

THE SHADOWS

by

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story by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ARIZONA - APACHE LAKE - CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

SUPER: Apache Lake, Arizona

A sweltering hot August night and a YOUNG BOY (5) wanders out of a tent and over to a food cooler.

He flips open the lid and grabs a juice bar. Popping the lid back on, he plops himself down on it.

While he savors his late night snack, SOUNDS of nature attract his momentary notice before he focuses on kinetic colored lights descending from the heavens.

METEORS.

EXT. ARIZONA - APACHE LAKE - CANYON - NIGHT

An impact fire blazes up the hillside, fed by the dry summer heat and overgrown underbrush.

Cresting the rise, the ROARING conflagration breaks fast toward the lights of the campground.

EXT. ARIZONA - APACHE LAKE - CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

A large rattlesnake slithers through the campground, escaping the fire's INTENSE RADIANCE.

Catching the Young Boy's attention, the kid hurries after the rattler.

Alarmed at a new threat the rattler coils and HISSES a warning at the Young Boy. It's RATTLE flashes danger.

As he reaches for the coiled snake, the fire clears the forest behind him and casts the Young Boy's Shadow across the reptile as it strikes.

KABOOM!

Rattlesnake blood and goo explode over the screaming Young Boy.

EXT. ARIZONA - APACHE LAKE - CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

A FIREFIGHTER rushes toward the flames. Spotting the Young Boy in the path of the growing inferno, he rushes forward to save the child.

The Young Boy's Shadow grows as the flames approach.

A moment later, the firefighter steps into the Young Boy's Shadow.

KABOOM!

Google Earth lifts up from the conflagration and America's landscapes pass below until the Pacific Ocean comes into view. It repositions above...

EXT. PHOENIX'S/TUC'S HOUSE - MORNING

A small house up from the surf at the base of a trailhead leading into the Santa Monica mountains.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - MORNING

Off a trailhead sits an old beach house.

SUPER: Santa Monica, California

Inside, the casual messiness of men greets us.

LIVING ROOM

An eclectic collection of items litter the room: free hand weights casually tossed on a tome titled 'Gravitation' on a chair, a worn picture book of Ancient Native American Art, opened to a mosaic of cultural rituals.

DINING ROOM

Across the table, a complex of laptops, broadcasting equipment, pizza boxes, a stash of superhero comics and a 'Final Notice' Internet bill.

ON THE COUCH

PHOENIX (26), an easy-going, clean-cut powerful Caucasian / Native American man, whose open farm-boy face hides the heart of an adventurer, sets the stopwatch and radio functions on his Fitbit.

Strapping on bike shoes, he pauses to listen to a popular morning news broadcast. The man's inflections suggest a mystery more than the usual tragedy of a brush fire.

NEWS (V.O.)

...a fire set off by the summer heatwave across the southwest appears to have claimed the lives of a team of firefighters and a family of campers. A storm front moving into the area has hampered...

Phoenix grabs his backpack and as he heads out the door, the broadcast fades out.

EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - MORNING

Astride his high-end mountain bike, Phoenix summons his playful athletic herd dog, MR. FINCH.

When Phoenix takes off, Mr. Finch tugs at his pant's leg. His departure grinds to a halt.

PHOENIX

Blackmail, aye?

The happy dog appears to nod in agreement.

Phoenix fishes a treat from his pocket and tosses it to Mr. Finch, who wolfs it down.

They hit a rugged trail leading into the mountains.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - TRAILS - MORNING

A dawn mist clears and sunlight glints over the ocean.

Rough mountain trails pass below.

A news broadcast raises concern over a serious breach of international law.

NEWS (V.O.)

-- China denies sinking a Portuguese oil tanker entering the South China Sea but warns of the most severe of consequences if ships transit without permission.

The President rejects China's demands and has called back the seventh fleet to investigate and enforce freedom of navigation.

Phoenix rips across the trails. Long morning Shadows crisscross his path.

As he summits the plateau before Griffith Observatory, an unearthly reverberation of CHIMES resonates.

The sun glints off a sign reading: GRIFFITH PARK OBSERVATORY

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - FRONT LAWN - DAY

On several acres of manicured lawn stretching out before the observatory domes, Phoenix stops at the foot of a monolith honoring the giants of science.

Eerie VIBRATIONS draw his attention to a strange broken crystal dangling from a sundial.

Mr. Finch WHIMPERS then races across the lawn toward the observatory steps.

Curious, Phoenix reaches for it. A jagged fragment slices his hand. He winces, brings his palm to his mouth, and licks off the blood.

In the sunlight, the crystal shifts through a kaleidoscope of colors.

A BUS

pulls up at the drop-off zone near the monolith. Words stamped on the side of the bus read: WESTWOOD SCHOOL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A compassionate special needs TEACHER (60s), herds a ragtag group of misfits and child geniuses from the bus. She motions for the children to line up for a count.

One of them, EMMA (10), a bright endearing girl with awkward social skills pans her cellphone's video across the venue.

Reveal: (she cursed with the frightening gift of second sight)

PHOENIX

in pain, shakes his sliced hand and hops about.

PHOENIX

Damn!

Self-conscious, he glances around and regards the young girl filming in his direction. He turns his hop into a crazy Indian war dance, WHOOPING around the monolith.

From across the lawn, the OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR (late 70s), a small ruddy faced man inching toward the grave, with the demeanor of a born bureaucrat scowls at Phoenix's antics.

Nearby, Emma GIGGLES. Phoenix bows to her. He turns and removes a bright RED POSTIT-NOTE attached to the crystal.

He stares at the peculiar cryptic message in a child's handwriting that reads: WE ARE ALIVE

As he holds up the crystal against the sun, it appears to pulse with life.

Phoenix pockets the curiosity and the note and carries on to the observatory steps, where he secures his bike.

Mr. Finch paws at his master's leg. Phoenix bends down and rubs Mr. Finch's ears.

PHOENIX

Sorry boy. You wanted to come... Go harass a squirrel.

Mr. Finch watches his master disappear through the giant entry and into the observatory.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Emma breaks away from her school mates and races around the monolith acting like a crazy young spirited kid.

She halts before one of the figures carved into the statue, places her hand on it and SCREAMS out.

EMMA

Newton! Gravity!

She takes off again circling the monolith, WHOOPING it up. She rushes toward a second famous carved figure.

The Observatory Director steps in front of Emma.

She crashes into him.

He squints with disapproval over his glasses.

OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR
 Little girl, there's no running on
 the lawn...

The Director's harassment freaks out Emma and she curls up shaking on the ground, confused by the angry man.

EMMA
 (screams)
 No! No! No! No! No!

The Director feels the CROWD'S disquiet at the young girl's trauma.

Bad karma creeping up the Director's ass jerks him into full extraction mode. He hesitates with his next words as the crowd coalesces in disapproval.

OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR
 Just slow down.

As Emma's Teacher rushes over to comfort the young girl, the Director slithers away toward the observatory, in silence.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - EAST WING - DAY

A giant rotunda with a massive pendulum greets a crowd of visitors.

Phoenix exits a maintenance room. A door sign reads: Danger - High Voltage

Annoyed SPECTATORS crowd around the TESLA Coil exhibit where a sign reads: Next Showing 9:00 AM

The Observatory Director squints with disapproval over his glasses when he spots Phoenix.

A wall clock reads 9:10 AM.

With a crazed sense of urgency, Phoenix forces his way through the throng.

PHOENIX
 Stand back.

An unnoticed backpack on the floor trips Phoenix. With some fancy footwork, he saves squashing a cadre of SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS.

Emma videos the encounter.

She CLAPS and SCREAMS in glee at Phoenix's wild dance.

Phoenix picks up the backpack and notices painted symbols, faces, and words splashed across it.

He spies similar colorful, glittering markings crisscrossing Emma's arms. He realizes who the backpack belongs to and hands it to her.

She grabs Phoenix's shirt.

EMMA

Is this how the cars work?

Phoenix falters in thought, then smiles.

PHOENIX

Yes, you have to keep your feet insulated or you're toast.

Emma won't release her grip.

Phoenix ferries the young girl to a panel and motions to a big button.

When she reaches for it, he stops her.

PHOENIX

(dramatic)

Wait. We need protection.

The CROWD takes a step back.

A bewildered Emma shifts her attention from Phoenix to the faces on her arm. Her fingers run along different emotional Emoji faces before stopping on one.

EMMA

Angry?

Phoenix hides a smile before moving her hand to the image of someone laughing.

PHOENIX

(sotto voce)

Humor.

Emma smiles.

Phoenix yanks a handmade tin foil hat off the wall and plops it onto her head.

He fastens his own foil-covered bike helmet to his head.

The Crowd takes another step back.

Phoenix grabs Emma's reluctant hand and guides it to the big button on the wall.

OMG! The crack of thunder SNAPS and BOOMS throughout the structure.

Lightning bolts leap out from the giant transformer in search of prey. An acidic stench permeates the air.

Neon-colored lights spelling T.E.S.L.A. go supernova.

PHOENIX
(in faked horror)
Something's wrong.

Emma SHRIEKS.

Spectators disperse in SCREAMING panic. Phoenix moves Emma's hand off the button. The THUNDERING chaos goes silent.

Phoenix's hearty LAUGH fills the exhibit.

Phoenix motions the people back. Apprehensive, some timidly approach.

PHOENIX
Hear that?

He pushes the button again, and the crackling of THUNDER resonates.

PHOENIX
Those are voices from another dimension.

EMMA
What are they saying?

PHOENIX
The language, I don't know... Telsa believed we could travel to this other world. And his contemporary, H. G. Wells --

EMMA
-- You mean The War of the Worlds... Martians?

In a spooky voice, he leans forward.

PHOENIX
No one would have believed that this world was being watched by an intelligence greater than man's --

EMMA

-- what about girl's?

A broad grin glows on Phoenix's face, as he wonders if this young girl was taking the piss out of him.

PHOENIX

Who knows... He didn't say.

Emma's Teacher motions for Emma.

PHOENIX

Later Chaos.

Emma smiles.

EMMA

Liar!

Emma skips over to join her group.

Concern comes over Phoenix as he regards this unusual collection of kids.

Emma's Teacher casts a warm expression and walks over.

TEACHER

Thank you, she doesn't usually take to people.

She returns to her charges.

Phoenix moves off down the hall past an annoyed Observatory Director.

OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR

I'm not pleased... not pleased at all.

PHOENIX (V.O.)

Guess that Euthanasia Bill didn't pass...

Phoenix flashes a broad smile.

PHOENIX

Just giving the people a show they'll remember.

Phoenix merges with a crowd moving away from the Director and toward a sign that reads: LOWER LEVEL

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

A CROWD huddles around a female LECTURER (20s).

A BORED MAN'S eyes glaze over like the walking dead while the scholarly talk on meteors drones on.

LECTURER

...and this meteorite fragment has traveled a long way... all the way from Mars to reach here...

The Crowd turns to a commotion in the back.

Phoenix, in a full hazmat suit, extends a metallic probe and pushes his way through the Crowd. A loud CLICKING registers alarm.

PHOENIX

Danger. Stand back.

Like the parting of the Red Sea, they give him a wide berth.

He leans forward. His extended hand trembles as he reaches toward the Mars rock.

The Geiger counter goes crazy.

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

With concern, he swivels to face the Crowd.

PHOENIX

Anyone dizzy or nauseous? Anyone a doctor?

A KID present at the Tesla exhibit recognizes Phoenix's routine and collapses on the floor, shaking violently.

The Bored Man MOANS, clutches his chest, and staggers back.

Phoenix LAUGHS and grabs the man's arm. He removes his facepiece.

PHOENIX

Welcome to the theater of science.

KIDS laugh, shoving aside the adults to crowd Phoenix.

EMMA

Liar!

Phoenix turns to the familiar voice and grins.

PHOENIX

Who's to say? There's always more
than one interpretation of reality.

The Lecturer joins in CLAPPING, while the Bored Man flashes a sheepish grin.

LECTURER

Phoenix is an astrobiologist and
our resident comedian.

More PEOPLE crowd in to listen.

Phoenix steps forward. The Lecturer hands Phoenix the Mars meteorite.

Hefting it, he notices its crystalline structure and reflects with fascination on what he holds in his hand for a long moment.

PHOENIX

This beauty has traveled billions
of miles and millions of years to
our little blue world. Maybe this
rock holds the secret of why we
haven't as yet found any life on
the red planet...Perhaps our
definition of life is too
narrow...or perhaps it's just a
rock.

An uneasy LAUGHTER ripples through the CROWD.

The Lecturer motions for the Crowd to move on to another exhibit.

PHOENIX

Thanks everyone, don't go extinct.

As the Crowd moves on, Phoenix hangs back and takes stock of his surroundings, before he pockets the Mars rock.

He notices Emma standing motionless in front of the spark chamber exhibit and saunters over to join her.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - LOWER LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: Spark Array - Radiation

Sparks leisurely ZAP across a matrix of metal plates like lazy fireflies on a summer evening.

Emma's transfixed on the ZAPPING incandescence.

While she stares at the exhibit, she trembles as though in a trance.

Inconsistent with the reality observed.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

The Spark Array glows with intense heat as chaotic flashing SPARKS leap across the grids.

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix places his hand on the girl's shoulder, bringing her back to reality.

Concern contorts Phoenix's face.

PHOENIX

You okay?

EMMA

Radiation dangerous?

He motions toward the spark array.

PHOENIX

This level - no. But we're 70% water. Think water balloon and microwave oven.

In dramatic fashion, he CLAPS his hands together like Zeus summoning a lightning bolt.

Phoenix notices Emma's Teacher moving in their direction.

TEACHER

Emma.

Emma rushes a few steps toward the Teacher then turns back to face Phoenix.

Phoenix with a wide grin and a gesture worthy of the panache of Cyrano de Bergerac, bows deeply to Emma.

Emma glances one last time at the tranquil flash of random SPARKS before scampering off to her Teacher.

Phoenix pats the Mars rock in his pocket and heads for the stairs leading back to the main level.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - WEST WING - DAY

At the solar exhibit, Phoenix stops to look at the sun projected on a central column.

Curious, he runs a hand over a enormous dark spot on the column as if trying to rub it out.

PHOENIX

Huh.

Passing through the monitor, up the solar telescope's lens and into space, the sun blazes. An enormous sunspot rips through the magnetic flux of the sun's photosphere.

INT./EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - DAY

Sitting at a patio table, along the glass wall of windows, Phoenix enjoys a sandwich as he watches an excited group of SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS rush the cafeteria.

At the check-out, Emma's Teacher collects the assortment of candies the Kids have grabbed and hands them to the lady CLERK (20s).

She nervously motions for the Clerk to exclude them from the total.

Observing the interaction, Phoenix grabs a box of assorted candies, plops down two twenties at the register, and hands the box to the Teacher.

He returns to his table to finish his meal.

Phoenix looks up at the commotion of kids huddled up against a window.

Outside, Mr. Finch sends out a blood curdling YELP!

Emma SCREAMS.

Striking a nerve, Phoenix bolts toward the back door. Through the wall of windows, he spots Mr. Finch backed up against a rock.

The dog's CRY of pain drives Phoenix's outrage at spotting two large male scumbag ASIAN GANG MEMBERS (20s) SNICKERING as they chuck beer bottles at Mr. Finch.

Jamming flat out through the back door, Phoenix yanks GANG MEMBER #1 off his feet, and before the man can react, he throws him off the courtyard and down the canyon embankment.

On Gang Member #1's startled SCREAM, GANG MEMBER #2 turns to face Phoenix's wrath.

The man takes a drunken swing at Phoenix, who with a leg sweep sends the man hard to the pavement. A moment later, the man sails out down the embankment, joining his partner.

Phoenix rushes over to comfort Mr. Finch.

Broken bottles litter about.

Mr. Finch lifts an injured paw.

Phoenix kneels to remove a nasty glass splinter from the dog's paw.

Bearing Mr. Finch inside, the Kids rush over.

When Phoenix applies a damp napkin to Mr. Finch's paw, the dog WHIMPERS.

PHOENIX

Alright boy?

Emma comes over and hugs the dog. She hands Phoenix a small colored sock. She points to Mr. Finch's injured paw.

After a moment, he grasps her intentions.

PHOENIX

A bandage? Thanks.

He notices the girl's missing sock as he slips it on Mr. Finch's paw.

A stern voice from behind startles him.

PHOENIX (V.O.)

Oh shit, the jackal circles.

OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR

Dr. Cota, filthy creatures are not allowed. This is completely unacceptable. I can't have someone working --

The Teacher rushes over.

TEACHER

(to Phoenix)

-- Thank you, doctor. Those hooligans were trying to kill my baby... Who would allow those monsters on the grounds?

The Director prepares to comment but considers the optics and silently walks away.

The Teacher smiles at Phoenix while the Director trudges off.

PHOENIX

Thanks.

Phoenix gathers up Mr. Finch and heads toward the staircase leading to the observatory roof.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - ROOF - DUSK

Phoenix sits on the railing overlooking the city while the sun sets. A warm summer breeze clears the night, and the lights of Los Angeles shimmer below.

Mr. Finch curls up just below him wearing Emma's sock.

Crickets CHIRP.

Phoenix soaks in the magical warmth of the evening.

His older half-brother, TUCSON 'TUC' (28) a mixed Native/African American who fancies himself a rogue with a comical take on life, approaches.

Reveal: (unknown to Tuc, he has the gift of prophecy. But it comes with the curse of not believing his own premonitions)

Tuc meanders over in the full garb of a Native American shaman.

Phoenix's smirk tells it all. REALLY!

TUC

Hey, it's part of the persona.

Tuc lifts his hands to the sky as if in reverence.

TUC

Wise Native American.

Tuc pauses as he reaches out with a beer.

TUC

The show's important.

Phoenix confirms Tuc's statement with a nod and takes the cold brew.

The brothers catch sight of a shooting star piercing the night sky.

TUC

A wish?

PHOENIX

A little excitement.

TUC

Careful brother, the Gods have a wicked sense of humor.

Both LAUGH.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - ROOF - NIGHT

A young couple strolls on the steps below the railing.

A news broadcast blares from their cellphone.

NEWS (V.O.)

...China's two aircraft carrier fleets have left Hangzhou Bay. The question - will they run the US blockade? Is war on the horizon?

Concern marks Phoenix's face. Tuc slaps his brother's back.

TUC

Huh, draft... there's always the bonehead theory exemption.

PHOENIX

Well, you're safe with those moccasin feet.

Both CHUCKLE as Tuc hands his brother another beer.

Raucous CHATTER from the growing Audience catches his attention.

TUC

Showtime.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Ice cubes TINKLE as a BARTENDER (20s) shoves them into glasses.

Music PUMPS, strobe lights flash, and peoples' Shadows dance on the outside dome walls and across a giant projection screen set up for the guest interview.

Tuc ambles over and takes a microphone in front of the AUDIENCE for his radio show - *The Abyss*.

Reveal: (talks on the supernatural and conspiracies - like the radio show, 'Coast to Coast')

From across the roof, his producer, CRAIG JONES (30), holds up three fingers, then two, then one.

Spooky 'The Abyss' theme MUSIC.

Reveal: (perhaps music similar to this:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q584ITNJIPQ>)

TUC

Welcome to everyone listening all around the world and beyond. We're coming to you live from the edge of The Abyss, broadcasting from Los Angeles, under the stars. I'm your host, Tucson Cota, Oracle of the Airwaves. Joining us is my astrobiologist brother and fellow Native American, Dr. Phoenix Cota. Tonight, we will unravel the secrets of life itself... For those with internet, you can watch our streaming podcast.

Phoenix puts down his beer on the railing and joins his brother. He hugs Tuc.

TUC

A story worthy of 'The Abyss'.

The liquored Audience politely CLAPS.

Ice cubes TINKLE in the glass of a well-watered audience MEMBER #1 (30s) who enthusiastically CLAPS.

MEMBER #1

Bring on the crazies.

Phoenix takes a second mic.

PHOENIX

I want to tell you about the Universe. What it is. How it came to be. And what its building blocks are. But first...

Tuc signals Craig and a bright spotlight blasts Phoenix's silhouette across the screen.

PHOENIX

This is a projection of my three dimensional self onto a two dimensional flat world. In its flat world, it cannot know that a higher dimensional being controls it.

Member #1 (30s) blurts out.

MEMBER #1

That Shadow isn't alive.

PHOENIX

Are we any more alive if we are but a projection from a higher dimension?

Phoenix holds up a three dimensional lattice of dowel rods connected together to form a series of interconnections.

He rotates this before the spotlight. Eerie changing patterns shift across the screen.

TUC

How's this connected with our reality?

PHOENIX

We are the projections of proteins, all created from the crystal we call DNA. But I believe that all of reality... our reality... is really an 8-dimensional crystal projected as a quasi-crystal on our world forming the substrate of all that exists.

TUC

So, this reality... creates all life through DNA?

PHOENIX

No... it's stranger than that. DNA is just one facet of life. I believe life is an emergent property of the structure of the universe itself, and will reveal itself in multiple ways.

Phoenix pulls out the Mars rock he'd pocketed, a strange crystal-like fragment.

PHOENIX

I believe this fragment of a meteorite represents a totally different basis for life... more complex than DNA.

TUC

Huh, just looks like a rock...
Hello, anyone home?

Phoenix frowns before moving the crystal fragment into the projection light.

On the screen, strange colors seem to merge in and out of existence.

PHOENIX

The Ancient Greeks and our own ancestors believed in the idea of panpsychism - all matter has an individual consciousness... Modern biology states life forms around Carbon. And the elixir of that life is H₂O, common water... What if the complexity of nature itself demands multiple pathways to conscious intelligence.

TUC

Crystals?

PHOENIX

Our own ancestors believed in the wisdom of grandfather rocks.

TUC

Yeah, how did that work out for them?

Audience LAUGHS.

PHOENIX

Our world, and the universe, are more complex than we can imagine.

TUC

New age blends with science.

Obnoxious Member #1 shoves forward and growing bold with the encouragement of friends, blurts out.

MEMBER #1

No savage is going to tell me God didn't make man special... we're not damn rocks.

PHOENIX

In your case that could be argued.

MEMBER #1

Fuck you! Pocahontas!

The man gulps down his drink then launches his glass at Phoenix who catches it and takes a menacing step forward.

Member #1 backs away from the big man.

On the screen, the man's Shadow shrinks and backs away in fear as Phoenix's Shadow looms larger.

Tuc puts his arm out to stop his brother and leans against him.

Tuc places a hand over Phoenix's mic.

TUC

(sotto voce)

Hey brother, stupid swims upstream here.

In annoyance, Phoenix chucks the glass into the night's darkness, SHATTERING against a distant rock.

Tuc sweeps his hand out across the telescope dome.

TUC

Lets take a break, so everybody can feel the calming vibes of this beautiful evening.

Tuc leans into Phoenix.

TUC

(sotto voce)

This is 'The Abyss', and everyone's crazy as June bugs.

Tuc's guiding hand points Phoenix toward the telescope dome.

TUC

Everyone's invited to join my brother to learn the language of the moon and uncover its secrets. Youngsters first.

Tuc looks up into the heavens at a shooting star then over at Craig, who signals a commercial.

Tuc mumbles a wish.

TUC

Just ram a two-by-four up my ass.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Tuc walks over to a table and fingers through an assortment of rocks before deciding on a large Rose Quartz, which he hefts as if contemplating smashing someone.

He surveys the make-up of tonight's audience - a nice mix of assorted nuts.

TUC

(sotto voce)

A live audience... what a mistake.

Self-conscious, a smile transforms his actions once again into the entertaining host as he addresses the Audience.

TUC

Ever wonder why the world seems to be unraveling?

He scoops up a handful of rocks and walks among the audience handing out crystals and semi-precious stones like candy.

TUC

Not enough people believe in nature's mysteries. Tonight I'd like to thank our sponsor, 'World's Best Nature Store', for providing us with a collection of soothing crystals. And to let everyone know about the online courses they offer to help you reach your own potential. Change your future. Unlock the meaning of Déjà vu. Understand how you can harness second sight, mental projection, clairvoyance, and telepathy. Touch the divine by mastering the supernatural --

MEMBER #1

-- Supernatural! You're just a carnival barker.

Tuc turns to face the same jackass Phoenix had encountered.

He motions for Craig to stop recording the program.

TUC

You know, mastering second sight
might help keep most of your teeth
in your head.

Tuc measures the distance to the man and takes an aggressive step toward him.

The man stumbles back into the Audience.

Everyone's attention shifts at the RUMBLE of the Zeiss telescope dome moving into position.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE DOME - NIGHT

A group of rowdy TEENS grab-ass inside the Dome.

At the control console, Phoenix rotates the big Zeiss refractor and centers it on the full moon.

A BOY (15) stops to watch the big monitor. A testimonial to California's education system.

The moon slides into view.

BOY

Can you see the future with that thing?

Phoenix grins at a believed joke.

BOY

Like in Paycheck?

PHOENIX

If you could... you might be very disappointed.

Phoenix's face reflects a thought...

PHOENIX (V.O.)

Kid, you're a toad bucket full of stupid.

Annoyed at competing VOICES, Phoenix directs a laser pointer before them to catch their attention, like one would distract a cat.

He points the laser at a small crater on the monitor and zooms in on it.

PHOENIX

A little fellow like that said
sayonara to the dinosaurs.

Zooms back out to hundreds of bigger craters.

PHOENIX

Any of these will be extinction
level events.

The Teens' interest piques.

PHOENIX

What we do to ourselves is
insignificant, compared to what
dangers threatens us... out there.

Phoenix sweeps his hand up toward the dome opening.

Craig pokes his head inside the dome door.

CRAIG

We're on a schedule.

With the Teens slow to react, Craig enters and herds them
out.

Phoenix notices and picks off the floor a comic book left by
one of the teens.

INSERT - COMIC BOOK

Reads: The Blob

BACK TO SCENE

Surprise blankets his face.

INT. CHILDREN'S WORLD BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

SUPER: One Year Earlier

Phoenix meanders through 'Children's World Bookstore' with
SEAN (10), an overweight, insecure, sensitive boy, whom he
mentors as a Big Brother.

Phoenix thumbs through an occasional storybook and points a
few out to Sean.

Sean shows the interest of a dead carp and turns away to move
further up the aisle. He brushes a book rack and a comic book
falls to the floor.

Phoenix picks it up and glances at the cover.

INSERT - COMIC BOOK

Reads: The Blob

BACK TO SCENE

He puts the comic before Sean.

SEAN

That's not real.

PHOENIX

Who's to say. We only know of life
on Earth but the Universe has one
hell of a backyard.

Sean perks up and gives the comic a closer look.

He clutches the comic as they continue to meander among the
aisles.

A female VOICE attracts Phoenix's attention.

Phoenix directs Sean toward the woman's words.

INT. CHILDREN'S WORLD BOOKSTORE - CONTINUOUS

PIPER SPENCER (24), a young, attractive athletic tomboyish
woman and imaginative fiction writer, lectures before a small
AUDIENCE of kids and adults.

On a front table, a stack of books waits for her to sign,
twice as many as the audience count.

She holds up her book promoting ancient myths entitled: *The
Shadows*.

Phoenix and Sean grab seats in back.

PIPER

Myths are cautionary warnings of
our fight for survival against
forces beyond our comprehension...

Phoenix holds up Sean's hand.

Piper smiles and acknowledges him.

PHOENIX

You're saying myths are man's
answer to mysteries?

PIPER
All good stories are built around
mystery.

Piper motions toward the lights. The room darkens...

PIPER
Before the dawn of civilization,
when humans were trying to secure a
foothold...

A chime CLINKS as another person enters the bookstore.

STORY - EXT. ON A BLOOD-RED PLAIN - NIGHT

Reveal: (similar to "The Tale Of The Three Brothers" in Harry Potter)

PIPER (V.O.)
...there was a tribe of hunter-
gatherers, and among them a young
girl, who in the chill of night
huddled near the campfire, which
cast her Shadow into the dark...

The silhouette of a YOUNG GIRL slumbers on the ground under the stars.

Curled up against her, a small PUPPY fidgets against the night's cold.

A cascade of embers leap from a campfire and drifts into the darkness.

An ember lands on her, and she stirs.

Her Shadow casts its life into the night.

PIPER (V.O.)
The Shadow's chaotic dance
frightens the girl. It leaps in
fury, straining to escape its
world.

Embers drift toward the stars.

PIPER (V.O.)
The girl's puppy barks at the
apparition. Breaking free from its
song, she covers her eyes and
scrambles farther away. She shivers
and falls back into restless
dreams.

PHOENIX

turns on the flashlight on his cellphone and with his fingers makes a Shadow Puppet of a small dog against a projection screen behind Piper.

Phoenix encourages Sean to join in by handing him a crystal which the boy holds before the light. An eerie kaleidoscopic phantom pulses throughout the room.

Sparkling colors arcs out toward Phoenix's dog puppet.

Piper's own silhouette morphs into a young girl.

Uneasy LAUGHTER rises from the Audience.

Piper glances at the screen, irritated at Phoenix's antics.

She continues.

PIPER (V.O.)

The girl trembles. Embers swirl out, gently caressing her. This time she doesn't wake, but tosses in the grip of a mysterious force. Her Shadow speaks.

All dramatized in surreal silhouettes.

PIPER (V.O.)

The Shadow reassures the girl.

Inside the girl's dream, the pleasant figure of her puppy comforts her.

Phoenix WHIMPERS like a puppy.

CHUCKLES ripple through the Audience.

PIPER (V.O.)

The dog is not fooled by the apparition. Its bark breaks the spell. Awakened, the girl can no longer hear the siren's words and again scrambles out of reach.

Once more upon sleeping, the girl's Shadow tries to stroke her hair.

Phoenix's dog puppet's Shadow pauses to scratch an itch. The Audience LAUGHS.

Piper glances back at the screen, sighs, and CHUCKLES.

PIPER (V.O.)

The Shadow reaches to touch the girl. But not being of this world, its hand passes through her. It encourages her to come closer. In her dream, she believes the Shadow is her friend, for there she can feel its loving warmth.

The Shadow wraps the girl in its essence.

Her dog paws the girl now standing in a trance by the fire.

The Shadow casts an apparition out into the night, leading the girl's dog to give chase.

PIPER (V.O.)

The Shadow's tricks coax the dog out into the darkness. Alone and sad, the Shadow convinces the girl that her companion is waiting for her inside its world. And that she can join him. As the girl steps into the fire, she vanishes. Taking her place is the Shadow, now unleashed upon the world.

As the mysterious Shadow moves over the sleeping members of the tribe, each disintegrates into embers.

INT. CHILDREN'S WORLD BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

In the Audience, children clutch their parents.

Phoenix APPLAUDS to cut the tension.

Piper signs a book to Sean as Phoenix stands by.

SEAN

Thank you.

WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!

Sean darts out the door at Mr. Finch's call.

Phoenix appears torn in indecision as to what to do.

His opportunity passes as an EMPLOYEE (20s) interrupts the book signings and another series of BARKS forces Phoenix into action.

He rushes out to check on his charges.

Piper signs a book for the last Customer, hefts her backpack and excuses herself to the restroom.

An Employee collects the remaining books.

INT./EXT. CHILDREN'S WORLD BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Clad in bike gear, Piper waves at a few lingering Audience members and exits.

At the bike rack, she regards a very nice mountain bike; Phoenix bends over and unlocks it.

An SUV drives up and Sean rushes to it with the Blob comic in his hand and hops into the backseat.

He waves to Phoenix as they drive off.

Piper appears curious.

PHOENIX

I'm with the Big Brother program.

Phoenix admires the bike Piper unlocks.

PHOENIX

A Stumpjumper. Ever take it up
Mountaingate?

A slow smile spreads across Piper's face.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - MOUNTAIN GATE - DAY

Phoenix and Piper cycle along a dirt mountain path in the morning sun.

A flashy pod of jerk-off male CYCLISTS whiz past, hogging the fireroad.

One of them, CYCLIST #1, SLAPS Piper on the backside as he goes past.

Phoenix turns back at the sound and gives a questioning glance to Piper.

Annoyance flickers across Piper's face.

PIPER

Nothing, just a little extra
contact.

The fireroad peels off onto a paved road at the top of Mountain Gate, an upper class neighborhood in the Santa Monica mountains.

At the one water fountain, the Cyclists take their sweet time CHATTING. They hog the fountain, slow in filling up their water bottles.

PIPER
(to Cyclists)
A little movement, please.

CYCLIST #1
(to Piper)
Perhaps we can negotiate?

The man's delivery suggested a little more than sharing water.

Phoenix steps up and shoves Cyclist #1 away from the fountain.

PHOENIX
Negotiate your ass out of here.

Cyclist #1 looks for support but none's coming.

Phoenix stares the guy down.

The four Cyclists mount their bikes and flip Phoenix off as they head down the steep mile-plus Mountaingate Drive.

As Phoenix responds to the man's gesture, Piper puts a hand on Phoenix's chest.

PIPER
Sometimes you gotta choose your battles.

Piper fills her and Phoenix's canteens. Gazing after the departing Cyclists, her face clouds and she cranks on the canteen cap, having reconsidered her own words.

PIPER
Of course... you might leave out the important ones.

She shoves Phoenix his canteen and jumps onto her bike to catch up with the Cyclists.

As she pedals, she snatches up an orange road maintenance cone in one hand.

At the T-intersection, at the top of Mountaingate Dr., she plunks it down, then picks up speed down the hill.

EXT. MOUNTAINGATE & SEPULVEDA - BOTTOM OF THE HILL - DAY

At the base of Mountaingate, Piper and Phoenix come upon the male Cyclists and dismount.

Anger darkens Phoenix's face.

Piper turns to him and places her hand on his arm.

PIPER
(suggestive)
Down boy. Save that maleness.

Piper steps off her bike and marches through the toxic male hormones to secure a C-note around the golden post on the curb that marks the starting point of the annual one-mile Turkey Challenge.

Reveal: A yearly 1-mile bike time trial up a 20% grade called 'The Turkey Climb'

PIPER
For your castration fund. A
Challenge Match. Up and back around
the orange cone. Winner take all.

The Cyclists hesitates.

Phoenix secures a C-note to the post.

PHOENIX
(to Cyclists)
Well, let's have at it.

The Cyclists hurry to match the challenge.

Amid whoops, the Cyclists jump on their bikes to put a few seconds of daylight on Piper and Phoenix up Mountaingate's steep incline.

Phoenix catches up, while Piper pumps hard to maintain contact.

Phoenix challenges for the lead as they approach the summit's turnaround.

A few seconds back, the other Cyclists jostle Piper to contain her.

One cyclist empties his stomach just before the summit.

At the top they all make a sharp 180 degree turn around the orange road maintenance cone and start blasting downhill.

Cranking hard, Piper slipstreams behind them, gaining speed, then slingshots around.

Phoenix beams at her bold maneuver.

Abandoning caution, standing on her pedals, she heads downhill, cranking flat out at a blistering 70+ mph.

Cyclist #2 loses control and splatters himself across the asphalt. Nasty!

Frightened, two of the competitors break off the pursuit.

Phoenix swerves and brakes to avoid running over the downed biker, losing his position.

Piper challenges for the lead.

Cyclist #1 veers into Piper, forcing her toward the curb.

On contact, Piper jumps her Stumpjumper onto the narrow curb.

Cyclist #1 slams into the edge and wipes out into the tulies.

Cranking like a demon's on her ass, Piper rips past the finish line and barrels into the intersection, barely avoiding HONKING cross traffic on Sepulveda.

Phoenix, just on her tail.

Glancing back, she grins at Phoenix.

They turn and meet back at the starting pole.

Looking victorious, Piper slows to a halt. She snaps the bills from the rubber band.

The two remaining competitors slow to applaud her victory.

Phoenix notices her biking outfit for the first time.

PHOENIX
Rio Olympics, right?

Piper shrugs.

Piper holds Phoenix for a moment with a piercing gaze that asks the question, "Do you measure up?"

PIPER
It all comes down to courage.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - EVENING

Phoenix and Piper sit high in the mountains on the rock precipice overlooking the Los Angeles basin.

A pizza box and a bottle of wine lay to one side.

PIPER

Astrobiologist, huh? You haven't even asked my sign.

PHOENIX

In training... play your Tarot cards right and I'll...well, I'll think of something.

Piper makes a silly face.

PIPER

What does an astrobiologist... in training... even do?

PHOENIX

Mostly scan space for anomalies and track down anything that actually reaches the ground... And stay unnoticed until I get my doctorate.

Piper's interest piques. A questioning look fills her face.

PHOENIX

I have a theory out of the mainstream about non-organic life.

Piper's skeptical demeanor doesn't go unnoticed.

He points to the first shooting star of the evening.

PIPER

Wish?

PHOENIX

Right now... To be a little bolder and change the future.

Piper draws him close. Phoenix hesitates before responding to her kiss.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

Under a full moon and a sea of stars, Phoenix and Piper come together. A blanket wraps them against the chill.

EXT./INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Piper rides up on her bike under a full moon.

Wearing her biking gear, Piper walks into a modest single-story tract house that's tired yet tidy.

LIVING ROOM

A gold medal loops over a photo of Piper on the Olympic podium. Children's books and volumes on Native American myths teeter on a crammed bookshelf.

KITCHEN

Emma's drawings of geodesic crystals, unusual in their intricacy, populate the refrigerator with magnets.

Spying a new sketch, Piper leans in. A curious one has three figures and a dog inside a crystal box, their palms pressed against a wall.

Puzzled, Piper touches the dog's image.

She continues through the house.

PIPER

Mom?

No answer.

She passes Emma's open bedroom door. A sparkling rock collection glints in the moonlight on the dresser.

She hears a low SCREECHING.

EMMA'S BEDROOM

Rushing in, she sees tree branches SCRAPING against the window and casting eerie Shadows across the room.

At the SOUND of a car door, she rushes out.

LIVING ROOM

The front door opens.

DEBRA SPENCER (40s), a fragile, life-weary woman wearing an waitress uniform, flustered and angry enters.

Reveal: (she's Piper's and Emma's mother)

Holding an inhaler, Emma shuffles in behind her mother.

In between breaths...

EMMA
(to Piper)
The shadow people were here.

Debra turns to confront Piper.

DEBRA
What's your story, NOW?

Annoyance comes across in Piper's response.

PIPER
A little freedom.

Piper turns to her sister.

PIPER
You need some sleep.

Piper guides Emma to her bedroom.

INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - EMMA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Piper tucks Emma into bed and turns to leave. Emma grabs her sister's arm and looks out toward the window.

EMMA
No.

Piper turns back and holds Emma's hand.

Reveal: (Children Song Like: 'Give Into Your Dreams'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAJ0JVEuTlQ&t=107s>)

PIPER

(singing)

"IT'S TIME TO SLEEP/SO CLOSE YOUR
EYES/I'LL TUCK YOU IN/YOU'RE SAFE
TONIGHT/AS DARKNESS FALLS/GIVE INTO
YOUR DREAMS/YOU CAN'T FIND
HAPPINESS/BY WISHING ON
RAINBOWS/FOR RAINBOWS ARE LOST IN
THE SUN/PRAYERS TO THE STARS AT
NIGHT/MAY NEVER BE ANSWERED/BUT YOU
MUST BE WILLING TO TRY/FOR THERE'S
NO STAR TO HIGH/SAIL AWAY WITH ME
TO NEW HORIZONS/ALL OUR TOMORROWS
ARE FOUND IN OUR DREAMS/PLEASE TAKE
MY HAND AND/TOGETHER WITH ME WE'LL
SEE TOMORROW/A WORLD OF
ADVENTURES/IS WAITING OUT
THERE/WE'RE ON LIFE'S GREAT
ADVENTURES/EACH ONE A STORY TO
TELL/DREAM ON STRAIGHT TILL THE
MORNING/THEN COME GO WITH ME/TO A
BEAUTIFUL WORLD OUT THERE/OH CAN'T
YOU SEE/THAT THE MAGIC WILL ALWAYS
BE THERE/ALWAYS BE THERE/I'LL
ALWAYS BE THERE/I'LL ALWAYS BE
THERE/AS LITTLE CHILDREN/EVERYONE
OF US NEEDS A HELPING HAND/SO COME
PLACE YOUR HAND/IN MINE/HUSH CLOSE
YOUR EYES AND DREAM MY
DARLING/TOMORROW WE'LL GIVE LIFE A
TRY/HUSH FALL TO SLEEP/AND DREAM MY
DARLING/TOMORROW WE'LL GIVE LIFE A
TRY..."

Emma's fast asleep.

Piper crawls into bed beside her. She looks one last time up at the window.

The moon casts eerie shadows through the window and onto the wall.

EXT. PHOENIX/TUC HOUSE - DAY

Phoenix hefts his duffel bag and checks his plane ticket. It reads: "Honolulu"

His cellphone rings.

INSERT - CELLPHONE

Reads: PIPER SPENCER

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix stares down at it. His finger hesitates over the "OK" button.

A TEXT MESSAGE pops up on the screen.

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

Pick you up at airport

Aloha au ia'oe XOXO

BACK TO SCENE

Anguish crosses his face.

At the last moment, he taps "Send To Voicemail"

INT./EXT. HAWAII - ATLAS - NIGHT

On the summit of Haleakala, a telescope swings across the pristine night sky.

SUPER: Haleakala Summit, Maui

A Nene bird pauses to stare up at the mystery of man's magic. It turns its attention to something more interesting, the possibility of food.

KAILA (23), a cute, inquisitive Hawaiian doctoral student at the Hawaiian Observatory sits bundled up against the cold outside the observatory on a rock.

She tosses a cracker to the bird who eats and soon bored wanders off on its own business.

A sea of stars twinkle overhead.

On a drawing pad, she sketches the Phoenix bird.

INSERT - PHOENIX (FROM GREEK MYTHOLOGY)

Soars against a backdrop of stars. Underneath signed XOXO

BACK TO SCENE

A BEEP on her cellphone goes off and she puts her sketch pad away and heads inside.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE DOME - NIGHT

SUPER: Present Day

Tuc pokes his head in the doorway.

TUC
On-air in five?

Phoenix grins.

PHOENIX
And still can't fly.

Phoenix's cellphone BEEPS.

INSERT - CELLPHONE

Text message reads: "U got 2 c this... XOXO"

BACK TO SCENE

Turning to a laptop, Phoenix logs into ATLAS (Asteroid Terrestrial Impact Last Alert System) out of Hawaii.

INT./EXT. HAWAII - ATLAS - NIGHT

INTERCUT BETWEEN KALIA AND PHOENIX

A panoramic sweep of the observatories on the desolate landscape at the summit of Haleakala.

SUPER: Hawaiian Observatory, Haleakala, Maui

Inside the ATLAS facility, high tech instrumentation lights up a dozen monitor feeds.

Kaila appears on the screen.

KAILA (V.O.)
Found Mr. Finch's squeaky bone.

PHOENIX
A gift... What's up, Kaila?

KAILA (V.O.)
(excited)
This could be a breakthrough supporting your thesis. I'm sending you a scattering report. The spectrum is off the charts.

If the information is true they'll
have to consider your theory.

PHOENIX
How that?

KAILA
They're reproducing.

PHOENIX
(cynical)
Data resolution errors.

Phoenix brings up the projection report.

INSERT - MONITOR

Projections of a dozen impact marks sprinkle the Santa Monica mountains, with a second grouping near the Very Large Array in New Mexico.

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix flips to another screen.

INSERT - MONITOR

Shows the previous day's impacts, which include a large batch around the three-border area where North Korea, Russia, and China meet, and another grouping around Apache Lake.

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix switches to another readout.

He draws his finger up a temperature gradient.

INSERT - MONITOR

A temperature gradient of the meteoroids appears on the screen.

BACK TO SCENE

KAILA (V.O.)
The temperature gradients makes no
sense. It's empty space.

PHOENIX
Perhaps radioactive or could they
be --

KAILA (V.O.)
 -- from China or Russia? I don't
 see how. They're thousands of them
 and they appear to be originating
 from deep space... What about your
 theory?

Overhearing the conversation, Tuc saunters in, beers in hand.

TUC
 (joking)
 Alien invasion.

Phoenix LAUGHS.

PHOENIX
 Sure.

He grabs a beer and prints out the report, then shoves the
 papers into his back pocket.

He speaks to Kaila through ATLAS on his laptop.

PHOENIX
 Maybe we'll get lucky, find one out
 here and figure this out...Follow
 their progress. Talk soon...Keep
 the gift warm.

Phoenix signs off and turns to see Tuc hanging over his
 shoulder.

TUC
 Wow! She can neon light my nights
 anytime.

Phoenix shakes his head.

PHOENIX
 You're just a horn dog.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - DAY (MOVING)

Phoenix drives up the winding road to the Visitor Center in a
 Jeep. A news broadcast plays on the radio.

NEWS (V.O.)
 ...the President's personal
 physician has been charged with
 first degree murder and terrorism
 in conjunction with a foreign
 power.

During the attack, Dr. Lee Chu was overheard saying, "The future begins now."

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - VISITOR CENTER - DAY

At the Visitor Center, Sean and several young Woodcraft Ranger SCOUTS pile out.

Just behind, an SUV driven by Tuc slides to a halt. More BOYS pile out.

Excited Boys dash out onto the polo field.

Mr. Finch tears out after them.

Tuc drives off.

Wind chimes outside the Visitor Center TINKLE in the breeze.

INT./EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - VISITOR CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Phoenix encourages stragglers toward the polo field.

At a piercing SCREECH, he turns to see a young girl racing toward him from inside the Visitor Center, SQUEALING with excitement.

EMMA

Liar! Liar!

She throws herself into his arms. Phoenix swings her around. Both smiling.

PHOENIX

Chaos, you sure get around.

He ruffles her hair, and she beams at him.

EMMA

I'm everywhere, like your Shadow.

Piper stalks over from inside the Visitor Center.

Phoenix spots her.

His smile vanishes as his sphincter goes into cardiac arrest.

Piper yanks Emma away.

EMMA

Ouch!

PIPER
Don't talk to strange men.

EMMA
He's my friend.

PIPER
No, he isn't.

Piper drags Emma who resists by going limp.

PIPER
Damn it!

Piper hoists her sister off the ground and carries her back into the 'Visitor's Center' theater.

INT. WILL ROGERS PARK - THEATER - DAY

At the back of the gallery, inside the small theater, a video of Will Rogers' life plays.

Three rows of young GIRL RANGERS fill the front benches.

A single Boy, Sean, sits on the back bench.

The Boy appears entranced by the painted tattoo-like images running along Emma's arms.

Right out of the "Illustrated Man," they appear to be alive as the girl's wild gyrations animates her every emotion.

Sean's small, tentative hand reaches out.

Emma swivels and seizes Sean's hand. She stares into his eyes with withering intensity.

Stunned, Sean draws back.

She points to a series of painted facial expressions on her arm.

EMMA
You?

Sean's frozen in the moment.

Piper walks over and puts her hand on Emma's shoulder.

PIPER
He doesn't understand.

Piper turns to Sean.

PIPER
My sister has a challenge
communicating.

Sean smiles and points to a smiling face on her arm, then
nods to Piper that everything's okay.

Sean jumps over to the bench beside Emma.

INT. WILL ROGERS PARK - GALLERY - DAY

Photos of cowboy-actor/satirist Will Rogers line the walls,
along with wry quotes.

Exiting from inside the theater, Piper's troop of Girls swarm
through the gallery and outside into the sunlight.

Phoenix stands before a photo of Will Rogers and his native
American relatives.

INSERT - QUOTE ON PICTURE

Reads: "I have Indian Blood in me. I have just enough white
blood for you to question my honesty."

BACK TO SCENE

As Piper walks through the gallery to join her Girls, she
pauses behind Phoenix and notices the quote.

Under her breath...

PIPER
Isn't that the truth.

Phoenix turns to address the familiar voice.

PHOENIX
Hey --

PIPER
-- FUCK YOU!

Sean and Emma enter the gallery from the theater.

EMMA
(gleefully)
Liar!

Piper gives Emma a stern look while she yanks her away.

PIPER
Liar. Sounds about right.

Pissed, Piper drags Emma outside.

Confusion and indecision fixes Sean in place.

A traumatized Phoenix motions for Sean to join his friend Emma.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - LAWN - LATER

Under the shade of a tree, Piper looks out across the field.

A cloud of sadness envelops her while she watches Emma and Sean interact, tossing around a frisbee.

Piper's phone buzzes with a text. She glances at it in disgust.

PIPER

Great.

Piper stops a passing PARK RANGER.

PIPER

Any place to eat around here?

PARK RANGER

Plenty... if you're a horse.

As Phoenix approaches, he overhears a perturbed Piper.

PHOENIX

Got pizza.

Piper can barely get the words out.

PIPER

Not a chance.

She spins around to see her Girls race toward Tuc who's carrying a stack of pizza boxes.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - LAWN - DAY

Girls and Boys wolf down pizza and soda as they hang out on the grass.

Piper sits nearby watching.

Tuc approaches and hands her a slice.

TUC
So, you're Piper. I'm Tuc. The good
brother.

PIPER
Tuc?

TUC
Short for Tucson... Mom had a thing
about Arizona.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - LAWN - DAY

Phoenix blows a WHISTLE and motions the Boys to gather around for games.

One Boy, CARL (10), a snarky-faced bully with a bad attitude, pushes his way through other kids and snatches a frisbee from Sean.

Carl WHACKS Sean in the head with the frisbee, and SNORTING like a warthog, jerks it out of Sean's reach.

Everyone around him grimaces.

Emma rushes up and snatches the frisbee away.

Lunging at her, Carl awkwardly stumbles and strikes the ground hard, knocking a GRUNT out of him.

Before he can recover, she expertly hurls the frisbee. It soars across the field.

Mr. Finch leaps and takes it out of the air.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - LAWN - DAY

From the picnic tables, Phoenix WHISTLES and draws a circle with his hands.

PHOENIX
Round 'Em up, Mr. Finch.

Phoenix gives Piper a wide berth as he collects and crams pizza boxes into trash bins.

BARKING, Mr. Finch herds the Boys up a steep fireroad toward Eagle Rock's campsite, two miles away.

Piper and her Girls strap on their own backpacks and set off in a different direction along the Mush Trail, toward the same destination.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DAY

Outside the campsite by Eagle Rock, Phoenix and the Boys horse around.

Searching out mischief, Carl leads a clique of Boys to spy on the nearby Girls' camp.

His assholeness comes out when he motions for his gang to shove over a Porta-Potty.

Standing off unseen, Emma secretly films the entire event on her cellphone.

Piper arrives, catching them in the act.

PIPER

Hey!

Boys scatter.

Piper marches to the Boys' encampment. Determined Girls with backpacks follow.

Piper shoves the video into Phoenix's face.

PIPER

This is our campsite now.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - LATER

The Boys who had tipped over the Porta-Potty struggle to right it. Their grip slips and the structure CRASHES back down.

The door swings open and a wave of gooey brown gunk splashes over Carl and his gang.

Yuck!

Phoenix and Tuc stand by CHUCKLING.

Carl runs toward them WAILING and CACKLING like a deranged chicken.

TUC

That doesn't look fun.

Phoenix holds up his hands to halt.

PHOENIX

Woe! Stop right there. You stink like a bucket of rotting fish.

Phoenix tosses Carl a roll of paper towels and a bar of soap and steps back.

PHOENIX

Mess with other people's crap and
shit happens.

Phoenix points down the fireroad to a distant blue Porta-Potty at 'The Hub', over a mile away.

Reveal: (*'the hub' is a center point where several trails in the Santa Monica Mountains meet*)

PHOENIX

There's a hose at the Hub where you
can destink yourself.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - FIREROAD - LATER

Carl brings up the rear of a line of sweaty Boys.

Never passing up an opportunity for fast food, a swarm of BUZZING flies and gnats give chase.

Forced into a grueling pace, Boys CRY and BITCH under the sun's blistering heat.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - THE HUB - DAY

Carl turns on the hose but only a trickle comes out. A cloud of flying carnivores feast on the stink wafting off him.

At the water faucet the group discovers the joy of low pressure as water dribbles out.

As he attempts to wash up, Carl casts a Shadow over the red clay ground.

A flickering movement in the Shadows at his feet elicits poor judgement as Carl attempts to stomp it out.

An aggregation of gnats rise like the Phoenix to punish the boy drawing an anguished MOAN.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DAY

A conglomeration of tents spread out around a communal campfire circle.

Under the sweltering summer heat, Piper hands out water bottles to her Girls.

Sean races through the campsite searching for Emma. Against the rising heat of the day, his failure to find her ramps into frantic despair.

Spotting Piper, he dashes over and tugs on her shirt.

SEAN
I can't find her.

Connecting with Sean's anxiety, Piper's sight tracks the surroundings with apprehension.

SEAN
She was over there.

He motions to a small rugged trail leading away from the campsite.

Nearby, Tuc overhears the conversation's tension and connects with Piper's concern.

He rushes over.

PIPER
(to Tuc)
Emma?

Filled with angst, Piper fixates in the direction Sean pointed.

TUC
I'll watch the girls.

Piper takes off down the trail.

TUC
(to Sean)
She'll be alright.

Tuc notices a cluster of Kids getting into the supplies and hurries off.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - LATER

Phoenix regards Sean sitting on a rock, sweating profusely and staring off into the mountains.

The boy's Shadow spills out over the rocks.

Phoenix walks up and hands him a cold soda.

PHOENIX
Where's your friend?

Sean points toward the trail.

PHOENIX
She's with her sister?

Sean shrugs.

Phoenix wipes the sweat off his brow and follows Sean's gaze.

PHOENIX
How long have you been here?

Sean's almost in tears.

SEAN
I don't know.

Seeing Sean's distress, Tuc hurries over.

TUC
They ain't back yet? Piper went
looking for her sister.

PHOENIX
Great...

Phoenix grabs a utility belt with two canteens and WHISTLES for Mr. Finch, who takes off down the trail ahead of him.

Phoenix rushes off the trail to join Mr. Finch.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - TRAILS - DAY

Up ahead, Mr. Finch leads down a broken trail.

Under a sweltering summer sun, Phoenix jogs to a stop. He considers taking a drink from his canteen but when Mr. Finch BARKS, he puts it away.

Phoenix takes off after the sound.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - TRAILS - DAY

Phoenix comes upon Emma on the ground in the shade of a large boulder, suffering from heat exhaustion.

Phoenix hands her one of his canteens.

Like a beached goldfish gasping in air, she seizes it and takes a large gulp, then vomits it up.

A vision morphs into Emma's eyes.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

An injured Piper clutches her ankle as a rattlesnake strikes.

BACK TO SCENE

Emma trembles.

Phoenix places his hand on Emma's and slowly tilts the canteen.

PHOENIX

Easy.

She looks up into Phoenix's eyes, imploring him.

EMMA

Sister.

PHOENIX

She came looking for you. You see her?

Emma shakes her head.

She lurches to her feet and surprises Phoenix as she attempts to continue down the trail.

Phoenix holds her in place with a gentle hand on her shoulder.

PHOENIX

Whoa, Chaos. You're sitting this one out.

Phoenix ponders what to do.

He takes a pink ribbon from Emma's hair. He ties one end to Mr. Finch's collar and the other around her wrist, and gives her a canteen.

He points Mr. Finch back up the trail toward camp.

PHOENIX

Take her to Tuc... Tuc, boy.

Mr. Finch steps forward. Emma tugs at her bonds.

Phoenix motions for Mr. Finch to halt.

EMMA

Rattles... follow them.

In frustration, he notices the markings on Emma's arm.

He moves his hand along her arm and places a finger on the word PROMISE.

PHOENIX

Promise... I'll find your sister.
Let Mr. Finch take you back to
camp.

Emma resists at first, but Mr. Finch licks her cheek.

EMMA

Liar.

Phoenix reassures her and motions for Mr. Finch to continue.

She and Mr. Finch amble along the trail toward camp.

As they move off down the trail, he hears Emma's parting words.

EMMA

Rattles!

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - TRAILS - DAY

Phoenix trots down a fireroad. At a fork, he moves down the most obvious path before he hears a RATTLE.

He spots a rattlesnake slithering along a side trail.

He hesitates, unsure of what to do.

Shaking his head, he hurdles over the rattlesnake and heads off in a new direction.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - WATERFALL - DAY

Piper sinks down on a rock cradling her ankle. Water trickles down the cliffside.

Behind her, a six-foot rattler slithers into her Shadow's darkness, silently threatening.

The snake strikes, its RATTLE fills the canyon.

Phoenix lunges forward and snatches the snake out of the air.

Startled, Piper leaps up but collapses to the ground as her sprained ankle gives way.

PIPER

Damn it.

Phoenix hurls the snake into the bushes. The hostile snake RATTLES its threat as it slithers up the embankment.

PIPER

Emma!

PHOENIX

She's okay.

Piper's about to lay into him until she looks up and sees the anguish in his eyes.

She mirrors these emotions.

PIPER

Why?

Phoenix senses a come-to-Jesus moment.

He helps her back onto the rock under the shade of a tree.

Pulling an ace bandage from the first aid kit on his utility belt, he kneels down and wraps her ankle while he gathers his words.

PHOENIX

Karma.

Irritation sweeps back over Piper.

PIPER

What the fuck? You ghosted me.

PHOENIX

Frogs that chase princesses usually end up on a French menu.

PIPER

A prince doesn't wait for destiny to shine up their ass... They act.

PHOENIX

Truth... I was not in a good place. My thesis had been rejected.

PIPER

You didn't call.

PHOENIX

How? Yell really loud? I had no address! No money! No future!

Regret etches his face.

PHOENIX
I fucked up... badly.

Both realize there's no winners in pursuing this topic.
Phoenix finishes the bandage wrap and offers her his hand.

PHOENIX
How's that?

Hesitantly, she takes it and stands.

PIPER
Yeah.

She attempts to hobble forward. Insurmountable pain causes her to collapse into his arms.

She pushes him away and hops to a rock where she plants herself.

Nearby, a RATTLING snake diverts Phoenix's attention.

Remembering something, he mumbles under his breath.

PHOENIX
(sotto voce)
Rattles... Your sister helped me
find you.

Phoenix steps off the trail and scrambles up the embankment into the underbrush.

Surprise strikes Piper's face.

The RATTLE recedes before him.

The enormous face of a giant boulder blocks his path, yet the RATTLE continues to retreat.

Curious, Phoenix shoves aside the underbrush and notices an ancient faded marking near the base of the boulder.

Phoenix drops to all fours and realizes the enormous mountainous boulder rests on a scattering of large rocks, lifted off the ground with a clearance that would challenge a limbo artist.

On his back, he shimmies underneath.

Hidden from the world, a cathedral of symbols and paintings chronicles the struggles of an ancient people.

In awe, Phoenix pulls out his cellphone and records the weathered illustrations.

Afterward, he scrambles back into the sunlight to a questioning Piper.

He shows her a few seconds of the strange video.

INSERT - CEILING PAINTINGS

A scene of figures staring up at what appears to be stars falling from the heavens.

BACK TO SCENE

It puzzles both. Phoenix snaps off the video.

PIPER
How did you know...?

PHOENIX
I didn't... Let's get back.

Phoenix hoists Piper in his arms. Carrying her, he steps onto the trail.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DAY

Tuc works the grill. He hears BARKING and grins at seeing Emma tied to the dog coming off the trail.

Stepping forward, Tuc kneels to untie her.

Sean rushes over, not knowing what to do.

Emma hugs Sean.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - LATER

A filthy but elated Phoenix returns to the campsite, supporting Piper.

Tuc turns the barbecue over to the Kids.

TUC
Emma's back, and the kids are fine,
but you two...

Emma rushes to embrace Piper.

Tuc hands them a couple of water bottles.

Spotting Phoenix, Emma releases her sister and flies into his arms.

PHOENIX
Alright, Chaos.

Phoenix walks over and brings the girl over to Piper, who hugs her with Phoenix still holding Emma.

Phoenix motions Sean over whose standing off in the distance.

A nervous Sean trots over.

PHOENIX
Here's the real hero. He warned us
that you and your sister were in
trouble.

Emma wraps her arms around Sean and SQUEALS her thanks.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - EVENING

Kids gather firewood like zealots preparing for Burning Man.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - LATER

Scattered around the campsite, clusters of friends chow down on treats off the grill.

In the Shadow of Eagle Rock, Phoenix shows Tuc and Piper the video he'd taken of the ancient Native Americans on his cellphone.

Tuc points out a symbol.

TUC
That's Chumash.

Piper focuses on connecting the symbols in the video. She draws her finger from one picture to another.

PIPER
This...story.

Phoenix points to a series of drawings in the video. One shows a shaman apparently standing in a crystal with flames around him.

TUC
Looks like he's inside a crystal.

PHOENIX

I remember Mom talking about
crystal travelers.

TUC

Well, Mom's a little off.

Phoenix senses Piper's exhaustion.

PHOENIX

Let's continue this later.

He pockets his cellphone.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DUSK

Everyone gathers around the campfire with their food, still
stuffing themselves.

As evening progresses into night, the Shadows against the
rocks cast by the fire grow larger and stronger.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

Tuc passes around a pair of powerful binoculars. Kids take
turns peering up at the stars.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

A pristine night, dark and wondrous. Phoenix points out a
constellation.

PHOENIX

The Big Dipper. With that you can
always determine North.

CARL

Why does anybody care? My cellphone
shows that.

PHOENIX

Well, get your ass lost in the
wilderness and tell me how that
cellphone stays charged.

Piper steps in. She takes a more humanist view of the
constellations.

PIPER

All our histories are in the stories etched in the imaginative patterns we see in the stars. From the heroes of every culture to the individual struggles of every person who's ever lived... They've all looked to the heavens for inspiration.

Piper lifts her hands to the heavens and points to the Big Dipper constellation.

On a nearby rock, Tuc lifts a guitar and strums a haunting melodic rhythm. The Kids gather around.

TUC

A few of my own ancestors used the Dipper... sort of a travel guide... whose cup points North to freedom... Join in and feel what my ancestors felt.

Tuc breaks into an old folk song of freedom.
(<http://thescriptsavant.com/FollowTheDrinkingGourd.mp3>)

TUC

(singing)

"FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD/ FOLLOW
THE DRINKING GOURD/ FOR THE OLD
MAN'S AWAITING FOR TO CARRY YOU TO
FREEDOM"

To the surprise of Piper, Emma sings out the refrain with Tuc. Sean joins in.

TUC/EMMA/SEAN

(singing)

"FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD/FOLLOW
THE DRINKING GOURD"

TUC

(singing)

"WHEN THE SUN COMES BACK/ AND THE
FIRST QUAIL CALLS"

Encouraged by Emma and Sean everyone chimes in.

TUC/EMMA/SEAN/PIPER/PHOENIX/KIDS

(singing)

"FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD/FOR THE
OLD MAN'S AWAITING FOR TO CARRY YOU
TO FREEDOM/ FOLLOW THE DRINKING
GOURD/ FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD/
FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD"

INSERT - NIGHT SKY

While Tuc sings, scenes of a family of slaves creep along a riverbank to avoid a hunting party. Above them the Big Dipper guides their journey North, to freedom.

BACK TO SCENE

TUC

(singing)

"/THE RIVER BANK MAKES A MIGHTY
GOOD ROAD/ THE DEAD TREES WILL SHOW
YOU THE WAY/ LEFT FOOT PEG FOOT
TRAVELING ON"

The night sparkles in lazy turns as stars spin around the North Star and the song resonates out across the canyons.

TUC/EMMA/SEAN/PIPER/PHOENIX/KIDS

(singing)

"FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD/ FOLLOW
THE DRINKING GOURD/ FOLLOW THE
DRINKING GOURD/ FOR THE OLD MAN'S
AWAITING FOR TO CARRY YOU TO
FREEDOM..."

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

Mr. Finch leaps up and HOWLS at the sky, interrupting Tuc.

Everyone looks up as a cluster of sparkling incandescent meteors descend off in the distance in SILENCE.

Phoenix hugs Mr. Finch in an attempt to calm him.

PHOENIX

All right, boy.

Excited Kids rush about like deranged dingbats, SCREAMING and gesturing up at the heavens.

Needing to take control, Tuc gazes over at the dark tents scattered across the campsite.

TUC

Well pretty exciting...It's too nice a night to be stuck inside. Set out your sleeping bags, then we'll roast marshmallows.

Kids rush to their tents and drag out their sleeping bags.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

Kids crowd around the rocks circling the campfire.

The night soon returns to normal.

Campfire Shadows seep into the darkness.

Phoenix, Tuc, and Piper join their troops.

The Kids chant with excitement.

KIDS

Story! Story! Story!

Carl gives a snarky GRUNT.

CARL

Scary story!

Encouraged by Tuc, Piper, and Emma, Phoenix gives in to everyone's request.

Piper motions for silence.

Crickets CHIRP in the quiet night air.

PHOENIX

Ten thousand years ago, my people lived in these very mountains before mysteriously vanishing...

Phoenix sweeps his hands across the dark sky.

PHOENIX

Gather close, for a frightening tale...

An owl HOOTS as its silhouette passes over the full moon. It swoops over the campfire.

Kids SHRIEK and lean in closer together, TOUCHING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER.

Tuc tosses more branches onto the campfire. It ROARS to life.

Night CRICKETS go SILENT.

Emma holds up her cellphone and sweeps the video across the area.

Shadows leap out from the firelight as CRACKLING embers catch flight.

Unnoticed, the fire appears different, its flames shimmer. A jumbled collage of otherworldly images morph inside the flames.

Phoenix attention shifts to a distant campfire blaze up for a moment. He breaks off his story.

Tuc tosses a few more branches onto the fire.

Embers burst from the fire. Shadows shimmer in the light.

The painted symbols on Emma's arms glow and she videos it with her cellphone.

Strange wildlife noises CRY out from the darkness of distant canyons.

A nervous Mr. Finch's ears perk up, and he BARKS at a perceived SOUND as he directs his attention to the campfire.

Off in the distance, a faint haunting CACOPHONY lofts in from the mountains.

Phoenix hugs Mr. Finch to calm his BARKING.

Emma grabs the binoculars. With her cellphone, she points the video through the binoculars at the far off EERIE SOUNDS and lights.

Wide-eyed Kids SCREAM with imagined fright.

An anxious Piper responds to the NOISE.

PIPER

That must be a really scary story.

TUC

Maybe an alien invasion.

Phoenix motions for silence and carries on with his story.

PHOENIX

A native myth tells of spirits from the sky, in this very area.

Tuc nods in agreement.

TUC

Aliens.

Excited, Kids SCREAM with fright but stay glued to their seats.

As headlights flash across the campsite, everyone's attention shifts.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - NIGHT

A vehicle RUMBLES up. A PARK RANGER (40) steps out of his truck with a flashlight.

RANGER

Everyone okay here?

More faint desperate SCREAMS echo across the canyons.

The Park Ranger swings his flashlight around the group.

Walking toward the campfire, he steps through one of the camper's Shadow and...

Reveal: (*SHADOW RULES:*

#1: A STRONG Shadow cast off by a LIVING CREATURE that's created by the light from burning organic matter: wood, natural gas, etc., will cause any creature touching the Shadow to explode.

#2: If the Shadow instantly forms around the creature without it making contact with the Shadows edges, the creature will vanish into another world.

#3: If people/animals physically touch they form one single Shadow and doesn't affect each other as long as they remain touching.

#4: A single CRYSTAL'S Shadow effect only reaches within a radius of about 1 mile from where it landed.

#5: The intensity of the Shadow must be strong else no effect.

#6: A Shadow cast by sunlight has no effect - at the moment)

KABOOM!

Blood spatters across Piper's face and shirt.

Kids SHREIK in fear.

Carl BELLOWS in alarm. He leaps up breaking contact and scrambles out of the circle, away from the fire.

Carl steps into Sean's Shadow...

KABOOM!

Tuc sweeps a blanket over the campfire. DARKNESS!

TUC

Run. We're under attack.

CHAOS!

CRYING OUT in terror, Kids bolt toward the SUV or down the fireroad toward the park entrance.

Tuc herds Kids into the SUV.

Phoenix helps the injured Piper into the Jeep along with Emma, Sean, and Mr. Finch.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - FIREROAD - NIGHT - (MOVING)

Phoenix's Jeep and Tuc's SUV blast down the fireroad picking up Kids.

EXT. WILL ROGERS - VISITOR CENTER - NIGHT

Phoenix transfers Kids and Sean to Tuc's SUV.

Piper rings 911. No signal.

EXT. WILL ROGERS - VISITOR CENTER - NIGHT - (MOVING)

They tear down the road out of the park.

Shadows dance inside the Jeep from oncoming headlights as they head down the Pacific Coast Highway toward the city.

INT. SANTA MONICA POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a slow night. Three POLICE OFFICERS (40s), sit bored, serving out their life sentence.

They hang around shooting the shit as they listen to the pre-recorded segment of *The Abyss* from the previous night.

PHOENIX (V.O.)

(on radio)

I want to tell you how the future
creates the past, which then
creates the present, which creates
the future...

TUC (V.O.)

(on radio)

Then when the aliens attack, you
can zap into the future, find their
rabbit's foot, and come back and
save the world.

Police Officer #1 shakes his head in disgust.

POLICE OFFICER #1

You believe this shit?

EXT. SANTA MONICA POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Off the freeway, a building sign reads: Police and Fire
Department.

The SUV and Jeep pull up.

Phoenix, Tuc, and Piper herd traumatized Kids into the police
station.

INT. SANTA MONICA POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

A news alert broadcasts over a radio.

NEWS (V.O.)

Today the joint chiefs of staff put
all branches of the military and
reserve forces on high alert.

The door bursts open with Phoenix, Tuc, Piper and a host of
crying, distraught Kids. Piper and Phoenix comfort them.

Tuc rushes to a Plexiglas barrier with Police Officer #1 on
the other side.

The Abyss blares on the air.

TUC (V.O.)

Welcome back to the Abyss. I'm
Tucson Cota, your host and Oracle
of the Airwaves, coming to you from
Griffith Observatory.

POLICE OFFICER #1
 (to Tuc)
 Sir.

TUC
 At the park two people, a Ranger
 and one of the Boys, were murdered.

POLICE OFFICER #1
 Slow down. You are?

TUC
 Tucson Cota.

Police Officer #1 recognizes Tuc's name and voice. Annoyance stamps his countenance.

POLICE OFFICER #1
 (sarcastic)
 Would you describe this as an alien
 invasion?

TUC
 What?

POLICE OFFICER #1
 I can lock you up, filing a false
 report.

Police Officer #2 and #3 rush in from the back.

POLICE OFFICER #2
 (to Police Officer #1)
 What are you doing? Attack reports
 are lighting up the lines. These
 Kids from Will Rogers? We'll need
 statements, and call their parents.

Police Officer #3 flips a switch and news broadcasts.

NEWS (V.O.)
 ...11th Marines out of Camp
 Pendleton has cordoned off Will
 Rodgers State Park in the Santa
 Monica mountains...

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Parents coddle their children and rush them into cars to take them home.

Tuc pulls out of the parking lot in the SUV, while Phoenix, Piper, and Emma climb into the Jeep.

PHOENIX
(to Piper)
Emma looks tired. I'll drop you
off.

Emma bolts up in the back seat, SCREAMING and BANGING on the
seat back.

EMMA
No, stay with Liar.

Mr. Finch WHIMPERS and draws toward her.

PIPER
Emma, it's late. Mom will be
worried.

Phoenix throws a look at Piper and starts the Jeep.

Emma leaps out the door.

Piper exits to confront Emma. The young girl scrambles out of
her sister's reach and races around the car.

As Piper closes in, Emma darts underneath the Jeep.

PIPER
Get out of there. We're going...

As Piper grabs her arm, Emma lets out a bone chilling WAIL.

EMMA
NOOOOO!

Mr. Finch jumps out of the Jeep and SNARLES like they're
under attack.

Phoenix exits and attempts to grab Mr. Finch who leaps back
out of reach and BARKS.

The optics don't look good. Piper notices the growing
attention in the Police Parking lot.

PHOENIX
She's in shock. You guys can take
our mom's room.

At the end of her string, Piper gives up.

PIPER
(to Emma)
You win.

Everyone loads back into the Jeep.

Phoenix presses his face to a nervous Mr. Finch.

PHOENIX
You all right boy?

Mr. Finch rubs his head against his master's.

Phoenix drives out of the parking lot.

INT./EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Phoenix pulls the Jeep into his driveway.

Piper peers into the backseat.

Emma's already asleep.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

GUEST BEDROOM

Piper tucks Emma into an old-fashioned bed.

KITCHEN

Phoenix opens his laptop and logs into the Asteroid Terrestrial Impact Last Alert System (ATLAS).

Tuc scans radio channels and stops on a news broadcast.

NEWS (V.O.)
Deadly attacks at Will Rogers State Park, California and Apache Lake, Arizona have left more than a dozen dead, including children. As of now, no one has claimed responsibility. The State Department believes China bears the onus on this heinous act of terror.

Piper joins Phoenix at the kitchen table.

Phoenix searches projected meteor impact reports around the world and recent deaths in those areas.

The crystal Phoenix found on the sundial outside the observatory lays on the table; beside it, the Red Post-it Note.

PIPER
Any news?

Phoenix shakes his head - no.

Piper picks up the crystal and regards it.

PIPER
What's this?

PHOENIX
Something I found... Be careful,
it's sharp.

From a stack of papers on the table, Phoenix pulls out the reports he printed at the observatory the other night.

He points to several locations where the meteors were projected to land.

PHOENIX
Look. Here at Apache Lake, and at
the Very Large Array, outside
Socorro, New Mexico.

Piper picks up the Red Post-it Note and studies it.

PHOENIX
Hang on. Checking with a buddy at
the Very Large Array.

Phoenix taps a video call on his cellphone and selects speaker phone.

Tuc and Piper lean in to watch a young man CHANG (24), with juvenile social skills.

PHOENIX
(on phone)
Hey Chang, is Robert around?

CHANG
(on phone)
No, haven't seen him. Maybe out on
a date... How's Kaila?

Phoenix pauses a long uncomfortable moment.

Piper notices.

PHOENIX
(on phone)
I'm back in Los Angeles. Hey, any
strange occurrences out there?

CHANG
(on phone)
Other than Robert getting a date,
no.

PHOENIX
(on phone)
Tell Robert I called?

Piper nudges Phoenix aside.

PIPER
(on phone)
Wait... Chang, I'm Piper, a
colleague of Phoenix's. Did Robert
go on a REAL date with a real live
woman?

CHANG
(on phone)
Aah...no. He's not that lucky. A
group of them went out to explore
some fire.

PIPER
(on phone)
Any of them come back?

CHANG
(on phone)
They probably went into town. We
don't get out much.

PIPER
(on phone)
Any way to contact them?

CHANG
(on phone)
Reception sucks out here.

Phoenix steps back into the picture.

PHOENIX
(on phone)
Chang, have him call me when he
gets in... It's important.

Phoenix taps off the call.

PIPER
Kaila. Sounds... Hawaiian?

He ignores her fishing expedition.

Piper examines the Red Post-it Note in her hand.

PIPER

I see Emma's leaving you notes.
"WE ARE ALIVE." What does it mean?

She steps over and shows Phoenix and Tuc. They study the note.

PHOENIX

That's not from Emma. It was with that crystal. Someone left it at the observatory.

PIPER

That's Emma's handwriting. And she always uses that color. Makes me special order them online.

Phoenix glances over at his brother.

TUC

Wasn't me.

The three trade nonplussed expressions.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

GUEST BEDROOM

A WHIMPERING Mr. Finch paws open the door. He enters, jumps on the bed, and nudges Emma's arm, which glows.

Emma wakes and stares at her arms.

KITCHEN

Tugging on Mr. Finch, Emma stumbles sleepily in where Piper, Tuc, and Phoenix are transfixed at the computer.

On the table, the crystal glows. Emma picks it up, SCREAMS, and covers her eyes.

Piper rushes over and Emma hugs her.

PIPER

What are you seeing?

Emma shakes her head and moves her hands away.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

shows a nuclear explosion vaporizing downtown Los Angeles

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix and Tuc notice the pulsing glow on Emma's arms.

TUC
What's that?

Piper pulls back EMMA'S shirt sleeve and reveals the glimmering symbols.

PHOENIX
(to Piper)
Where did you get that body paint?

A big grin flashes across Tuc's face.

TUC
Alien Communication?

PHOENIX
Communicating, my ass. The language
of death.

PIPER
You're scaring her. We're going to
bed.

Piper pulls out her cellphone and taps mother's number.

INSERT - CELLPHONE

Reads: MOTHER

BACK TO SCENE

A long moment as the call goes to voicemail.

PIPER
Mom, we're alright. Staying over at
Phoenix's. Talk in the morning.

She hangs up and motions Emma toward the bedroom. She nods to the brothers as she escorts Emma out of the room.

Phoenix glances down at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

Reads: 3:35 AM

BACK TO SCENE

PHOENIX
Let's rap this up.

Tuc nods in agreement and closes the laptop.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - DAWN

Phoenix makes coffee while Tuc speculates.

Piper enters.

TUC

So, if it's not the Chinese, not
Russia or North Korea, then it's
got to be aliens.

Phoenix has the look of annoyance.

PHOENIX

Terrorists attacking campsites?
Makes no sense. Whatever has been
falling, didn't come from Earth.

An inkling of a possible different reality dawns on Phoenix.

PHOENIX

Meteorites?

TUC

I'm going with aliens. Gonna be a
big show tonight on the Abyss.

PHOENIX

Tuc, we need to go back to the
campsite. There's no answers in
craziness.

TUC

Woe! I've got a show to get ready
for. Questions to explore.

Phoenix points toward the door.

PHOENIX

Really! Out there are your answers.
Not some stupid carnival show.

Emma and Piper appear in the doorway.

Determined, she comes over and tugs on Phoenix's hand.

EMMA

I go.

In surrender, Piper throws up her hands.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - JEEP - DAWN (MOVING)

A gloomy marine layer and smoke from fires burning in the Santa Monica mountains hang over the sky as Phoenix, Piper, Tuc, Emma, and Mr. Finch drive up to the park entrance in the Jeep.

SOLDIERS block access and motions them away.

As they drive away, concern haunts Emma's features.

Phoenix's eyes shine with mischief.

PHOENIX

(to Emma)

One of the advantages of running all the trails. If you know enough about these mountains, no place is off limits.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - JEEP - DAWN (MOVING)

They barrel down an adjoining fireroad, which ends at the entrance to an overgrown trail.

A news broadcast blares over the radio.

U.S. PRESIDENT (V.O.)

...we will meet force with force and weapons outside the Space Treaty will be considered an act of war...

Phoenix punches off the radio.

The Jeep skids to a stop.

INT./EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - JEEP - DAWN

Phoenix and Piper exit. Emma pushes open the backdoor but Piper shoves it shut.

Emma throws herself against the door. But Piper holds fast.

She motions for Tuc in the driver's seat who flips the automatic door locks.

CLICK!

PHOENIX

(to Tuc)

Hold down the fort.

Tuc's grave look has Phoenix reassuring him.

PHOENIX

Don't worry. They're just grunts.

PHOENIX

Yeah! That's why the fox dines on rabbit everyday.

The brothers laugh.

Phoenix scans the amber horizon from a fire burning over the horizon. Smoke wafts up from the canyons as Phoenix and Piper turn away.

Mr. Finch scratches at the window and WHIMPERS.

Tuc scratches the dog behind the ears.

TUC

We're not going anywhere.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - DIRT TRAIL - DAWN

As Phoenix and Piper hike up the trail, they climb above the marine layer and into the rising sun.

Long Shadows of morning stretch across the land.

Each of their Shadows draw down the hill, perpendicular to the trail.

INT./EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - JEEP - DAWN

In the driver's seat, Tuc impatiently fishes through the radio channels, searching for news.

In the backseat, Emma, half asleep, hugs Mr. Finch.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

An EXPLOSION down in a canyon captures Tuc's attention. He glances out the car window and sees a frightened deer coming over a nearby ridge.

Tuc scrambles out of the car to confront the frightened animal as a roaring fire crests the canyon ridge. Tuc steps into the deer's shadow.

KABOOM!

BACK TO SCENE

Emma bolts upright; fear flashes over her.

An EXPLOSION down the canyon has Emma attempting to scramble over Tuc into the front seat.

EMMA

Nooooo!

Tuc holds her back.

TUC

Stay! I'll check it out.

Emma Fishes around on the floor of the backseat, she hefts a small five pound gym weight. In one fluid motion she swings it hard into Tuc's head.

WHACK!

Tuc takes a long timeout from having to listen to himself.

A deer leaps into view before a raging fire driving it forward. The animal races toward the Jeep. It's Shadow precedes it.

Emma jams her fists into the car horn.

BLARE!

The deer darts off in a different direction up a hill.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DAWN

SOLDIERS stationed in the mountains emerge from their tents, where they'd occupied Eagle Rock to investigate a possible terrorist attack.

Coffee brewing brings more Soldiers out of their tents.

Piper and Phoenix trek down a fireroad.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - DAWN

The fire has reached the ridge and flares up near a bird tearing into some leftover flesh on the fireroad. A SOLDIER attempts to shoo it away with a rock.

The angry bird SQUAWKS and takes flight.

The bird's glimmering Shadow passes over the Soldier.

KABOOM!

The soldier's remains splatter across the fireroad.

The bird lands and takes up where it left off - another tasty entrée.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - EAGLE ROCK - CONTINUOUS

The BLAST brings armed Soldiers out of their tents.

Half a dozen Soldiers race down the fireroad toward Phoenix and Piper.

Mr. Finch rushes in from a side trail BARKING, stopping the Soldiers for a moment in their tracks.

One soldier, threatened by 70 pounds of fur, draws his gun and takes a shot at him. He misses.

The Soldier advances, his gun leveled at the mutt.

As he's about to fire, Emma runs up out from nowhere. The fire on the ridge behind her erupts and her Shadow reaches out and touches the Soldier.

KABOOM!

The Soldier splatters across other Soldier's rushing up.

A murder of crows swarm in from the nearby trees for a hearty morning meal - an early bird special.

Soldiers invade the birds' Shadows and a chain reaction of bodies DETONATES.

Phoenix watches Shadows tinged with iridescent edges dance across the Soldiers.

Phoenix's WHISTLE calls Mr. Finch.

PHOENIX
(to Mr. Finch)
Get your ass out of there.

The fire subsides and Mr. Finch runs up to Emma who puts her arms around him.

The CRACKLING of fire rushing up from the canyon below catches everyone's attention.

Piper lets go of Phoenix's hand and steps toward Emma. At that instance the fire behind them flares up.

Phoenix's FLASH SHADOW swallows Piper whole.

WHOOSE!

She vanishes - GONE.

Emma SCREAMS and rushes toward where her sister had stood.

A stunned Phoenix SCREAMS.

 PHOENIX
 (to Emma)
 STOP!

He stumbles back away from the blazing hillside.

He stands in locked bewilderment, attempting to take in what has just happened as the blaze dies down.

The SOUND of Soldiers coming down the fireroad and Mr. Finch's BARKS shake Phoenix back into the world. He grabs Emma and the three of them race back down the trail toward the car.

INT./EXT. JEEP - DAWN

As they approach the Jeep, the remnants of a fire smolders around the area.

Phoenix shoves Emma into the back street along with Mr. Finch. He then pushes his brother over to the passenger seat and jumps inside.

A groggy Tuc greets them.

 TUC
 What's happening? Where's Piper?

In anguish, Phoenix shakes his head.

 EMMA
 (screams)
 My sister! She's gone!

INT. JEEP - DAY (MOVING)

Phoenix punches the accelerator and TEARS OUT down the trail, out of the mountains.

 TUC
 What happened?

PHOENIX

I don't really know. I think... we
were attacked.

Tuc gives his brother an odd confusing look.

INT. JEEP - DAY (MOVING)

Driving away.

In the backseat, Emma WAILS.

Mr. Finch licks Emma's face.

Emma meets Mr. Finch's brown-eyed gaze, then grips his fur,
wide-eyed and trembling as if in a trance.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

Reflects a vision of Piper trapped in a crystal.

BACK TO SCENE

Emma calms.

EMMA

(sotto voce)

She's alive.

Emma snatches her backpack and takes out a Red Post-it Note
pad and pencil. She sketches what she saw: A crystal
structure with Piper and another figure inside.

Her SILENCE catches Phoenix's attention. He turns his
attention back to her.

The Red Post-it Note catches Phoenix's attention.

PHOENIX

What's that?

EMMA

She's in a crystal.

Phoenix peers at the drawing of a male figure.

PHOENIX

Who's that?

EMMA

You.

Phoenix slows to a stop. Ahead, in his driveway, a police car waits.

He's conflicted.

His phone BEEPS. Phoenix glances at it and sees an Amber Alert with his car.

PHOENIX
What the hell?

INSERT - CELLPHONE

AMBER Alert

ABDUCTION Two females - Santa Monica, CA AMBER Alert: LIC/
5SEY238 (CA) 2010 Black Jeep Rubicon

BACK TO SCENE

PHOENIX
What the hell?

TUC
Should have called her mother this
morning.

Tuc looks over at Phoenix's cellphone.

TUC
Kidnapper. What would mom think?

Phoenix's car idles, out of sight, a block away until the police car pulls out.

INT./EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Phoenix eases his car into their garage.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

DINING ROOM

Tuc walks over and fires up his laptop and a bunch of messages appear from the 'The Abyss' network.

TUC
Shit!

Phoenix slams down Tuc's laptop cover. Tuc leaps up.

PHOENIX
Piper's gone. Like the others...

Tuc glances at Emma with concern.

EMMA
She's NOT!

Phoenix appears perplexed. The brothers share a grave look above Emma's head.

TUC
We're all about to be annihilated.
You've heard the news?

Tuc grabs two beers and a soda from the refrigerator. He grabs the remote and flips on the big screen TV.

He hands a beer to Phoenix and a soda to Emma.

NEWS (V.O.)
...after China's attack on Taiwan,
the Joint Chiefs of Staff have
ordered an occupation of China's
Spratly islands.

The news barely registers with Phoenix. Something Emma just said causes Phoenix to react.

He pulls out his cellphone to look at his video of the cave paintings and then projects the images onto the big screen TV.

INSERT - TV

Like the cave painting of Chauvet, the mysterious paintings capture the imagination.

BACK TO SCENE

Tuc gestures to the paintings shown on the video.

TUC
These remind me of old stories Mom
used to recount.

Phoenix points out geodesic pictographs.

PHOENIX
These look like crystals...?

Plopping down next to Mr. Finch, Emma watches the screen.

TUC

Mom thought the Shadows could eat people. They went into some kind of woo-woo crystal world. But then they got spit out. I can't believe we're talking about killer Shadows. How crazy is that? Got to be a real explanation.

PHOENIX

I know what I saw... And I didn't see David Copperfield anywhere around. I don't believe it was anything man-made.

TUC

Now who's got a nail missing.

Phoenix tries to piece things together.

PHOENIX

Shadows thrown by people... by fire.

TUC

I'll put it out to the Abyss. Maybe get some answers.

PHOENIX

(to Emma)

Can we look at the campsite videos?

Emma hesitates.

PHOENIX

We won't watch the last part.

Emma shares her videos from her phone to Phoenix's.

Phoenix taps Emma's campsite video onto the big screen TV.

INSERT - TV

Fire CRACKLES and Kids LAUGH in the background.

BACK TO SCENE

TUC

Wait... the flames look odd.

Phoenix stops the video to step through it frame by frame.

PHOENIX

Could these meteorites actually be alive? The universe is too complex to think that DNA is the only valid life form out there.

SILENCE fills the room as each ponders this.

SERIES OF SHOTS - VIDEO FRAME BY FRAME

-- Images appear to dance inside the flames.

-- An image inside the fire morphs into Piper's distraught face.

PHOENIX

What the... that a reflection?

Phoenix leans toward the screen.

PHOENIX

Gotta be a reflection.

Tuc moves closer and peers at the image. He points to Piper sitting next to Emma on a rock.

TUC

Their tops don't match.

-- Another frame advances and inside the flames, a bizarre crystal creature morphs into a field of stars.

TUC

Is that a double exposure... and why didn't we see it when we played the video?

Phoenix struggles to get out an explanation.

PHOENIX

Human recognition response... If an image flashes less than 13 milliseconds, it doesn't register on our synopsis but it does register on a still picture, a frozen moment in time.

-- In the image Emma took of the distant campsite through binoculars, a person appears to explode.

Emma hides her face.

Phoenix reaches out to comfort her.

PHOENIX

Sorry.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Tuc glances at his watch.

TUC

Let's see if the Abyss has any answers.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tuc preps his computer and microphone to broadcast.

Phoenix sits next to him, his laptop open to monitor ATLAS.

Emma fixates on her Red Post-it Note drawings.

Mr. Finch curls at her feet.

Motioning to his brother with his fingers, Tuc signals three, two, one.

Tuc presses a button on his laptop to play 'The Abyss' spooky theme music. He leans into the microphone.

TUC

Welcome to the Abyss, I'm Tucson Cota, your Oracle of the Airwaves, and this is a special emergency broadcast. We've talked about unraveling the secrets of life on the show, and now we need your help like never before. You've probably heard of last night's terrorist attack in Los Angeles. My brother, Dr. Phoenix Cota, and I were there, and it was as bad as you've heard.

Phoenix speaks into the microphone.

PHOENIX

We've been tracking meteorites across the planet. These are not conventional terrorist attacks. This is not a coincidence.

TUC

The news is fake. These attacks originate from deep space, not from any Earthly source. Not China. Not Russia.

Nuclear annihilation is stamped across our future if we don't come together to recognize this reality... That's why I ask if you have seen any strange meteorite sightings? Do you know of anyone dying in strange circumstances? Help us, please. Call now... for there may be no tomorrow.

His switch board lights up with names and locations.

Tuc takes a call.

TUC

Jack from Pikeville, Tennessee.
You're live on the Abyss.

A man's shaky voice CRACKLES on the air.

JACK (V.O.)

I'm a prison guard... we lost some guards and inmates, just blown to bits.

Phoenix clicks onto the ATLAS mapping and sees possible meteorite impacts around Pikeville. Phoenix nods and gives his brother a thumbs up.

TUC

Sorry to hear that, Jack. What was the circumstance?

JACK (V.O.)

It was during the lunch period, out in the yard. Two hundred inmates and twenty guards. I was on tower duty... I looked down and all hell broke out.

TUC

Was the sun out?

JACK (V.O.)

It was a Tennessee summer. A thunder storm had just moved through and the inmates were released to the yard... No, it was overcast.

TUC

So, what about any fires.

JACK (V.O.)

Well, yes...a lightning strike ignited a pile of compose and it seemed several prisoners were struck.

Phoenix steps in with a question.

PHOENIX

Really. Are you sure?

JACK (V.O.)

They closed the prison and we were debriefed by the FBI. At the moment of the attack, we were told China's new Tianhe-1 space station was passing overhead in orbit. I think it's a weapon.

PHOENIX

Lightening strike or weapon from space?

JACK (V.O.)

I think you're wrong, I saw no meteors.

Tuc switches off the call.

PHOENIX

What space weapon could strike through the clouds? No, he couldn't have seen anything.

Tuc switches to another caller.

TUC

Claire, I see you're from San Francisco. You're live on 'The Abyss'.

Phoenix rifles through the impact reports and shakes his head.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

Sounds like alien abductions... They're not dead. They've been beamed up to their invisible armada and they've returned to infiltrate our entire society.

TUC

That's an interesting theory, Claire.

Tuc mutes the microphone.

TUC
And ghosts might rent your ass out
for storage space.

In frustration Phoenix throws his hands up.

PHOENIX
This is just unicorns shitting on
rainbows.

TUC
Let's try another caller.

Tuc unmutes his microphone.

Phoenix shoots a concerned look at Emma, who's calmly videoing the events in the room on her cellphone.

Without a word, Emma races over and opens the patio door to nothing but darkness.

Tuc pushes the next button on his panel.

TUC
I didn't know we reached this far.
Taking a call from Tokyo, Japan.
Hinata, you're live on the Abyss.

A man's frantic voice CRACKLES across the line.

HINATA (V.O.)
Today, North Korea shelled and
moved troops into Yeonpyeong
Island. The island's entire
population's either murdered or
transferred to North Korea. Japan
has augmented South Korea's assault
on the island with two Hatsuyhuki-
class destroyers.

TUC
What started this...

INT./EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

By the patio door, Emma watches a brilliant meteorite arc though the sky.

A glass chime hanging in the patio vibrates.

Mr. Finch's ears prick up, and he rushes to her side.

CRASH!

An EXPLOSION rocks the ground, SHAKING the house.

Mr. Finch GROWLS and BARKS at something.

TUC
Earthquake?

Tuc braces himself.

Emma hugs Mr. Finch.

PHOENIX
That was an impact.

TUC
Meteorite?

INT./EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small fire CRACKLES from a nearby house.

Gripping Mr. Finch, Emma peers out from the patio doorway.

INT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tuc leans into the microphone.

TUC
Everyone, we're still on the air.
That sound, I believe, was a
meteorite impact.

Sirens BLARE in the distance, drawing closer.

EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Phoenix rushes outside past Emma and the dog onto the patio for a closer look.

Firefighters and police descend on the neighborhood.

EXT. PHOENIX/TUC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Behind Phoenix, in the doorway, Emma's transfixed at what's happening.

At the laptop, Tuc issues a warning.

TUC

It's not safe. Come back inside.

A GAS MAIN explodes, and an enormous fireball roars high into the sky.

Phoenix whirls around -- too late -- his Shadow swallows Emma holding Mr. Finch in the doorway... And in a dazzling flash of color and EXPLOSION, they vanish, faster than a Snickers bar at a Weight Watcher's convention.

In shock, Phoenix stumbles inside.

With ominous relentlessness, Phoenix's Shadow advances into the room, reaching out.

Tuc rapidly steps back against the wall.

TUC

Hey, Stay back... OK. OK. You can have the last beer.

Phoenix halts. He shuts the door, cutting off the source generating his Shadow.

In shock, he zombies across the room.

PHOENIX

Where'd they go?

Deeply disturbed, a logical answer escapes the two brothers.

TUC

Another world?

In reflection, Phoenix idly flips through his cellphone at the videos Emma had sent him.

PHOENIX

What are we not seeing?

INSERT - VIDEO

Shows happy Kids sitting around the campfire TOUCHING shoulder to shoulder.

Their shadows mingle together, cast out into the darkness.

Phoenix advances the video to when the Park Ranger walks into a shadow.

The man EXPLODES. Goo and blood splatter across the campers.

BACK TO SCENE

With a critical eye, Phoenix looks around. Insight strikes.

PHOENIX
No evidence.

TUC
No evidence of what?

Phoenix glances at the table where the RED POST-IT NOTES and CRYSTAL CHIME were - THEY'RE GONE.

PHOENIX
That she died... It was the same
with Piper... no blood.

Phoenix pockets his cellphone. His excitement mounts.

He walks over, grabs his brother, and drags him toward the patio door.

Before Tuc can protest, Phoenix kicks open the door and their combined silhouette leaps out across the room.

NOTHING HAPPENS!

PHOENIX
That's it... it's our connection.

CRAZED! Face to face, Phoenix grips onto his brother.

PHOENIX
I understand...WE ARE ALIVE!

Phoenix steps back into a crouch as he releases his connection with Tuc. He falls inside his brother's Shadow.

A shifting prism of colors consumes Phoenix and like Keyser Söze - HE'S GONE!

INT. CRYSTAL IN SPACE

Tossed like a rag, he tumbles into a vast glittering crystal chamber. Shaken, Phoenix fights to regain his footing. Dazed.

He takes in the glowing, Shadowy geodesics across the landscape in guarded, terrified wonder.

He trembles from a bitter chill in the air. A dark haze swirls at his feet. Reaching down his hand retrieves a coating of cold black ash.

Vibrations, like crystal CHIMES, echo out from the vastness.

Before him, a crystal the size of a football hovers before him.

It glows bright, emitting waves of light which strikes a paper thin crystalline filament about a yard across rising out of the floor and vanishing into the darkness above.

Prismatic colors from the crystal illuminates the filament rendering a translucent portal into what appears to be other worlds.

One such image reveals a field of glittering stars which appear to shift through time.

The crystal passes through the illuminated portal and vanishes into the stars.

The filament grows cold, dark and opaque again.

In awe, Phoenix cautiously circles the filament.

Like a curious child at what appears to be magic, he reaches out.

At his touch, the filament quivers with light, sending a SHOCK WAVE that knocks him back, CRASHING through another filament.

He struggles off the ground. Dazed.

Glassy slivers prick blood along his arms. He shivers as he brushes himself off.

PHOENIX
(sotto voce)
That's not good.

An unnatural cold chill sweeps over him.

His breath freezes as he turns his attention to a vast expanse of islands of flickering colored lights in the Shadowy darkness.

PHOENIX
(yells)
Emma! Mr. Finch!... Piper!

INT. CRYSTAL - (LATER)

He advances through the darkness and feels his way around a maze of angled sheets of crystalline lattice shimmering with vivid colors.

Phoenix eludes menacing vortexes of swirling colors.

Curious charred mounds of black dust plumes up from the floor at his passing.

Off in the distance, Mr. Finch barks.

PHOENIX

Finch!

Time ticks by until from the darkness, Mr. Finch leaps into his master's arms.

The dog shivers, icy cold.

Phoenix responds with a sense of urgency.

PHOENIX

Find them, boy.

Mr. Finch dashes off through the maze.

Phoenix trails him into the Shadowy darkness through kaleidoscopic islands of color.

Mr. Finch pauses and pricks his ears.

Drawing closer, a piercing SCREAM reverberates from the darkness.

PHOENIX

GO!

Mr. Finch takes off.

INT. CRYSTAL - CHAMBER

The maze opens into a chamber.

From the Shadows, large glowing eyes and disjoined spidery limbs close in on Emma, who's crouching in the distance next to a crystal outcropping.

In protective defiance, Piper stands before a dark threat, holding in her bloody hand a crystal sliver.

The SPIDER CREATURE emerges from the darkness, towering above Piper and Emma. It advances.

Out of nowhere, a SHARD (*a protective entity, like our white blood cells*) materializes, a multi-colored shape-shifting thing of moving jagged slivers.

Its prismatic colors appear to reflect emotions.

Time appears to distort as the Shard materializes ghost-like in multiple locations while advancing toward the Spider.

The Shard emits an intense ear piercing SONIC blast.

Phoenix, Piper and Emma clasps their ears in SCREAMING pain.

The UPROAR sends Mr. Finch into a fit of HOWLING.

The Spider Creature scuttles into the light projected by the Shard and pierces the Shard with one of its jointed legs.

Its leg immediately DISSOLVES into charcoal dust.

Glowing crimson, the Shard shoots out a splinter, piercing the Spider Creature.

The intruder DISINTEGRATES into a mound of black dust.

The sliver, now a blinding blue-white light, rejoins the glowing Shard.

PHOENIX
(to Piper, Emma)
Get the hell out of there.

Piper grabs a shell-shocked Emma and drags her in a limping-gaited dash toward Phoenix.

The Shard advances, glowing red for a strike.

Piper thrusts Emma toward Phoenix's open arms as the Shard strikes.

Piper DISINTEGRATES into glowing black dust.

Phoenix clutches a terrified Emma, who buries her face in his shoulder.

INT. CRYSTAL - MAZE

They race back into the maze.

Growling, Mr. Finch retreats into the maze behind his master.

Coming to a dead-end, Phoenix CRASHES through a crystalline plate.

INT. CRYSTAL - ORIGINAL CHAMBER

Scrambling to his feet, Phoenix recognizes the damage he created where he originally entered the crystal.

Instantly, he grabs a glowing floating baby crystal and points the crystal's light at different crystalline plates, searching for his original entry point.

As each plate comes under illumination, it turns translucent.

Images flash by of locations familiar and strange.

Phoenix pauses at a familiar site, Griffith Observatory.

As he holds the crystal's light steady, images of the observatory shift through time.

A nervous frightened Emma, videos the time transitions flashing before them.

Hearing the SONIC approach of the predator Shard, he shoves Emma through the portal.

Phoenix hesitates, searching for Mr. Finch, who's BARKING against the advancing Shard to protect his master.

PHOENIX

Finch! Get your ass out of there.

As Mr. Finch turns, the Shard lashes out.

The dog YELPS and BURSTS into a cloud of black dust.

Releasing the crystal, Phoenix dives through the portal after Emma.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - HILLSIDE - DAY

Phoenix tumbles out down the hillside, the brush breaking his fall. Crashing through dead bushes, he skids down charred ground below the observatory.

Disoriented, he's anxious to find Emma.

PHOENIX

Emma! Emma!

She's nowhere in sight.

The sky glows eerie orange and smoky rust-colored soot permeates the air. An ominous breeze blows ash in his face.

COUGHING!

Phoenix scrambles up to the grounds before the observatory.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Rising, he takes in the panoramic view from the promontory point.

He stares in horror out across a smoldering Los Angeles. The city, a nuclear wasteland. Burning fires dot the landscape.

An angry, blood-red ocean ROARS in the distance.

Through a hacking COUGH, he screams.

PHOENIX

God damn you. God damn you all to hell.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - FRONT LAWN - DAY

The sound of coyotes HOWL from the nearby hills.

Beneath the observatory monolith on the front lawn, Phoenix cringes at partly eaten human remains. Looking closer, he recognizes the Observatory Director.

PHOENIX (V.O.)

That's not good!

Phoenix scans the nearby mountains then scrambles toward the observatory main entrance.

INSERT - ABOVE FRONT DOORS

Reads: GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY

BACK TO SCENE

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CENTRAL ROTUNDA - DAY

Phoenix throws open the heavy double doors. Tawny specks of dust mingle in a dance with sunbeams casting Shadows into the darkness.

COUGHING!

He stumbles into the observatory and heads with caution through a darkened corridor toward the Security Office.

A heavy boot caves in the door.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

In the darkness, with the efficiency of Helen Keller, he slides his hands in search of value.

He snatches a flashlight from a hook on the wall.

Clicking it on, he spies a box of road flares on the floor.

He shoves several flares into his pockets and continues his search.

Somewhere in the structure, the SOUND of breaking glass freezes Phoenix in place.

Holding his breath, he continues his search.

Silently he drags a security box from under a table.

Pausing with uncertainty as to what to do, he SHAKES the box - something's inside.

An unmistakable GROWL - nearby - forces his decision. He SLAMS the box hard onto the table, bursting it open.

A pack of coyotes closes in.

He yanks out a revolver.

Swinging the weapon toward the approaching danger, he fires.

NOTHING!

Grabbing a flare, he rips off the cap and strikes it against the rough brick wall.

Startled beasts scatter out the main entrance at the sudden luminescence.

Calming, he checks the revolver's chambers - Empty. Fishing through the security box, he finds a box of 45 shells and loads the weapon.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - GIFT SHOP - DAY

A hacking COUGH leads his progress through the corridor to the gift shop.

Inside, he snatches a couple of souvenir bandanas and a backpack. He ties a bandana around his neck and stuffs the other one, along with some flares, into the backpack.

He glances at a solar clock.

PHOENIX

Oh my God...

INSERT - SOLAR CLOCK

Reads: Aug 13 - 5:17 PM

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix glances at his own Fitbit.

INSERT - FITBIT

Reads: July 12, 11:37 PM

BACK TO SCENE

PHOENIX

(sotto voce)

A month... That's impossible.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - DAY

Phoenix snags a bottle of water and a bag of chips. Shoves canned food from the kitchen into the backpack.

Snatching a newspaper from a table, he reads the headline in horror.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

Headline reads: PAKISTAN/INDIA EXCHANGE NUCLEAR ATTACKS ON
CAPITOLS - JULY 19

BACK TO SCENE

Phoenix collapses into a chair - stunned. He scans the article.

PHOENIX

Stupid still swims in the human
genes...or at the end of the line.

A child's distant SCREAM rips through the silence.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Phoenix races down the blackened hillside.

PHOENIX

Emma!

Emma, tangled in a large bush, SCREAMS and flails.

A pack of coyotes claws through the brush, savoring the opportunity for an early evening meal of fresh meat.

BANG! BANG!

Two shots send the pack scattering.

Phoenix breaks through the brush to free Emma and kneels to cradle her in his arms. Both CRY and hug each other.

Emma GASPS for breath through the pollution and retrieves her inhaler from her pocket.

She greedily sucks in its promise for life.

Phoenix reacts to the young girl's emotions.

PHOENIX

Let's get inside.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - DUSK

With tears slipping down her face, Emma sits staring at a can of blueberry pie filling. Phoenix scoops beans from another can. Crumpled chip bags litter the table.

Trauma etches their faces at the loss of loved ones and at the hellish scene outside the windows.

Emma snaps a picture of him and then of a newspaper lying on the table.

Phoenix scans the cafeteria. That was the only newspaper.

PHOENIX

I'll be back.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - KITCHEN - DUSK

Phoenix walks into the kitchen and spots a trash dumpster.

He rummages through the scorched and burned trash to finish off his collection of newspapers chronicling recent events.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - LATER

Emma's WAILING brings him rushing back into the cafeteria with a stack of burned newspapers which he plops on the table.

PHOENIX
Everything alright?

Emma shakes her head - no.

He attempts to remove the soot as he sorts and reorders the papers.

In silence he reads the headlines and places each paper down on the table.

Phoenix stares out a broken window at the coming darkness.

PHOENIX
Night's coming.

Phoenix places two flares on the table.

PHOENIX
I have to see about getting us some light... You know how these work?

In fear, Emma shakes her head and digs her nails into his arm.

PHOENIX
OK... OK... We'll go together.

Switching on the flashlight, they enter the corridor leading to the Security Office.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - SECURITY OFFICE - DUSK

At a control panel, Phoenix pushes a button labeled Emergency Battery Power.

The observatory comes back to life.

Emma sits nearby, struggling to breathe.

PHOENIX
I don't know how long this will last.

On the table sits a shortwave radio.

Phoenix pulls a clipboard with a list of frequencies and cities from the wall. He flips on the power and punches in the first number on the list: Washington D.C.

Grabbing the microphone, he's anxious to reach anyone.

PHOENIX
Anyone out there? This is Los Angeles, please respond.

From the shortwave, he hears only STATIC.

With a black marker he crosses out Washington D.C.

Phoenix repeats the procedure for the list of the world's major cities - ONLY STATIC.

INSERT - CLIPBOARD

List of several dozen major world cities, each with a black mark scratched through it.

BACK TO SCENE

When Phoenix scratches the last city off the list, he throws down the clipboard and turns down the shortwave STATIC, a bad reminder of humanity's failure.

PHOENIX (V.O.)
So, this is how it ends.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

He picks up the top newspaper off the table.

PHOENIX
This is the last newspaper. A week ago... it all ended.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

Single Ticket \$365 Million Lottery Winner Takes All. 2-14-72-5-10-75. Image caption: "We always played our birthdays."

BACK TO SCENE

PHOENIX
That was one unlucky dude.

Emma videos the desecrated landscape outside with her cellphone.

She puts her cellphone down on the table. Low on power, it BEEPS.

Phoenix, drawn to her cellphone's display, notices the time and compares it to his Fitbit.

PHOENIX
You're five hours ahead.

Emma shrugs.

Puzzled. A frustrated Phoenix mumbles to himself.

PHOENIX
Asymmetrical time differential...

EMMA
Are we going to die?

PHOENIX
Let's see what we can salvage.
There's a storage room on the lower
level.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Phoenix and Emma wander through the empty exhibit halls.

They approach the spark chamber, SNAPPING and flashing like an angry dragon.

Phoenix recognizes the meaning of the disheartening rapid fire CLICKS of the radiation counter.

WHEEZING and COUGHING, Emma uses the last puff from her inhaler, which does little good.

Emma fixates on the spark chamber.

EMMA
Is that water-balloon dangerous?

Phoenix trembles at the ramifications - death by radiation.

EMMA
We're going to die?

Hopeless, Phoenix stares at the lethal radiation levels and struggles with a response.

PHOENIX
Let's get out of here.

EMMA

What about the supplies?

PHOENIX

Where we're going, we won't need them.

Phoenix grabs Emma's arm and walks back toward the cafeteria.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Phoenix emerges from the kitchen carrying a birthday cake decorated with candles.

Pondering the newspapers before her, Emma brightens a little at the sight, despite her coughs.

EMMA

It's not my birthday.

PHOENIX

All the more reason to celebrate.

He slides the cake onto the table and cuts two slices.

Emma wolfs down with a cake face like it's her last meal. Unable to share her joy, Phoenix excuses himself.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Out of Emma's sight, Phoenix breaks down as he faces their hopeless situation.

Overcome with emotion, he pulls the revolver from his waistband. Only one merciful way to escape this horror.

INT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Phoenix steps from the kitchen, the revolver by his side.

Unaware of Phoenix's presence, Emma's bent over snapping photos of the newspapers between her HACKING, WHEEZING COUGH.

Steeling himself, Phoenix raises the revolver.

INSERT - REFLECTION IN EMMA'S EYES

Glow - Emma, Piper, and Phoenix appear inside a crystal enveloped in a blue glow

BACK TO SCENE

A smile comes over her face and she bounces up and down.

Noticing her sudden excitement, he lowers the gun.

Bright eyed, Emma leaps up and runs to Phoenix.

They throw their arms around each other and cling to one another.

Emotion overcomes Phoenix.

Emma pulls back.

EMMA
We can go home.

Emma leads him back to the table.

EMMA
The cave paintings.

Taking her words on faith, Phoenix opens his original video from the waterfall.

His cellphone BEEPS low battery.

He plays the pictographic stories of ancient Native Americans.

Emma leans in.

EMMA
There.

Phoenix stops the video and slowly steps through frame by frame.

Emma points to an image.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- A Native American steps into a flame that has a deep red halo around it and emerges on the other side facing forward.

-- A Native American steps into a flame that has a yellow halo around it and emerges from a crystal with two faces pointing in both directions.

-- A Native American steps into a flame that has a violet halo around it and emerges from a crystal with a face pointing backward.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

PHOENIX
Crystal travelers... fire's a
portal?

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

On the cafeteria balcony, in a frenzy, Phoenix rips out propane tanks from a row of heat lamps.

EXT. GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - MONOLITH - NIGHT

Near the monolith, Phoenix lines up a row of propane tanks.

With labored breathing, Emma stands by, videoing with her cellphone.

Phoenix goes down the line and turns on the gas nozzles of each. HISSING gas gathers in intensity.

He grabs Emma's hand and igniting a flare, he tosses it a dozen feet before him into the gas stream.

A walled inferno rises into the sky.

The scorching heat holds them fast.

Before them the Shadows dance inside the flames.

Unsure what to do, they watch. Phoenix snaps a tree branch and throws it in.

The flames consume it.

Nervous, Emma records the conflagration.

PHOENIX
This is crazy.

Emma lowers her cellphone and points.

EMMA
Look, some of the flames have red
halos. Can only see them on video.

As Phoenix looks down at her discovery, Emma's cellphone dies.

PHOENIX
Shit!

He appears perplexed.

PHOENIX

My ancestors didn't have
cellphones.

Emma fishes the crystal found on the sundial days ago from
her pocket and hands it to him.

He holds it up to the flames.

Colors of the rainbow cycle through it, like light through a
prism, they're showered in a cascade of colors.

Phoenix remembers an image from the cave video of a Shaman
holding a crystal inside the fire.

INSERT - CRYSTAL

Gripped tightly by a Shaman stepping into the flames.

BACK TO SCENE

He hands the crystal back to Emma and clasps her other hand.

PHOENIX

Tell me when it's blue.

She holds the crystal out toward the flame. She winches as
her arm blisters from the heat.

Colors cycle slowly through the crystal.

The wall of fire scorches their flesh.

The crystal cycles blue and Emma squeezes Phoenix's hand.

EMMA

Now!

Phoenix tightens his grip. He hears Piper's distant voice.

PIPER (V.O.)

In the end it all comes down to
courage.

Phoenix picks Emma up and rushes into the flame and vanish.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: White House - Oval Office - Present Day

Time reads: 7:45 AM

The PRESIDENT (60s) in gym gear strides along a treadmill at a good pace. He's intent on a NEWS broadcast on the big screen.

NEWS (V.O.)

Most of us have seen the fake videos attached to the BLACK PAPERS, which the far left hopes will frighten the public into capitulating to Chinese demands...

INSERT - TV

- a video of a nuclear-devastated Los Angeles plays.
- scorched newspaper headlines from London reading "Countdown to Catastrophe" flash.

BACK TO SCENE

PRESIDENT

Bunch of crap.

NEWS (V.O.)

On a humorous note, more than half a million winners will split yesterday's \$365 million dollar Super Lotto jackpot. That's less than \$700 dollars each. It appears they all picked the numbers off the mysterious BLACK PAPERS found on social media. Too bad for the single predicted winner.

A message buzzes on his cellphone.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

DR. LEE CHU (60s) distinguished Chinese-American sits in the lobby looking at his watch. A female WHITE HOUSE AID (20s) approaches.

WHITE HOUSE AID

Sorry, Dr. Chu, the President's too busy to see anyone today. Today's a travel day for his summit meeting.

DR. CHU

It's imperative that I see him.

Dr. Chu nervously pats his medical bag. She punches in the White House Chief of Staff on her cellphone.

WHITE HOUSE AID
Mandis will see you.

The Aid bubbles with effervescence.

WHITE HOUSE AID
You have family in China?

With repressed anger, Dr. Chu answers.

DR. CHU
Buried.

The Aid's phone RINGS, and she excuses herself.

Dr. Chu starts down the hallway. At first pensive, then gaining resolve.

Through the open door, the President's Chief of Staff, JOHN MANDIS (50s), ex-Marine, no-nonsense, master of detail, looks up as Dr. Chu passes and hears the doctor reassuring himself.

DR. CHU
The future begins now.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CHIEF OF STAFF OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: White House - Chief of Staff Office - 7:46 AM

Mandis scans through a check list of today's authorized visitors, ignoring the beep on his cellphone lying on his desk.

INSERT - CELLPHONE

Message reads: THE FUTURE BEGINS NOW. At 7:48 AM the President will be assassinated.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

On the treadmill's ledge the President looks down at the same message on his cellphone.

The Oval Office door opens and the President, huffing on a treadmill, motions Dr. Chu in.

Dr. Chu approaches the President and retrieves a syringe from his medical bag.

SUPER: Time reads: 7:47 AM

DR. CHU
You've heard about the flesh-eating
STD?

The President waves him off.

Stunned for a moment, Dr. Chu takes another approach.

He walks to the outer door and locks it. He turns back to the President.

DR. CHU
Had to give your Press Secretary a
shot this morning.

Alarmed, the President stops and steps off the treadmill before rolling up his sleeve.

Dr. Chu reaches for a bottle and fills the syringe.

The President glances up at the office clock, which reads 7:48 AM, just as POUNDING erupts at the outer door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Moments later, the President opens the door.

Mandis and two SECRET SERVICE AGENTS surge in.

The President hefts a 25 million volt stun baton.

Dr. Chu lies on the floor behind the President.

PRESIDENT
Thanks for the gift, Mandis.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - ROAD - DAY (MOVING)

As a tinted window SUV drives up the winding road to the Visitor Center, a news broadcast plays on the radio.

A woman's hand from the passenger's side reaches over to turn up the volume of a news broadcast.

NEWS (V.O.)
...today the President announced plans to hold a summit with world leaders regarding a threat from outer space... Yes, you heard right. An astrobiologist from California will be presenting findings to world leaders.

EXT. WILL ROGERS PARK - VISITOR CENTER - DAY

Phoenix steps out of his Jeep and turns to see a young girl racing toward him from inside the Visitor's Center, squealing with excitement.

EMMA

Liar! Liar!

She throws herself into his arms. Phoenix swings her around. Both smiling.

Piper strides toward them.

A HONK shifts their attention to an SUV pulling up. Its tinted windows hide a secret.

The back car door opens. The painted arm and hand of a young girl releasing Mr. Finch #2 who rushes to join Mr. Finch #1 next to Phoenix #1 and Piper #1.

FADE OUT.

THE END