

MIRAMAX
INTERNATIONAL

EQUILIBRIUM

LIBRIUM

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TELEVISION SCREEN

A DOCUMENTARY. IMAGES from the ravaging wars of our century.

TELEVISION NARRATOR

... for decades, for no better reason than mutual contempt, civilization hovered on the brink of nuclear war. Peoples in eastern Europe massacred each other over forgotten cultural grudges. 'Tensions have again escalated' was the familiar refrain ...

Now images of CHEMISTS diligently working in labs ...

NARRATOR

It became inescapable - if Man were to survive into the future, he must find a way to govern his emotions before they governed him into non-existence ...

But it is lost on the FIGURE in the FOREGROUND of this SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM.

Ragged, desperate - a modern-day pirate - he gently, almost lovingly, places a scratched black platter onto an old PLAYSKOOL RECORD PLAYER.

Watching, mesmerized, as the disc goes round and a child's lullaby - *Hushabye Street* - begins to eke out the set's tinny speakers. His Adam's apple rises, knotting ...

Abruptly, his eyes snap out the window. Screeching around the distant corner, a phalanx of POLICE CARS.

Forgetting the lullaby, he moves.

INT. ROOM - DAY

The man's spiritual brothers sit here scattered. Long braided hair some, tattooed others, pierced all, they sit telling jokes, playing cards, laughing with each other.

Don't be deceived. They are, in fact, a rolling army. Wolves, living on the move, taking what they need where they find it.

The door flies open, the man bursting in.

MAN

POLICE!!!

At the window, SEAMUS CLANCY, handsome and brilliant beyond his years, hits his feet milliseconds ahead of his men.

SEAMUS

You know what to do!

They jump to it, snatching up the CANVASES that lean against the walls around the room.

VAN GOGH'S SUNFLOWERS, MONET'S HAYSTACKS ... MUNCH'S SCREAM; some of the greatest artworks of mankind in the hands of these criminals ...

In the street below outside, UNMARKED POLICE CARS are screeching up at the curb.

Dropping a SHOTGUN from beneath his coat Seamus cracks! in the first shell and faces his men.

Around the room, every heart is pounding, every chest rising with raw emotion.

SEAMUS

It all comes down to this.

EXT. QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

And, under the soothing strains of Hushabye Street, it does. A swarm of yellow-jackets, the police cars slam the curb outside the house. The front door flies open ...

FIRST MAN

HYAAAAAH!!!

The desperadoes come streaming out PPOW! PPOW! guns blazing, spreading out across the lawn, OPENING fire without quarter on the law enforcers who ...

Return fire with automatic weapons, bullets thickening the air, chewing the house, cartwheeling great tufts of sod as one by one, across the lawn, Seamus' men begin to drop.

In what seems nothing more than a moment, they are all down and SPECIAL TACTICS TEAMS are swarming past their dying bodies up the steps and into the house

TACTICS COMMANDER

Go!Go!Go!

The sound of gunfire erupts within the house.

At the curb, a BLACK SEDAN stops. Out of it, steps a MAN. He surveys the house with a keen eye.

Thoughtful. Quiet, soothing to look at.

JOHN PRESTON looks to HIS PARTNER emerging out the other side of the car - PARTRIDGE.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

They move quickly, quietly inside the front door. Sounds of gunfire ringing through distant parts of the house.

A glance exchanged. Years of experience there.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Synchronized, like a machine, Preston and Partridge move silently through the house.

A DESPERADO steps abruptly out of a doorway ahead, shotgun not an inch from Fartridge's head.

POW!, almost before he even appeared, Preston has put him down with a bullet to the brain. The two look at each other. Close.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

They reach a tight KNOT of police forces, clustered combat-style outside a CLOSED DOOR at the end of a hall. The OFFICER IN CHARGE, quickly approaches, speaking in whispers.

OFFICER IN CHARGE

Lights out. May be as many as a dozen inside.

Preston nods.

PRESTON

Once the door's down, blow the bulbs.

The O.I.C. nods, snapping his fingers at the security forces, who scramble to take position.

Preston stands, eyes closed for a moment, leveling his breathing. Two officers quickly place pistols into his hanging hands while three more take position at the door - zeroing the hinges and lock with shotguns ...

One deep, steady breath. Preston opens his eyes. Nods.

PAPOW!POW!POW! the three officers BLOW out the hinges ...

INT. ROOM

A doorway of light opens into a world of black as the dark slab of the door collapses inward under the feet of a SILHOUETTED FIGURE in a flowing dark coat.

BABLAM! the security forces BLOW the lights behind, raining down fiery red sparks as everything drops to PITCH BLACK.

POW! PADAPOW! POW! like a string of fire-crackers, the darkness GOES OFF with the stroboscopic action of John Preston's guns, punctuating the black world into a discotheque of instantaneous spit-fire globes of light ...

A black world defined by fleeting retinal-burst images of his adversaries slamming the walls with the impact of his bullets.

And then, three blinding seconds and thirty bullets later, his guns fall silent and blackness rules again.

Behind him, FLASHLIGHTS strobe into the darkness from the hall as the police forces enter the room - fresh young faces mirroring their astonishment as they count the fallen.

Wordlessly, Preston turns and exits.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The dust has settled now. It is quiet. Preston is met in the battle-scarred main hall by the Tactics Commander and his team who have secured the upper floor.

TACTICS COMMANDER

House is clean. We found nothing.

Preston nods, taking in every detail from floor to ceiling.

PRESTON

Clear it.

The Tactics Commander glances at Partridge - who nods with simple gravity.

The Tactics Officer jumps to it, ushering his men streaming out. Preston turns to look briefly to Partridge ...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Preston stands in the kitchen, taking it in, feeling it. A man lies dead, half on the kitchen table, half off ...

But he takes no notice, so intent his communion with the room.

INT. UPPER ROOM - DAY

He stops in the doorway of an empty second floor room. Light eking sickly through a dusty window.

He stands for a long moment, feeling the air.

PRESTON

This is it.

Partridge nods to the SPECIAL TEAMS who move quickly up.

PARTRIDGE

Where ...?

Preston nods to a SPACE in the middle of the floorboards, covered by a threadbare rug.

PRESTON

There.

The Special Teams jump quickly to it; stripping away the rug, splintering up the floorboarding with crowbars.

Revealing, within a jagged hole, atop many other similar sized canvasses, the MONA LISA. Smiling back at them with her quiet smile.

Special Teams back off to let A MAN WITH GLASSES through. He kneels at the edge of the hole, swabs an edge of the painting with a Q-tip and drops it into a small test tube.

He shakes it, studying the reactant chemicals. Turns, nodding with gravity at Preston.

CHEMIST

It's real.

Without turning, Preston says to the Conflagration Teams who step abruptly in beside him with FLAME THROWERS:

PRESTON

Burn it.

WHOOOSH! the two Conflagration Units unleash a torrent of FLAME into the jagged hole. Igniting the great paintings in burning petroleum jelly.

Preston turns wordlessly and walks out.

He is our hero.

PARTRIDGE lingers for a moment, staring at Mona Lisa's smile as it curls up in the flames along with a billion dollars of mankind's other greatest artworks.

INT. POLICE VEHICLE - DAY

Preston and Partridge ride in silence in the back of the vehicle, watching the quaint, silent neighborhood go by.

Odd, but there isn't a soul to be seen in this neighborhood.

Every door has been painted with a plague-era black 'T', and every 5th or so house, has been burned to the ground ...

But it seems to make no impression on Preston. He looks over at Partridge, his partner's strong jaw tensed, contemplative, as he stares out the window at the empty, passing neighborhood.

Preston studies his partner of many years.

There are things Preston can know by simply looking at a person that would border on mind-reading for the rest of us.

PRESTON

You're thinking something ...

Partridge blinks over from the window.

PARTRIDGE

Oh ... no ... nothing ...

He shakes his head, gesturing the vacant neighborhood.

PARTRIDGE

Why don't we just burn it all to the ground - and be done with it?

PRESTON

Resources are tight. An uncontrolled fire in the Zone could spread to the city.

Partridge nods. Sure ... sure ...

Ahead, out the windshield, the suburban neighborhood abruptly ends, as though crushed in mid-thought by a giant stone foot.

A MASSIVE GATE girded by MASSIVE WALLS some 75 feet tall and stretching off out of sight in either direction like the Great Wall of China.

Atop the gate, carved in granite, massive stone Hitlerian letters proclaim LIBRIA. And, in smaller script below that: *Librium est Libertas*

Standing atop the precipice, a SENTRY clad in white watches through the featureless black glass of his helmet as Preston and Partridge's car is checked through the gate below.

Barrel of his white-metal machinegun following as the car passes from the faded flower that is the Zone ...

Through the vast, opening doors ...

To the vista of a VAST WALLED CITYSCAPE.

Nothing less than a stunning constructivist black and white geometry.

LIBRIA.

Le Corbusier's "machines for living in". Cold and beautiful.

A bichromatic masterpiece in which more has been done with the elegant simplicity of black and white than others who have gone before have managed with all the spectrum of the rainbow

And unlike the neighborhood - sealed off like East Berlin - the city is teeming with people. A peaceful mass - flowing with quiet fluidity.

PRESTON, in the car, watches a FAMILY preparing to cross the street. Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, holding hands ...

Waiting for the light to change.

His gaze stays on them - longer maybe, than warranted.

Abruptly a SHARP BEEPING blinks him out of his momentary dream. He joins the others in the car as they raise their wrists and flick off their alarms, all beeping in concert.

Wordlessly, around the vehicle, the men flip open WHITE CASES marked with MORNING and EVENING SLOTS for each day.

With mechanized routineness, each extracts this evening's GLASS AMPULE - marked Evening 6/18 ...

PRESTON

(reflective)

Every time we make this drive into the city - it hits me ...

(nods)

How very far we've come.

Partridge does not look up as he clicks his vial into the small PNEUMATIC SYRINGE tucked into the bottom of his case.

PARTRIDGE

We have?

Preston looks sharply over - not certain he heard correctly. Cocks his head.

PRESTON

I beg your pardon?

There is a pneumatic pop! as Partridge and the others inject themselves. Finally, he turns to look at Preston a frank moment - eyes searching. Then - simply - nods.

PRESTON

We have.

Preston holds on him a narrow instant. But is interrupted as the Driver looks suddenly over his shoulder.

DRIVER

Excuse me - a situation at the Stad - do we want to stop?

EXT. STAD LIBRIA - DAY

A great surge of APPLAUSE rises as Partridge and Preston proceed rapidly through the two great stone columns that form the gateway to the city's vast communal stadium.

The stands are packed with intent on-lookers as, on-field, corps of black-uniformed, tow-headed CHILDREN are going through a synchronized martial choreography ...

The crowd, ten thousand-strong, applauds, enjoying the spectacle thoroughly.

Preston and Partridge are met immediately by two white-clad SWEEPERS who fall into quick lock-step with them.

SWEEPER

We can't take the shot without endangering people ...

Preston nods, on it.

PRESTON

Show me.

EXT. STADIUM COMMON - DAY

Just outside the stadium-proper, Preston and Partridge are led through a large knot of concerned-looking people into an OPEN SPACE ringed by ARMED SWEEPERS...

... all giving ample space to a SWEAT-SLICKENED, DESPERATE MAN who holds a GUN and is railing at the surrounding crowd.

MAN

You stupid fucks! Look at you! You're sheep! Fucking sheep!

POW! he fires a SHOT over their heads. The crowd flinches, but does not budge.

MAN

You see! You see! What kind of fucking reaction is that!

At his feet lies a DEAD WOMAN. Bullet in her heart. Preston and Partridge exchange a glance.

Preston unholsters his own guns, handing them to his partner. And steps out into the ring. A MURMUR travels through the crowd. The Man snaps the gun round towards him.

Preston raises his hands.

PRESTON

Easy. No one here means you any harm.

MAN

Well they should!

POW! he fires another shot over the crowd. They flinch again, but remain rooted.

MAN

You see!?!
(crowd)

Hello? Hello? I just killed my wife. She fucked another man so I killed her.

He looks very particularly at Preston.

MAN

I'm a menace to your fucked up society.

A displeased murmur ripples through the crowd.

PRESTON

A menace maybe ...
(crowd)

But you're wrong about them. This is something that works. Better than it ever has.

MAN

Works!?! All these freaking sheep should be running for their lives! Shitting their pants; feeling terrified, feeling scared for their fucking lives; feeling something.

PRESTON

Like what you're feeling now?

The man grinds silent, Preston's words hitting home. Preston takes a step forward.

PRESTON

(crowd)

Look at them ...

In spite of himself, the man does. Unlike him, everyone healthy, relaxed-looking, innocent, in balance.

PRESTON

What's missing? Stress? Depression?
Can you remember, in your whole life,
ever seeing an overweight person?

He shakes his head.

PRESTON

All the reasons to overeat - anxiety,
worry, unhappiness - all gone.

He takes a step forward.

PRESTON

Along with sadness, anger, hate ...

He looks at the dead woman at the man's feet. Back ...

PRESTON

... jealousy.

The Man's angry facade strains. Struggling. Beginning to
break.

MAN

What the fuck do you want from me ...

PRESTON

All I want - is for you to stop shaking.

The Man looks at him - surprised at the compassionate words.
Preston takes another step.

PRESTON

I want you to stop ... dreading ... I
want you to stop ... raging inside...

In spite of himself, the Man swallows hard. Preston stops
not a yard away - closed FIST rising up between them. The
Man tenses his grip on the gun - but Preston does not blink.

PRESTON

I want the rushing in your brain - all of
it ...

Like a flower, his fingers bloom open.

PRESTON

... to stop.

In his open palm - glinting - an AMPULE of golden liquid.

LIBRIUM.

The Man holds on it - tears brimming into his eyes.

Suddenly, faster than thought, Preston strips the gun out of his hands and slams him to the concrete.

Instantly, the Sweepers swarm the man, gagging and binding him with stunning swiftness. The crowd politely applauds.

Preston's eyes meet Partridge's in the crowd. Preston smiles. Partridge doesn't.

EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DUSK

A great edifice, at whose crest is a great white 'T'.

INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DUSK

PRESTON stands at attention before a desk situated at the end of a vast hall at which a man in an elegant suit sits stamping the crest of the Tetragrammaton - an ornate 'T' onto a stack of papers.

Behind him a great 'T' has been cut through the wall and the sun's setting rays blaze through it.

PRESTON's eyes fall on a lavish GLOBE of the earth standing in an ornate pedestal by the desk. Across the continent of North America, 'Libria' is printed in an ornate script ...

And, fading around the sphere, other names, XylyX, Entropia, and others, mark the lesser continents ...

Setting aside his papers, the MAN looks Preston over a keen moment, assessing him.

MAN

Thank you for coming, Cleric. I assume you know who I am?

PRESTON

Yes Sir. Of course, Sir. You are Vice-Council DuPont of the Third Councillary of the Tetragrammaton. You are Father's voice.

DUPONT

(thoughtfully)

Yes ... I am at that.

(sitting back)

I've heard a great deal about you, Preston. They say you're the veritable Fourth Horseman of the TetraGram. That you were raised from childhood in the Cleric Monasteries, schooled in the arts of intuition and strife. That there is no one better.

PRESTON

I do only what I can, Sir.

DUPONT

They also tell me you are deeply empathetic. That you can find contraband wherever it may be hidden; you've a nose for it...

PRESTON

I've a good record, Sir.

Vice-Council DuPont considers him a moment.

DUPONT

Why do you imagine that is, Cleric?

PRESTON

I ... I'm not sure Vice-Council. I just ... put myself in their position. Where would I conceal illegal material.

DUPONT

If you had ceased your Librium interval. If you were ... a Sense Offender ...

PRESTON

Yes Sir, of course, Sir.

DuPont considers him with bright, intelligent eyes.

DUPONT

You were senior officer on an Apprehension and Recovery today?

PRESTON

Yes Sir. In the restricted zone.

DUPONT

It was paintings this time was it not?

PRESTON

Yes Sir.

DUPONT

And the result was?

PRESTON

Combustion, Sir. As always.

DUPONT

How did you feel about that?

Preston blinks at him a confused moment.

PRESTON

I'm ... sorry. I don't understand.

DUPONT

How did you feel - watching those paintings burning. Sublimating away into invisible gas - never again to be laid upon by human eyes.

PRESTON

(still confused)

I ... didn't feel anything. I was just doing my job.

DUPONT

Yes ... yes, of course you were.

He considers a moment. Refocuses on Preston.

DUPONT

You're a family man? Children ... ?

PRESTON

A boy and a girl, Sir. The boy is in the monastery - on path to becoming a Cleric.

DUPONT

Very good - and ... the mother?

PRESTON

My spouse was arrested and incinerated for Sense Offense four years ago, Sir.

DUPONT

I see. By yourself?

Preston hesitates a micro-instant.

PRESTON

No Sir. By another.

DUPONT

Really? How did you come to miss it?

PRESTON

I ... I've asked myself that same question, Sir. I ... I don't know.

DuPont focuses on him very intently for a deep moment.

DUPONT

Do not let your vigilance flag, Cleric. You may still be needed in this battle.

Something in the very specific way he says it gives Preston a

twinge. He nods ...

PRESTON

Yes Sir.

DuPont waves a hand, dismissing him. Preston hesitates an instant - then turns sharply on his heel and walks out.

EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE

Halfway down the palatial steps, he drifts to a stop, blinking into the space before him.

Remembering something.

INT. DESK SPACE - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - NIGHT

Empty this time of night. Preston sits watching DIGITAL REPLAY of the car ride back from the Apprehension and Recovery on his desk monitor.

PRESTON'S IMAGE

Every time we make this drive into the city - it hits me ...

(nods)

How very far we've come.

PARTRIDGE'S IMAGE

We have?

Freezing it - he plays Partridge's quiet line again.

PARTRIDGE'S IMAGE

We have?

His face is turned partially from the camera. Preston considers. Then SWITCHES to surveillance replay from the STADIUM.

PRESTON'S IMAGE

Easy. No one here means you any harm.

MAN'S IMAGE

Well they should!

POW! he fires another shot over the crowd.

Preston freezes the image. None of the Enforcers or people in the background have moved or started in the slightest.

Except one.

Preston zooms in on the grainy image of the one man who, with a look of distinct alarm, has reached for his gun.

Partridge. Afraid for his partner - Preston's - life.

Preston ponders this very human reaction, frozen on his screen, for a long, very dark time.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

He stands before a LOCKER marked 'Partridge'. Feels with his fingers the tumbler that locks it.

With a crowbar, he cracks it open.

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Preston stands crowded into the dimly lit hall with a TEAM OF ENFORCERS. He knocks sharply at the door.

PRESTON

Cleric Partridge! Open up!

Nothing. He nods to the Enforcement Team who blows off the hinges and goes streaming in.

INT. PARTRIDGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Preston scans the living unit as the search team flows in around him - moving into the back rooms to tear it to pieces.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sounds of the catastrophic search going on in the apartment behind, Preston fades out into the hall.

He pauses, feeling the air - communing with it. His eyes fall on the LIGHT FIXTURE - the only prominent object in the otherwise featureless hallway.

Moving INTUITIVELY to it, he touches it. Feeling its looseness, he twists it sideways ...

Revealing, lying hidden in the space in the wall behind it, a huge supply of unused Librium.

Preston stares at his partner's death warrant.

EXT. GATE 34-B - NIGHT

A small CONVOY of VEHICLES pulls to the towering edifice of GATE 34-b to the unlit darkness of the Zone.

The Armed Guard snaps to attention.

PRESTON

You confirm he came through this gate this evening?

GUARD

Yes Sir. Our records show 8:10 P.M. And
Sir ...

He hesitates.

PRESTON

Speak.

GUARD

Well Sir, we assumed it was Enforcement
related. He's been coming through every
night for the last two weeks ...

Preston absorbs this a mortal beat. Putting the window back
up, he waves to the driver and the convoy rolls past, under
the keen gaze of a SWEEPER CREW in its distinctive white
uniforms, and through the massive gates of 34-B.

EXT. THE ZONE - NIGHT

The car sits, just the idle rumble of its ignition in the
silence of a great empty intersection in the unlit dead city.

BRANDT, Preston's freshly assigned partner, a HANDSOME YOUNG
MAN, sits in the shadows of the driver's seat.

He looks to Preston - an eagerness in his eyes.

BRANDT

I hope you're as pleased to be assigned
me as I am for the placement. I'm told
it's a career-making advancement.

Preston says nothing, silently surveying the abandoned city.
Eyes sifting through the silhouettes of the buildings.

BRANDT

Not that it's the only reason I'm pleased
to be here. You're the most intuitive of
the Grammaton Clerics. Everyone knows it.
I'm intuitive too. I can learn from you.
How to focus. So that I miss no detail.
So that I know when they're feeling
before they even know it themselves ...

A long beat. Finally, quietly, Preston speaks. Nodding
towards the dark spires of a great, DEAD CATHEDRAL caught in
the distant moonlight.

PRESTON

He's there.

INT. CATHEDRAL - ZONE - NIGHT

A real cathedral - a still-standing relic from ages-gone-by.

FARTRIDGE sits in the front pew, candles lit on either side, reading a DOG-EARED PAPERBACK. The great cathedral doors behind him creak open.

His eyes neither rise nor turn ... only continuing to read as the footsteps approach echoing down the aisle.

PRESTON stops alone in front of his partner.

PARTRIDGE

You always know. You just couldn't bring yourself to admit it.

With the tip of his GUN, Preston raises the cover of the book. THE POETRY OF YEATS.

PARTRIDGE

Ever had the pleasure ...

PRESTON

Have you lost your mind.

PARTRIDGE

(reads)

*But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

(looks up)

I assume you dream, Preston?

PRESTON

You've got to come with me.

Partridge only looks back at him, spattered in the colored moonlight splintering down through the cathedral's great, broken STAINED GLASS WHEEL.

PARTRIDGE

How can you be immune to it, John?

Preston looks up to the great window. Back. Immune to it.

PRESTON

You have to come with me. I'll do what I can to see they go easy on you.

PARTRIDGE

We both know - they never go easy on anybody.

A steady silence as the two men regard each other in the

flickering candlelight.

PRESTON
(finally)

Then I'm sorry.

But Partridge just sadly shakes his head.

PARTRIDGE
No. You're not. You don't even know the meaning. It's just a vestigial word for a feeling you've never felt.

Preston is silent.

PARTRIDGE
Don't you see, Preston - it's gone. Everything that makes us; what we are; traded away.

PRESTON
I'm what I am. There's no war. No murder.

Partridge searches his eyes through the colored gloom.

PARTRIDGE
What is it you think we do?

A hard silence. Preston's teeth grinding. Anyone else would be dead already.

PRESTON
You're wrong. You've been with me; you've seen how it can be. Jealousy and rage. Anger. Hate...

Slowly, sadly, silently, Partridge nods.

PARTRIDGE
A very heavy cost ...

His hand FALLS to a DARK OBJECT in his lap ...

PARTRIDGE
I pay it gladly ...

Preston sees, in the moonlight's colored glint, that the object is PARTRIDGE'S GUN. His hand resting on it ...

Preston pulls his own gun up in line with Partridge's eyes. Those eyes look past the gun - up into his own eyes.

Then Partridge raises the open book. Between their eyes ...

Ending the conversation. Forever.

In his lap, his thumb click! cocks back the hammer on his gun. An eternal moment ...

PCW! Preston puts a bullet through the book. His friend crumples behind it in the muted color of the shadows.

Preston looks for a moment at the dark form of his former partner and friend huddled in the pew before him.

And feels a strange, unsettling chill.

Something, some strange, distant voice knocking on the door of his unconscious.

Turning, he sees a DARK FIGURE standing in the doorway of the cathedral - watching him. That figure takes one step forward into the splintered moonlight.

BRANDT. A feral excitement in his eyes.

EXT. PRESTON'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The car pulls to a stop at the curb before the concrete bunker that comprises the ten thousand unit building that contains the cubicle that Preston lives in.

Preston steps out. Brandt's voice floats out of the car.

BRANDT

Cleric ...

Preston glances momentarily back. Brandt's eyes are bright.

BRANDT

I could only hope to one day be as uncompromising as you.

And, pulling the door shut, he drives off. Preston watches after him a moment. Within him, something... not quite right.

INT. PRESTON'S UNIT - NIGHT

A TEN YEAR-OLD BOY, dressed in the severe black uniform of the CLERIC YOUTH, the same uniform of the children at the stadium, sits at the kitchen table working from schooltexts.

On a TELEVISION, a MAN speaks frankly into the camera.

TELEVISION/MAN

I am Father.

He smiles.

TELEVISION/MAN

You are Father.

And changes - seamlessly - into a WOMAN.

TELEVISION/WOMAN

He is Father. We are Father.

Then a boy.

TELEVISION/BOY

She is Father. They are Father.

Who becomes a young girl.

TELEVISION/GIRL

Father is Everywhere.

These are the FACES OF LIBRIA, always changing, always playing, everywhere, all the time.

As Preston comes through the door, the boy, his TEN YEAR-OLD SON, ROBBIE, looks up.

PRESTON

Lisa's asleep?

ROBBIE

Yes. For about an hour.

Preston nods, hanging up his coat. Begins flipping through the mail.

PRESTON

School, how was it?

ROBBIE

Good, thank you. Work?

Preston pauses, realizing the boy is watching him, intently interested in anything he might tell about his day.

And he is struck - by how oddly hard it is to say ...

PRESTON

My partner stopped taking his Dose. He had to be destroyed.

The boy perks.

ROBBIE

You? By you?

The thinnest beat.

PRESTON

Yes.

Robbie looks back at him - eyes bright.

ROBBIE

I'm very proud.

Preston doesn't know why - but saying this next word feels like climbing a mountain.

PRESTON

Thanks.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wife long gone, Preston lies down on one side of a bed made for two. The other side vacant.

He stares at the wall for a long time before closing his eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

His eyes blink open. Dawn.

Finding himself still crowded onto his side of the bed. It's the way he has slept every night since his wife was taken.

But, for some reason, this morning - he notices it.

He makes his way into the tiny bathroom. Just a sink, a toilet and a small personal maintenance mirror.

Opening a drawer, he pulls out his DOSE CASE and, flipping it open, withdraws the ampule marked MORNING 8/17.

He sets it on the counter and bends to brush his teeth when a tinkling crash brings his eyes up.

He sees, to his surprise, that, with his arm, he has knocked the morning's dosage off the counter onto the concrete floor.

It lies there - shattered. He stares for a moment at the TINY POOL of liquid and glass on the floor.

VOICE

What are you doing?

He turns, startled. ROBBIE stands there in his uniform, already ready to go to school. The boy's eyes move to the pool of amber and glass on the floor.

Shooting sharply back up to his father's.

ROBBIE

I said what are you doing?

PRESTON

I ... I accidentally dropped my morning interval. I ...

(perplexed)

I took it out before I brushed my teeth...

He looks at the boy, somewhat baffled.

PRESTON

I never take it out before I brush my teeth ...

The ten year-old holds on him a narrow moment.

ROBBIE

Of course you'll go by Equilibrium, log the loss and get a replacement ...

PRESTON

Yes. Of course.

The boy lingers an instant longer - then, satisfied, leaves. Preston's eyes return to the enigmatic amber pool evaporating off his bathroom floor.

PRESTON

... of course ...

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

When Preston enters, Robbie and Preston's SEVEN YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER LISA are already sitting eating breakfast.

Preston sits down to his food.

ROBBIE

This came.

He hands his father a piece of PAPER.

ROBBIE

A Sense Offender here in the city. Your partner's to pick you up at 10 for the AER.

Preston holds on the boy who is beaming. He nods ...

PRESTON

Thanks ...

And, for some reason unable to hold his son's eyes, his own move to his daughter Lisa who, bored, is amusing herself by stirring her cereal and watching it swirl around the bowl.

ROBBIE, seeing Preston watching his sister, immediately fixes

the girl with a dark look.

ROBBIE

Stop that.

The girl looks furtively to her father ... then returns to eating with the same mechanical torpor as her brother.

INT. DUPONT'S OFFICES - MORNING

Preston stands before VICE COUNCIL DUPONT who is making hand-written notes.

DUPONT

This is strictly routine, you understand...

PRESTON

I do understand, of course.

DUPONT

You encountered your partner, Errol Partridge within a cathedral in the restricted sector ...

PRESTON

That's correct.

DUPONT

How would you describe his state of mind?

PRESTON

He was ... emotional.

DUPONT

(glances up)

Emotional?

PRESTON

He was ...

(thinks)

... not making rational decisions. He was, I believe, governed by ... passions.

DUPONT

So you shot him.

PRESTON

Destruction is the penalty for cessation of the Dose. The penalty for feeling.

DUPONT

Unquestionably. But prior to destruction could he not conceivably have been interrogated by more systematic, by more

... clinical means here at the Palace of Justice? Potentially leading to crucial evidence? Possibly even confederates?

Preston hesitates an instant. Partridge? 'Clinical' interrogation? He feels a flush of confusion.

PRESTON

I ... felt he would not come willingly. It was likely that damage to either myself or my backup would have resulted.

DUPONT

(considering)

Yes ... yes ... and, in any case, I suppose something like that could not have been easy in the first place ...

PRESTON¹

(off guard)

I'm ... sorry?

DUPONT

Shooting this man. Whom you'd spent so much time with. He was what you might call a friend, was he not?

PRESTON

(hesitates)

I ...

DUPONT

Please - speak openly. What did you feel?

PRESTON

(hardening)

I felt nothing.

After a studied moment, DuPont sits back.

DUPONT

You've a 10 O'clock Arrest and Recovery?

Preston is surprised.

PRESTON

Yes Sir, I was just informed this morning.

DUPONT

Then I suppose you'd better hurry - that is, if you expect to make the Hall of Equilibrium first.

Preston is doubly startled. DuPont smiles faintly.

DUFONT

There's very little I don't know,
Preston.

Preston hesitates an instant, coming to grips with it - then, with an abrupt nod and a click of his heels, he nods, turns and heads for the door.

EXT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

Preston pauses on the sidewalk outside the massive Fritz Langian edifice - deeply engraved with the solemn words HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM and the motto 'Librium est Libertas'.

It's massively stark concrete columns rising upwards, shoulders upon which the mighty building sits.

INT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

Preston stands in line. On either side, as far up and as far down as he can see, stretch similar lines. Multitudes of people. Waiting to get their Librium replacements.

On monitors lining the wall - the changing faces of Libria...

FACES OF LIBRIA

You are Father; We are Father; Father is
Everywhere ...

He glances at his watch. Shifts impatiently. Looks around. No one else seems impatient. He glances at his watch again.

Almost ten.

The line moves one person closer to the window. Two more people and he'll finally be there. He glances at his watch again. Still almost ten. The line moves one forward.

Abruptly, he steps out of the queue and heads for the doors. A PROCTOR encounters him before he has made a dozen steps.

PROCTOR

Sir, is everything okay?

PRESTON

(quickly)

No, no, everything's fine. I'm just
late. I'm late ...

He steps around the Proctor, walking backward towards the doors now as he continues to explain, tapping his watch ...

PRESTON

Late. I'll be back later ...

And he is gone. Leaving the Proctor staring curiously after.

EXT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

As Preston comes down the steps, a CAR skids up to the curb, passenger door swinging open. BRANDT is behind the wheel.

BRANDT

Just in time - hop in.

Preston, surprised, looks into the car for a moment. Then, without much choice, he gets in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Brandt guides the car into traffic.

BRANDT,

How're the lines?

Preston looks at him - what?

BRANDT

The lines. They're always terrible at that place. I'm surprised you were able to get your dose and get out so quickly.

Preston hesitates, surprised at how much he knows.

PRESTON

They were ... they were fine.

Nodding, Brandt reaches inside his coat, pulling out his GUN and checking it as he drives.

BRANDT

Maybe I'll drop by later. I got on the scale this morning. Do you know I've lost nearly 20 pounds in the last 8 months? Naturally, I'll want to go by and have my Dose adjusted.

PRESTON

Well you ... shouldn't have much problem.

He watches as Brandt snaps his gun closed, reholstering it.

PRESTON

Expecting resistance?

Brandt looks at him. Smiles thinly.

BRANDT

That's something you'll find me, Cleric. I'm a wary person. Cautious by nature. Always expecting the worst.

INT. HOUSE - LIBRIA - DAY

BAM! a door explodes inward off its hinges as the BATTERING RAM TEAMS make way for PRESTON and BRANDT entering the house.

Preston is immediately accosted by a FURIOUS DARK-HAIRED WOMAN coming at him down the hall

WOMAN

You can't do this! You cannot do this!

Preston brushes past her.

PRESTON

We're TetraGrammaton; there's nothing we can't do.

Her eyes go dark and she CHARGES him.

WOMAN

You son of a bitch!

He easily ducks her charge and, grabbing her, twists her arm around behind her, growling into her ear.

PRESTON

How long have you been off the Dose?

She doesn't answer, shaking with emotion and anger.

PRESTON

Look at you.

He spins her around by her twisted arm to face an ornate UNREGISTERED MIRROR in the hall.

PRESTON

Look at you!

They both stand there, in the illegal mirror's reflection.

His face looking over her shoulder. And hers, flushed with emotion, strands of wavy dark hair drifting wildly into blazing eyes ... lips red, full ...

Preston catches himself staring at her ...

Abruptly, he releases her. Suddenly finding that he cannot hold her eyes any longer. All he can think to mumble is...

PRESTON

Look at you ...

And leaving her in Brandt's custody, he abruptly turns and moves into the house. Brandt watches after him. Curiously.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Preston moves through the house, searching, feeling ...
Brandt trails with the captive woman and several officers.

PRESTON

You live here alone?

Fuming, she says nothing.

PRESTON

Who else do you know who's ceased their
Librium interval?

WOMAN

Fuck you, how's that?

Preston just nods. He can play it that way too. He begins
measuring off one of the walls with measured footsteps

INT. HALL - DAY

They follow him into the hall as he continues, measuring the
wall as he goes ...

INT. ROOM - DAY

And into the next room where he wraps around the doorframe,
measuring the distance to the wall. He turns to Brandt and
the Woman. Looking at her particularly.

PRESTON

Interesting.

The Woman bitterly says nothing. Clearly there is more
distance between the rooms than there is wall between them.
Preston nods to the wall of the room.

PRESTON

Tear it down.

The Demolition Team jumps to it with jackhammers, knocking
down the flimsy faux wall in a matter of seconds. A moment
later, through a ragged hole, Preston steps into...

INT. ROOM - DAY

A HIDDEN ROOM. Instantly, the eye is assaulted with the
uncustomary sensation of COLOR. THINGS, jumbled everywhere.
Teddy Bears, pictures, paintings, posters, wall paper,
collages, toys, upholstered furniture...

Everything that incites sensation, feeling, emotion.
Everything we take for granted. Everything forbidden.

The collage of an entire life, stuffed into one tiny room.

The three of them, Preston, Brandt and the Woman - stand silently in the clearing dust.

WOMAN
(finally)

You're going to burn it, aren't you ...

PRESTON

Eventually. However, you couldn't have accumulated all this by yourself. It will all be sorted and examined. By means of clues and evidence - we'll discover who your confederates are.

The Woman stands there a stark moment, chest rising and falling ... Abruptly, she grabs the gun of the nearest Enforcer and spins it around on Preston.

The Officer dives for her and Brandt's own gun snaps out.

But Preston knocks Brandt aside even as his gun goes off, shot firing wide, punching a small hole into the beautiful, textured wallpaper.

There is a ringing moment. Then, regaining his feet, Brandt looks at Preston like he was crazy. Preston looks from the thwarted Woman sitting pinned against the wall, eyes afire, ... to Brandt.

PRESTON

We need her.

... is all he can say.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - DAY

Preston sits across from the Woman in a windowless room.

PRESTON

Do you have a name?

She is silent. Staring stonily into the space between them.

PRESTON

It doesn't matter, you know. You're to be taken to the Palace of Justice from here. Where, I'm sure you know, few questions remain unanswered.

She remains mute, defiant.

PRESTON

That ... fragrance. Why do you do it? Why do you put it on yourself?

She responds again with imperial silence. Reaching into the pocket of his coat, he removes - small, beautiful, ornate - an ART DECO PERFUME DECANTER, taken from her house.

He sets it between them.

Her eyes hold on it perhaps a millisecond too long. A beat. Preston pushes the small treasure across to her.

An instant of struggle. She takes it, cradling its familiar weight in her hands.

PRESTON

What's your name?

She stares at the object in her hands another moment before drawing a deep breath.

WOMAN

O'Brien ... Mary.

PRESTON

Well Mary, you can either wait and tell the technicians at the Palace of Justice, or you can tell me now - who are your friends?

Her eyes rise. Looking back at him for the first time. Impossibly steady.

MARY

(finally)

I'm wondering - if you have any idea at all what the word "friend" means.

Preston tightens an imperceptible instant - Partridge and DuPont coming back to him. His composure recrystallizes.

PRESTON

Theres nothing you don't feel?

She only looks back at him.

PRESTON

Guilt?

MARY

If I've done something wrong. But I haven't.

PRESTON

You've taken it upon yourself to cease your interval. You've broken the law.

MARY

What law would that be? The law of nature says I should feel. That every atom of me was built for it. It's a crime I don't use chemicals to crush myself? To stop myself from feeling because you're afraid what I feel might be dangerous?

PRESTON

Excuse me, are you at all aware...

MARY

(stepping on him)

'Of the history of suffering grown out of the emotional nature of Man?' The Manifest Doctrinals: Man's inhumanity to Man - all because he can hate and lust - rage and covet. . .

PRESTON

You speak as though it's somehow inaccurate. Do you deny he's tortured, mutilated his way through his existence? That until Librium genocide had been the very legend of Man?

She is silent.

PRESTON

Look at you - a blister. Fear, anxiety - you like that; feeling that?

She considers him a calm beat. Leans across the table.

MARY

Let me ask you something ...

And, startlingly, she reaches forward and grasps one of his hands into her own. Her eyes looking into his.

MARY

Why are you alive?

Within Preston, for reasons he can't even understand, every atom of his being electrifies.

He quickly pulls his hand back from hers, flustered. Trying to cover ...

PRESTON

I'm alive ... I live because ...

He hesitates again, finally managing ...

PRESTON

As a cleric and citizen I have function.

MARY

What function?

PRESTON

To ... safeguard the continuity of this.
This Great Society. To serve Libria.

MARY

It's circular. You exist to continue
your existence. What's the point?

He looks at her a long moment, pulse finally calming.

PRESTON

What's the point of your existence?

MARY

To feel. Because you've never done it,
you can never know it. But it's as vital
as breath. And without it, without love,
without anger, sorrow - breath is just a
clock - ticking.

Preston considers her another long moment.

PRESTON

And you're willing, by virtue of your own
selfishness, to be a seed in the downfall
of a functioning society?

MARY

I'm willing to be a lot more than the
seed, I can tell you. I'm willing to be
the soil, I'm willing to be the sun - the
very water - if necessary.

A flummoxed beat from Preston.

PRESTON

Then I have no choice but to remand you
to the Palace of Justice for processing.

She sits back with a wry smile.

MARY

"Processing"? You mean execution don't
you.

He looks back at her impassively across the table.

PRESTON

Processing.

INT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

BRANDT stands impatiently in the long line to the dose window. He's got a ways to go and he's not happy about it. He stops a passing PROCTOR.

BRANDT

I was told the lines were short today.

PROCTOR

I'm sorry, Sir - there hasn't been less than an hour's wait all day.

He walks off, leaving Brandt watching after, a number of thoughts occurring behind his grey eyes.

INT. PRESTON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT,

Preston sits with his children in the living room. On the television, the Faces of Liberia.

FACES OF LIBERIA

You are Father; She is Father; Father is Everywhere ...

He is attempting to read from a thick volume entitled The Manifesto, while Robbie and Lisa do homework.

But he cannot. Fidgety. Restless. Something bubbling inside him that will not, no matter how hard he tries, allow him to focus on the reading of the book.

Finally, unable to take it, he slaps it shut.

His children look sharply up. He hesitates ... finally:

PRESTON

(Robbie)

You ... reported my breakage this morning?

ROBBIE

I didn't, I'm sorry. I forgot.

Preston nods. Swallows imperceptibly. Then, not knowing what else to do with himself, he rises.

PRESTON

It's okay. I think I'll ... go to bed.

And he walks quickly out. Robbie and Lisa exchange a narrow glance.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Stark, Preston faces himself in the mirror in his bathroom. Dozens of thoughts rushing unbeckoned through his head.

Impulsively, he pushes his fingers behind the mirror and cracks the mirror away from its aging glue on the wall.

Behind it, a cavity - but no camera ...

He looks around - eyes falling on the light fixture. He unscrews it. Nothing ...

Eyes scanning the bathroom again. Nothing. No other place a camera could be. *So how did DuPont know ...*

His eyes fall on his DOSE CASE.

Opening it, he removes the vial marked for this night.

Raising the small amber vial aloft to the dim bare bulb above, he stares up into its goldness. Long and deep. Lost in it.

Librium.

Abruptly, for reasons he does not know, he puts it back in its case and, turning off the light, he exits to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Preston awakens with a start. Heart pounding, face slickened with sweat. He had been dreaming. He looks around, chest rising and falling dramatically - confused. Panicked.

Raising his hand to his chest, he touches his breast bone. He can literally feel his heart pounding inside him. He has never felt these feelings ... any feelings.

Rising, he goes to the window, scratching away the thin, translucent paper that covers all windows in Libria.

He peers out across the stark, powerful geometry of Libria's rooftops where the light of the sun is breaking. Dawn.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAWN

A few shoves and the unused rooftop door shudders open, allowing Preston onto the roof. He has never been up here before. No one has, really.

Drawn, he drifts towards the roof's edge. Staring out at the great red rim of the SUN as it rises above the horizon. He gazes, mesmerized, as though he had never seen it before.

And, in fact, maybe he hasn't. Not really ...

And it moves him. So much so that a TEAR breaks unprovoked out of his eye, rolling down his cheek. Trembling, his finger comes up to touch it. He looks at the unfamiliar, moisture budded on his fingertip ...

Confused ... Mind beginning to turmoil ... Turning, he runs

INT. STAIRWELL - DAWN

Tearing down the stairwell.

INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Bursting back into his cubicle. Only to encounter LISA headed down the hall from the bathroom. The girl turns, surprised to see her father framed in the doorway, panting.

LISA

Dad ... ?

Preston stares at the girl a moment, caught completely off guard, at a loss for words. Finally, he manages to get out

PRESTON

Go back ... go back to bed ...

She holds on him a beat ... then, with a shrug, she does.

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

He bursts into the bathroom, quickly closing the door and fumbling for his LIBRIUM CASE with shaking hands.

Getting it open, he snatches out the morning's dose, loading it into the pneumatic syringe as quickly as his trembling fingers can manage, thrusting it to his neck ...

But before he pushes the button that will release the soothing amber fluid into his carotid artery, and shut off this unendurable assault of emotion ...

He catches SIGHT of himself in the mirror. Haggard, pneumatic injector to his neck...

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Preston stands with the hundreds of other morning commuter waiting on the platform for the subway.

His eyes travel, searching those around him. A hiss of hydraulics, the train pulls up and the crowd turns liquid flowing in through the open doors.

Preston is the last to board. A cracking sound from under his shoe as he steps off the platform and onto the train.

Two TINY GLASS VIALS left crushed and unnoticed on the concrete platform.

INT. SUBWAY - MORNING

The throng rides in ponderous silence. No person speaking, no person looking at any other. All just sitting in their unquestioned contentment.

All but PRESTON, whose eyes move secretly from face to face. From the elderly woman next to him. To the young man. To the pretty woman - drinking in their detail. Like a vampire.

Every wrinkle, every contour, the shape of each hand, the length of each eyelash never before noticed. Seeing for the first time beauty ... and ugliness. Fascinated.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

He walks through the morning throng - outwardly calm, emotionless - but inside, his heart a torrent of emotion, a veritable hurricane raging inside of him.

Making him for the first time unsure how to hold his body. Uncertain what to do with his eyes. Fearful at every instant that he will give himself away.

INT. NEWSPAPER STAND - MORNING

He seeks refuge at a newspaper stand. Relieved. Like a man hiding in plain sight, he picks up a paper and pretends to read - trying to calm his racing heart.

He risks a glance up. Finds himself staring into the eyes of another man at the stand - staring right back at him.

And in that instant, Preston knows. This man is feeling too! And it scares the shit out of him. Dropping the paper, he turns and walks away as quickly as he can.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Until he can stand it no longer - and his retreating stride disintegrates into a run. He runs. And runs. Pinballing through the crowd, people turning after him as he passes ...

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Finally finding a breathless, heart-pounding refuge in a grim alley. He buries his face in his hands - tormented by a thousand colliding emotions.

Then, suddenly, everything comes welling up inside him. He VOMITS forcefully onto the alley floor. Remaining there, shaking, choking.

INT. HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - MORNING

Like a shattered puzzle, Preston has tentatively pieced his composure back together. He steps into the busy station.

OFFICER

Good morning Cleric.

Preston manages a tight, curt nod as he passes.

PRESTON

Good morning ...

The Officer glances up, looking after him a curious moment.

INT. CLERIC DESKS - DAY

Preston sits at his desk. Heart still pounding like a jackhammer.

His eyes fall on the desk. Seeing it for the first time as ... uninspired. Things placed in perfect order, yes ... but not ... inspired.

Without even realizing it, he begins rearranging the items on it. Rearranging them to suit, well ... his inclination.

Turning the stapler at an angle, putting the paperclip holder, the phone, slightly askew.

VOICE

What are you doing?

Preston looks sharply up. BRANDT stands there, eying him.

BRANDT

(repeats)

What are you doing?

PRESTON

I'm ... rearranging my desk.

Brandt stands there the slightest instant - considering him.

BRANDT

You didn't like the way it was before?

Preston looks back at the other man. Is he testing him?

PRESTON

I had no feelings about it. I'm merely

attempting to optimize.

Brandt continues looking at him another moment. Then nods, as though satisfied with the answer. He tosses a square of paper onto the desk.

BRANDT

Sense Offenders. Holed up in Y-Bloc.

EXT. HOUSE - TEE ZONE - DAY

CHAOS. Madness. GUNSHOTS. Screams.
An overgrown but quaint house in the Zone.

INT. HOUSE

It is absolute insanity as the Enforcement Teams fight their way through the dark twisting shadows of the house, trying to take it hall by hall like a street fire-fight.

Their gunfire is returned, muzzle-flashes in smoke. Brandt, ducking behind a wall, yells to Preston a few feet to the rear.

BRANDT

I'm going to go! Cover me!

Abruptly, a MAN, a Sense Offender, comes flying around the corner, SCREAMING like a banshee, waving a gun. He slams past Brandt and runs right into Preston's arms.

BLAM! Brandt's gun barks and the man goes limp in Preston's grasp. His fading eyes connecting with Preston's as he slides lifeless down his torso ...

Preston stares at the dead man in his arms. Then looks, astonished, to Brandt who nods.

BRANDT

Good grab, Cleric.

And, with a yell, he steps around the corner shooting - several Enforcement units blazing away with him.

Preston is left alone - in the ringing aftermath. Realizing he still holds the dead man. Looking into a face that, moments before, felt. Like him ...

He quickly releases the body.

His hands. Covered in blood. Blinking rapidly. Deeply, conflicted, confused.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The gunfire and screams are gone but for the echoes now. Every shot needed, has been fired. Every scream, silenced.

Now Preston does his work. Wandering through the house alone. Searching. Smelling out that place ...

He fixes on a wall. Approaching it, he scratches at the plaster with a fingernail. It crumbles away easily and, a moment later, he is stepping into a HIDDEN ROOM.

Instantly, the eye is assaulted with the uncustomary sensation of COLOR. THINGS, jumbled everywhere. Pictures, paintings, posters, wall paper, collages, toys, upholstered furniture...

He looks around ...

An old Singer sewing machine. A work of art, really. He picks up an embroidered pillow - "Bless this Mess" Tacky, yes, but to eyes hungry for human expression, the highest art.

He allows his hand to run along the edge of a long, ornately carved table as he moves slowly through the room - past the framed pictures of unrelated people, long dead.

Stopping at an ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK. Picking it up, he mutters the title ...

PRESTON

'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary . . .'

He blinks, eyes losing momentary focus at the name's associations.

He shakes it off, eyes catching something else. On the FLOOR in the center of the room. Something. A slight, almost unnoticeable BULGE beneath the shag carpet ...

Bending, he runs his fingers across it.

VOICE

So this is it.

He looks sharply up. BRANDT stands there - surveying the cornucopia of memorabilia that is the room. Preston quickly straightens.

PRESTON

Looks like it.

He takes one last look at the room. Then turns to the CONFLAGRATION TEAMS hustling up behind Brandt.

PRESTON

Burn it.

And as he steps out - they do. Blasting the room with incinerating flame.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Brandt works on paperwork on the hood of the car while Preston watches the house burn. Even the flames are beautiful to him now.

BRANDT

You're thinking something ...

Preston looks over at him. Echoes of his own words to Partridge. Brandt puts on the shadow of a smile.

BRANDT

Whenever someone's preoccupied, I can't help but wonder why. My nature, I guess.

Preston holds the other man's piercingly interrogative gaze for a moment. Then shakes his head.

PRESTON

It's nothing.

Brandt shrugs and returns to his paperwork. Reflectively ...

BRANDT

Do you know - it's the law of diminishment - if we keep burning this contraband - one day there simply won't be any of it left.

He looks up again, as if sobered by the thought.

BRANDT

Who will be left to watch?

There is a profound beat between them - oddly uncomfortable.

Instead of answering, Preston picks Brandt's GUN up off the hood of the car where he had set it ...
And hands it to him.

Abruptly an OFFICER comes flying around from the back of the burning house.

ENFORCER

Hey! Got something out back!

EXT. KENNEL - DAY

Preston and Brandt stand with the Enforcement teams outside the fence of a KENNEL. More than a dozen DOGS of every description within, baying at the burning house.

BRANDT

(shakes head)

This isn't the first time we've seen this. Why do they do it? Why do they keep these animals?

(looks to Preston)

Do they eat them?

PRESTON

I couldn't tell you.

ENFORCEMENT

What should we do, Sir?

BRANDT

Exterminate them, of course.

The Enforcer racks back the bolt on his repeating rifle and, opening the gate, starts to step in. Involuntarily, Preston opens his mouth to speak.

BRANDT

(raising hand)

Wait ...

(Preston)

What is it, Cleric?

Preston struggles for a moment, against what not even he knows or understands ... then shakes his head.

PRESTON

Nothing ...

Brandt nods to the Enforcer and the report of the rifle fills the air, mingled with the screams of the dogs.

Amidst the carnage, SOMETHING scrambling between the Enforcer's legs catches Preston's eyes.

He grabs it as it scurries out the open gate, trying to escape. Hefts it up into his arms.

A PUPPY. Scared eyes, short murky-tan fur. The thing is shaking with fear.

ENFORCER

Toss it back in, Sir - I'll finish it off.

Preston doesn't move. Everyone looks to at him.

BRANDT

Toss it back in - he'll finish it.

Preston hesitates. Starts to hand the puppy back in the enclosure. The Enforcer reaches for it ...

But Preston pulls it back.

PRESTON

It ... it seems to me that at least one of these animals ought to be tested for disease.

He is barely able to contain the nervous quaver in his voice and even less able to hold anyone's eyes. He covers for it by turning immediately and starting back for the cars.

Tossing back over his shoulder ...

PRESTON

If there's an epidemic in the Zone, it would be better if we knew about it.

Brandt and the Enforcers exchange a glance. The Enforcer just shrugs and returns to perfunctorily Pow! Pow! administering coup de graces to the dying animals.

But Brandt watches carefully after his partner; walking away with a puppy held tight in his arms.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Preston climbs into the back of the car. He closes his eyes a moment, puppy in his lap, trying to still his pounding heart.

When he opens them, he finds the eyes of the DRIVER, an Enforcer he hadn't even realized was there - staring back at him in the rear-view mirror.

Preston forces impassivity instantly into his features.

PRESTON

Take me to the station. Right away.

INT. ENFORCEMENT PARKING LOT - DAY

Preston stands at the open trunk of his Cleric-issued car. Inside, the PUPPY sits on some newspaper spread out within.

He hesitates, glancing around, making sure no one is watching, then places a small tray of water down in the trunk and arranges an old coat as a bed for the dog.

PRESTON

Um ... you uh ... stay ...

He pauses. Torn, struggling with himself ...

He starts to reach to touch the dog, but stops. He's never touched another creature in affection before.

He does it. Allowing his fingers to touch the dog's head. The Puppy does not shrink away. His small tail wags.

Preston runs his hand down the length of the grateful dog, savoring the creature's warmth, the feel of his fur.

VOICE

Cleric ...

Startled, Preston spins, shutting the trunk. An ENFORCER is walking towards him. Preston tenses but ...

ENFORCER

Congratulations.

Preston's heart is pounding.

PRESTON

For ... what?

ENFORCER

O'Brien, Mary. The sense offender you arrested.

(smiles)

She's been sentenced to death.

Preston blinks back at him a stark microsecond.

PRESTON

... that's wonderful ...

The Enforcer gives a thumbs up as he passes. Preston can only nod, staring after him.

INT. POLICE EVIDENTIARY STORAGE - DAY

Face a mask, Preston stops at the counter.

PRESTON

Confiscated evidence for X23-T45 ...

He has to cough to cover his nervousness.

PRESTON

Mary O'Brien ...

INT. EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Preston sits in front of the BOX of objects confiscated from Mary's home. Contemplating it, almost fearfully.

Finally, with fingers that nearly tremble, he opens the box, picking out a bit of RIBBON. Nothing really. Something you'd cast out without a second thought.

But it captivates him. Staring into its crimson depths, feeling its supple pliancy.

Putting it down, he pulls out her ART DECO PERFUME DECANTER. As he turns it in his hands, the cut glass splits the light, creating a rainbow inside its diamond facets.

Tentatively, he sprays a tiny bit it into his palm and breathes it. Instantly, the fragrance possesses him.

He inhales it into his very essence.

EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Preston stands in front of the gargantuan gauntness of the Palace of Justice. Not knowing why he's here. Not quite comprehending these forces that have driven him ...

INT. SECURITY HUB - DAY

Preston stands beside the SECURITY TECHNICIANS. Staring at one of the many video monitors. MARY sits in her cell.

He gazes long into her pensive features. Finally, shaking it off, he speaks to the security technicians.

PRESTON

I want to interrogate her.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN

All the interrogation cells are in use, Sir.

He indicates a bank of surveillance monitors. On each, a prisoner sits being interrogated. EXCEPT ONE, which is empty.

PRESTON

What about that one? Room 101.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN

The microphones won't be up in that room until next week.

PRESTON

Put us in there.

4

SECURITY TECHNICIAN

But Sir ...

Preston turns sharply on the man - eyes burning with all the gravity of the TetraGrammaton. 3

PRESTON

My timeframe dictates that I cannot wait.
I said put us in there.

The Security Technician gulps back any argument.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN

By all means, Sir - Room 101.

INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

A windowless room. Preston sits across from MARY. All trace of his inner turmoil - hidden away.

For her part, she looks as though she has been knocked around a bit. She considers him a mildly curious moment.

MARY

I can't say I'm not surprised to see you.

Preston swallows invisibly.

PRESTON

I don't see why. My interrogation of you
isn't fully concluded.

Her eyes search him for another instant.

MARY

And, after all, time's so very short now,
isn't it?

Her death sentence. Through an act of will, he manages to hold her eyes. She smiles to herself.

Then, something, some fissure, cracks behind her hard facade and her hand reaches for her eyes.

But just as quickly, she wipes it away, drawing a crisp breath - defiant again.

MARY

Ask your questions. And then leave.

Preston is unprepared. He'd come only because he wanted, he needed to see her. He's thought no further than that.

PRESTON

Well ... the ... resistance ...

MARY

The technicians already asked me that. If there were a resistance, I guess I would have told them, wouldn't I? So why don't you get to the point and tell me why you're really here.

He holds on her another moment. He can't possibly tell her that he is here because he felt irresistibly drawn here.

PRESTON

When you ... first went off the dose, surely you ... surely it was hard. There must have been ... doubts.

She looks back at him a coldly curious moment.

MARY

Why do you care?

PRESTON

I don't.

MARY

Then why ask?

PRESTON

I'm just trying to understand ... people like you ...

She holds on him, studying him like an insect.

MARY

Of course it was hard. It's a withdrawal. It's a drug. You get through it by thinking about the people who put it in you.

Preston looks hard at her - trying hard to comprehend.

PRESTON

... you mean ... hate ...

She says nothing - looking back most particularly at him.

PRESTON

But they're only trying to help. Human nature, it can be so ...

MARY

Uncooperative?

There is an ironic half-twist in her smile.

MARY

Well we can't have that, can we? If someone's coloring outside the lines, by all means, medicate them. Please! Right back into conformity. And, hey, since we're just trying to help, why not institutionalize it while we're at it?

She smiles with everything but her eyes.

MARY

'Cause if that doesn't work - well, I suppose we can always find a witch or two to burn in Salem.

Preston stares. Deeply stirred by this amazing woman.

MARY,

Mind if I ask you a personal question?

An invisible swallow. He nods.

MARY

Do you find me attractive?

Startled, Preston's eyes blink away for the thinnest fraction of an instant. Then back.

PRESTON

I'm not - entirely sure what you mean.

Her eyes search his for a moment. Then, discovering no fragment of life, she sits back - sad for the future.

MARY

You see?

INT. CLERIC MONASTERY - DAY

The grand college where select individuals are trained from birth to join the formidable ranks of the Grammaton Cleric. The quasi-military/religious order of the TetraGrammaton ...

Preston walks the somber, echoing corridors with VICE COUNCIL DUPONT, passing classrooms of fresh-faced cadets.

DuPont is perusing MARY'S FILE as they walk.

DUPONT

I don't think I quite comprehend your request, Cleric.

PRESTON

It's just, Sir, that her execution date has been set. I believe she still has

information about the Resistance that could be valuable to us.

DUPONT

But she's already been clinically interrogated, correct?

PRESTON

Yes, but I ... I believe that somehow she has been able to resist; that her character is such that ... that ...

He falters.

PRESTON

It's difficult to explain.

DuPont holds on him an instant. Turns to MARY'S PHOTO in the file. Darkly beautiful. His eyes rise back to Preston.

DUPONT

Pretty ...

Preston barely manages to conceal the confused rush he feels at those words.

PRESTON

I ... don't fully grasp the reference.

DuPont holds on him another steady beat. Then nods, closing the file as they stop, overlooking an OPEN FLOOR where dozens of cadets are being led through a strange MARTIAL ARTS KATA.

DUPONT

Do you know of the Shao Lin ... or perhaps the Mamelukes, Preston?

PRESTON

No Sir - I do not.

DUPONT

In a time of a land called Arabia, the Mameluke were a caste of warrior monks. Eunuchs. Selected and castrated at birth; trained to be the greatest fighting slaves ever known. Existing entirely above the move and sway of common passion.

He is quiet, thoughtful a moment.

DUPONT

Like you Preston.

Then, faintly sad, he nods.

DUPONT

Like me.

Preston looks at him, startled.

DUPONT

You're surprised? All the high clergy, even Father himself, is drawn from the Cleric.

He gazes again down at the practicing cadets.

DUPONT

Tell me what you know of him, Preston, of Father...

PRESTON

Only what everyone knows. That he is the foremost Citizen. The very model of the insensate ideal.

DUPONT

And have you ever seen him?

PRESTON

No Sir. I mean ... I don't know, Sir. Father is nowhere. And everywhere. The threat of assassination forces him to remain faceless.

He looks down, feeling a pit inside him ...

PRESTON

Even so, such is his empathy that he risks daily pilgrimages to the Palace of Justice to witness the combustion of the accused - that he might continually test his unemotionality.

DUPONT

Do you know why, Preston?

Preston hesitates for another instant, feeling his insides twist. Then regurgitates the rote dogma that has been the boilerplate of his entire existence.

PRESTON

Because only such a person can we be confident will rule without the interference of his passions. Because only with such a man may we rest knowing he will not be reduced to tyranny by mere emotion.

DUPONT

And yet - yet there are elements in this

society, secretly banned together,
secretly feeling, who would tear down all
he has accomplished and surrender it back
to exactly that - the tyranny of emotion.

He pauses, paradoxically impassioned a moment. Then calms.

DUPONT

Even knowing that, Cleric, it is his
uncompromising example we must continue
to uphold. We cannot bend our own laws,
we cannot compromise our ideals.

He looks very particularly at Preston.

DUPONT

We can beat this Resistance. We can beat
it without entering into league with
Sense Offenders, can't we, Preston?

Preston tenses as it hits him what the other man's saying.

DUPONT

Let's show them that we are what we mean.
Let's burn this woman, this Sense Offender.
Let's burn her and break them anyway.

He abruptly takes Preston's hand with missionary zeal.

DUPONT

Because I believe you can do it, Preston.
The only question is will you? Will you
be Father's pure weapon against the
Resistance. The instrument of the State,
for the State. Will you find them? Will
you break them? For Father. For me.

Preston wavers - twisting to near-breaking inside. But
ultimately, has no choice but to say:

PRESTON

It would be ... the greatest honor.

INT. STORAGE SPACE - NIGHT

Preston sits, deep in the bowels of his building's basement,
in his family's personal storage space, buried in thought.

Kneading through his fingers, MARY'S RED RIBBON.

While, between his knees, the PUPPY contentedly snoozes.

EXT. GATE 17-E - NIGHT

He sits idling in his car at one of the great gates to the

Zone. The soldier on duty returns from the guardhouse and hands his identification back through the window.

SOLDIER

Thank you, Sir. Good hunting.

PRESTON

Yes. Thank you.

He drives on.

INT. BRANDT'S CAR - NIGHT

BRANDT watches from his own car as Preston, whom he followed, drives through the gate into the Zone. Watching. Thinking.

EXT. GATE - NIGHT

Pulling up to the gate, Brandt flashes his identification.

BRANDT

Cleric. I need to pass right away.

The soldier takes his I.D., examining it.

SOLDIER

You're second class - not authorized for solo excursions into the Zone.

BRANDT

Dammit, this is essential Clerical business! I have to pass now!

The soldier straightens, putting his hand on his rifle.

SOLDIER

You lack authorization. Under no circumstances will you be allowed to pass through this gate.

Brandt sees that this man means what he says. His eyes shift to the ominous white-leather clad SWEEPER CREW posted by their tanker just on the other side of the gate.

He snaps his eyes back to the soldier.

BRANDT

Tell the captain of the Sweeper Crew I need to speak to him immediately.

EXT. BACK YARD - BURNED-OUT HOUSE - NIGHT

PUPPY in his arms, Preston stands outside what remains of the kennel behind the HOUSE he condemned to be burned to the ground this morning.

Charred remains of the dead dogs heaped there.

INT. BURNED-OUT HOUSE - NIGHT

He haunts through the house's burned-out shell. Finds his way into what was the secret room - now nothing more than a charred skeleton of studs.

Flicking on his flashlight, he sweeps the floor until he finds what he is looking for. The carpet has been burned away now and the TRAP DOOR he felt there this morning, is exposed.

Sweeping aside the ashes, he pulls the door open and shines his light down inside.

INT. SECRET CHAMBER

He descends into the dark sub-terrestrial room. His light sweeps across a LANTERN. Setting the PUPPY down, he turns it on, filling the SMALL ROOM with its golden illumination.

What he sees nearly takes his breath away. Like Midas' treasure trove, the room, untouched by the fire, is simply jammed with memorabilia.

Photos, baseball cards, a train set, the complete works of William Shakespeare, a Clown painting, a book of quotations, a box filled with costume jewelry, an old Victrola.

A kid in a candy store, he walks the tiny dimensions, savoring each step, running his fingers over every object.

Picks up a half-consumed pack of WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM. Turns it over in his hands. Un-peels a stick, pushes it tentatively into his mouth. Chews ... smiles ...

Moves on to the Victrola. Beside it, in their wax wrappers, some OLD RECORDS.

He shakes one out. Examines it. He's not quite sure, but it's pretty evident that it goes with the Victrola. He mouths the words on the label ...

PRESTON

RCA Symphony No. 9, D minor, opus 125...
Ludwig van Bee ... Beethoven ...

It means nothing to him. He puts the record on the player. It doesn't take him but an instant to figure it out. Placing the needle on the vinyl platter, he cranks the crank.

It cracks and pops as the record goes round unevenly for a moment ... and then, issuing from the horn, something he has never in his life heard before.

Music. And not just music, but the most heartfelt, profoundly created music ever made. The very soul of mankind rent open, bleeding forth melody ...

Preston's throat knots as the first notes of the bassoon distantly sound, building ... mounting ...

And it only gets worse from there. After a moment, he must sit, he has begun to shake so badly.

Helpless in its spell, he can only listen, astonished, as the towering magnificence of the first movement washes over him.

It is unfair, that music which moves even the most hardened human soul should be the first heard by this defenseless man.

Tears flow unblocked down his face as he realizes for the first time, all at once, what are death, life and love.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Strains of the symphony still echoing in his ears, Preston sets the puppy back into the trunk. Removing his overcoat, he makes a bed for the dog with it.

PRESTON

Stay ... Ludwig ...

He smiles, realizing he just named the dog. His dog. The dog wags its tail appreciatively.

Abruptly the world bursts into blinding white light.

Shielding his eyes, Preston rises to see approaching down the street a SWEEPER PATROL, its rack of roof-mounted XENON LIGHTS turning night into day.

MEGAPHONE

Step away from the vehicle!

Preston, heart stalled, can only stare at it, coming at him.

MEGAPHONE

Step away from the vehicle!

Subtly shutting the trunk, Preston obeys. With a hiss of pneumatics, the Sweeper Patrol stops a dozen yards away.

Shotguns at the ready, THREE leather-clad SWEEPERS step out.

LEAD SWEEPER

Hands above your head.

Preston's raises his hands.

SWEEPER LEAD

Identification.

PRESTON

I'm a Cleric. I'm here on official business.

SWEEPER LEAD

Identification.

Preston reaches inside his jacket. Feels for it. But it's not there. He blinks. FLASHING BACK...

To putting his overcoat in the TRUNK for the dog.

His eyes snap back. The Sweepers' shotguns are on him. He swallows ...

PRESTON

I don't have it ...

SWEEPER LEAD

Unidentified individuals found in the zone are subject to summary destruction.

The other two sweepers tighten their grips on their guns.

PRESTON

(steady)

You'd be making a very big mistake. I'm a Grammaton Cleric, first class.

The Sweeper Lead holds on him an instant - debating.

SWEEPER LEAD

We're going to search your vehicle.

Preston's eyes flicker to the trunk.

PRESTON

You're wasting your time. There's nothing in it and I have essential places to be.

Stepping forward, the Sweeper Lead wrests Preston's GUN from inside his coat and steps back. Covering him, he nods sharply to the other two who immediately begin searching through the car interior with flashlights.

After a moment, they emerge. Shake their heads. Nothing. Sweeper Lead turns back to Preston.

SWEEPER LEAD

The keys for the trunk.

Tight-lipped, Preston holds on him for an instant.

PRESTON

I'm trying to tell you - I have a pre-dawn combustion to witness. My timeframe dictates that I cannot wait.

Stepping forward, the Sweeper snatches the keys out of Preston's hand and tosses them to the searching sweepers.

Preston sucks in a deep, quiet breath. Holds it. One of them inserts the key into the trunk. Struggling with it ...

It clicks open ...

SWEEPER LEAD

Wait ...

Hands on the opening trunk-lid, the two searchers stop. The Sweeper Lead is studying Preston's face, illuminated for the first time in the beam of his shotgun's riot-light.

His gun's barrel drops as he realizes ...

SWEEPER LEAD

Cleric Preston - I'm sorry, I ... I didn't recognize you.

(quickly/Sweepers)

Stand off. It's all right.

Leaving the keys dangling in the lock, they do. Stepping back from the car. Fireworks of relief go off inside Preston.

The Sweeper Lead is desperately apologetic.

SWEEPER LEAD

You understand, Sir, in this light, it's extremely difficult ...

From his vantage, Preston can see the dog through the four inches of open trunk. He manages a nod.

PRESTON

You're just doing your job.

SWEEPER LEAD

Yes Sir. Thank you for appreciating that, Sir. We'll escort you back to the gate.

PRESTON

That would be good, thank you.

(as the Sweepers turn)

And my sidearm?

SWEEPER LEAD
(turning back)

Ah - yes Sir, sorry Sir.

He starts to hand the gun back to Preston when a small canine WHIMPER from the direction of the car snaps all heads round.

Preston's heart stops.

PRESTON

An animal ... The zone's full of them ...

He reaches for his gun but the Sweeper Lead pulls it back, looking at him through narrow eyes.

SWEEPER LEAD

It sounded like it came from your car ...

PRESTON

Impossible. Now, if you'll return my firearm, I'll be on my way.

But the Sweeper Lead only holds on him another dark moment.

Then striding over to the car, he throws open the trunk, his flashlight illuminating the PUPPY, panting in its beam.

All heads snap towards Preston. Instantly the two SWEEPERS step in on either side of him, shotguns aimed at his head.

SHOTGUN SWEEPER

On your knees! Get on your knees!

Preston exhibits less emotion now than he has since he went off Librium. Pulse flat-lining, he doesn't move.

SWEEPER LEAD

Get on your knees - now!!!

Preston's hands shoot up, grasping the shotgun barrels at either side of his head. A startled beat ...

... as the Sweeper Lead realizes what's just happened. That they have just made the mortal error ...

... of engaging a Grammaton Cleric ...

... without first calling for back-up.

SWEEPER LEAD

Do it! Do it! Shoot him now!

The Sweepers yank back on their triggers - but Preston, knowing their movements before even they do, is a micro-second ahead, shoving back the pump-actions of their guns ...

Sending each gun's shell ejecting cartwheeling unfired upwards into the darkness ...

In the instant that follows - one in which they are too astonished to react ...

Preston spins, whipping them around 180 degrees by their guns, racking their pump-actions as he does, chambering the next shell and yanking the guns FIRING across his body.

Blowing the faceplates out of their helmets like black water.

Even as they drop, he rolls the shotguns over his wrists and, dropping down to one knee, fires both barrels at the Sweeper Lead even as that man shoots - shot going wild.

Dropping the shotguns, Preston rolls forward, snatching up his Grammaton sidearm as he hits his feet and POW! firing simultaneously with the Sweeper Lead's next shot ...

BULLETS exploding in collision in the air between them.

BLABLAM! Preston's next shot, a nano-second behind the first, blows the Sweeper Lead off his feet.

Preston stops, breathing now in the empty silence of the zone and the hot white light of the xenons.

Sick, deadly sick inside.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Head in his hands, Preston sits in the dark at the bedside of the SLEEPING FORMS of his children - ROBBIE and LISA.

So many conflicting, painful things rushing through him.

His son lies there, severe and perfect, even in sleep. Lisa, just a seven year-old girl - features abandoned as her sleeping mind wanders distant realms ...

Quietly, Preston opens the drawer beside Robbie's bed. With a penlight, he illuminates its contents. Finds what he is looking for. ROBBIE'S DOSE CASE.

Silently he opens it, locating the following day's doses...

VOICE

What are you doing?

He snaps the penlight up, startled to find his ten year-old's eagle-eyes staring back at him through its beam.

ROBBIE

I said what are you doing?

Preston's heart pounds.

PRESTON

I . . .

He stares back at his son. Robbie sits upright in bed, eyes narrowing. Preston swallows deeply.

PRESTON

I was checking. To make sure you've been taking your interval.

Robbie looks back at him a moment. Then relaxes. Nodding.

ROBBIE

And you're satisfied?

Preston holds on him an instant - then manages an curt nod.

PRESTON

I'm satisfied.

Robbie nods too - pleased.

ROBBIE

Good night then, Father.

PRESTON

Good night . . . Son.

The boy puts his head back on his pillow and closes his eyes. Preston closes the young man's dose case, looks at him one last instant . . . and walks out.

EXT. ZONE - NIGHT

LIGHTS FLASHING, dozens of Enforcement units are gathered in the street beside the dead bodies of the SWEEPER TEAM.

Among the Enforcement units on the crime scene, BRANDT considers the dark remains of the house whose burning he participated in that morning.

All a bit too much of a coincidence. He turns to an ENFORCER working on a MOBILE COMPUTING UNIT on the hood of a car.

BRANDT

Can you run a trace on the movements of a Cleric's sidearm tonight through that thing?

ENFORCER

No Sir. Only Councillary members have access to gun tracking.

Brandt purses his lips, thwarted for the moment. Then nods.

BRANDT

I want ballistics performed on the artifacts removed from these bodies. I want the results compared against the gun records of the Cleric.

The Enforcer looks shocked at the implication of this. But the look in Brandt's black eyes leaves him no doubt other than that the man is deadly serious.

INT. CORRIDOR - MORNING

When Preston exits his cubicle, he is surprised by a PAIR OF SWEEPERS marching towards him down the corridor.

SWEEPER

Cleric John Preston ...

He freezes, heart STOPPING ... But all they say is ...

SWEEPERS

Good morning, Sir.

As they march past, continuing down the hall. He stares after them, heart beating again - pounding. Just a patrol.

Opening his hand, he looks at his MORNING'S UNUSED LIBRIUM. Ready to be disposed of in the subway or garage.

Palm bruised, he had gripped it so hard.

Had they searched him, he would have been dead.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Closing the door, he pulls the mirror away from the wall. Behind it, the cavity in the wall.

He hesitates an instant ...

Then drops the amber ampule into the cavity and pushes the mirror back in place.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

When Preston exits his building, a CAR skids up, passenger door swinging open. BRANDT:

BRANDT

Raid in the industrial section. Let's go.

Preston hesitates an instant ... then gets in.

INT. BRANDT'S CAR - MORNING

Brandt guides the car into traffic.

BRANDT
Everything all right?

Preston looks over at him - surprised.

PRESTON
Of course ... why do you ask?

BRANDT
(shrugs)
Oh ... you've got a lot on your mind.

Preston hesitates an instant. ?

PRESTON
What makes you say that?

Brandt looks at his partner. Faintly smiles.

BRANDT
You forget - the intuitive arts, Cleric.
It's my job to know what you're thinking.

Preston looks back at him -; manages a smile of his own.

PRESTON
So then - what am I thinking?

Brandt looks back at him.

BRANDT
You're thinking about the murders in the
zone last night.

The smile drops off Preston's face.

BRANDT
You're wondering ... if they know who did
it yet.

Preston is frozen.

BRANDT
Tell me, Cleric, am I ... close?

Preston swallows. Nods.

PRESTON
Not bad. So ... do they? Know?

BRANDT

Oh, there's theories. I have one or two of my own. But at the moment they're...

He looks at Preston. Deeply, deeply ...

BRANDT

... premature.

(abruptly)

And in any case - I'm glad it happened.

Preston looks back at him - feeling a chill.

PRESTON

Why ...

BRANDT

Because now Father's decreed an acceleration in the crackdown on offenders.

He shrugs.

BRANDT

Whoever did it - all they accomplished was a quicker end to the Resistance.

He looks at Preston - that ghost of a smile again.

BRANDT

It's going to be a massacre.

MONTAGE:

Under the allegro assai of the 4th movement of Beethoven's 9th, the carnage of the day. With military precision, Shock Troops converge in the street outside an abandoned factory...

Guns firing ...

Windows exploding, plaster flying ...

Suspected offenders, running, crumpling, dying ...

And Preston, drifting through the chaos - stunned, horrified.

At the events. At his participation in them.

And in his background, BRANDT, watching him always.

INT. VIDEO-CHAMBER - DAY

Preston, in a special TELE-CHAMBER at Cleric Headquarters, faces an enormous SCREEN that projects DuPont's face.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

I don't quite follow your logic, Cleric.

Preston is pale, barely able to conceal the fact that he is trembling.

PRESTON

They were unarmed, Sir. Not providing resistance. Yet instead of apprehension for interrogation and process they were slaughtered.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

But Cleric, given the circumstances of last night, Father has decreed that there will be no more process for Sense Offenders - they are to either be shot on sight or incinerated without trial.

Preston is desperate.

PRESTON

But it's counter to law.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

(slightly annoyed)

Father is law, Preston.

Preston stares back at him.

PRESTON

Sir - without the logic of process - is it not just ... mayhem? What we've tried so hard to eradicate?

DuPont's image tightens - becoming intimate.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

You must understand, Preston - while you and even I may not always agree with it, it is not the message that's important; it's our obedience to it. Father's will.

He shakes his head.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

It may be hard, even counter-intuitive at times - but the point is the test. Call it faith. You have it, I assume ...

Preston stares back at him for the thinnest instant as he reaches some inner resolve. Then:

PRESTON

Yes. I have it.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

Good.

Preston struggles within again for the tiniest instant. †

PRESTON

Sir ...

DUPONT'S IMAGE

Yes, Cleric.

PRESTON

You asked me to become Father's instrument against the resistance ...

He gathers up all the momentum burning within him.

PRESTON

I'm ready. Today. I wish to show my faith. I wish, with your permission, to begin immediately the search for underground.

DuPont considers him, this walking weapon, for a moment.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

To destroy it, Cleric?

Preston looks back at him, every atom of his body vibrating.

PRESTON

To destroy it.

INT. COLD STORAGE - CREMATORY CENTRAL - N/A

In a metal chair next to a metal tray that holds PARTRIDGE'S BODY. Preston sits, head in his hands - anguished.

Partridge is the light lavender of death. Just below his throat, the neat hole where Preston's bullet entered.

PRESTON

I'm so so very sorry ...

The door abruptly opens and he pops up, emotion instantly erased from his face. The Cremation Technician in the doorway gives him an odd look. Then sets down a tray.

TECHNICIAN

These are the possessions he had on him at the time of death. The illegal ones will be burned with him.

He walks out, closing the door behind him. Preston's eyes turn to the tray. On it are several of Partridge's effects. Keys, identification ...

And an ENGRAVED SILVER CIGARETTE CASE. Picking it up, Preston feels the fine engraving with his fingertips. Opens it.

Inside lie a dozen or more OLD PHOTOGRAPHS. He flips slowly through them, drinking in the details of each.

They are, of course, pictures of strangers, probably all long dead for the most part, from an age long gone by. A happier time.

Things look different. People are dressed differently. Colorfully. Women wear make-up. In many of the photos, both men and women are smiling and even laughing.

He stops, eyes rising quickly at the SUDDEN SOUND of VOICES approaching the door. Then, they fade away.

Returning his attention back to the photos, he turns to the last picture. It is turned over. On its back is written the word FREEDOM. He considers the word an instant ...

Then flips it over. And freezes. Shocked.

It is of PARTRIDGE. Standing with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. MARY.

Preston stares at the photo trembling in his hands for an eternal moment. A thousand emotions stabbing through him.

INT. COMBUSTION ANTE-CHAMBER - N/A

Preston stands watching as Partridge's body travels down the rollers into the hunger of the FLAMES.

Clenched hidden in Preston's fist, is the PHOTO.

INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

Preston sits opposite Mary in the high-ceilinged windowless room 101. She smiles, amused.

MARY

We have to stop seeing each other like this. People will talk.

But Preston is in no mood.

PRESTON

You said there weren't any others. You said you weren't part of any underground.

MARY
I'm not. There aren't.

PRESTON
Errol Partridge.

Her eyes flutter momentarily. Recovering, she shrugs.

MARY
The name's supposed to mean something to me?

PRESTON
A Grammaton Cleric, first class. You knew him.

MARY
News bulletin. I'm a Sense-Offender. I don't hang 'round much with the Cleric.

He places the PHOTO on the table, flicks it across with a finger. She looks at it, just for an instant off her guard.

Then just shrugs. Preston looks levelly back at her.

PRESTON
I want to know about him.

She looks back at him, equally level. But behind her lavender eyes, she's coming to some inner decision.

MARY
Well, I'd suggest you go ask him, but I understand that he's dead. Killed by your friends at the TetraGrammaton.

PRESTON
Not my friends -- me.

The smile drops right off her face. Shocked.

PRESTON
Tell me about Partridge.

Her gaze hovers on him an instant. Then, quick as a cat, she lunges across the table, grabbing up his pencil and swinging it hard at his carotid artery.

But Preston isn't TetraGrammaton for nothing. Faster, he catches her and slams her back down on the table. For an instant, they tremble there, his face so close to hers he can smell her, feel the energy sweeping off her ...

Snap! the pencil clenched in both their hands cracks like a rifle shot.

Relaxing, he releases her and goes to the wall, facing it.
Runs his hand over his face, as though trying to erase the emotions that must surely be etched upon it.

PRESTON
(quietly)

What was he part of?

MARY

You really want to know? You talk about service to Libria? You can't even imagine the sacrifice he was going to make before you murdered him.

Preston turns and looks back at her, every fiber screaming out inside him, longing to tell her.

PRESTON

You were ... lovers?

She only glares haughtily back. Neither affirming nor denying. And his pride will not allow him to ask again.

He turns to go.

MARY

Can I tell you something?

Without turning, he pauses in the doorway.

MARY

I hate you. And everything you stand for.

He looks down a moment. Then gets the hell out of there before he says something he regrets.

INT. DESKS - DAY

The office is empty. Preston sits at his desk, contemplating the PHOTO of Mary and Partridge.

He turns it over. The word FREEDOM written there. Mocking him.

He stares at it. Then, intuitively, picks up a pen and writes an alphabetic number under each letter: 6 18 5 5 4 15 13.

He considers what he has written a moment. Circles the first number of each group.

615 5411.

EXT. TELEPHONE - DAY

Preston stands at a payphone. A voice picks up ...

VOICE

Freedom Reading Room.

Preston hangs up.

EXT. FREEDOM READING ROOM - DAY

Preston stands across the street from a storefront whose sign reads BLOCK 42 FREEDOM READING ROOM.

INT. FREEDOM READING ROOM - DAY

Preston steps in the door. Arrayed in chairs at school-style tables, citizens pore over approved texts.

On the video screens around the room, the Faces of Libria smile.

FACES OF LIBRIA

You are Father; I am Father; Father is
Everywhere ...

Coming from behind a counter, the PROPRIETOR, a thin, nervous-looking sycophant, approaches Preston, ducking and scraping.

PROPRIETOR

Good afternoon, Sir. What will it be for you? The latest copy of *The Insensate*. A revised edition of the *Manifesto*?

Preston drops open his Cleric identification.

PRESTON

Errol Partridge. I want to know everything you know about him.

The Proprietor's sucking smile vanishes.

PROPRIETOR

I ... beg your pardon.

Preston is in his element now. Investigating.

PRESTON

I'm going to ask you one more time. Errol Partridge. Tell me what you know.

PROPRIETOR

I ... I'm sure I don't...

That's all he gets out before Preston grabs him by his collar, picks him bodily up and slams him down onto a tabletop - sending State-approved texts scattering.

The patrons of the reading room react, dully shocked.

PRESTON

You're a Sense Offender.

PROPRIETOR

I...I...I'm not!

PRESTON

No? Then how is it you've come to be so frightened of me?

The Proprietor just lies there, shivering with fear.

PRESTON

(growls)

Now - you will tell me everything there is to know about Errol Partridge or I will have a wagon come to take you to the Hall of Destruction for summary combustion.

The man sputters.

PROPRIETOR

I...I r..r..really don't know much.

PRESTON

Speak.

PROPRIETOR

H..h..he'd come in with a fellow named J..Jurgen.

Preston tightens his choking grip.

PRESTON

Why.

The Proprietor looks fearfully into his eyes.

PRESTON

Why.

PROPRIETOR

Th..Th..They were under the m..mistaken impression there were p..picture books to be f..found here.

PRESTON

Where can I find this person?

The Proprietor is hesitant ...

PRESTON

(tightening his grip)

You don't seem to understand. Father has decreed that Sense Offenders are to be destroyed on sight now.

People like, in other words, the proprietor:

PROPRIETOR

(quickly)

Personal Maintenance Bloc 27.

Preston roughly releases him, gives the rest of the patrons a look - daring them to defy his authority - then walks out.

Shakily finding his feet, the Proprietor looks to his clientele. They are all staring back at him. He swallows.

EXT. APPEARANCE MAINTENANCE 27 - DAY

One of the numerous appearance maintenance centers throughout the city where persistent-growth technicians give identical haircuts to each person who comes in.

PRESTON strides through the door, TetraGrammaton badge out.

PRESTON

Everyone out. Now.

Everyone scurries to comply. Preston roughly catches the MANAGER as he tries to pass, shoving him back in the shop.

PRESTON

Not you.

He shuts the door after the last person, locking it. Turning back, he can see the alarm in the Manager's eyes.

Another Sense Offender.

PRESTON

Jurgen. I want him.

MANAGER

I'm quite certain I don't know what you're talking about.

Grabbing him, Preston drives him across the room, slamming into the far wall between two hair-cutting stations.

PRESTON

I'm quite certain you do.

Though flustered, this one's made of stiffer stuff than the last one.

MANAGER

You hurt me. It's not legal.

PRESTON

It is if you're feeling.

A heart-pounding beat from the manager. His resolve sets.

MANAGER

Prove it.

Preston looks at him a beat. Then releases him.

PRESTON

You're sure about that?!

The Manager swallows, but says nothing, standing his ground.

Preston holds on him one beat longer. Then nods. His eyes scanning the shop, sixth sense engaging, absorbing every detail of the chairs, tools, floors, walls...

Stopping on the WALL MIRROR, its permit pasted in the corner. He looks back to the Manager who has seen him see it - a look of ill-concealed alarm.

Striding over, Preston grabs him by his jacket and swings him smashing through the mirror.

It drops in a shower, leaving in its wake, a JAGGED HOLE that looks into A HIDDEN ROOM ...

A hidden room, walls covered with MAPS of Libria - diagrams and plans of attack ...

Where a DOZEN MEN, a desperate-looking group - like freedom fighters - sit frozen round a table.

INT. HIDDEN ROOM

Preston steps through the shattered frame into the room. Slowly, he circles the table of stunned young men.

They know they are done for, they just can't believe it.

PRESTON

Which one's Jurgén?

No answer. He slams the table with his hand, making the maps and rolls of blueprints jump.

PRESTON

Which one's Jorgen!

Now they're too scared to speak.

PRESTON

You're all as good as dust. So you might's well talk.

MAN

(speaking up)

Nobody say anything.

Preston goes forthright to that man and kicks his chair out from under him. The man, no more than 27, with dreadlocks and dark skin, falls to the floor - and lies there limply, knowing that to resist a Grammaton Cleric is to invite death.

Pulling his gun, Preston sights down on the man's forehead.

PRESTON

Are you Jorgen?

The man struggles for a moment internally. Then ...

MAN

He's not here.

Preston cocks the gun.

PRESTON

You're lying.

MAN

Go ahead. Kill me. I'm going to die anyway - if not here then at the Palace of Justice at dusk. There's nothing more you can take from me; from any of us.

PRESTON

You have a family?

The man pales.

MAN

(whispers)

They don't feel.

PRESTON

I don't care if they feel or they don't. They're suspect. They'll get contaminatory disposal - I'll see to it.

The balding man on the floor stares back at him.

MAN

You fucking cold bastard.

PRESTON

I'm listening.

The man hesitates. Then his features set.

MAN

Go ahead. Kill me, kill my family; they're as good as walking dead anyway. What Jurgen's going to do to you and everything you stand for is well worth dying to protect. Isn't that right, Boys?

A murmur from around the table. Preston sees red. Reaching down, he hauls the man up and slams him down onto the table.

PRESTON

Tell me goddamn it!

The Man stares back at him - startled by his vehemence ... They all do. Startled that he could be so ... impassioned.

The darkness clears from Preston's eyes. He straightens, looking from face to face staring back at him - feeling naked ... exposed ... for an instant.

He covers by quickly searching the man's pockets. Comes up with an illegal MATCHBOOK with an address scribbled under its inner cover. Pocketing it, he looks back to the table once more, heart pounding.

PRESTON

Tell Jurgen I'm looking for him.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Alone, he stops in an alley, pushing his eyes into his hand. Trembling.

VOICE

Cleric John Preston!

Preston's eyes snap up. A SWEEPER TANKER has stopped just out in the street - two white-clad Sweepers with white-metal machine guns standing before it.

SWEEPER

You're to come with us!

Preston hesitates, hand moving an unnoticed inch towards his gun. In his eyes flashes the thought of standing and fighting.

SWEEPER

Immediately!

A tense beat as Preston's eyes consider the dark barrels of the Sweeper guns. A deep breath. He relaxes. 3

EXT. STEPS - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Preston is silent as he mounts the palace steps ahead of the two machine-gun toting Sweepers.

INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DAY

When Preston is escorted in by the Sweepers, DuPont is staring out over the cityscape of Libria through the great T cut into the wall of his office.

When he turns, there is no trace of humour.

DUPONT

Cleric Preston ...

Preston swallows imperceptibly.

PRESTON

Sir.

DUPONT

I've heard the most disturbing rumour.

His pinning eyes make Preston go cold as the grave.

PRESTON

A rumour, Sir?

DUPONT

Yes. One that maintains that, away from the prying eyes of the world, one of us - one of the Cleric - has taken it upon himself to cease his dose. That one of our elite number - is feeling. Can you imagine?

Preston goes concrete inside. All he can think to say is ...

PRESTON

Feeling, Sir?

DUPONT

Are you playing with me Cleric!

A stark, ringing beat. Then Preston's voice, comes, a whisper, dry as dust.

PRESTON

No Sir. I'm not.

DUPONT

This person, I'm told, is actually attempting to make contact with the Resistance. Now tell me, if you'll be so kind - how exactly have you been making use of your time of late?

A rigid beat as Preston stares back at this man who knows everything. It is all he can do to reach down inside and make himself speak his own death-sentence - saying what DuPont must already know:

PRESTON

Attempting to contact the Resistance.

DUPONT

Attempting!!! How is it that you intend to expose this traitor if all you do is attempt!

Preston stares back at the other man - as the astounding fact sinks in. DuPont doesn't know!!!

PRESTON

I ... I ... you're absolutely 100% right Sir.

DUPONT

Of course I am. The Cleric is the final line of defense. If the Resistance compromises it, we are doomed. Father is doomed.

Preston nods with a swallow of relief.

PRESTON

I will ... redouble my efforts. To locate the Resistance ... to find this traitor. And bring them to your fair justice.

In ill humour, DuPont dismisses him with a surly wave and, with a quick, curt bow, Preston gets the hell out of there as fast as he can.

EXT. HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

He stands before a hundred story housing complex. Ten thousand units, all identical. Consults the MATCHBOOK he took off the man in the hidden room.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

The door creaks open and Preston enters. Silence. It does not appear that anybody is home. He walks through the cubicle - sixth sense engaged.

It is an ordinary cubicle, resembling his own.

He taps a wall, listening for hollowness ...

VOICE

You're wasting your time ...

He spins. The MAN that he roughed up in the hidden room at the personal maintenance bloc stands in the doorway.

MAN

I'd hardly be stupid enough to keep anything here.

PRESTON

You

He blinks at the man a moment, realizing.

PRESTON

You're Jurgen ...

The man moves more fully into the cubicle.

JURGEN

You're feeling.

Preston hesitates.

PRESTON

I could be faking it.

JURGEN

(smiles)

Knowing what you know now - do you really believe that's possible ...?

Preston is silent.

JURGEN

Do you know why you came?

Preston hesitates a beat.

JURGEN

How could you? A million conflicting emotions. On one hand your commitment to the State; not so easily forgot. The other, the abhorrence of the wrongs

committed in its name...

He takes a step closer. Preston stiffens as Jurgen raises a hand ... and lays it on his shoulder. No one has ever in his life touched him compassionately before.

JURGEN

And your natural desire for the company
and friendship of other human beings.

Preston trembles as the words toll a resounding chord in him. He looks down, ashamed, as his eyes mist.

PRESTON

Why did you come?

JURGEN

That's very simple, Preston. We need you.

INT. CELLAR

In a bare, dank cellar hidden somewhere in the metropolis. Preston sits wired up to what looks to be an old, dilapidated LIE DETECTOR.

JURGEN

This is just a test, you understand ...

There are SEVERAL OTHER MEN with them now. In the eyes of all of them, the glint of desperate, driven man.

JURGEN

It's what was called a polygraph. Of course there is no one left qualified to interpret the results now, but it works by detecting emotional fluctuations.

He nods.

JURGEN

And for our purposes - that's enough.

He nods to one of the men who turns it on. Jurgen paces slowly around the dim room for a moment. Then, stopping before Preston, he quietly speaks one word:

JURGEN

Mary.

The needle on the graph spikes, registering sharply from flatline. Jurgen smiles sadly, knowingly.

JURGEN

(quietly)

You're in love with her ...

Preston looks down, ashamed. Swallows hard, almost trembling.

PRESTON

I ... I'm not even sure what it is ...

JURGEN

Are you not then ... carrying in your left pocket a red ribbon sprayed with her scent ...

Preston looks at him, shocked.

JURGEN

... that you breathe in when you think there's no one to see ...

Preston is astonished. Jurgen kneels to his level, words dropping nearly to a rapid-fire whisper.

JURGEN

But it's not enough. What you feel, it could only be satisfied folding yourself into her. For all time. That's love, Preston. I should know ...

He rises, nods. Draws a deep breath, nods ...

JURGEN

I should know ...

Preston looks at him - for the first time in his life - understanding completely what another human being is feeling.

PRESTON

She's scheduled for combustion.

JURGEN

I know.

Preston searches his features. How can he say it like that?

JURGEN

You're thinking I'm cold. I'm like one of them. But it's not so, Preston. I'd do anything to save her. Anything at all. Except betray her.

He draws a deep, quietly passionate breath.

JURGEN

To risk a rescue now, at this juncture, it would jeopardize everything we've worked for, everything she's worked for. She's a martyr, Preston. A martyr. For us all.

He nods quietly.

JURGEN

Come with me.

INT. OFFICE

Preston follows him into a small, windowless office, stacked high with books like *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Rights of Man* and reams of papers. It is the lair of the revolutionary.

JURGEN

Take a seat.

A beat. Preston complies. Jurgen settles into his chair on the other side of the desk. Lights a cigar.

JURGEN

I was like you. But the first thing you learn - emotion has its price.

He shakes his head.

JURGEN

It's a paradox. But, without restraint, even control - emotion is chaos.

PRESTON

But ...

JURGEN

(raises hand)

I know. The key difference is a matter of degree. When we want to feel, we can. So you see, in the case of Mary, though I desperately want to do just that, I can't allow myself that luxury - I have to see beyond my emotion.

He looks levelly across the desk at Preston.

JURGEN

And so must you, Preston.

They look at one another, the last words hanging there.

PRESTON

What can I do?

Jurgen contemplatively taps his cigar on the edge of the ashtray for a moment.

JURGEN

You can kill Pather.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Preston walks rapidly away down the busy sidewalk. Jurgen walks quickly a few steps behind him. Neither of them exhibits the slightest emotion but the truth is that both of them are exploding with it.

Invisible to all, Jurgen is pursuing Preston.

INT. ALLEY - DAY

He follows Preston into an alley where, out of sight, he grabs him and slams him up against the brick wall.

JURGEN

Listen to me.

Preston resists.

PRESTON

I can't. I can't do what you're asking!

JURGEN

But dammit, don't you see!? You're our only hope!

PRESTON

I can't kill a man. The first time I understand what life is, you want me to take it. I can't. Don't you understand? I can't.

Jurgen releases him, taking a cold step back.

JURGEN

What about the Sweeper Team.

Preston looks back at him, realizing for the first time just how deep Jurgen's resources are.

PRESTON

That was different ...

Jurgen is silent, struggling before he himself spits out:

JURGEN

What do you think Partridge was doing?

Preston looks at him, shocked. But then, as it sinks in, of course ... it makes perfect sense.

JURGEN

You killed him before he could do it.

He shakes his head.

JURGEN

That's why you're a Godsend to us,
Preston. You're the only person that can
get through Father's security. Without
you, we've lost everything. Without you
- we're doomed.

Preston can only stare at him, overwhelmed.

JURGEN

Think about it.

And he walks out of the alley. Neither of them seeing,
standing on the sidewalk across the street, a MAN with his
hands buried deep in the pockets of his overcoat. BRANDT.

INT. STORAGE SPACE - NIGHT

Once again, deep in the bowels of Preston's building, he sits
in his storage space. One hand distractedly scratching the
puppy's head, the other grasping Mary's bit of ribbon ...

Staring long and deep into space.

INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

Preston sits now across from MARY in the cold white of room
101. There is a long silence.

MARY

My combustion has been scheduled for dusk
today.

Preston nods. She herself looks down at the table now.

MARY

... you keep coming ...

He says nothing.

Abruptly, his watch begins beeping - alerting him that it is
time to take his Librium. It beeps starkly in the silence of
the concrete room between them. Quietly, he turns it off.

She watches him a beat.

MARY

Aren't you going to dose?

He does not reply, silently staring down at the table ...

PRESTON

'Mary' ...

He traces a pattern on it with his finger.

PRESTON

... it's a beautiful name ...

Her eyes narrow. Did he say what she thinks he just said? He does not look up at her. She cocks her head, realizing.

MARY

My God you feel ...

He says nothing. Until finally ...

PRESTON

I've been to see Jurgen ...

She remains silent. Stunned. Riveted on him.

PRESTON

They want me to kill Father.

He looks up at her for the first time.

PRESTON

And another thing ...

Eyes brimming now with unconcealed feeling:

PRESTON

I'm in love with you.

She stares back at him a long moment. Then TEARS, big and full as diamonds, begin pouring silently down her cheeks.

They both just sit there like that for the longest time. Until finally ...

MARY

... what will you ... do ...

Preston looks down.

PRESTON

... I don't know ...

She nods, silently.

MARY

We have ... such difficult thresholds to cross.

The words hit him like a bolt, twisting a knot in his throat. Neither acknowledges the CAMERA, a black eye staring down ...

But quietly, sliding slowly, nearly imperceptibly forward ...
 ... at the risk of everything ...
 ... in the center of the table ...
 ... their fingertips ...
 ... touch.

INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON - DAY

The House of the Tetragrammaton - the vast palace where Father dwells. Preston intercepts DuPont on his way down the corridor with his BATTALION OF BODYGUARDS.

PRESTON

Sir - a few moments?

DuPont considers him an instant - then nods.

DUPONT

Walk with me. I'm to see Father.

INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON - SECURITY AIRLOCK - DAY

Preston follows DuPont through a heavily guarded security airlock. DuPont nods to the brutally armed Sweepers.

DUPONT

He's with me.

The Sweeper Teams duly relieve Preston of his firearm and allow him to follow DuPont through the heavy METAL DETECTORS.

INT. H.O.T. HALL OF MIRRORS - DAY

Into a long, BAROQUE HALL whose ceilings soar to over 30 feet. Lined along its walls and in parapets half-way up, HEAVILY ARMED SWEEPERS stand vigilant.

Preston takes it all in as he walks at DuPont's side.

DUPONT

Yes, Cleric?

Preston snaps his attention back to DuPont.

PRESTON

Yes Sir, if you recall, I'd spoken to you about a Sense Offender critical to my investigation into the underground ...

DUPONT

We process a great number of offenders,
Cleric.

Preston hesitates an internal instant.

PRESTON

You'd described this one as pretty.

DuPont turns a dark eye on him.

DUPONT

Are you quite sure that's the word I
used, Cleric? It could be misconstrued.

PRESTON

Maybe I'm ... mistaken, Sir.

DuPont considers him a deep instant.

DUPONT

What about her?

PRESTON

She's scheduled to be incinerated today.
I cannot locate the resistance without
her aid. I'm ... I'm begging you.

DUPONT

I see ...

DuPont studies him - long and deep.

DUPONT

In any case - I've already spoken to
Father about this woman on your behalf.
He was, sadly, unyielding. She'll burn
as scheduled.

Everything within Preston shrivels.

DUPONT

His will is hard - but that's what makes
him great, is it not, Cleric?

When Preston finally finds it in himself to speak, it is with
an empty whisper.

PRESTON

Yes.

DUPONT

And that we prevail in the face of
adversity makes us ourselves great, yes?

Preston climbs the dark, dark hill in his heart.

PRESTON

Yes.

DuPont seems pleased as they stop at the HEAVILY GUARDED GILDED DOORS at the far end of the hall.

DUPONT

If you are able to follow this through to its end - you'll choose your own reward.

Heart dark, Preston holds on the other man a moment.

PRESTON

My reward, Sir - would be the pleasure of knowing that I had freed Father ...

He takes a last look at the huge heavily guarded hall.

PRESTON

... from the terrible necessity of all this security.

DuPont looks at him a curious instant - then signals to the guards who open the great doors. Allowing him to pass through into audience with FATHER.

Preston stands there as the guards re-shut the doors peremptorily in his face.

INT. ROOM

Another windowless room hidden somewhere in the stark metropolis. Walls cluttered with maps and diagrams and plans of attack. A meeting place of revolutionaries.

JURGEN and his COMPATRIOTS are here. They sit across from Preston.

PRESTON

There's at least fifty men. Maybe more.

JURGEN

What about an audience? Could you somehow arrange to meet with him? That would get you through security.

PRESTON

Father's never seen anyone. Ever.

A tough silence.

JURGEN

They trained you your whole life to fight

these kind of odds, Preston ...

Preston is silent, struggling.

PRESTON

Even if I could - even if I could make it through - what guarantee is there it would accomplish anything? That anything would be different?

Jurgen nods, rising to the catalog of maps and blueprints that paper the walls. A giant map of citadel Libria ...

JURGEN

We have a network that's larger than you imagine. The instant word is gotten that Father is dead, bombs that have already been planted ...

He indicates on the vast map - here ... here ... and here ...

JURGEN

... they'll be set off in the Librium clinics and factories around Libria. If we can succeed in disrupting the supply for even one day, our cause will be won by human nature itself.

He looks at Preston.

JURGEN

Will you? Will you do it ...

Preston is silent again, waging a battle that's already lost in his heart.

PRESTON

What about war? The everyday cruelties that are all gone now ...

JURGEN

Replaced by the TetraGrammaton. You do it for us wholesale, don't you ...

A heavy silence. Preston knows he's right.

JURGEN

Will you do it?

The longest beat.

PRESTON

Yes.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Jurgen sees Preston out to the sidewalk. He catches Preston's arm. A beat between the two men.

JURGEN

You'll say goodbye to her for me, won't you?

Preston stares at the other man. Then nods. The two men, both in love with the same woman, shake hands.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE SPACE - NIGHT

The PUPPY lies nose between his front paws on the floor of Preston's small storage space. A SHADOW falls across him and he gets to his feet, coming hopefully to the gate.

But if the dog is hoping for some affection, he is doomed to disappointment. The shadow belongs to BRANDT.

INT. CAR - DAY

Preston drives. Eyes lost in the mid-distance. Neither seeing nor hearing the cars and traffic around him.

INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

He flashes his I.D. as he walks through the metal detectors.

INT. DETENTION WING - DAY

He stands outside her cell, hand to his eyes. Struggling to force himself to go in and say goodbye forever.

Finally, he turns and nods to the guard. The guard inserts the key into the lock and opens the door.

INT. CELL - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

But when Preston walks in, he is shocked to find, instead of Mary, a GRIZZLED MALE PRISONER sitting there.

She is gone.

INT. GUARD STATION - DAY

The guard shrugs.

GUARD

There was a bit of slack in the schedule. No one saw why she shouldn't go early.

Preston stares at him a dead beat. Then dashes out.

INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Preston fairly flies down the corridors, turning heads as he goes tearing by.

INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

He skids to the elevators, slapping the buttons. Hovers an instant ... Dashes for the stairs.

INT. DESTRUCTION WING - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

He skids breathlessly to the security checkpoint, flashing his badge.

PRESTON

Cleric! I need to pass!

He agonizes while the GUARD scrutinizes his ID.

PRESTON

The 5 O'clock! Is she ...?

SECURITY

We don't keep track of scheduling here.
You're clear to proceed d...

But Preston is gone, like a horse out of the gate.

INT. DESTRUCTION WING - PALACE OF JUSTICE

The guards come to their feet at the secondary checkpoint as Preston blasts by them without stopping.

GUARD

Hey!

INT. DEATH-WALK - PALACE OF JUSTICE

He skids around the corner in time to see a short column of people walking down towards the INCINERATION CHAMBER at the distant end of the long, low corridor.

In the center of the column, in a light, backless smock, MARY walks barefoot.

PRESTON

Mary!

INT. DEATH-ROOM ANTECHAMBER

Stopping just outside of the Incinerarium, an INCINERATION TECHNICIAN begins removing Mary's smock. She looks peaceful, registering no surprise when she looks up and sees Preston running towards her.

PRESTON

Mary!

A guard moves to stop him, but he shoves the man aside.

INCINERATION TECHNICIAN

Hey now...

PRESTON

(flashing badge)

Cleric, I have to question this person,
now step back.

The Technician looks uncertainly to the ARMED GUARDS.

PRESTON

(threatening)

I said step back!

Cowed, the technician releases Mary's smock and steps back.
Preston turns to her, voice dropping to a desperate whisper.

PRESTON

Mary, listen to me - I can't be without
you. I can't. I don't care about
anything else. I don't care about Father,
any of it. Just being with you...

MARY

Preston ...

PRESTON

(urgent)

No listen to me. I can take these
people; I can. We can get out of here.

She looks at him a peaceful moment.

MARY

And then what, Preston?

He stares back at her - trembling - unable to answer.

She looks at him for the deepest moment. Then, sadly, shakes
her head.

MARY

My one regret is that we didn't have more
... of everything ...

She touches the side of his face. The Incineration
Technician and guards look shocked. But Preston makes no
move to stop her, his anguished eyes drinking hers.

PRESTON

Mary, you don't understand - I'll die here with you, I don't care ...

She nods.

MARY

I do understand. But understand me - I go to this fire for a reason.

Shaking her head with the greatest gravity.

MARY

Promise me - it's not for nothing.

He stares at her, tortured, anguished. He starts to speak, but she stops him.

MARY

Promise me ...

All he can finally manage ... is a mute nod. She nods too. Kisses his cheek and turns to the Incineration Technicians.

MARY

I'm ready.

They remove her smock. The door to the incineration chamber sucks open and she steps in. She turns, looking at Preston, so beatific, so utterly beautiful, as the door sucks shut.

There is a moment. Then behind the small window, there is a WHOOSH! and a brilliant flash of orange. She's gone.

Stunned, head ringing, Preston's eyes move to the SMOKED GLASS WINDOW above the incineration chamber.

He can see a DARK FORM behind it.

It could only be ...

FATHER.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

In a state of shock, Preston shuffles down the Palace steps and merges into the flow of sidewalk traffic pedestrians.

He walks like that, unfocused, shell-shocked, for several yards before - finally, simply - dropping to his knees.

Pressing his face into his hands - he WEEPS.

Passersby turn and stare as he openly cries his heart out.

A PAIR OF POLISHED SHOES stops in front of him. Blinded by tears, Preston looks up at the silhouetted figure towering over him.

BRANDT

Cleric John Preston - you're under arrest.

INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - NIGHT

Officers and civilians alike turn to stare as Preston is driven ahead of Brandt and three armed and uniformed Enforcement officers.

He has been severely beaten. He stumbles and Brandt kicks him from behind, propelling him crashing forward onto the floor.

Brandt, panting, looks at those who stare back at them.

BRANDT

This man - a Senior Cleric! Has ceased the Dose! He is feeling!

He kicks Preston again. Preston takes it with less emotion than he'd expressed even before he began to feel.

BRANDT

This man! Is the worm that has been eating at the core of our Great Society. And I have brought him for your justice!

He hauls Preston to his feet, hissing into his ear.

BRANDT

I told you I'd make my career with you, Preston.

INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DAY

DUPONT is in the midst of a dictation to his secretary when the great carved doors fly open and Preston comes stumbling in - crashing into a heap on the floor.

BRANDT

Vice-Council! This man is guilty of consorting with Sense Offenders, of having relations with a female

His lips curl as he speaks these last most damning words.

BRANDT

Of Sense Crime itself.

DuPont looks at them both - surprised. Nods to a SWEEPER standing at the door.

DUPONT

Dispatch a search team to the Cleric's quarters to search for unused Librium.

The man salutes and exits instantly to comply.

BRANDT

That won't even be necessary, Sir. If you run the trace record on his sidearm, you will see that it was he who was with the Sweeper Team when they were killed.

Vice-Council DuPont considers him for a moment. Then, pulling his keyboard forward, he runs the trace.

He stares, astonished, at the result. Looks to Preston.

DUPONT!

Cleric - I assume you have something to say to me?

A beat. Then, bloody, Preston pulls himself up off the floor.

PRESTON

I know ... it's hard to believe ... that a Cleric of the TetraGrammaton ... could turn his back on everything he has been taught ... to become a sense offender ... to become associated with the resistance ... even becoming ... a provocateur in its underground movement ... but it's true...

Brandt's eyes burn bright at the confession. Preston nods.

PRESTON

I promised I would bring that man to you. And I have.

He looks at Brandt - who looks confused for a moment. Then baffled. He looks to DuPont who shakes his head.

DUPONT

Cleric Brandt - the trace shows that it was you in the Zone with the Sweepers.

He turns the screen so that Brandt too can see the trace record. Brandt stares at it. His gun in the Zone.

BRANDT

B..But it's impossible ...

DuPont only blinks back at him. Abruptly, Brandt reaches inside his coat - the GUNS of the Sweepers that accompanied them snap up ...

He freezes - then slowly draws the gun out by the muzzle. And sees for the first time, etched into the butt in fine letters - Grammaton Cleric Preston.

And he flashes back:

TO HIS CAR: The house in the zone burning in the background.

BRANDT

Who will be left to watch ...

A beat. Then Preston hands Brandt his gun.

BACK - Brandt's eyes shoot up as he realizes.

BRANDT

He switched them.

He holds the gun up.

BRANDT

You see?? I have his gun.

PRESTON

(dry)

Of course you do. You took it when you arrested me.

Brandt stares at him. At them all. Feeling the walls tumbling down all around him.

DUPONT

I suppose I should have known by the enthusiasm, the very rabid passion with which you pursued this task. A fervor reminiscent almost ...

His eyes narrow thinly.

DUPONT

Of a man feeling.

Brandt goes grave-cold. DuPont nods to the Sweepers.

DUPONT

Take him to the Hall of Destruction for summary judgment and combustion.

The three black-clad guards grab Brandt, who can't believe it, dragging him out.

BRANDT

No! It's him! Him! Not me! Him!

And he is gone. DuPont looks to bloodied Preston.

DUPONT

Of course, since a complaint has been lodged, the law and the letter is that I allow the team to carry out the search of your premises. Do you think that's entirely necessary, Cleric? Or am I being ... to unyielding?

Preston wavers only an instant.

PRESTON

As you say, Sir - it's the law and the letter.

DUPONT

(smiles)

And it doesn't disturb you in the least that he's going to his end?

Preston looks at him.

PRESTON

How could it?

DuPont smiles to himself again. Right answer, as always.

PRESTON

It disturbs me only that I am Father's instrument - yet have never had the honor of meeting him.

DuPont looks at him, surprised.

DUPONT

But Cleric ... you know Father never gives audience to anyone ...

Preston steps through the dark doorway in his heart.

PRESTON

Even the man who brings him the Resistance?

The two men regard each other - a Faustian bargain struck.

EXT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT MEGAPLEX - DAY

When Preston pulls up, several WHITE VANS are massed outside at the curb, SEARCH UNITS coordinating.

A search coordinator approaches as he emerges from his car.

SEARCH COORDINATOR

Cleric, you understand, this is just a formality ...

But Preston just waves him off.

PRESTON

I've nothing to hide.

INT. BUILDING - DAY

But the second he enters his building, beyond the reach of the preparing searchers' eyes, he breaks into a run.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Flying up the stairwell ...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Bursting into his apartment.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Skidding into his bathroom where, adrenaline surging, he yanks the mirror away from the wall.

And finds, to his shock - the Librium is gone. He thrusts his hand deep into the cavity - but nothing is there.

He stands, pulse pounding. Where did it go?

VOICE

Looking for something?

He whirls. ROBBIE'S cold eyes stare back at him. A beat of stark, ringing truth ...

The boy's hand rises - opening.

Revealing a small sea of amber ampules. Preston's Librium. His eyes shoot back up to his son's.

The search teams - can be heard. Coming.

ROBBIE

If I were you ...

He closes his hand.

ROBBIE

... I'd be more careful in the future.

Preston stares at the boy - shocked. He is even more stunned when LISA appears. Robbie places his hand on her shoulders

in a way that could only be described as fraternal.

And it hits Preston all at once - they're feeling too. They always were. Only concealing it - from him.

PRESTON

But how ...

The boy looks at his Father with a gravity far beyond his years.

ROBBIE

You forget - it's my job to know what you're thinking ...

Man and Boy look at each other. Like staring into a mirror. Preston nods.

PRESTON

Then you know what I'm going to do now.

The boy just looks back at him - and simply says:

ROBBIE

Yes.

INT. ROOM

Preston sits at a table, phone to his ear.

PHONE

You're connected with the Vice-Council.

DuPont's voice comes on the line.

DUPONT'S VOICE

Yes?

PRESTON

It's done.

DUPONT'S VOICE

The Resistance?

Like Judas with Christ and his disciples, Preston SITS with JURGEN and his top men. He exchanges a glance with them. This is their sacrifice, their doom - and they know it.

PRESTON

Send a wagon now - you'll have them all.

Preston terminates the line - looks to the others. Grim.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

He stands by watching as black-clad Enforcers lead Jurgen and his accomplices into the waiting wagons.

His eyes meet Jurgen's as he is shoved into the wagon. The message in the revolutionary's own eyes is clear - I go to my death, I pray you do what must be done.

The door is slammed shut. An Enforcer nods to Preston.

ENFORCER

The Vice-Council has sent me to tell you
- you may think of any reward you wish.

PRESTON

Tell the Vice-Council there's only one
thing that will make me complete.

The Enforcer looks at the killing machine standing before him.

PRESTON

To meet Father.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DUSK

A red satin interior, sumptuous like the interior of a coffin. Preston rides alone in the back.

He opens his hand. In it lies a tiny flower.

INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON CORRIDOR'S - DUSK

A SERVANT ushers Preston through the corridors.

SERVANT

Do not address Father unless first
addressed by him. Avoid eye-contact. If
you should break his four foot personal
safety zone, you will be put down
immediately by the snipers. Understood?

Preston nods, hardly hearing the man through the rush of thoughts in his head.

SERVANT

You'll be required to surrender your
firearm, of course, and pass through a
series of metal detectors. And then
there's the test...

Preston looks at him, alarmed.

PRESTON

Test?

They stop at the steel door of the SECURITY AIRLOCK.

SERVANT

Yes, yes - you don't imagine we'd risk exposing even such a dedicated servant as yourself to Father without first having you tested did you?

Preston's heart beats. A test?!? The servant ushers him through

INT. SECURITY AIRLOCK

... into the long, low steel chamber that designates the gateway between Libria and the inner-sanctum of Father.

One of Father's personal banner guard, his Praetorian guard, steps forward.

GUARD

Your firearm, Cleric.

Preston hesitates - then surrenders the weapon.

SERVANT

Here ...

Preston sees that a LIE DETECTOR stands next to the metal detector.

SERVANT

Sit.

Preston looks around. There are seven Sweepers in here, all heavily armed. He has no choice.

He sits. Two technicians quickly hook up the sensors.

A DOCTOR steps forward.

DOCTOR

We'll start with a test question first.

He nods to the Polygraph Tech who flicks the machine on.

DOCTOR

More of a riddle actually. What, would you say, is the easiest way to get a gun away from a Grammaton Cleric ... ?

He smiles. And ANOTHER VOICE fills the blank:

VOICE

Ask him for it.

Preston looks sharply to see a LARGE WALL MONITOR flickering to life with the CHANGING FACES OF LIBRIA.

ALL SEVEN of the Sweeper's guns snap up in line with Preston's head.

FACES OF LIBRIA/MAN

Did you really think we'd be so stupid...

FACES OF LIBRIA/WOMAN

As not to know you were feeling, Preston?

The Polygraph needle starts - registering Preston's surprise.

FACES OF LIBRIA/BOY

Did you forget ... ?

The changing faces abruptly stop changing, settling on ONE FINAL FACE whose eyes lance back into Preston's own.

DUPONT'S.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

I'm everywhere.

The POLYGRAPH goes nuts, expending a sudden flurry of ink as Preston's emotional response redlines.

DuPont smiles slightly.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

Thank you, Preston. You've consolidated my power, given me the Resistance.

The perspective on the screen WIDENS slightly. To include the head of a WOMAN DuPont stands just behind.

MARY.

DUPONT

And everyone connected to it. Only someone who was truly feeling could have done it. Bravo.

Mary's eyes, proud and misted, try to turn from the screen, trying not to give DuPont the satisfaction - but twining his fingers into her hair, he forces her face forward.

DUPONT'S IMAGE

And now Preston, I have you as well. Calmly, coolly. Utterly without incident.

Preston stares trembling back into the screen. A million colliding thoughts igniting behind his eyes.

Then, in an instant, they all disappear - replaced by the abyss.

PRESTON

No

Slowly, he shakes his head.

PRESTON

Not without incident.

Behind him, the needle on the polygraph, that had been vibrating madly with his pounding heart ...

Suddenly drops to a smooth flatline.

POLYGRAPH TECHNICIAN

(realizing)

Oh ... shit ...

And before anyone knows it, Preston has stripped the GUN from guard just behind him and **BLABLAM!** has shot the doctor between the eyes.

As that man goes down - like the Phoenix - Preston rises.

Electrodes falling away like guy wires, **BLADAM!BLADAM!BLAM!** in the blink of an eye, faster than thought, he guns the seven guards down in their tracks - they never stood a chance.

Retrieving his first gun, he kills the Polygraph Technician and pauses - looking at the cine-screen ...

On which DuPont's visage stares back at him - astonished at the turn of events.

PRESTON

I'm coming.

POW! he blows DuPont's startled image out of the screen and ducks through the screaming metal detectors.

EXT. HALL OF MIRRORS - DAY

Security Forces stream into the magnificent hall to meet him, but lest we forget, Preston is a Grammarian Cleric, First Class. He is the best.

In a blaze of fire, both guns bucking like pistons, he tolls in blood the history of every man who dares challenge him, rolling like thunder down the mirrored corridor.

GUNS flowing with the machine-like grace of a printing press, a blur of fire in his hands, he fills the statistical trajectories with blazing paths of lead.

Everywhere, the Sweeper Teams go down, withering under the fury of his unstoppable assault.

INT. ANTEROOM - DAY

He bursts into the anteroom. The six guards in there knew he was coming, they could hear it ...

But so awesome was the sound of the battle rumbling inexorably towards them that they were beaten before he even stepped into the room and blew them back through the doors...

INT. FATHER'S BOUDOIR - DAY

Into Father's chambers. Coming on like the Fourth Horseman himself, Preston follows their collapsing bodies into a massive marble room of incomparable beauty and elegance.

Where DUPONT stands.

Quietly, silently, TWO PISTOLS dangling in his hands at his sides. Preston's eyes quickly scan the room.

PRESTON

Where is she ...

DuPont holds on him steadily.

DUPONT

You seemed so taken with her - I have to admit ...

A whimsical shrug.

DUPONT

I was intrigued.

His guns snap up - Preston's match him millimeter for millimeter.

Slowly, they circle.

Preston moves his guns - DuPont's mirroring their movements, muzzle to muzzle - as though they were tied together by invisible strings.

DUPONT

Remember, Preston - I'm Grammaton Cleric too. I know your thoughts - even as you do.

PRESTON

Then you know I'm going to kill you.

POW! he and Dupont suddenly and simultaneously fire, bullets colliding and EXPLODING in the air between them.

DUPONT
(circling)

That I'm not quite picking up.

POW! Preston fires. DuPont, synchronized with him, fires at the exact same instant and trajectory, bullets exploding into shrapnel between them.

And that's it, the dam bursts.

BLAM!BLAM!BLAM!, like pure ballet, a whirling, swirling, two-fisted swordfight with bullets erupts between Preston and DuPont ...

So accurate and so intuitive are they both that every bullet fired by one is parried - blasted out of existence - by the answering bullet of the other.

In an instant, the air is thick with screaming shrapnel as their bullets explode together in a machine-gun staccato of stuttering collisions.

Neither man able to get the edge over the other whose movements he instinctively knows.

The COUNTER on Preston's gun, flying down towards zero.

Abruptly, at ONE, Preston spins - aiming down at DuPont's thigh, drawing DuPont spinning and his own gun down in a mirror counter-movement ...

But at the last instant, Preston doesn't fire as POW! DuPont's bullet spits out of his gun and PUNCHES thru Preston's thigh.

A tight gasp through clenched teeth and Preston staggers ...

Then ... straightens ...

DuPont's gun has clicked open, having matched Preston bullet for bullet - all now spent. But Preston still has his last one.

His eyes come up, clear. He took the bullet on purpose. He directed it where he wanted it and took it.

He raises his gun in line with DuPont's forehead.

DUPONT

Wait!

Preston does.

DUPONT

Look at me. I'm life. I live. I breathe. I feel. Now that you know it - can you really take it?

Preston stares back at him - the words not without effect as the emotions battle inside him.

Finally, quietly, he drops the lever on his pistol grip so that the LCD on it now registers "Explosive round armed!"

PRESTON

Father is everywhere.

BLAM! he drills the explosive round into DuPont and ~~BABLANON!!!~~ Father, the man behind the curtain of Oz, literally explodes.

Preston drops his guns.

And, looking up, begins, for the last time, to hunt for something that has been hidden.

His eyes slowly sweep, scanning the walls, ceilings and floors ...

Until they settle at last on a great framed mirror. Limping to it, he feels its surface.

Pushes. It swings open, like a door ...

INT. PUBLIC ADDRESS CHAMBER

Revealing the final hidden room. Inside, amidst all of the equipment that broadcasts the Faces of Libria, the greatest treasure of all.

Mary.

With a great gasp, she throws herself into his arms.

MARY

I thought you were dead.

They hold one another as if they will never let go. When they finally separate, they look long into each other eyes.

Then, limping over, Preston settles in at DuPont's PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM.

Keying the mike, he flicks it on. It crackles whirring to a static hum ...

PRESTON

Libria ... there is a new message ...

INT. OFFICES OF THE CLERIC - DAY

Clerics and Enforcers alike all stop, turning to the omnipresent screens where the ever-changing FACES OF LIBRIA speak PRESTON'S WORDS ...

FACES OF LIBRIA

The Dose is dead - Librium is finished...

INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

And on the Death-Walk to the Incinerarium's, JURGEN, his COMPATRIOTS, and their astonished guards all turn to look at the faces speaking to them from the screens ...

FACES OF LIBRIA

The back of the Cleric is broken...

Jurgen and his fellows exchange a look of amazement.

INT. CLERIC MONASTERY - DAY

ROBBIE among them, the young Clerics-in-training all stop in their classes, heads turned towards the screen ...

... where the faces, for the first time in history, STOP changing, settling finally on one single face ...

And one final voice.

Representative of all humanity ...

Preston's.

PRESTON'S IMAGE

And Father is nowhere to be found.

And, for the first time in his own history, he smiles.

Silently, to himself, Robbie smiles back.

INT. FATHER'S QUARTERS.

Dropping the mike, Preston looks to Mary.

PRESTON

Let's watch.

EXT. TERRACE - DAY

She helps Preston out onto the windswept terrace that overlooks Libria. The city stretching into the horizon.

They look out over its vast panorama.

All across Libria, FIREBALLS begin rising up into the sky as, one after another, the LIBRIUM FACTORIES explode.

Preston turns to Mary. She to him.

In the light of the explosions, they kiss.

THE END