

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY INFORMATION OFFICE. DAY.
We move slowly through a crowded office. A hundred information operators in booths. SHARON works at a computer terminal. Close on her. She's on a kind of autopilot as she does her job, and the people talking to her hear so little personality that her humanity barely registers. That she might have a beauty that is becoming hollow, or a private life that would astonish them -- this, no one thinks about. She watches the clock. Five minutes to six.

SHARON

Please hold for the number.
Operator 134, what city please?
(Pause, as she
types in the name.)
Is that a business or residence?
Please hold for the number.
(Pause.)
Operator 134. What city please?
(Pause.)
How do you spell that?

The clock. Two minutes to six.

SHARON

(pause)
Please hold for the number.
(Pause.)
Operator 134. What city please?
(Pause.)
Is that a business or residence?
(Pause.)
Please hold for the number.

Pause. Behind her, a woman, another OPERATOR, waits for the chair.

Six o'clock.

SHARON gets up. The other OPERATOR takes her place and takes her headphones. SHARON starts to stand as she begins the next sentence. Pause.

SHARON

Operator 134. Is that a business or
residence? ...

And the other OPERATOR takes her headset and completes the number as SHARON leaves her post.

OPERATOR

Please hold for the number.

SHARON walks away.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: STREET. NIGHT.

And now we see her sitting in the back of a Jaguar convertible. VIC is driving the car. VIC looks to someone offscreen.

VIC

What about them?

SHARON

No. He's wearing a rug, and she has a nose job.

VIC

It's not a bad nose job.

SHARON

They're all bad.

Now we see VIC. He is a beardless werewolf [I mean, spiritually]. SHARON is excited. She likes danger. Underneath, we feel her deep exhaustion.

SHARON

Let's go to the Continental Club.

VIC

Really?

SHARON

Come on, Vic, you don't want to go back to the airport.

He's thinking.

VIC

I like the airport. I like the bars at the airport hotels. I like tourists.

(Meaning the bar:)

I don't want that tonight.

SHARON

What's the matter, are you scared
of getting dirty?

VIC

(uncertain)

Maybe.

SHARON

C'mon, Vic. That's the place to
start. Let's have some fun.

From her challenging smile, his laugh, we cut to:

INTERIOR: BAR. NIGHT.

A rummy's bar in Hollywood. SHARON and VIC lean against a wall, drinking from bottles. VIC studies a couple sitting alone at a table, side by side. Sharp-featured, long-haired, not talking, they are smoking.

SHARON

I like them.

VIC

You would.

SHARON and VIC walk across the floor to the table. They slide into the seat facing the couple. Call her DIANA. Call him RANDY.

VIC

I'm Vic.

SHARON

I'm Sharon.

VIC

Hi.

RANDY and DIANA are quietly amused.

RANDY

What brings you to this side of
town?

SHARON

We got tired of shooting the dogs
where the rich people live.

DIANA

What are you looking for now?

SHARON

Now we're looking for something a
little less obvious.

VIC

But fun. Definitely fun. We're very
social people.

RANDY

You might be asking for something
you couldn't handle.

SHARON

I can handle it.

RANDY

What if things go out of control?

SHARON

What's control got to do with it?

VIC

I think he wants to find out if
you have any limits.

SHARON

Tell him that I haven't found them
yet.

VIC

Sharon hasn't found her limits yet.

DIANA

Talk, talk, talk.

(To RANDY:)

Let's go somewhere.

VIC

I have a store. Let's go to the store.

They stand up. VIC takes DIANA'S hand. RANDY and SHARON
follow.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: VIC'S STORE. NIGHT.

VIC leads the others in, turning on lights and slow dance music (Little Richard singing "Directly from My Heart"). We move through the store to a far corner, to a model bedroom.

SHARON reaches out to RANDY and pulls him to her. RANDY lets go of DIANA and dances with SHARON. They dance to be watched. They are moving toward a bed. DIANA takes VIC'S hand. They dance. A blues song plays.

RANDY

Come here. Come here and have a seat.

SHARON

Come on, let's fool around.

RANDY lifts SHARON into his arms.

SHARON

Ohh. What a man.

RANDY

Nice store you got here, Vic. Nice.

SHARON dances slowly with RANDY; they grind into each other, putting on a show. SHARON and VIC watch each other.

DIANA

Come on. Show me what you mean by fun.

VIC

Unnh-uhh.

SHARON sees this and shakes her head. DIANA goes to RANDY and SHARON.

SHARON

Vic likes to watch.

RANDY

Watch this.

And we stay with Vic's face as the other three fall on the

bed.

Dissolve to:

INTERIOR: VIC'S STORE. NIGHT.

SHARON, RANDY, and DIANA on a bed. Their sex is a ritual, and the surprise here is their need. SHARON is the subject. They finish. They are still for a moment. SHARON gets up. We watch RANDY watching her.

SHARON sits on the arm of a leather couch, smoking. RANDY comes over to her. Behind them, Vic begins fucking DIANA. SHARON looks grim. RANDY studies her.

RANDY

Was that far enough?

SHARON turns to look at him.

SHARON

Randy, right?

RANDY

Hey, you remembered my name.

SHARON

Hi, Randy.

RANDY

Was it enough?

SHARON

That was ... interesting.

The camera pulls back. We hear DIANA as VIC tries to come.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY INFORMATION OFFICE. DAY.

SHARON works at a computer terminal. Close on her.

SHARON

Operator 134, what city please?

(Pause, as she
types in the name.)

Is that a business or residence?
(Pause.)
Hold for the number.
(Pause.)
This is operator 134. What city?
(Pause.)
Can you spell that?
(Pause.)
Is that D as in Dick?
(Pause.)
Please hold for the number.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY VENDING-MACHINE ROOM. DAY.
Coffee break. Move through the room. Everyone sits alone,
recovering from the phones. SHARON enters staring into space.
Behind her are a group of workers, talking quietly but
passionately. At first, SHARON doesn't listen. Bits of the
following drift into consciousness.

WORKER #1

Hi, Wayne. It was much stronger last
night, wasn't it?

WORKER #2

By a factor of five.

WORKER #3

It was almost like the first time,
I mean, it was that clear.

WORKER #1

And the horn, the sound of a horn,
that was new.

WORKER #2

One note, a very clear tone. I found
it on my piano; it's B flat.

WORKER #1

What do you think?

SHARON has leaned back in her chair to eavesdrop.

WORKER #3

I think it's going to happen, and

soon. Have you been praying?

WORKER #2, facing SHARON'S back, sees her leaning in and puts a finger to his lips.

WORKER #2

Yes, as much as I can.

The other two glance over their shoulders at SHARON. She looks over her shoulder and sees them look at her. She pulls her chair forward.

WORKER #3

What does The Boy say?

WORKER #1

Not yet.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

She is in bed with RANDY. Under the sheet, he strokes her. She comes, pushing his hand away.

SHARON

Tell me a story.

RANDY

Hmmm.

He tries to start again.

SHARON

No, no, no. I already know that story. Tell me something new.

He thinks about it.

RANDY

I've done things for money.

SHARON

Like what?

RANDY

Things I wish I hadn't.

SHARON

Like what?

RANDY

I killed a man once.

SHARON

For how much?

RANDY

For a thousand dollars.

SHARON

That's not very much money.

RANDY

It was a lot then. All I can say now is, I wish I hadn't.

SHARON

Why?

RANDY

'Cause it stays with me. I mean, I killed a man. I took his life, his only life. That's bad.

SHARON

Did you know him?

RANDY

No.

SHARON

Well, why did the people who paid you want him dead?

RANDY

There are some questions you don't ask. After that, they offered me another job, the same kind of job, better money.

SHARON

And did you do it?

RANDY

No. But I think about that killing a lot. I think, you know, if we weren't

taught that killing is bad, would I still feel as bad?

SHARON

I don't know.

RANDY

You don't know. Are you scared of me now?

SHARON

Did anyone pay you to kill me?

A long pause.

RANDY

That was not a good year. 1975, that was my best year. I was nineteen. What was your best year?

SHARON

Hmmm. I guess I'm still waiting. I don't know. I don't know. Everything just seems so empty. Time passes so quickly.

RANDY

Yeah? I think it's kind of slow.

SHARON

No, I mean, like a day. You know, a day is always just over ... I don't know what I'm trying to say.

RANDY

I think I understand.

SHARON

Oh really? Why don't you let me in on my secret.

RANDY

I think that you are depressed, and I think that you should see a therapist.

SHARON

Oh, that's great. That's fucking brilliant.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. DAY.

SHARON pulls subscription cards out of magazines. A door bell rings; then there's a knock at the door. SHARON answers it. Two men wearing suits, white shirts, and dark ties are there.

Both are in their late thirties or early forties. In New York, you would assume they were bankers or painters trying to look like bankers. They are evangelists. None of the evangelists in this film sound like TV preachers or have a hint of the South in their accents.

FIRST EVANGELIST

You understand that these are the last days. It can't go on like this. God is coming back. His prophecies are now being fulfilled.

SECOND EVANGELIST

You have to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

SHARON

Otherwise ...

FIRST EVANGELIST

You won't be saved.

She shuts the door. Pause. She opens it again. The men are still there, still smiling.

SECOND EVANGELIST

We're not trying to scare you.

FIRST EVANGELIST

No.

SECOND EVANGELIST

Do you understand the difference between righteousness and faith?

SHARON

Why don't you tell me.

SECOND EVANGELIST

It's only by the grace of God you'll be saved.

SHARON

But what if I lead a good life? Does it still matter if I don't believe?

FIRST EVANGELIST

Do you really lead a good life?

SHARON

No.

SECOND EVANGELIST

You have to believe. If you don't, you go to Hell.

SHARON

Well, that doesn't seem fair.

FIRST EVANGELIST

I used to think that. But then I met Him.

SHARON

Who?

SECOND EVANGELIST

That's what we're trying to tell you.

FIRST EVANGELIST

(from John 3:16)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. That whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

SECOND EVANGELIST

You can have what we have.

FIRST EVANGELIST

A personal relationship with the Son of God.

SECOND EVANGELIST

It's hard to believe unless you

believe it. But when you believe it,
then it's easy. You just know.

SHARON
What?

FIRST EVANGELIST
Him.

SHARON
How?

FIRST EVANGELIST
Who knows? It just is.

SHARON
Right. And I'm supposed to buy this?

He hands her a small Bible.

FIRST EVANGELIST
No. It's a gift.

SECOND EVANGELIST
We know what you're thinking ... It
doesn't make sense.

SHARON
No.

SECOND EVANGELIST
I was like you.

SHARON
I doubt it.

SECOND EVANGELIST
No, really.

SHARON
And, like I said, I doubt it.

The men turn and leave. As they walk away, SHARON speaks:

SHARON
I heard someone talking about The
Boy? Who's The Boy?

SECOND EVANGELIST

Some people say that he's a prophet
in the old tradition.

FIRST EVANGELIST
And some people say there are others
like him, all around the country.

SECOND EVANGELIST
All around the world.

SHARON
And what do you say?

SECOND EVANGELIST
I say trust in God.

The SECOND EVANGELIST gives SHARON a warm smile.

SHARON
Excuse me.

And she shuts the door.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY INFORMATION OFFICE. DAY.
SHARON works at a computer terminal. Close on her.

SHARON
Operator 134. What city please?
(Pause.)
City please?
(Pause.)
Please hold for the number.
(Pause.)
Operator 134. What city please?
(Pause.)
Is that a business or residence?

EXTERIOR/INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. DAY.
The phone rings. She picks up, and we hear VIC on the line.

SHARON
Hello?

VIC
(voice-over)
Sharon?

SHARON
Hi, Vic.

VIC
(voice-over)
I dropped by a few of the hotels
near the airport today. You'll never
guess who I found. The most
fascinating couple, really. They're
from Philadelphia. Well, he's from
Pennsylvania and she's from Florida
and they're married. Isn't that
romantic?

She sees evangelists pass outside on bicycles.

SHARON
What time?

VIC
(voice-over)
Pick you up at nine.

EXTERIOR: VIC'S WIFE'S HOUSE. NIGHT.
SHARON looking out. Behind her, VIC is dancing with ANGIE
and the EXECUTIVE.

INTERIOR: VIC'S WIFE'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

EXECUTIVE
Here's to open-minded people and
L.A., my kind of town.

ANGIE
Don't you have, uhh,
(to her husband while
she corners VIC)
something better to do?

EXECUTIVE
I'm doing it.

ANGIE laughs as the Executive goes to SHARON. She declines.

SHARON'S point of view as he walks back to the group. VIC dances with ANGIE while the EXECUTIVE gropes her a little. The EXECUTIVE unzips the back of ANGIE'S dress as he turns her around, and as the dress falls away, SHARON can see a tattoo through the veil of ANGIE'S long black hair.

The tattoo is not finished: we see a long boat with an angel blowing a horn on the bow. Behind the scene is a large pearl.

SHARON

What is that?

VIC

What are you talking about?

SHARON

She has a tattoo on her back.

VIC looks.

VIC

Whoa.

ANGIE

I got it when I was a kid.

EXECUTIVE

This was before she met me.

ANGIE

I got drunk one night.

SHARON

One night. You had it done in one night?

EXECUTIVE

Well, you know how kids are. I almost got a tattoo once. She was drunk.

ANGIE wraps herself around VIC. The naked EXECUTIVE fondles SHARON while she watches VIC and ANGIE kiss and laugh, the EXECUTIVE wants to get inside her, but she won't let him, he can only use his hands. For a moment, she enjoys it, but the pearl on ANGIE'S back is too compelling.

SHARON

Angie, you got that in one night?

VIC

Maybe she doesn't want to talk about it.

ANGIE

There's nothing to talk about.

SHARON

Why did you get it?

VIC

Sharon? Can we talk about it later?

SHARON

I mean it must have been painful.

ANGIE realizes she has to deal with SHARON'S curiosity.

ANGIE

(facing SHARON)

I don't remember, and I don't know why I got it.

She looks at the EXECUTIVE. He gives her a compassionate look.

EXECUTIVE

Its okay, Angie. I'm here. I'm with you.

SHARON

Why would you get a tattoo that you didn't really want? I'm sorry, I don't want to make you unhappy, but I really need to know.

ANGIE

Why?

SHARON

I don't know. I don't know. It's important.

(She asks again:)

What is it?

ANGIE

Don't you know what's going on?

SHARON

What?

ANGIE

The dream? The Pearl?

SHARON

What dream?

EXECUTIVE

Tell them.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY VENDING-MACHINE ROOM. DAY.
The three workers are sitting together, drinking coffee.
SHARON comes into the room and walks over to them, then sits
down. She acts as though she's seen the light, but she's
heavy-handed and obvious.

SHARON

Hi, it's a beautiful day, isn't it?
How are you?

WORKER #1

(cautious)

We're fine. And you?

SHARON

I'm fine. Now that I dream about the
Pearl.

Silence. The men watch her carefully. She becomes
uncomfortable, but they don't release her from their hard
stares. She is being evaluated.

WORKER #2

What dream would that be?

SHARON

The Pearl. I dream about the Pearl.

WORKER #3

Tell us about it.

WORKER #1

What does it look like?

SHARON

You know. The Pearl. It's a big pearl by a river.

WORKER #3

No, it's not.

WORKER #1

You haven't seen it.

SHARON

Yes, I have.

WORKER #2

You can't fake it.

SHARON slumps, defeated.

WORKER #1

It's a message from God. If you really want it, all you have to do is pray.

SHARON

(disdainfully)

Pray.

WORKER #2

He's coming back.

SHARON

Slow down. If everybody is getting this dream, how come it isn't on the news?

WORKER #2

Those who need to know, know.

WORKER #1

And those who don't believe won't get the dream.

SHARON

There are five billion people on the planet. There's I-don't-know-how-many religions. Why does the God of

some little country on the
Mediterranean have to be the God for
everyone? Isn't that a little
arrogant? I mean, really? The
Buddhists get along okay without
Jesus Christ. The Hindus get along
okay without Jesus Christ. The
Moslems seem to be getting along
okay without Jesus Christ.

WORKER #1

But none of them are saved.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

SHARON comes in. She goes to the bedroom. VIC is in bed with
a woman.

VIC

Sharon, this is my friend Andrea.
Andrea is from Nebraska. Come and
join?

SHARON leaves and slumps down a wall in the next room.

EXTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. DAY.

SHARON smokes on the balcony. Something has changed.

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

SHARON wakes up. She shakes RANDY.

SHARON

Get up.

RANDY

What?

SHARON

Get up, or get out.

RANDY

What did I do?

SHARON

I have to make the bed.

RANDY

Come on, look, no, it's three o'clock in the morning.

SHARON

Get out of bed, or get out of the house.

RANDY

Why?

SHARON

This bed is unclean.

RANDY

I'm out, I'm out. Unclean ... you changed the sheets yesterday.

SHARON

Shut up!

And he gets out of bed. She rips the sheets off the bed and then we cut to:

Close-up of clean sheets being put over the bed. RANDY isn't helping; he leans against a wall, trying to sleep.

SHARON

I'm starting over, Randy. I've had enough.

RANDY

Enough what?

SHARON

I need a new direction in my life. There is a God, I know it, there is a God, and I'm going to meet Him.

RANDY

When did you get religion?

SHARON

I am trying, Randy. I want my salvation.

RANDY

Sharon, you're fine the way you are.

SHARON

You just want to live in sin, don't you?

RANDY

That's right. I just want to live in sin.

SHARON

Fine, be a slave to the Devil.

RANDY

Devil? Do you remember where we met? Don't start asking me now to apologize for who I am or what I believe in.

SHARON

Oh, and what do you believe in?

RANDY

There is no God. There's only chaos.

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

SHARON takes a shower. RANDY talks to her through the glass.

SHARON

And why do we have such guilty consciences? Answer that?

RANDY

You're the one with the guilty conscience. I sleep really well, or at least I used to.

(He tests the shower water.)

Jesus Christ, that's hot.

SHARON

Don't take the Lord's name in vain, Randy. That's one of the commandments, it even comes before theft and adultery, it even comes

before murder. That's how important it is not to take the Lord's name in vain.

RANDY
Since when have you known the Lord?

SHARON
I am trying to.

RANDY
And what does a shower at three in the morning have to do with eternal salvation?

SHARON is washing herself in a steaming hot shower. She scrubs herself with a hard brush. She gets out of the shower.

SHARON
I want to be clean. Am I clean?

RANDY watches in silence as she dries herself with a towel, cleans her fingernails, and brushes her teeth. She speaks to him in her reflection.

RANDY
Yeah, you're clean.

SHARON
When you do something wrong, we feel bad, and that's because there's a little bit of God in all of us, telling us to change our ways before it's too late. Isn't that right?

RANDY
No, it's not right. It's just conditioned by society. All we are is animals whose brains have become too big and too complicated for the purposes of satisfying our animal needs, which are food and sex.

SHARON
There is a spiritual need which is just as real as hunger, just as real as the need for love.

RANDY

Sharon, don't you understand what's going on? The world's a disaster. We have no power to make it better. You hate your job. You hate your life. But you want to feel special. But instead of letting me do that, you're rushing off to something that's not even there. There's no Pearl, there's only us.

SHARON flosses her teeth.

SHARON

I feel sorry for you, Randy, I really do. But you have to leave.

RANDY

I don't want to leave. I want to stay here with you. You know me. We know each other. We know each other's secrets, that's something. I think we can love each other, and I think you feel that too.

SHARON

There has to be something more.

RANDY

Why?

SHARON cries.

SHARON

I'm tired of the pain in my life. I'm tired of feeling empty all the time.

RANDY

Let me help you.

SHARON

Why can't we let God help both of us?

RANDY

Because there is no God.

And he is out the door. Hold on SHARON.

EXTERIOR: DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.
RANDY gets into his truck.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.
SHARON reads the Bible the EVANGELISTS gave her and then simply clutches it.

She tries to sleep, to relax.

Her eyes close.

Whatever it is, self-consciousness or doubt, she can't force herself to believe.

SHARON
(whisper)
God, please, please, please help me.
God, I'm lost.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: ENDLESS BOULEVARD. DAY.
SHARON drives aimlessly. She stops for a hitchhiker named TOMMY, rough-looking, with a bedroll and a rucksack.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S CAR. DAY.

TOMMY
Chicks don't usually stop for me.
(No response
from SHARON.)
In fact, I think they think I'm
dangerous.
(Pause, again
no response.)
They're probably right. I'm not as
dangerous as some guys I know, but
I would never give myself a lift,

that's for sure. No way. If I was a chick, no double-fucking way would I give me a lift. I've looked in the mirror. I've seen myself. I mean, with my thumb out, if I was a chick and I saw me, no sir. On the other hand, if I was a, if I was the one who was hitching and I was a chick, I'd stop for me in a second. In fact, I'd, I'd fuck me, too. In fact, if I was hitching and I was a chick, and I got stopped by a chick, I'd fuck me that way, too. Yeah. In fact, I wouldn't mind getting into a bi-girl scene with myself. Actually, you're the first chick that has ever given me a lift. I think other chicks don't pick me up because they can tell I carry a gun and I've been to prison in Vermont. I don't think they can tell I've been to prison, but that's where I'm from. Vermont. You ever been to Vermont?

(SHARON doesn't answer.)

I'm from the Lemon Fair Valley. Actually, there's no lemons in Vermont. Actually, it comes from the French, Lay Moan Vayer, which means the Green Mountains. Which is what Vermont means. Green Mountains. Vert: Green. Mont: Mountains. Vermont. Green Mountains. Anyway, my father's a farmer. I left home. What's your name? I'm Tommy.

SHARON

Sharon.

TOMMY

Oh yeah? With who?

SHARON

What?

TOMMY

Who you sharin' it with? You gonna share it with me?

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: ADULT MOTEL. DAY.

Tracking shot past the entrance. SHARON'S is not the only car parked at the motel.

INTERIOR: ADULT MOTEL. DAY.

TOMMY is on the round bed. He plays with a knife. We hear the shower running. The camera peeks into the bathroom.

INTERIOR: ADULT MOTEL. BATHROOM. DAY.

SHARON is in the shower, dressed. TOMMY'S rucksack is just outside the bathroom.

TOMMY

Sharon? Did you know that the state bird of Vermont is the Hermit Thrush? I'll bet you didn't know that. The state flower is the Red Clover. Highest point is Mount Mansfield, I believe, which is four thousand three hundred ninety-three something, I don't know. Hey, have you got a quarter? Let's get some magic finger going in here. How would that be?

INTERIOR: ADULT MOTEL. DAY.

SHARON pulls a gun from TOMMY'S rucksack. He hears something, turns. SHARON is standing there dripping, with the gun.

SHARON

It's time for you to go.

TOMMY

Uhhh?

SHARON

You have to go, Tommy, and you have to leave me your gun.

TOMMY

Ahhhh!

TOMMY raises his knife, she cocks the gun, and he plunges it into the bed.

Dissolve to:

EXTERIOR/INTERIOR: ADULT MOTEL. LATER.

SHARON is in bed, the blankets pulled up over her head. She pulls the blankets down. She reaches beside her for her bag. She opens her bag. A pint of pear schnapps.

She drinks half the schnapps. She takes the gun and puts it under her chin. She closes her eyes and holds the gun for a long moment. She opens her eyes.

The disorder of the room bothers her.

She gets out of the bed and puts everything from the bag but the gun back into it. The ashtray on the night table is filled with crushed butts. She pulls the drawer open to hide the ashtray, and she finds the Gideon Bible. She puts the ashtray on top of the Bible.

She is a bit disgusted with herself; disappointed at her lack of resolve. Then she takes the Bible out of the drawer and opens it.

She starts to read the Gospels.

A golden light fills the room.

SHARON is thrown backward by it, and before she's eclipsed by its brilliance:

Dissolve to:

Extreme close-up: a pearl.

You've never seen a pearl this close, so close that we lose its shape. All we can see of it is the color: the changing white, silver, and pink. It is beautiful. You don't want it to go away.

Dissolve to:

INTERIOR: SHARON'S APARTMENT. DAY.

SHARON is sleeping, smiling, at peace. She wakes up. Everything is different.

She gets up. She goes to her closet and takes a simple dress from a hanger.

She hears a door. VIC is behind her. She covers herself with the dress.

SHARON

Can I get dressed?

VIC

Where were you?

SHARON

Turn around.

VIC

Really?

She nods. He does while she puts on the dress.

VIC

C'mon. Where have you been?

SHARON

I went away for a few days.

VIC

Who'd you go with?

SHARON

No one.

VIC

Meet anyone?

SHARON

Yes, yes, I did. I did meet someone.

VIC can sense that something is different about her by the way she talks to him so directly and so calmly, and by her placid smile. VIC lies on the bed. She comes out from behind the door.

VIC

Are you okay?

SHARON

I'm fine, Vic. I'm really, really fine.

VIC

Unnh-uhh. No you're not. Something's going on. You've changed. You've got this look right now.

SHARON

What look?

VIC

That goofy smile.

SHARON

If I tell you, you're not going to believe me. But I have to tell you, so it really doesn't matter if you don't believe me. It doesn't matter to me. I mean it matters to me, but you're the one who really needs to hear this now.

VIC

You met a guy.

SHARON

Well, guy is not exactly the word I'd use for Him.

VIC

You fox, you fell in love.

SHARON

(deadly serious)

Yes.

VIC

Wait until he finds out about you.

SHARON

Well, He knows all about me.

VIC

Is he as bad a boy as I am?

SHARON

I think you should meet Him.

VIC

Did you tell him about me?

SHARON

I told you, He knows everything.

VIC

He's rich, right? He's some rich guy, and you fell for some line of his.

SHARON

You could love Him, too.

VIC

(laughing)

Oh, no, you fell in love with some rich homosexual.

SHARON

He's the Lord Jesus Christ, Vic.
He's the Son of God.

VIC jumps off the bed.

VIC

Sharon, did you quit your job?

SHARON

Why would I do that?

VIC

So you can go to the airport and sell flowers, or do whatever the cult wants you to do.

SHARON

You can't understand, but I know what that's like. Until it happens to you, until you accept God into your heart, it's like a fairy tale, it's like some joke that you just don't get.

VIC

I think you need to be deprogrammed.

SHARON

There's no cult, Vic. There's only
God, and his message of Love.

VIC

Love.

SHARON

Love.

VIC

Look, you'll give this up, someday.
I know you, you'll give this up.

SHARON

This is forever.

VIC

Everybody says that.

SHARON

This is different.

VIC

Everybody says that, too.

(He is heading
out the door.)

Sharon, call me when this is over.

SHARON is alone, content.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY INFORMATION OFFICE. DAY.
Go down the rows of computer terminals, hearing other
operators. Stop at SHARON.

SHARON

Hold for the number. Hi. Who's this?
... Hi, Susanna, this is Sharon.
Have you met Jesus? ... Well, I'm
sure you're in a hurry, but don't
you think you could take time out
to get to know your Lord and Savior?

... well okay, well, you have a good day too. What was the number you wanted? Here you go ...

(Pause.)

Hi, this is Sharon. Who's this? Hi, Maria. Have you met God? You have? Isn't He wonderful?

She looks up and sees HENRY, her supervisor.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: TELEPHONE COMPANY. HENRY'S OFFICE. DAY.
The door is closed.

HENRY

You're supposed to spend a maximum of fifteen seconds on each call. Do you know what your average has been?

SHARON

No.

HENRY

Take a guess.

SHARON

Twenty seconds? Twenty-five?

HENRY

Two minutes. You were clocked on one call at seven minutes fifteen.

SHARON

I am just trying to do my job.

HENRY

It seems like you're trying to do two jobs.

SHARON

(a little defiantly)

We only have one job.

HENRY

That's right. And you're not doing the one you're being paid for.

SHARON

Henry, God made me an information operator for a reason. I'm in a position to spread His word to hundreds of people every day, personally. One-to-one.

HENRY

God.

SHARON

I know you can't believe this, but God is coming back to judge the world. And it's important, I have to tell people. We have to prepare for His return.

HENRY takes his time before speaking.

HENRY

When did you first see the light?

SHARON

A few days ago.

HENRY

(neutral)

Mmm-hmm.

SHARON

You don't believe me.

HENRY

Sometimes people have heard about the Pearl and they try to pretend like they've seen it, but you can always tell when they're lying. You just can't fake it.

SHARON

You?

SHARON puts her hand on her heart.

HENRY

When they first meet Him, everyone thinks that Judgement Day is just around the corner. I remember that

feeling very well; it's a powerful feeling. But ... that sense that it's going to happen tomorrow passes when tomorrow comes and He doesn't. And then you understand that those feelings, as powerful as they are, and the dreams, as real as they are, are still just shadows of the real thing, and no one can say how far away that real thing really is.

SHARON

The feeling is so strong.

HENRY studies her.

HENRY

I don't know you, but I know you. A lot of people who have come to God are broken. They've been messed up by life. The unbelievers try to make it seem like there's something wrong with us, that we're stupid, but only the humble hear the voice of God. You're alone, aren't you?

SHARON

(tears forming)

Yes.

HENRY

It's hard at the beginning. You give up your old life, and it's like you've come to a new country. Your old friends can not really be your friends anymore.

SHARON

What do I do?

HENRY

Trust in God, and take it easy on the phones.

SHARON smiles.

SHARON

Who's The Boy?

He looks at her.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: CHURCH. DAY.

A small, spare room. No pews, only a circle of folding chairs. Perhaps twenty people are there. We're watching HENRY and his son, THE BOY, about ten years old. He never speaks out loud; he whispers behind a cupped hand into his father's ear.

On SHARON, across from them, watching.

On THE BOY: he cups a hand and speaks to HENRY. HENRY addresses the room.

HENRY

God is coming back. There are wars
and rumors of wars, and a curse
devours the Earth, and those who
live in it are held guilty.

THE BOY again whispers to his father.

HENRY

We have to wait.

An OLDER WOMAN in the circle.

SHARON

For how long?

THE BOY whispers to his father.

HENRY

Probably a few years. Five years,
six years.

The people in the room hug each other. SHARON gives herself to the hugs and gives hugs. Love without sex.

Dissolve to:

INTERIOR: RANDY'S WORKPLACE.

RANDY sprays coating on a metal gate. SHARON arrives.

SHARON

Hi, Randy.

RANDY

(pretends to struggle
to remember her name)

Ohh, uhh, Sharon. Sharon. How's that
apartment coming? Is it still
unclean?

SHARON

No.

RANDY

So you found your salvation.
Congratulations.

SHARON

I found God.

RANDY

Oh yeah? Is he going to move in, or
did he keep his own place, or are
you going to do that commuting
thing? You've got to watch that;
it's very tough on a relationship.
Why are you here?

They walk into an adjoining woodshop.

SHARON

I know you are as lost as I was,
Randy, and I wanted to tell you that
you could know God. If you just
surrender your pride, you can know
God.

RANDY

Sharon, it's just a drug. Instead of
doing heroin, you're doing God, and
I need sandpaper.

SHARON

Randy, God is real. God is not make-
believe, and you know that. You
don't want to admit that, because
you're afraid.

RANDY

What am I afraid of?

SHARON

What we are all afraid of: God's judgement.

RANDY

No. I'm not.

SHARON

I don't want to lose you.

RANDY

You just want to save my soul.

SHARON

At least you know you have one.

RANDY

I don't want to tell my secrets in church.

SHARON

I'll pray for both of us.

RANDY

You'd stay with me even if I didn't pray?

SHARON kisses RANDY. They hug.

TITLE SUPERIMPOSED: SIX YEARS LATER

INTERIOR: CHURCH. NIGHT.

There are more people in the room now. THE BOY is older now; and although HENRY is beside him, he speaks directly.

THE BOY

So far, we're still in the realm of signs and wonders ... But the Rapture is coming. It says so in the Bible. Our bodies will be transformed into spirit. And then we will be caught

up in a cloud to meet God. The end
is coming soon ... This year ...

RANDY takes SHARON'S hand.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON AND RANDY'S TOWN HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.
The bedroom is now filled with Christian icons. SHARON and
RANDY wake up together, shaken by the same image.

RANDY

Ever since I was a kid, I've had the
feeling that something was going to
happen to me. I always knew that
when it happened, I would recognize
it, and that I wouldn't mistake it
for something else. I wouldn't have
something happen to me and I would
say, this is it! and then later on
say, no, that wasn't it. It was a
secret feeling, and I never told
anybody about it.

SHARON

And what's the feeling now?

RANDY

Something's going to happen.

INTERIOR: RANDY AND SHARON'S KITCHEN. DAY.
SHARON and her daughter, MARY, six years old, sit at the
kitchen table.

MARY

Where's Heaven?

SHARON

It's in the sky.

MARY

Why can't we see it?

SHARON

You will.

MARY

But why can't we see it now?

SHARON

Mary? Do you love Baby Jesus?

MARY

Yes.

SHARON

Then you'll see him really soon.

Slowly dissolve to:

EXTERIOR: SWIMMING POOL. DAY.

We move through the water, and the change from the light is easy, gradual. The water is ethereal; we don't even know this is a pool yet; it could be a body of heavenly water. The calm surface of the pool explodes as a six-year-old-girl, MARY, bursts to the surface. SHARON moves through the water. Her friend PAULA floats on a raft.

PAULA

What does the Bible say?

SHARON

We who are alive who are saved will be taken bodily into Heaven.

PAULA

Ohhh, Sharon ... Sharon ...

SHARON

You can't accept God, can you?

PAULA

No.

SHARON

Well, maybe we should talk about that for a minute.

PAULA

(smiling)

Okay, do you mean that if you're a Christian and you're ironing your

shirts and the Rapture happens,
you'll be taken to Heaven in the
middle of doing the laundry? Or does
God give you time to turn off the
iron, or do your shirts burn?

SHARON
(joking but deadpan)
I wear permanent press.

PAULA
Well, I mean what's supposed to
happen? You are supposed to float
up into the sky?

SHARON
In the twinkling of an eye. The body
will be transformed into spirit. And
there is a warning. If you listen,
if you pray for it. We'll hear the
sound of trumpets, God's angels.

MARY listens.

INTERIOR: RANDY'S WORKPLACE. DAY.
RANDY is now a supervisor in a large insurance office. He is
well groomed; his hair is cut short; he is a few pounds
lighter. Other workers are around. RANDY is arguing with
LOUIS, another worker. A security officer stands behind
RANDY.

RANDY
Louis, I'm trying to say this
without causing you a lot of pain.

LOUIS
Any way you say it, I'm fired,
right?

RANDY
We have struggled together, but, you
have to admit, it hasn't worked out.

LOUIS
That's because I'm not kissing ass
around here, isn't it?

RANDY

Louis, it's because you're not doing your job.

LOUIS

You're not doing your job, banana-head.

RANDY

Louis, we've tried to help you, haven't we?

LOUIS

(crying)

I don't want your fucking help.

RANDY

We took you to a counselor.

LOUIS

You took me to a homo.

RANDY

I took you to an A.A. meeting.

LOUIS

They were a bunch of a-holes. A-holes Anonymous. And you're an a-hole. And I'm tired of kissing your Christian a-hole.

(To the security guard:)

What are you looking at?

RANDY

Louis, I'll pray for you.

LOUIS

(wildly)

Yeah, well, fuck you!

Cut to:

INTERIOR: RANDY AND SHARON'S APARTMENT. DAY.
MARY and her parents, RANDY and SHARON, hold hands in a circle. This is a happy family.

INTERIOR: RANDY'S WORKPLACE. DAY.

We hear a blast. We see RANDY in his office at the corner of a hall. There are two bodies in the hall, and LOUIS walks down it with a gun. RANDY gets up from his desk and starts to come out. As he does, LOUIS shoots into an office. LOUIS goes into another office, and we hear two more shotgun blasts. RANDY is now out of his office and turning down the empty hall when LOUIS comes back into the hall.

RANDY

Louis.

LOUIS

No speeches, preacher.

RANDY

I have a little girl.

LOUIS

So what?

And he blasts RANDY.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON AND RANDY'S TOWN HOUSE. DAY.

MARY opens the front door.

MARY

Come in.

The living room is filled with friends who have brought food to SHARON. MARY and other children play. SHARON talks to PAULA on a balcony.

PAULA

You see, now's one of those times when I wish I was a believer.

SHARON

Why?

PAULA

Because I would have a rock to stand on, because I could tell myself that everything was for the better

because God has a plan.

SHARON

But it is, because He does.

PAULA

It is so hard for me, Sharon. I try to resist it as much as possible.

SHARON

So you do feel something tugging at you, don't you?

PAULA

I tell myself it's just conditioning, it's how I was raised. I tell myself that if we didn't tell our children about God, they wouldn't ask. It is a story we tell ourselves so everything makes sense.

SHARON

It's not.

PAULA

But how do you know?

SHARON

The Bible.

PAULA

Don't tell me the Bible.

SHARON

It's a question of faith.

PAULA

So there's no proof?

SHARON

Paula, the universe you live in is cold and filled with empty space. The universe I live in is filled with God.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: SHARON AND RANDY'S TOWN HOUSE. NIGHT.
SHARON and MARY kneel at MARY'S bed, praying.

MARY
Will we see Daddy again?

SHARON
Yes.

MARY
When we die?

SHARON
Or when God takes us to Heaven.

MARY
When the Rapture comes, does that
mean we die?

SHARON
Not exactly.

MARY
So you can go to Heaven without
dying?

SHARON
Yeah.

MARY
But if you die, you can still go to
Heaven.

SHARON
Yes.

MARY
So Daddy is going to Heaven.

SHARON
No, Daddy's already in Heaven.

MARY
If we pray to Daddy, can he hear us?

SHARON
Well, we pray to God, and God tells
Daddy what we're saying. That way he
can hear everything.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: MINIMALL STAIRCASE. DAY.
SHARON comes down the stairs and stops.

Pull back to reveal:

We are outside a Photolab in a corner pod mall. SHARON walks into view, looking at the snapshots of America rolling off the printer.

In the photographs, we see RANDY wearing the clothes in which he died, and he's trying to reach her, trying to say something to her. Her husband appears improbably in a picture at the beach, standing behind a typical family. Then RANDY is pictured in the desert, standing on a tall rock pile, his arm raised, calling her to him. He's pleading with her.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: CHURCH. DAY.
The room is filled; people are standing on chairs at the wall. There's still a circle in the middle, but it's smaller. HENRY and THE BOY are flanked by the two EVANGELISTS. SHARON is across from them, with MARY. Now THE BOY speaks.

THE BOY

This is from the Book of Revelation, chapter 12, verse 6. It says, "And the woman fled into the desert where she had a place prepared for her by God." Is anyone else getting visions that tell us we have to go to the desert?

SHARON

You don't believe me.

THE BOY

I do.

SHARON

What does it mean?

THE BOY

You're the only one who can hear these calls. It could be Satan.

SHARON

I don't think so.

THE BOY

Then God wants you for His special purpose.

SHARON

Please, come with me.

THE BOY

We haven't been invited.

SHARON wants to cry. She gets up and takes Mary's hand. The crowd parts for her, making a path to the door. She starts walking toward it, about ten feet.

SHARON

But I'm scared.

THE BOY

Don't ask God to meet you halfway.

SHARON

What does that mean?

THE BOY shakes his head no.

HENRY

(to THE BOY)

What does that mean?

THE BOY shakes his head. No, he won't answer. SHARON is scared. She opens the door.

EXTERIOR: OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. SUNSET.

SHARON and MARY are framed in the church door, the faithful behind them. They walk out into the sunset.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: SHARON AND RANDY'S TOWN HOUSE. DAY.
SHARON is packing a sports bag while PAULA watches her.
PAULA is desperate. SHARON is calm. SHARON holds up a few of
MARY'S dresses while she studies the clothes in her closet.
PAULA has a shopping bag filled with food.

PAULA
Sharon, you can't just leave like
this.

SHARON
Yes, I can. God is calling me.

PAULA
No, no, no ... Sharon ... what
about Mary?

SHARON
God is calling her too.

PAULA
Why don't you sell the house? You
can't just walk away from it.

SHARON
Of course, I can. There's a better
house waiting for me. God is
building me a mansion, right now.
What should I wear?

She takes out a few dresses.

PAULA
God won't come, the bank will own
your home, and what are you going to
do then?

SHARON
I'm going to Heaven, Paula. I'm
going to Heaven. Mary and I are
going to Heaven. And we'll wear
these dresses, together, when we
finally meet God. Randy always liked
this dress. I'll wear it for him.
I'll be seeing him soon. And he
always loved to see Mary in this.

PAULA sits on the bed.

PAULA

Don't you get a white robe and wings?

SHARON

Angels don't have wings. And I don't know about the robes. I don't know what they wear, but I guess I'll find out.

SHARON packs a sweater.

PAULA

Then what's the sweater for?

SHARON

It gets cold at night in the desert.

PAULA

Winter is coming. You'll need more than a sweater.

SHARON

He's taking us soon, very soon.

PAULA

How do you know?

SHARON

He told me.

PAULA

Sharon, Sharon, listen to me. I don't know if you can hear me, but listen to me. You need food.

SHARON

Not that much.

PAULA

You need a tent. I don't want you guys sleeping out in the car. Okay. Candle, matches, flashlight.

PAULA pulls the named items out of the bag.

SHARON

Thank you, Paula.

PAULA

You need something else. You can't go out to the desert alone, there's a lot of creeps out there, Sharon, and a woman alone, I'm scared.

SHARON

God will take care of us.

PAULA

Maybe. Insurance.

She takes out a small handgun.

SHARON

Oh, Paula, no.

PAULA

You don't have to use it. But you have to take it. And you can bring it back to me when you come home.

SHARON holds PAULA'S hand, and she looks at the gun.

SHARON

I'm not coming home.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. DAY.

SHARON and MARY drive into a campground somewhere in the high desert. There are Joshua trees, yuccas, and large rocks and rock piles.

MARY

Mom?

SHARON

Yes, Mary.

MARY

This doesn't look like Heaven, Mom.

SHARON

This isn't Heaven, honey.

MARY

Then why stop here?

SHARON

Think of Heaven as a great big hotel
or a big office building.

MARY

Yeah.

SHARON

Well, this is the lobby, this is
where we have to wait.

MARY

For what?

SHARON

The elevator.

Another car pulls up.

Dissolve to:

INTERIOR: TENT. NIGHT.

SHARON and MARY sleeping. We go into SHARON'S dream. She is
dreaming of the Pearl.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. DAY.

ROCK CLIMBERS are high on the sheer face of a rock wall.
MARY watches them. One CLIMBER rappels down the rock and
lands beside them. He is lean, muscular, cool.

MARY

Are you waiting for God, too?

CLIMBER

Oh, is that what you guys are doing
here?

MARY

God is coming back.

CLIMBER

Sounds good.

MARY

He really is.

CLIMBER

Okay.

MARY

He's coming tomorrow.

SHARON

No, soon, Mary. He's coming soon.

They look up at the sky.

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. NIGHT.
SHARON puts MARY to sleep in the tent.

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. LATE DAY.
There isn't much food left or water. We hear a loud siren.
SHARON grabs MARY. MARY grabs for her toy panda.

SHARON

That's it! That's it, Mary, here it
comes, here it is, he's calling us,
come on, hurry, hurry ...

She runs with MARY up a rock formation, higher and higher.
The sound continues. MARY drops her panda and screams out:

MARY

Panda!

SHARON

Mary, come on ...

MARY

No, Panda!

SHARON scrambles back to get the doll. It is out of reach.
She gets it. MARY hugs her panda, and they continue on up
the rock until we have a good view of the whole campground.

EXTERIOR: TOP OF ROCK PILE. DAY.

The horn is still loud and clear. SHARON holds MARY, their faces lifted to the sky, waiting for the Rapture. We see a CLIMBER running across the parking lot to his car. He turns off the alarm, and the sound stops. SHARON remains frozen for a second; then she sits down. For the first time, we see real doubt and the beginning of defeat. MARY starts to cry.

MARY

I miss my Daddy.

SHARON

Honey, I miss your Daddy, too.

MARY

I want to see him again.

SHARON

You will, you will see him in Heaven.

MARY

Why can't we go to Heaven? Mommy, I want to go to Heaven.

SHARON

We have to wait until God calls us.

MARY

Did God call Daddy? When you die is that when God calls you?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY

Then I want to die.

SHARON

No, sweetie, no.

MARY

You want to go to Heaven, don't you?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY

And you believe that when we die
we'll go to Heaven, because we're
saved, right?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY

Then why can't we just die and go
there really quickly and be with
Daddy again? Why do we have to stay
here and just hang around and wait
for God? Come on, Mom, let's die.

SHARON puts her arm around her. She is too young to really
understand what she's asking for.

SHARON

Let's give God one more chance.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. DAY.

A county sheriff's car drives into the campground. FOSTER
MADISON gets out of it. MARY and SHARON pray at a picnic
bench. Something about SHARON attracts him. He could be hard,
but he is curious, soft.

FOSTER

Howdy.

SHARON

Hello.

FOSTER

I'm Foster Madison.

SHARON

Sharon. And Mary.

FOSTER crouches to be closer to MARY.

FOSTER

Oh yeah? I have a sister named Mary.
She's all grown-up now.

MARY

Are you with God?

FOSTER
I'm with the sheriff.

MARY
We're waiting for our father.

FOSTER
Where is he?

MARY
Heaven.

FOSTER
Don't you go to school?

MARY
I don't have to go to school.

FOSTER looks at SHARON.

SHARON
I'm not asking you to understand, or
to have faith, but the end of the
world is coming, and we're a lot
safer out here.

MARY walks away.

FOSTER
Well, there's a two-week limit on
staying here.

SHARON
Is that a limit on how long I can
stay in the park, or how long I can
use this campsite?

FOSTER
Actually, it's just a limit on how
long you can use this particular
campsite.

SHARON
(points to different
campsites)
So if I move over there, or over
there, or over there ... I can stay

for another two weeks.

FOSTER wants to be fair; he sees a woman in need.

FOSTER
Technically. I can't stop you.

SHARON
Thank you.

FOSTER
Could I ask you a question?

SHARON
Sure.

FOSTER
Is this good for your little girl?

SHARON
Have you been saved?

FOSTER
No.

SHARON
Do you know what that means?

FOSTER
Yeah.

SHARON
Would you like to be?

FOSTER
Oh yeah, yeah sure, who wouldn't.

SHARON
Why is it so hard for you to pray?

FOSTER
You have to surrender to God, don't you?

SHARON
(not fully certain)
That's right.

FOSTER
It's in my training. I don't give

up my gun.

SHARON
But you'd like to believe.

FOSTER
That these are the last days?

SHARON
You know they are. God is coming
back to judge the world. A lot of
people are going to suffer.

FOSTER
I hope that's not true; but if
there's no law against it, my hands
are tied.

SHARON smiles a little.

SHARON
I bet with a little prayer you'd be
on my side in an hour.

FOSTER
Well, then it's time for me to go.
Watch out for the coyotes.
(To MARY:)
Good-bye.

MARY
Good-bye.

FOSTER gets back into his car. When he is gone, SHARON
breaks down and cries.

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. NIGHT.
The moon is behind clouds. Wind pulls at the tent flaps.

INTERIOR: TENT. NIGHT.
The camera moves toward SHARON. We're getting inside her
dream again. Brief glimpses of an orgy.

INTERIOR: SHARON'S DREAM.
The Pearl recedes, gets smaller, and finally disappears.
Blackness.

MARY
(voice-over)
Mom ... Mommy ...

INTERIOR: TENT. NIGHT.
SHARON wakes up; her eyes are hollow. MARY is awake.

MARY
Mom ...

SHARON
(lost)
What?

MARY
Mom, I'm hungry.

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. DAY.
SHARON looks through trash cans. No food. She turns the
water jugs upside down. No water. MARY watches her.

MARY
You said we'd give him one more
chance.

SHARON
(impatient)
Who?

MARY
God. You said you'd give God one
more chance, and if we didn't get
the Rapture that we could die.
That's what you said. You promised.

SHARON
(gently avoiding
the question)
Baby ...

MARY

Don't you believe in God?

SHARON Yes.

MARY

Don't you love God? Then why can't we just go to God? Go now. Now.

SHARON doesn't answer immediately.

SHARON

(the implications
are frightening)

One more chance.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: DESERT CAMPGROUND. NIGHT.

A motorcycle comes into the campground. SHARON and MARY are in the tent. SHARON pokes her head out. The motorcycle comes closer. SHARON gets out.

FOSTER, out of uniform, is on the motorcycle.

FOSTER

I ... I was in the neighborhood.

SHARON

And you thought you'd come by for a cup of sugar.

FOSTER

No. Actually, I came to bring you this.

He reaches into his pack for a blanket. He hands it to her.

SHARON

We have sleeping bags.

FOSTER

Yeah, I know, I, it's just that sometimes you want to sit on the ground, you don't want to get dirty, it s nice to have a blanket.

SHARON

Thank you.

FOSTER

I, I brought your little girl a candy bar. I know moms are worried about cavities, so if you don't want to give it to her, you know, I'll understand.

SHARON

I'll give it to her.

FOSTER

You can share it.

SHARON

Thanks.

He wants to talk. He looks at her.

FOSTER

Well, I'll check up on you again sometime, if that's okay.

SHARON

Thank you.

And he rides away. She returns to the tent.

INTERIOR: TENT. NIGHT.

Close on MARY. She cries out in her sleep.

MARY

Mom! You have to make up your mind, now! Gabriel is coming, Mom, Gabriel is coming.

(She wakes up, and she is in a kind of trance, staring at her mother, afraid for her.)

He's God, Mom, He's God. Don't ask God to meet you halfway.

(A final cry.)

Mommy!

SHARON

Wake up, Mary, wake up. It's okay,

baby, it's okay.

MARY wakes up, and she cries deeply. Her face tells us everything: she has given up hope.

SHARON

Come on, baby, you're just hungry;
we'll get something to eat. Come on,
let's go to town.

MARY

No, we can't leave.

SHARON

Yes, we can.

MARY

But we don't need any food. God will
give us food when we get to Heaven.
I'll be in Heaven tonight. There was
a river. And I was in Heaven.

SHARON

Where was I?

MARY

You were there.

SHARON

Good.

MARY

Sort of. You were there, but only
sort of.

SHARON tries to make sense of this. She can't; she's too tired right now for tests of faith. She smiles and looks her daughter in the eye.

SHARON

It's almost morning. As soon as the
sun comes up, we'll go get something
to eat.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: JACK IN THE BOX DRIVE-THRU LINE. DAY.

SHARON is at the pick-up window. The food order is put out for her. The CASHIER waits for the money. Behind him is the MANAGER.

CASHIER
Eleven dollars and twenty-eight cents, please.

SHARON looks at him. He knows what the look means.

CASHIER
Oh, no you don't.

SHARON quickly grabs the food and drives away.

CASHIER
Call the police.

MANAGER
No.

CASHIER
Why not?

MANAGER
She had a kid.

INTERIOR: CAR. DAY.

SHARON returns to the Joshua tree campsite. MARY devours her burger and fries. SHARON'S face is set. She is on the other side of something powerful.

EXTERIOR: CAR. DAY.

SHARON drives down a road.

EXTERIOR: BURNED HILL. LATE AFTERNOON.

SHARON and MARY walk up the hillside. MARY kneels and clutches her toy panda. SHARON stands behind her.

SHARON
Do you love me?

MARY

Yes.

SHARON

Do you love Jesus?

MARY

Yes.

SHARON

You know, in Heaven there's Jesus
and Baby Jesus, together, and Baby
Jesus has the special job, has the
special job

(breaking down)

of looking out for all the children.
Mary, do you love Baby Jesus?

MARY

Yes.

SHARON

It's not fair to make you pay
because I'm lost. If God loves us,
He'll understand. We're going to
Heaven now.

MARY

We're going together?

SHARON

Together.

Now we see the gun that PAULA gave her before she left home.
The sun is going down.

MARY

And Daddy? Daddy's in Heaven.

SHARON

(this thought
comforts her)

Daddy. We'll see Daddy. Yes. And
we'll be together forever because
nothing is broken in Heaven. I love
you.

MARY

Daddy.

SHARON

You have to love God, Mary, do you
love God?

MARY

Yes.

MARY makes a face as though she's about to enter icy water. With her panda tucked under her arm, she clasps her hands in prayer even harder.

SHARON

Tell Him that. Don't be afraid.

SHARON pulls the trigger, and the gun fires. MARY is dead.

SHARON takes the gun and puts it to her head.

She holds the gun. We watch. We wait. Will she? Can she? She empties the gun into the air, screams at the sky; then she sits down on the ground; then she lies down beside MARY and goes to sleep.

Fade-out.

Fade-in:

EXTERIOR: BURNED HILL. LATER. NIGHT.

SHARON places a cross on the panda on top of the grave and then gets up. She walks away, empty.

We hear hoofbeats, one horse, distant. The sound gets louder.

INTERIOR: SHARON'S CAR. NIGHT.

SHARON speeds down the highway, and everywhere she looks she sees a white horse flashing in her vision.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: FREEWAY. NIGHT.

SHARON keeps speeding. The white horse is gone. And then the red lights of a sheriff's police car appear in the mirror. The siren is close. She is sure she has been caught. She

pulls over. The sheriff's OFFICER MADISON from the campground. He shines his searchlight on SHARON'S car. Then he walks to the car and knocks on her window.

FOSTER

Could you get out of the car, please?

SHARON gets out of the car.

FOSTER

What happened to God?

(He can see she is
in some kind of
distress.)

What's wrong?

She doesn't answer.

FOSTER

I have to see your license and
registration, please.

SHARON

They're in the car.

She gets them. She holds the license and registration out in her hand.

FOSTER

Thank you. Could you step over into
the light, please?

He takes the identification and goes back to his bike. SHARON nods yes. He studies the license. We look at him for a moment. He is not a bad man, and he is studying SHARON, less as another speeder than as a woman in obvious trouble.

In the beginning, SHARON is catatonic; her answers are short and sparse. As FOSTER continues to press her, she starts to unravel. She realizes what she has done.

FOSTER

Here. Where's your little girl?

SHARON

She's with God.

FOSTER

She died?

SHARON

Yes.

FOSTER

Mary.

SHARON

Yes.

FOSTER

How?

SHARON

I killed her. I was going to kill myself too, but you can't get into Heaven if you kill yourself. You can get into Heaven if somebody else kills you but not if you kill yourself. Life is some kind of punishment, isn't it? You have to go through with it, even when you know what life is for.

FOSTER

What is life for?

SHARON

Ask God.

FOSTER

What does he say?

SHARON

I think He says that, basically, you have to love Him, no matter what. But I don't love Him, not anymore. He has too many rules. He told me to meet Him in the desert. And I did and I waited. He didn't come. He broke His promise. He let me kill my little girl. And He still expects me to love Him? I'm afraid of Hell, so I have to wait out my life, waiting for God. Now: He'll forgive me and He'll let me join my daughter and my husband in Heaven, but first I have to say I love Him. You can send me to the gas chamber, and if I let God into my

heart before I die, then I can go to Heaven, because God is merciful. How fast was I going?

FOSTER

A hundred miles an hour.

SHARON

A hundred miles an hour. If I had gone off a bridge and died, would I have gone to Heaven?

FOSTER

I don't know.

SHARON

Neither do I.

Dissolve to:

INTERIOR: PRISON. DAY.

A guard leads SHARON down a row of cells. A door is opened and then locked behind her. A woman on the next bed is reading the Bible, and when she lowers the book, we see it is ANGIE, the swinger with the tattoo. SHARON says nothing to her.

ANGIE

I know you. I should be embarrassed to even tell you where we met, but I'm not ashamed, I'm not ashamed of anything anymore, I found God, God found me. I was preaching the word of God at a shopping mall in Palm Springs, and they had me kicked out. So I went back in, and they had me arrested. Have you heard the word of God?

(No reply.)

It's the greatest gift of all time. You have to trust completely in God. He'll forgive all your sins.

SHARON

Who forgives God?

And she turns away from her.

Fade-out.

INTERIOR: PRISON CELL. NIGHT.

SHARON hears a sound from her cell. A flaming sword slices the air. The sword stops flaming when it cuts through the air. The sword is held by the ARCHANGEL MICHAEL. ANGIE sleeps.

Another angel drifts into this scene outside the cell. MARY appears dressed as she was when she died.

MARY

(sincerely, with a
little difficulty)

God is coming back, Mommy. There are wars and rumors of wars, Mommy, and a curse devours the Earth, and those who live in it are held guilty.

SHARON

He said He was going to take us to Heaven.

MARY

Mother, listen to me. The living outnumber the dead. The Armies of the Lord are waiting for the Day of Judgement. Don't you still love God, Mommy?

SHARON

He left us, alone, in the desert. He let me kill you.

MARY

Do you still love Him?

SHARON

How can I love a God who let me kill my baby?

MARY

God loves you because you love Him.

SHARON

Why?

MARY

I know you want me back, but I can't
come back, Mommy. I'm dead.

SHARON looks as they vanish, then, after a beat, looks down.

Cut to:

INTERIOR: PRISON. NIGHT.

We move through the cells. A trumpet plays one long,
extended note. The prisoners look outside.

ANGIE

That's the first call. It's Gabriel
blowing his trumpet. There will be
six more calls. We have until the
last call to repent. After that,
it's too late. After that, it's too
late.

We hear the hoofbeats again, getting louder. People look up.
The sound seems to be in the middle of the room. The sound
of the hoofbeats is impossibly loud, and we see on the TV
screen the faint image of a white horse over a ballgame.
Then the game disappears, and we see the feet of the horse.

ANGIE

It's God. He's giving us a last
chance to save ourselves. At war,
the First Horseman of the
Apocalypse.

The horse is replaced by a trumpet. The channels are changed,
and the golden trumpet blowing the pure tone is seen across
every channel. It is a long trumpet raised high before a
deep blue background. A hand holds the trumpet, but we don't
see the angel's face. ANGIE begins to sing:

ANGIE

(sings)

Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;

With th' angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

As she sings, the trumpet sounds again. The hoofbeats grow. The blast gets louder. Prison bars start to collapse. All of the bars fall out of the walls, collapse to the floor with a great noise. Women step slowly out of their cells. A helicopter sounds in the background. Everyone sits quietly. No one knows what to say.

ANGIE

What more do you need?

SHARON

Get out of here.

ANGIE leaves. SHARON is alone in the cell. FOSTER walks down the corridor.

SHARON

What are you doing here?

FOSTER

I want to know what happens next.

SHARON

Are you scared?

FOSTER

I don't know. I never had any faith.
But you did.

SHARON

Yep.

FOSTER

So?

SHARON

So.

FOSTER

Well, if the world is coming to an
end, this isn't the place to be.
Let's go.

EXTERIOR: ROAD. DAY.

SHARON rides behind FOSTER on his motorcycle.

Hoofbeats are closer. The red horse ridden by a rider wielding a long sword chases them. The rider holds a pair of scales. The trumpet continues to sound.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: THE ROAD. NIGHT.

SHARON and FOSTER are on the bike. The night sky is filled with the image of a huge bull ridden by a ghostly woman holding an immense candelabra.

Cut to:

EXTERIOR: FARTHER DOWN THE ROAD. DUSK.

The motorcycle comes to the crest of a hill.

Smoke surrounds the two. It is impossible to go ahead. They stop driving. The smoke obscures everything now. Hoofbeats. The world is dissolving. The FOURTH HORSEMAN, DEATH, riding the pale horse, appears in the fog of smoke and comes slowly toward them.

SHARON and FOSTER get off their motorbike and watch the horseman. Then, they begin to rise slowly into the smoke. She doesn't want this.

SHARON

No! No, I don't want to go.

(To FOSTER:)

Don't let me go. No!

They disappear into the smoke.

Dissolve to:

EXTERIOR: LIMBO. NIGHT.

We are in the dark. The noise has stopped. Then we see them, barely lit, a hint of something like moonlight on them. A voice, MARY'S:

MARY

Mom?

(MARY walks out of
the darkness. She is
beside them, holding
her panda.)

Hi, Mom.

FOSTER

Is this Hell?

SHARON

(tenderly)

Hello, Mary.

SHARON walks to her, but MARY is just out of reach and
stays there.

FOSTER

That's your daughter.

SHARON

Mary? Where are you?

MARY

I'm here.

SHARON

Where are we?

MARY

You know when you hear those songs
about the river that washes away all
your sins? Well, here it is. Heaven
is on the other side of the river.

FOSTER

We're in Heaven. Why are we in
Heaven?

MARY

You're not in Heaven. Heaven is
over there.

She points to the distance, into the darkness.

FOSTER

I can't see it.

MARY

It's there. If you love God, it's there. Foster. Do you love God for giving you the gift of life?

FOSTER
(whispers)

Yes.

Then he smiles, and then he disappears.

SHARON
No!

MARY
Mommy! Gabriel is coming. You have to make up your mind.

SHARON
There's nothing more to say. Take me to God, Mary. I have to speak to Him.

MARY
You have to love God.

SHARON
I love you, Mary.

MARY
That isn't enough.

SHARON
Baby, it's all I have. If life is a gift, if it really is a gift, and there really is a Heaven ...

MARY
There really is a Heaven.

SHARON
Then why should I thank Him for the gift of so much suffering, Mary, so much pain on the Earth that He created. Let me ask Him why?

MARY
Tell God you love Him.

SHARON

I can't.

MARY

If you don't tell God that you love
Him, you can't go to Heaven. Tell
God that you love Him. Mommy!

SHARON

No.

And then we hear Gabriel's final call. Gabriel's melody is like the infinite regression of an image in parallel mirrors, and the melody stretches into the end of time. While they listen, a gold light, as though a sun is setting, fills SHARON'S face. MARY takes her hand and stands beside her. The gold light shines on both of them.

MARY

Do you see Heaven?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY

Isn't it beautiful?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY lets go of SHARON.

MARY

Do you know how long you have to
stay here?

SHARON

Yes.

MARY fades away.

MARY

How long?

And to the darkness, SHARON says:

SHARON

Forever.

She is alone. We pull back.

