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Critical Mass

Tom Radovich

Loyola Marymount University

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Critical Mass

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Loyola Marymount University, mr.tomradovich@gmail.com

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Critical Mass

Written by

Tom Radovich

A screenplay presented to the
Faculty of the School of Film & Television
Loyola Marymount University

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting

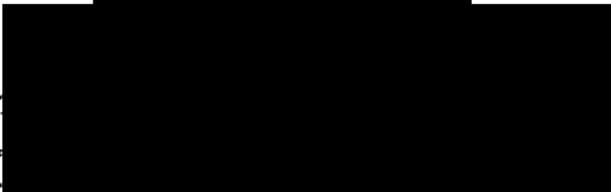
May 2018

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy
for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Screenwriting

Student:  Date: 5/3/18

Committee Co Chair (690):  Date: 5/3/18

Committee Co Chair (691):  Date: 5/3/18
5/3/18

Advanced Screenplay Project Title:

CRITICAL MASS

Criteria for advancement to candidacy:

Student has demonstrated sufficient ability and knowledge to complete the thesis project.

Approved to Candidacy

Not Approved to Candidacy

Comments

This feature length screenplay written by

Tom RADOVICI

under the guidance of a faculty committee from the School of Film & Television at Loyola Marymount University, and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting.

Advanced Screenplay Project Committee:

Committee Chair: SCWR 690

Committee Member: SCWR 690

Director of Graduate Screenwriting

Dean, School of Film & Television


Date


5/3/18

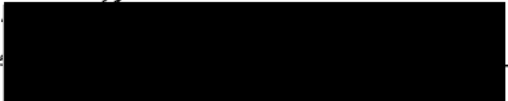
ADVANCED SCREENPLAY PROJECT APPROVAL


The Advanced Screenplay Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting submitted by the candidate fulfils the requirements and standards set forth in the University Bulletin by the Division.

Screenplay Title: CRITICAL MASS
Student: Tom RADOVIC Date: 5/3/18

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 690 BETH SERLIN
Signed:  Date: 5/3/18

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 691 Patty Meyer + Paul Chitlik
Signed:  Date: 5/3/18

Director of Graduate Screenwriting: Karol Hoeffner
Signed:  Date: 5/3/18

Dean: Stephen Ujicki
Signed:  Date: 5/3/2018

CRITICAL MASS

A Screenplay

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,
Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, California

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

By

TOM RADOVICI

CRITICAL MASS

by

Tom Radovich

A Screenplay
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,
Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, CA

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

E: mr.tomradovich@gmail.com
P: 815.997.3735

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - UNITED NATIONS HQ - NIGHT [ANIMATED]

Below a crescent moon, ALIEN BATTLESHIPS float around the tower in a feeding frenzy. Each green and orange ship has an icon burned into its hull: an angry frog face.

A nuclear warhead BLASTS out of the East River.

INT. UNITED NATIONS HQ - ASSEMBLY HALL [ANIMATED]

Labored GASPING. A frightened ASSEMBLY is at full capacity. Fear and disbelief rack their faces.

POLIWOT, a squamous humanoid frog in green and orange Qing Empress-style dress proclaims in a hostile, scaly voice.

POLIWOT

So you see, gentlemen and ladies,
the world's nuclear weapons belong
to the Crouk Dynasty. (ribbit)

CROUK THUGS (also frogs, infantry fatigues) hold laser weapons down the aisles and point them at the Assembly.

POLIWOT (CONT'D)

Any resistance against our peace-
loving species would be in vain.
Now all world leaders join hands in
harmony and bow to the Crouk.

The Crouk Thugs raise their weapons at the Assembly. The majority go to their knees.

But there's a single cocky AMERICAN ASSEMBLYWOMAN who keeps her legs raised on her table. A Thug order-ribbits at her.

POLIWOT (CONT'D)

Ah, America. Home of the foolish.

AMERICAN ASSEMBLYWOMAN

Come on, Poliwot. Can't we just
give you Canada and call it a day?

CANADIAN ASSEMBLYMAN (O.S.)

Hey!

POLIWOT

Such insolence! As frog is my
witness, you will bow to--

The Assemblywoman disarms the Thug with her quick fingers. Stuns two other armed Thugs with the laser gun.

POLIWOT (CONT'D)

What the *crap*?!

AMERICAN ASSEMBLYWOMAN

(heroic male voice)

Time to get out of these heels.

The Assemblywoman tears off her skin in one motion, revealing a blue, smirking and muscled humanoid bunny with "lovable smartass" drawn all over him. His name:

POLIWOT

DESCARTES? Stop him! (*ribbit*)

Descartes throws the gun at a Thug and takes four surrounding Thugs out with a fusion of breakdancing and kung fu.

A Thug in the aisle runs to aid. Gets tripped by a JAPANESE ASSEMBLYMAN. Who reveals himself to be a green bunny like Descartes. Meet SPINOZA, the funny one.

SPINOZA

Sorry, sir. No running in the hall of the United Nations.

POLIWOT

Spinoza? The Lunanites are here!

The French and Kenyan Assemblymen tear their skin off. Meet NEWTON (orange, bespeckled, the smart one) and VOLTAIRE (pink, eyepatch, grizzled, the angry one).

NEWTON

And we dressed for the occasion.

VOLTAIRE

Let's kick cottontail!

Descartes, Spinoza, Newton, and Voltaire are a "Fearless Force of Furry Fury" known as LUNANITES™.

The Assembly SCREAMS and rushes to the exits. The Thugs and Lunanites battle it out.

As Poliwot bounces away in his dress, Descartes crane kicks him to the center of the other Lunanites.

DESCARTES

Okay, Poliwot. Let's have a nice froggy evening and disarm the nuke.

POLIWOT

Mark my words, Lunanites. One day,
the Crouk will rise from the ashes
and then we'll see who--

ANGRY MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What the fucking hell?

All of them look up. This is not right.

VOLTAIRE

Uh, what was that?

A GIANT LEATHER BOOT (non-animated) RAMS into the hall.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

The boot rests in front of a startled seven year old boy with
crushed, innocent eyes. Meet YOUNG GABE POWERS.

The raging foot atop Gabe's Lunanite action figures belongs
to Gabe's FATHER (slurred, face unseen). Around Gabe and the
boot, a UN assembly hall made of Legos, odds, and ends.

FATHER (O.S.)

Still playing with this fruity
bunny shit.

The boots kick the UN around. Gabe stays put, staring at the
downed figures next to his mattress; Gabe sleeps down here.
Descartes's head is twisted to the side like a broken neck.

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Looks like a gay orgy down here.
(yells)
Whatchu been teachin' my boy, Ruby?

Gabe's mother RUBY, upstairs, YELLS something unintelligible
back. Gabe reaches for Descartes, but the boot steps on it.
Gabe closes his eyes and winces, preparing for a hit.

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Getcher head outta yer ass, boy.
You're a man, not no cocksucker.
You need to grow up, Gabe.

Gabe hides his tears. The basement door opens.

RUBY (O.S.)

I said, "where's my rojo," Cliff?

Gabe opens his eyes. Surprised not to be getting wailed on.
And sees the boots stumbling away from him. Up the stairs.

FATHER (O.S.)
 I'mma make yer ass rojo with all
 the homo shit you're givin' my boy.

The door SLAMS. Gabe pulls Descartes toward him.

Father and Ruby's O.S. argument is unintelligible. Gains volume. Gabe twists Descartes's head back to its origin.

DESCARTES (V.O.)
 Thank you, Gabe.

The toy doesn't move. Only Gabe hears the dialogue.

YOUNG GABE
 I'm... sorry, Descartes.

DESCARTES (V.O.)
 Don't be sorry, buddy. You saved
 the world. You're a true Lunanite.

Gabe attempts to smile. It's hard. Over to the other figures.

SPINOZA (V.O.)
 Oof. Newton, didja get the license
 plate of that bus that hit us?

NEWTON (V.O.)
 This is why I take the Lunamobile.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)
 Aaagh! That one really woke me up.

Wiping away tears, Gabe stifles a laugh. In his hands--

DESCARTES (V.O.)
 Don't ever forget, Gabe; no matter
 how hard life gets, the Lunanites
 will always be there for you. Just
 like you are always there for us.

Gabe's on the verge of smiling. He sniffs.

DESCARTES (V.O.)
 C'mon, give me that smile I like.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - SIXTEEN YEARS LATER

An adult hand grips Descartes. GABE (now 25) finally smiles. He is frail, pale, and has no muscle tone to his name.

GABE
 You're the best, Descartes.

Gabe stands from his futon/bed, his basement is a shrine to LUNAR GENESIS merchandise. Toys, posters, novels, accessories, blankets, unopened snacks, and a Nintendo GameCube game "Lunar Genesis: Crouk Cataclysm."

Next to the TV and "Lunar Genesis: The Complete Five Season DVD Collection," Gabe places Descartes next to the other Lunanites in a "Lunamobile" (rocket ship) play set.

Never looked happier in his life. Nods. Skips up the stairs.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Gabe showers his slender body. Generic 3-in-1 shower gel.

GABE
 (sings theme song)
*"Lunar Genesis! Fearless Force of
 Furry Fury-- Lunar Genesis!
 Lunanites unite-- Lunar G--"*

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

No mattress here. Storage. Dirty dishes. Piles of clothes.

Gabe dons a vintage red velvet with gold trim tuxedo; like a movie usher from the 40's. Straightens his clip-on bow tie.

On the nightstand--

AN URN. Ruby red. Gabe's footsteps tread away.

GABE (O.S.)
 I'm, um, going to work. Maybe be
 back around seven. So... bye, Mom.

The light switches off. Footsteps plod away. The urn watches.

EXT. CHICAGO DAILY GAZETTE (CDG) - DAY

An office building in busy downtown. Crowning: "Chicago Daily Gazette" in Old English-inspired font.

Typing on a keyboard PRE-LAPS into--

INT. CDG - LUCY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tidiness and order. A lack of color. Published books on film criticism: "Stilted Cinema," "Trapped in the Multiplex" and "Insufferable." The author doesn't smile in her bio photos.

LUCY ARGO (late 40's, dyed blonde, pointed appearance and demeanor) finishes an article. With her default frown.

The sole desk photo: her teenage son EZRA (emo hair, scowl).

ON HER LAPTOP SCREEN: The final words of a film review
 "...Bad Girlfriend lacks originality and subtlety. 1 Star."

Lucy blinks. Thinks. Is she reconsidering? She TYPES:
 "1/2 Star."

She "hmm's" in completion. Takes a drag of Diet Coke when--

HOWIE (mid 50's, black, permanently fatigued) opens without knocking. To his side, PEPPER ANN (early 20's, bubbly blonde, ink on liberal arts degree still drying).

HOWIE

You didn't pack anything?

LUCY

No, I have actual work to do.

HOWIE

Peachy. Lucy, this is Pepper Ann, our new social media director. Pepper Ann, meet our film critic.

PEPPER ANN

Hey, Lucy.

LUCY

(dismissive)
 Afternoon, Pepper Ann.

HOWIE

You check your email?

LUCY

I usually don't look in spam.

HOWIE

Well, you should. This office is Pepper Ann's now.

LUCY

Howie, you ever heard of paying your dues? Have you, Pepper Ann?

PEPPER ANN

Well, I live in a studio in Lincoln Park. My parents pay the rent.

Lucy sheds a mute glare to Howie. He sighs. "Yeah, I know."

INT. CDG - HALLWAY - DAY

Howie guides Lucy to her new office. Past Gazette front pages are framed as REPORTERS and STAFF walk past Lucy.

LUCY

Twenty-one years, Howie.

HOWIE

Twenty. No one counts maternity leave.

LUCY

I'm being kicked out of my office for a glorified intern.

HOWIE

The paper needs her to survive.

LUCY

I need an editor with balls to survive.

HOWIE

Our print edition's lookin' to be shuttered. Gotta adapt or die.

LUCY

I suppose we're tweeting our news from now on. Hopefully the Logan Square robbery will get enough likes and shares and insta-pokes.

HOWIE

You could learn something from her--

Howie stops her in front of a CLOSET.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

--she can teach you how to connect with people.

LUCY

Howie, I'm a *professional* critic. I give actual outlook and criticism to my readers.

HOWIE

So does everyone else. But they do it in 280 characters.

Lucy sighs. Too frustrated. Glances at the closet door.

LUCY
What the hell is this?

HOWIE
Your new office.

Howie opens the door to a cramped space for misc. office supplies. A JANITOR eats a hoagie and looks shocked.

JANITOR
Oh! Sorry, it's... my cheat day.

Lucy's mute glare returns. Howie takes it and moves on.

HOWIE
We'll have your stuff moved in. You got a movie to catch.

He holds up a PRESS PASS. She snatches it.

HOWIE (CONT'D)
Pulaski Theater. Two o'clock.

LUCY
Pulaski? That dump's still around?

Howie turns and plods away.

LUCY (CONT'D)
It's all the way across town.

HOWIE
It's an original... just like you.

Lucy folds her arms. Glances at the dining Janitor, who nonverbally offers her a bite. She pulls the door shut.

EXT. GABE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Low-middle income two-story apartments in Chicago.

Gabe rambles on the sidewalk in his tuxedo. And bellboy cap.

Yards ahead of him, a bearded pork loin of human flesh and ironic graphic tees rants to a smartphone on a tripod.

This is JOE TRAVIS (25).

JOE
The film is fucking ass. The script was retardedly written by retards. Watching it is like getting ass-pounded by the Michelin Man--

Joe spots Gabe.

JOE (CONT'D)
Gabe, thank Ra. I need someone to
deliver a quick line for me.

GABE
But I'm on my way to wo--

Joe pulls Gabe to his camera. Docks the cap off Gabe's head
and thrusts a FROGGER BEANIE on him.

JOE
C'mon, just one quick line. C'mon,
help a butt buddy out.

SMASH CUT TO:

POV: DSLR CAMERA (TIMECODE & BATTERY INFO)

Joe rants directly into the lens. He critiques--

JOE (CONT'D)
The Frogger movie is what happens
when movie executives ask, "what
beloved intellectual property do I
wanna sexually assault today?" It's
fucking cine-sewage.

Gabe stumbles into frame. Stilted delivery.

GABE
Hey, I liked the Frogger movie.

Joe fake-punches Gabe. Down Gabe goes.

JOE
Joe from "Dreck to Video" out.
(hold for the cut)
We're clear. Get'cher fat ass up.

Gabe helps himself up. Slips his cap back on. Tries to flee.

GABE
Okay, gotta go. Bye, Joe.

They exit frame.

JOE (O.S.)
What about next week? Gonna do the
Friday the 13th anime. It's a sure-
fire shitload of new subscribers.

Seconds later, Joe snatches his smartphone.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - DAY

A run-down 1950's era single screen. The farthest from a modern multiplex. But historically charming.

Marquee: "GUNWOMAN 2." Underneath, an outdoor box office.

Inside the booth, ISADORA CRUZ (21, Latina, and more to love) colors in a notebook. A fan drawing of Descartes cutting off Poliwot's head; she's a good artist.

She also wears a red tux. Here comes Gabe. Joe on his tail.

JOE

--so I said, "did you even watch my video, bitch?" Then she blocked me.

ISADORA

(grins)

Hey, Gabe.

GABE

Hey, Dora. Why are we in so early?

She plays coy. Has a juicy secret.

ISADORA

Just a critic screening.

JOE

Critic screening? To what?

Isadora's eyes point to an adjacent wall of movie posters. Gabe checks. His eyes double. Joe and Gabe dash over.

GABE

N-- no way.

WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING AT-- the Lunar Genesis movie one sheet. Our four motion capture CGI'd Lunanite heroes in shadows in front of a moon. Extreme font. Gritty reboot.

GABE (CONT'D)

Lunar Genesis!?

Handwritten banner: "MIDNIGHT SHOWING - Friday Night 12:01AM"

Isadora loves Gabe's starstruck reaction. She exits her booth and joins Gabe and Joe.

JOE

Looks like Vaughn Hartley sodomized the cartoon.

GABE

You're a pessimist. This movie is gonna bring people together.

JOE

I just think they shouldn't have picked the guy who did Nuclear Summer one through four to do Lunar Genesis. Those all sucked testes.

ISADORA

I mean, one was pretty good.

JOE

Two through four were shit--

GABE

He *directed* the Nuclear Summers, he's *producing* Lunar Genesis. Big dif-- look, just let me enjoy this.

Behind them, Lucy trudges to the theater door on her phone. Unaware of their presence. Joe spots her. Astounded.

JOE

Holy shit, it's Lucy Argo!

Gabe and Isadora turn. Lucy steps inside the lobby.

GABE

Oh my gosh, it is! It's Lucy!

ISADORA

Who?

GABE

The Gazette's critic. I have one of her books.

JOE

She was the shit. Tore apart shitty movies and spared no producers. You see that clip of her ripping apart Wallaby Willy? Legendary!

GABE

I remember one time she retracted her bad review of Earth Runner and the movie exploded. Big box office hit. Man, she had power.

JOE

Sorry you bitches gotta wait. I'm gonna see Lunar Genesis early.

GABE

I don't think Mr. Danielowski is going to allow that, Joe.

JOE

Yeah, he will. This is a critic screening and *I* am a film critic.

Joe waddles to the door.

ISADORA

You're gonna wait to see it with me at the midnight showing, right?

Gabe's hesitant. Can't answer. Shrugs shoulders. "Maybe?"

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY - DAY

Faded red velvet and gold trim. Old timey concession stand. As ramshackle as outside. But passion keeps it together.

ART DANIELOWSKI (late 50's, Santa Claus beard/body/behavior) perks up by the concession stand, enthralled.

ART

Lucy Argo. The Gazette.

Lucy halts. Art rushes past his adopted son KEUNG (18, Chinese, probably never smiled in his life). Keung sweeps the floor, in another red tux like Gabe.

LUCY

Afternoon.

Behind, Gabe and Joe slowly advance to Art and Lucy.

ART

We're thrilled to have a critic of your caliber at the Pulaski. I'm Art Danielowski: theater manager, cinephile, proud father... Oh, and sorry about the smell.

She sniffs. Goes back to her phone. With a huge smile, Art guides Lucy to the red curtain leading to the theater.

LUCY

Campy venue... Don't ever recall a press screening here.

ART

Studios see us as an anti-piracy measure, being a 35mm theater.

(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)
 Hard to rip off celluloid.
 And the extra revenue's nice.

LUCY
 Indeed.

Art spots Gabe and Joe. Brightens up at Gabe.

ART
 Gabe! Just in time. This is Gabe Powers, one of our hardest working team members at the Pulaski.

LUCY
 Charming.

GABE
 Good afternoon, Mr. Danielowski.
 (extends hand to Lucy)
 Loved your review of Earth Runner--

JOE
Lucy Argo! You inspired me to become a critic. You are the fucking tits!

This draws Lucy's attention off her phone. Speechless.

ART
 Uh, um-- I'm gonna let my usher and son Keung lead you to your seat so you can enjoy your movie. Keung.

Keung discards the broom and rushes to Lucy's side.

LUCY
 Yes, that would be most ideal.

ART
 Oh, and Mrs. Argo? My apologies, but no phones in the theater.

Lucy glances up. Insulted. 86's the phone.

LUCY
Ms. Argo.

Keung guides her into the theater. Joe brushes past Gabe but gets blocked by Art.

ART
 Oh, I'm sorry, sir. The theater's closed for a private event.

JOE
Joe Travis. "Dreck to Video."

ART
Uh... do you have a press pass?

JOE
I'm a critic. I have a YouTube channel. Lots of subscribers.

ART
I'm sorry, but I can only let critics with a press pass in.

JOE
C'mon, man. I'm a *critic*. I need to review Lunar Genesis for my people.

GABE
Joe, maybe you should just--

ART
I'm sorry, sir. Studio rules.

JOE
Or maybe you're just a fat bitch-ass prick! Fuck off, slunt-waffle!

Art and Gabe watch Joe stomp away.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER

A crusty mini-palace. Fifteen CRITICS scattered in two hundred seats. Lucy spies a familiar face by the aisle.

LUCY
Thank you, I can find my way.

Keung bows and about faces. Lucy attaches a smirk--

SAM RUTZ (late 40's, professor beard and eyeglasses) types on his phone. Lucy takes the seat behind him.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Hello, you "filthy philistine."

Sam spins. An in-joke. Puts on a grin. Back to his phone.

SAM
Argo. How's the Gazette?

LUCY
Awful. Howie moved me to a closet.

SAM

Sharing my office with obituaries.

Lucy glances to her left. A clique of twentysomething CRITICS chat with each other. Pollyanna smiles. Hipster duds.

LUCY

Ugh, they're like a disease. Used to be only two greenhorns. Now... nine? Who's the new one?

SAM

I dunno. But studios like 'em for their influence.

LUCY

On what? MTV?

SAM

On vlogs. Twitter. Facebook. The boy in the beanie over there? Got over nine hundred K followers... Nine hundred thousand disposable incomes that hear him say yea or nay on a film.

Lucy stares at the handsome BEANIE BOY in the clique. Envy?

LUCY

He looks as young as Ezra.

The lights dim. Lucy sighs and reclines in her seat. While the FEATURE PRESENTATION music rolls, Sam stays on his phone.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Hey, didn't you hear the manager? No phones, Sammy-boy.

SAM

We're seeing a Saturday morning cartoon. I'm sure I'll get a pass.

Lucy scoffs and folds her arms. Stares at the big screen.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - DAY

Gabe scrapes petrified gum from below Isadora's booth. Dear Lord, there's a lot... and so many colors.

ISADORA

It's probably going to be origin story-y, but I wish they did something from season four or five.

GABE

Doesn't matter. It's Lunar Genesis.
It's guaranteed to be great.

Art drops by the booth with a large bucket and pole.

ART

How's it going, Isadora?

ISADORA

All's well in my little booth, Art.

ART

I appreciate you helping out with
all the maintenance, Gabe.

GABE

It's no problem, Mr. Danielowski.

ART

When you're done, can you put up
the next movie on marquee? It's--

GABE

Lunar Genesis!?

ART

You two sure love that title.

GABE

It's... one of the greatest things
about life, Mr. Danielowski.

ISADORA

And we love you letting us take off
work for the midnight showing.

ART

Well, going to the movies is such a
magical experience. The movies...
that's my Lunar Genesis. Heck,
Gabe, I remember when you saw
"Snufflepuss" with your moth--

The joyful air departs. All become dead silent for a moment.

ART (CONT'D)

Uh, well... y'know, if ya like the
Lunar movie, Gabe, I'll give you
the poster once its run is over.

The air returns. Gabe SQUEE's. Art guffaws. Isadora grins.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keyboard TYPING like knives.

A FRAMED MOVIE POSTER: "My Weary Days Consuming" saddens the room. It's an early 2000's indie movie featuring a morose BAFTA-winning actress. Topping the poster, a quote:

"Dazzling and Daring"
-Lucy Argo, *Chicago Daily Gazette*

A quarter full glass of red wine. Lip prints. Typing ceases. Lucy takes the glass and downs it. Sits Indian and upright on her bed. Laptop open. No socks. Back to typing...

LUCY (V.O.)
I could never call it a train wreck. Train wrecks are more well-paced and entertaining than director Vaughn Hartley's debacle.

Lucy flips a sheet in her mini notebook. Continues.

LUCY (V.O.)
But I'm told Lunar Genesis is meant for children. The original cartoon, likely made for snot-noses who thought Sesame Street was too hard to follow, debuted in 1999.

Lifts her wine glass. Oops, no wine left. Lucy concludes...

LUCY (V.O.)
It's a bold choice for Hartley to adapt a film intended for those at a remedial reading level. But if you're dim enough to admit you're an *adult* fan of this show, you need to grow up. Half star.

A confirmation BLEEP. Lucy crawls off the bed.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MORNING

Gabe wakes on his mattress. He spoons a Descartes plushie. He smacks his lips and reaches for his phone.

No new texts. Clicks on the Chicago Daily Gazette app. Scrolls through headlines. His eyes widen.

"Lunar Genesis Review - LUCY ARGO"

He LEAPS out of bed with the phone.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Plain eggs and toast on the table. Lucy chews every bite.

The Argo abode is as prim and colorless as Lucy's office, with one element that bursts with color:

EZRA ARGOTSINGER (Lucy's *real* surname), 16, pudgy, shaggy emo hair, red pants, anime t-shirt, picks at his plate.

LUCY

How are the lessons coming along?

Ezra smacks the food in his mouth. Head down.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Ezr--

EZRA

Okay.

Lucy stares at him. Hmmm... Chews another small mouthful.

LUCY

And how's Mrs. Ortega?

EZRA

I dunno. Probably still shriveling.

LUCY

I received a call from her.

No response. A CLINKING fork on plate.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Ezr--

EZRA

I didn't go, alright?

LUCY

I'm paying Mrs. Ortega good money. She's performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

EZRA

Maybe I don't wanna do French horn.

LUCY

Ezra, you have to do something that challenges yourself.

EZRA

Why French horn? I have to stick my hand in a giant orifice. Not really getting any more popular at school.

LUCY

Maybe if you made a change to your appearance, you'd have friends.

Ezra JAMS his utensils down and heads to his room.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I didn't mean it like that, Ez.

EZRA
I got friends. They just don't meet
your pretentious definition of one.

He goes to his door. Before slamming, ends with a zinger:

EZRA (CONT'D)
Oh, and by the way, I haven't
decided if I'm bisexual yet.

SLAM. Lucy perches at the table. Sighs. She reaches a bottle of PRESCRIPTION PILLS by the counter. Downs one with water.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Gabe sits on the couch, gripping his phone. He lowers it, revealing wet eyes. A shuttering lip. A dead soul.

ON HIS PHONE: Lucy's biting line: "...this show, you need to grow up. 1/2 *"

FATHER (V.O.)
(echoed)
You need to grow up, Gabe.

He stares at his Lunanite action figure playset.

He BREAKS DOWN on the floor. Nancy Kerrigan, but worse.

GABE
Why? Whyyyy? Whyyyyyyyyyyyyy?

JUMP CUT.

In front of a poster, Gabe SCREAMS to the ceiling.

GABE (CONT'D)
Lucy Argo knows *nothing!* *Nothing!*

Back to SCREAMING. POUNDS the poster with a clenched fist.

JUMP CUT.

Gabe rocks back and forth on a Lunanite kids bicycle. Tense.

GABE (CONT'D)
I mean, there's no way her review
will actually do anything.
(MORE)

GABE (CONT'D)
 Lunar Genesis is critic-proof.
 Yeah. And no one reads reviews
 anymore.

Suddenly more confident than before. LAUGHS. Hysterically.

JUMP CUT.

Behind the couch in the fetal position. Sobbing. Wrapped in a Lunanite comforter.

GABE (CONT'D)
 Why... doesn't... she... like it?

JUMP CUT.

In only Lunanite briefs, Gabe faces the wall. Phone to ear.

GABE (CONT'D)
 --Lucy Argo... I just need to talk
 to her... No, but I need to tell
 her about something important...
 No, I don't want her voicemail--

JUMP CUT.

ON TV: An episode of Lunar Genesis. Descartes, Spinoza,
 Newton, and Voltaire are all in chef's hats in a kitchen.

SPINOZA
 So we're gonna raise more money
 than Poliwot by baking *cupcakes*?

DESCARTES
 Anything to save the orphanage.

NEWTON
 I've engineered the most exemplary
 cupcake recipe for maximum sales.
 And it's trans fat-free.

VOLTAIRE
 Ay! Hands off my confetti frosting!

ON THE COUCH: Gabe watches with possessed eyes. Agape mouth.
 Still in briefs. But he's not looking at the TV. It's--

THE HAUNTING PLASTIC FACE OF THE DESCARTES ACTION FIGURE

GABE
 It's just her stupid opinion. She
 can't stop Lunar Genesis with that.

That plastic face. Motionless.

GABE (CONT'D)

I know she's Lucy Argo. But... real fans don't read reviews.

Closer to the Descartes' toy face.

GABE (CONT'D)

Yes, I know what could happen if the movie bombs... but... look, it won't, okay? It's *Lunar Genesis*.

Descartes' unmoving angry eyes. Gabe BOLTS to his feet and dashes to the toy. Hysterical--

GABE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't know what to do! I don't want it to flop either! I want the world to experience Lunar Genesis. But... this critic...

Face to face with the silent Descartes action figure.

GABE (CONT'D)

I don't know. I... I have to do something--

DESCARTES (O.S.)

Radical!

Gabe gasps. Receives the revelation.

ON TV: Smilin' Descartes samples a delicious cupcake.

DESCARTES (CONT'D)

These cupcakes are radical-cakes!

BACK TO GABE: He's seen the future of Lunar Genesis in the toy's serene eyes. It's good. He whispers--

GABE

Thank you.

EXT. LUCY'S SEDAN - MOVING - DAY

Cruising past a green light in a school zone. Affluent.

LUCY (PRE-LAP)

It's a definitive no.

INT. LUCY'S SEDAN - MOVING

Lucy at the wheel. Sunglasses. Ezra rides shotgun. Glaring.

EZRA
Okay, mein Führer.

LUCY
Ez, you're not gonna become one of those people.

EZRA
What "those people?" My friends?

LUCY
Ezra, we're not arguing--

EZRA
You dye *your* hair.

Lucy scoffs and PARKS at the school's curb.

LUCY
If you change your beautiful hair to something other than what I gave you, then do not come home.

EZRA
Looks like we both win.

Ezra storms out. Goes four yards and gets flanked by his JAPANIMATION FRIENDS. All have dyed hair and colorful attire. The smiley PURPLE-HAIRED ONE waves at Lucy. She drives away.

INT. CDG - LUCY'S CLOSET - DAY

Lucy's office contents are shoved inside. Her desk has two inches of room on each side to the wall. Lucy pushes herself around the desk to her chair, knocking a frame from the wall.

LUCY
Shit.

She finally plants herself in her chair and opens the Gazette she brought in. Opens it to her page.

Dwarfing her Lunar Genesis Review; it looks like an ad:
"@LunarGenesisMovie looks fun! -xSniperKingx420"
"Hope @LunarGenesisMovie is better than Nuclear Summer
#NeverGettingMyMoneyBack -PluckyPetey91"

Lucy expels steam. She SCRUNCHES the paper up and--

INT. CDG - LUCY'S (FORMER) OFFICE - DAY

--POUNDS it on top of Pepper Ann's desk. Howie at her side.

LUCY

Tweets? You're putting average
people's tweets above *my* column?
(waves paper around)
Do you know how insulting this is?

HOWIE

It's hard for me to read when you
do that.

PEPPER ANN

Engaging our audience is a great
way to increase readership, Lucy.
It may keep the print edition
afloat for a few more months.

LUCY

I've had enough of this bullshit.
Either the tweets go, or I do.

HOWIE

Argo, you better take a breather or
your job's gonna be hashtag gone.
(to Pepper Ann)
Did I do that right?

Pepper Ann "EH's" in a "not really" way. Lucy crumples the
paper and turns away in disgust.

INT. CDG - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Lucy CHUCKS her bag into her car.

LUCY

Kiss ass Howie. Social media whore.

Staggers inside--

LUCY'S SEDAN

And turns on the engine. She pulls up her phone. And looks at
the Chicago Daily Gazette's Twitter page.

Top tweets: "@LunarGenesisMovie opens Friday. See what
@ReelVaughnHartley said about casting no-name actors: (link)

Read our interview with Chicago chef @MrHungryHampton"

LUCY (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

She puts it in reverse and keeps her eyes on her phone. Puts
it in drive and keeps it under ten MPH.

BY A COLUMN

Gabe waits. He has bloody make up on his face. Breathes in and out as Lucy's car approaches him. Eyes her as--

LUCY DRIVES

Distracted by her phone. Getting angrier at the tweets.

GABE

Readies his body as she comes closer. Here she comes...

HE VAULTS

In front of her hood as she looks up and SCREAMS.

SHE HITS THE BRAKES

And Gabe lands on her hood and bounces to the ground.

She parks. Cusses. Leaps out to Gabe's "moaning" side.

LUCY (CONT'D)

A-- are you okay? Shit.

GABE

Yeah, I... Ow. Uh... I think I probably look worse than I feel.

She looks around. No witnesses.

LUCY

Oh, shit. Um, uh... uh...

GABE

If you can help me up.

LUCY

Sh-- sure. I mean, if you're not...

She helps him to his feet. He sells the pain with each moan.

GABE

I'm okay. Can you maybe take me to the hospital?

LUCY

Well, uh... I mean--

GABE

Any one's fine. As long as they fix broken bones.

Gabe limps to her backseat. Climbs inside. He shuts the back door. Lucy freezes. Then gets in the driver's seat.

INT. LUCY'S SEDAN

A world of worry, Lucy looks ahead.

LUCY

Look, uh-- perhaps we can discuss exchanging information... Without the involvement of law enforcement.

A Beretta barrel presses against her neck. The hammer COCKS. Her eyes move to the gun, yet she's paralyzed.

GABE

Do exactly what I say or I'm making a smoothie in this car.

INT. PARKING GARAGE

Lucy's sedan slowly pulls away.

EXT. OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN - DAY

Lucy's sedan drives around a lower income area. Much like Gabe's neighborhood.

INT. LUCY SEDAN - MOVING

Lucy's sweating now.

LUCY

You can have all my money. Just--

GABE

--I don't want your money.

She tears up.

LUCY

I have a son...

GABE

Just make a left on 51st.

LUCY

Please... whatever you're thinking--

GABE
It's about what you're thinking,
Lucy.

Lucy chokes. Checks the rearview mirror. Gabe gazes at her.

GABE (CONT'D)
51st is next. Slow down.

She turns. Looks like they're heading to a garbage dump.

EXT. GARBAGE LOT - ENTRANCE - DAY

The sedan drives past towers of garbage.

INT. SEDAN

Lucy's eyes dart around. There's no one here to help.

GABE
One more left.

She turns to an--

EXT. GARBAGE LOT - CLEARING - DAY

Sees three people in Lunanite Costumes: ORANGE (thin male), GREEN (Isadora), and PINK (Joe). In front of an unmarked van.

She cries. He points the gun barrel at her neck.

GABE
Put it in park. Do it.

She brakes. Parks. Orange and Pink approach the sedan. She SHRIEKS as Orange and Pink open her door and pull her out.

LUCY
No! No! Help me! Help me!

Gabe gets out of the backseat.

GABE
Bag her.

Green puts a black bag over her head. Pink weighs her down as Orange zip-ties her wrists and legs as she struggles.

GABE (CONT'D)
Get her in. Ánde! Ánde!

Gabe "FIRES" the Beretta into the air. It shoots BB's.

Orange and Pink haul her into the van. Green closes the door. Peers at Gabe in the smiling bunny mask.

Green gets into the van's driver seat. Starts the engine.

Gabe gets in Lucy's sedan. Both vehicles flee the premises.

EXT. GABE'S HOUSE - DAY

The van stops in the driveway. The sedan right behind it.

Gabe leaps out of his car. The Costumes open the van door.

GABE
 (to Green)
 Watch for cars.
 (to Orange)
 Inside. Quick!

Green dashes to the edge of the driveway while Orange and Gabe pull SCREAMING and shaking Lucy from the back. Pink pulls a Lunar Genesis comforter from the van.

NOTE: It's obvious from the voice that Pink is Joe.

JOE
 Heh, heh. Lights out, bitch.

Pink/Joe throws the comforter over Lucy. It causes Orange and Gabe to trip. Making them all fall on the grass.

Green turns and sees all four of them ARGUING on the ground. Turns to see a car approaching in the distance. Green puts its hands over its smiling mouth.

GABE
 Just lift her inside! Lift her!

Gabe, Orange, and Pink/Joe get her in the front door before the car sees them. Green waves at the passing car.

DARKNESS THROUGH A MASK

Lucy's POV. Labored breaths. Shapes of people.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

The bag is REMOVED. Lucy blinks. Focuses. Orange holds up a bedpan. Next to Gabe. Glaring down on her.

Lucy's eyes whip around. Surrounded by Costumes and Gabe.

Her body and wrists are bound with rope to a chair with armrests; one that was made for video gamers.

GABE

I'm sure you know why you're here.

LUCY

Please just let me go.

GABE

You may not believe me now, but this is for your own good.

Her eyes whip around. Lunanite merchandise stares at her. Lucy's worry melts into confusion.

LUCY

Wait, is that the Saturday morning cartoon mov--

Gabe WHIPS a Gazette newspaper in front of her. Lucy's review of Lunar Genesis. Headline: "Loony Ghastliness"

GABE

A half-star. That's what one of the greatest achievements of the twenty-first century is worth to you?

Any trace of fear is gone. Lucy curves into irritation.

LUCY

I'm here because of a movie review?

GABE

Words hurt, Lucy. Lunar Genesis is to be seen by everyone and bad reviews turn people off before they've even experienced it.

LUCY

I'm here because of a movie review?

GABE

Now, I know critics go into movies hoping to hate them, but you didn't have context. That begins today.

Gabe skips over to his TV. Loads a DVD in the player.

LUCY
I'm here because of a *movie review*?

On TV, the Lunar Genesis DVD menu pops up. Gabe is suddenly happier.

GABE
We are gonna start from the beginning. And after you see all five seasons, you will want to change your wrong opinion.

LUCY
I'm here because of a movie review?

Joe gets face-to-face with Lucy. Badass in a bunny mask.

JOE
Yeah, bitch! You're in my world now! And it's a world of pain!

Lucy LUNGES toward Joe's mask and PULLS it off with her teeth. Joe flips and covers his face with his hands.

JOE (CONT'D)
She saw me! She can finger me!

GABE
Calm down, Joe.

JOE
Don't say my real name! I can't go down for this! I have followers!

He waddles upstairs. Quick as his hooves can fly.

GABE
Lucy, no pain will come to you as long as you have an open mind--

LUCY
--I *need* my medication.

Green looks at Gabe. Sniffs a problem. Gabe deflects.

GABE
...we're gonna start with episode one. Newton's gonna watch the first few with you, but I'll be back.

Orange sits on the couch next to Lucy. As the Lunar Genesis OPENING THEME plays, Gabe and Green stroll up the stairs.

LUCY

Hey! Did you teddy bears hear me? I need my medication!

GABE (O.S.)

Lunanites. Not teddy bears.

The basement door closes. Lucy stares at Orange.

LUCY

Get me the fuck out of here.

Orange turns to her. Then back to the TV.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Joe paces as Gabe sits at the table. Hunts through Lucy's purse. Wallet. Gazette ID. Comb. Lotion. Make up. No meds.

JOE

I mean, if this shit goes south, she could finger me.

Green pulls off her mask. It's Isadora.

ISADORA

Will you stop saying that?

Gabe paws a PHOTO of happy Lucy and "meh" Ezra.

GABE

She's not gonna turn you in. She's gonna see the error of her ways.

ISADORA

Did you find any meds?

He turns her purse upside down. Just sundries.

GABE

Nothing.

ISADORA

I don't know about this, Gabe. Pranking her is one thing, but I didn't know she needed medication.

GABE

I'll figure it out. I don't want you worrying about it, Dora.

ISADORA

Well, you should let her go soon.

Joe and Gabe exchange a knowing look. Harboring a secret.

GABE

Ah, def-definitel-ly-- so, you gotta get going to work, then?

ISADORA

Uh, yeah. See you tomorrow?

GABE

Sure thing. Thanks for letting us use your Lunamobile.

She gives him kind eyes before heading out. He nods with a smile. She leaves and Gabe makes sure she's gone.

JOE

You told her it was a prank?

GABE

We needed her van.

JOE

And you're gonna let Lucy Argo go... holy shit... *the* Lucy Argo is in your basement.

GABE

After she retracts her review, she can go. Lunar Genesis will be a big hit, just like Earth Runner.

JOE

Earth Runner was 2002.

GABE

So?

Joe pauses. Starts seeing cracks.

JOE

You know it wasn't just the Gazette's review that was bad--

GABE

Condescending critics don't like good movies. Big surprise.

JOE

Well, are you going to kidnap those other critics too?

GABE
 (irritated)
 Don't you have some review to do
 where you say "shit" and "fuck" and
 "jizz" a lot?

JOE
 ...actually, I do have to post
 "Daddy Dog Day." Toodles.

Joe hightails it out of there. Gabe decompresses with a sigh. Checks the kitchen table. Sees Lucy's CREDIT CARD and hundred dollar bills. Gabe's raised eyebrow begins a--

SHOPPING SPREE MUSIC MONTAGE (ALL DAY)

--INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - TOY AISLE - Gabe floats down the aisle. Slides Lunar Genesis movie toys into his cart.

--INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CEREAL AISLE - Gabe snatches Lunanite Loops cereal. His smile has more sugar than the box.

--INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SODA AISLE - Gabe spots Dr. Pepper twelve packs in a Lunar Genesis-edition. Winks at them.

--EXT. CARLISLE'S FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DRIVE THRU - Gabe smiles as he orders to the Speaker Box.

GABE
 Can I get twenty-two hamburger kids
 meals? With all the different Lunar
 Genesis toys? And extra Lunasauce?

Menu: "LUNASAUCE"- Limited edition purple-colored condiment.

SPEAKER BOX (O.S.)
 What do you want to drink?

GABE
 Uh, Coke- no, Diet Coke.

An audible SIGH from the Box.

--INT. COMIC BOOK STORE - Gabe stands proud and upright to the COMIC BOOK CLERK (portly).

GABE (CONT'D)
 Can I get the McGill?

COMIC BOOK CLERK
 Can I get three Asian girlfriends?

Gabe POUNDS the five hundred dollars on the counter. Smirks.

SERIES OF SHOTS: 1) Mario coin DING! Cash goes in register.
 2) An autograph by "J. McGill." On an animation cel featuring the four Lunanites. Housed in a metal collector's frame.
 3) The framed cell is lovingly placed in a plastic bag.
 4) Gabe's mouth warps into a grin.
 5) The store door opens. An angry Batman door sensor DINGS. Handwritten note in word bubble: "No Personal Checks."

--**INT. LUCY'S CAR - MOVING** - Gabe stops at a red light. To his side, a public bus with a Lunar Genesis advertisement.

He makes the "honk your horn" signal with his arm to the DRIVER... HOOOOOOOONK!

CRASH ZOOM INTO Gabe's cloud nine face.

END MONTAGE.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

CRASH ZOOM OUT of Lucy's pissed off face.

ON TV: The Lunanites are dressed as British nannies in the Crouk headquarters. It's an obvious parody of Mrs. Doubtfire.

Orange watches the show to her side. The basement door opens and Gabe skips down the stairs with a giant bowl of french fries and plate of kids meal burgers.

GABE

(singing)

*"Fearless Force of Furry Fury--
 Lunar Genesis! Lunanites unite--"*

(notices TV)

Ooo, episode 14. Nice. This is an important one. They introduce the Luna-Ray in this one.

Lucy melts Gabe with a death glare. Yet he's oblivious.

GABE (CONT'D)

What?

LUCY

(shrieks)

There are people looking for me!
 You fucking psychopath!

Gabe sighs. Glances at Orange.

GABE

You may want to leave us. You want a burger? Or four?

Orange gets up and passes Gabe. Not acknowledging the offer. Departs and shuts the basement door.

GABE (CONT'D)

He's quiet.

LUCY

You don't even know the mountain of shit you put yourself in.

GABE

Lucy, I know this may seem radical, but look at it in my shoes--

LUCY

--asshole.

He sits on the couch. Places the food on the coffee table.

GABE

Lunar Genesis is life-altering--

LUCY

--you haven't seen the movie! It's only been screened for critics.

GABE

I'm not talking about the movie; I'm talking about the whole. It's an experience--

LUCY

--it was a terrible fucking movie.

Gabe shudders. Attaches a little assertion.

GABE

Don't interrupt me. You didn't have proper education on the Lunar Genesis universe. You went in completely ignorant of the lore, the action figures, the show, the GameCube game--

LUCY

Is a positive review all you want?

GABE

Well... that'd be ideal... but your Lunar love needs to be genuine. I need you to see the same love in your eyes as I have in mine. The Lunanites will fix you, Lucy.

LUCY

Kid, I wrote four New York Times bestsellers. This is a TV show about four Bugs Bunnies who beat up frogs. This shit's not for me.

Gabe checks back at the TV. Sighs.

GABE

What are the names of the Lunanites?

LUCY

What?

GABE

What? The characters.

LUCY

I don't know. Dopey and Iggy.

Gabe sighs. Presses eject on the DVD remote. Gets up.

GABE

We have to start over from one.

LUCY

What?

GABE

You need to pay attention. This is important for your salvation.

As he switches to disc one, Lucy nearly hyperventilates. She eyes the single window.

LUCY

Help! Help me! Anyone! He's going to kill me! Help!

He presses play on the DVD. Grabs a burger. Goes to her side.

GABE

You're obviously hangry.

The Lunar Genesis theme PLAYS. He shoves the burger in her mouth. She gags. Spits it in his face. He repeats.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Crumbs and Lunasauce around her mouth, Lucy's eyes are heavy.

ON TV: The Lunanites are shrunk to the size of pennies. With a grin, normal-sized Poliwot towers over them and watches them battle an angry gerbil in a toy football stadium.

POLIWOT

Yes, my little-nites. Fight. Fight
my guardian for your furry lives.

Lucy looks over to Gabe, who mouths every line verbatim.

NEWTON (O.S.)

We gotta break that matter
transference device from around the
gerbil's neck!

SPINOZA (O.S.)

Easy for you to say!

Gabe leans forward for this one...

DESCARTES (O.S.)

We're Lunanites. *You can count on
us to fight for good in all
galaxies.*

GRUNTS and CARTOONY ACTION MUSIC. Lucy closes her eyes. Too tired. A stream of Dr. Pepper on her head jolts her up.

GABE

You're missing the climax.

She's about to yell, but stops. Considers.

LUCY

Uh... you... comfortable with
telling me your name?

He pauses the DVD.

GABE

Gabe. Gabe Powers.

LUCY

And you already know who I am.

GABE

Yes, Lucy. I have one of your
bestsellers. You signed copies of
it at a Borders... 2002, I think.

LUCY

2002. Must have been
"Insufferable."

GABE

That's the one. I remember the long line of people. They actually listen to you when you have something to say about a movie.

Lucy stares. Actually listens.

GABE (CONT'D)

It's just not fair that you trash on something before people get to experience it for themselves.

LUCY

Gabe, I don't go into a movie hoping to hate it. It's just my taste. You have your own taste too.

GABE

But Lunar Genesis *is* great, Lucy. It's-- it changes people. I'm a witness. And it will change you too. But you have to experience it first. Like I did.

Lucy exhales. A bit of frustration. But...

LUCY

I have a son. Ezra. He's everything I have and probably more scared than I am right now. I need to get back to him. Please, Gabe.

Gabe breathes out. Seems like he's affected.

GABE

I didn't want to do this... but... In the season three premiere, we find out that each of the Lunanites were taken from their home on the dark side of the moon by the Crouk--

LUCY

Gabe--

GABE

--Now these Lunanites were ripped from their mothers' arms, *as children*, and taken to earth. It was hard, but we find out the Lunanites actually grew stronger--

LUCY

This isn't a TV show--

GABE

--because they had to learn to live
and kung fu without maternal help.
They learned to be self-sufficient.

Lucy's stare returns to ice.

GABE (CONT'D)

Look, I didn't wanna spoil the plot
for you, but I wanted you to feel a
little better about your son. He's
gonna grow stronger.

LUCY

And what would your mother say
about kidnapping, Gabe?

GABE

(tense)

Now we return to the show.

He presses play. ACTION MUSIC returns.

LUCY

What about your mother, huh?

Gabe turns up the volume. Grits teeth.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Where's your mother, Gabe? Is she
proud of you for this?

Gabe KICKS the table. Startles Lucy and spills the burgers.

Lucy spots wet eyes on Gabe. He covers his face. Up the
stairs. SLAM.

VOLTAIRE (O.S.)

(from TV)

We sure made short work of him!

Lucy appears oddly remorseful in the glow of TV light.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gabe showers. Sits in a ball.

GABE

The movie will make money.

Opposite, an aged Lunar Genesis children's shampoo bottle
from 2003. All the smiling Lunanites. Flavor: "Lunaberry."

GABE (CONT'D)
I'll do what it takes. I promise.

Water cascades down Gabe's body.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MORNING

Lucy wakes up to the tune of the Lunar Genesis DVD menu. She's in a neck pillow and covered in an comforter.

At her feet, Gabe sleeps on his mattress. Mouth open. Clutching his Descartes doll. Looks like a little kid.

AT THE WINDOW

A SHADOW passes by the bushes. A meter man?

Lucy SCREAMS.

Gabe jolts up. Stumbles over to Lucy and covers her mouth.

Lucy BITES.

Gabe recoils his hand. Lucy SHRIEKS more. He quickly scans the room and snatches a small wastebasket. Puts it over her head, muffling Lucy's wail.

DING DONG.

Lucy pauses. Then SCREAMS as loud as she can, still muffled. Gabe casts the comforter over the wastebasket. Runs upstairs.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The comforter is pulled away. Trash can is removed from Lucy's head. She stares up at--

Gabe and Joe. Both unamused. Lucy thinks fast--

LUCY
Wh-- where am I?

JOE
She's faking it.

LUCY
What's going... did I wake up screaming again?

JOE
She's try'na play the fool, Gabe.

LUCY
I... sorry. I need my medication.
Badly. Or this happens.

JOE
Likely story.

Gabe stares at her. Unemotional.

GABE
I'll get your medication.

LUCY
What? How?

Gabe turns away. Goes upstairs. Joe PLOPS next to her.

JOE
The marathon continues. But first,
how about a little b-fast?

He clenches a box of Lunanite Loops cereal.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Gabe dons his red tuxedo. Eyes flutter at--

The ruby urn stares at him. He "shhhh's" it and leaves.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY - DAY

Keung pulls Lunar Genesis-branded soda cups and popcorn buckets from a box.

Gabe sets up a promotional cardboard stand for the Lunar Genesis film. One of those that invites fans to take selfies with life-size Lunanites.

With a grin, Isadora sneaks up on Gabe with her phone. She wraps an arm around him. Gabe is confused as--

SNAP! Isadora (big smile) takes a selfie with Gabe (unsure), with cardboard Descartes behind them.

ISADORA
This looks great, Gabe. I'm so
pumped for this.

GABE
Yeah, I'm about halfway done.

Isadora plays on her phone. Adds filters to her selfie.

ISADORA
Mmmm... so how'd the critic take
it? She think it was funny?

GABE
I uh... still got her.

She stops smiling. Stops typing on her phone.

ISADORA
What? But... Gabe. You said it was
a prank.

GABE
It is a prank.

Isadora eyes Keung, who stares at her. She pulls Gabe behind
cardboard Newton. Whispers--

ISADORA
Not if you hold onto her. It's
kidnapping.

GABE
Lunar Genesis needs a good re--
Deserves a good review. I'm just
keeping her for a little longer.

ISADORA
But what about the police?

GABE
I'm not going to get arrested. So
don't worry about it.

ISADORA
But Gabe--

She puts her hand on top of his.

ISADORA (CONT'D)
I care what happens to you.

Gabe shuts down. A hand upon his hand. He stares at it. Face
blank. Confused.

ISADORA (CONT'D)
Gabe?

He snaps to. Lets some gibberish escape while he backs away.

GABE
Ein hafta go see back here kay.

He RAMS into Descartes, trips, and keeps fleeing.

ISADORA

Wait, Gabe.

Gabe powerwalks away. Leaving Isadora and Keung behind.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gabe stares at himself in the mirror. But it's not his reflection he's seeing. It's--

Isadora. Smiling. A bright figment of Gabe's imagination.

ISADORA

(echoed, repeated)

I care what happens to you.

Gabe doesn't move. His crescendoing HEARTBEAT leads INTO--

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

ON TV: Valentine's special. A Cupid shoots Poliwot in the ass with his arrow. Poliwot's eyes fill with hearts... for a cow.

Joe cackles. He cuts his nails with a gross MINI NAIL CUTTER. Lucy watches, holding back her disgust.

JOE

I know why we do it.

LUCY

...sorry, what?

JOE

I know why we're negative all the time. I'm a critic myself.

LUCY

I don't follow.

JOE

"Dreck to Video." My YouTube show where I review shitty movies. I know it's more fun to review shit. I don't even know what to say if I like a movie. People like hearing other people talk shit about shit.

LUCY

That's not criticism. That sounds like ranting on social media.

JOE

Yeah, whatever you call it, it gets clicks. And clicks are God. In fact, I think you should talk about "Dreck to Video" to your followers.

LUCY

Clicks and criticism are different. You and me are nothing alike.

JOE

Maybe we are more than you think... I'mma see if Gabe's got burritos.

He puts the nail clipper on the side table and SLAPS her knee, showing his big buttcrack to her as he rises.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - PROJECTION BOOTH - DAY

A decaying fire and health hazard, but so adorable. CLASSIC MOVIE POSTERS line the wall like wallpaper.

Art watches an action movie (GUNSHOTS) between two WRRRRR-ing projectors. A genuine smile of love on his face.

Gabe sneaks in. Takes off his cap. Before Gabe can speak--

ART

Hey, little buddy. You get that cardboard doo-hickey done?

GABE

Yes, Mr. Danielowski. Just came by t- to say thanks for letting me and Isadora not work at the Lunar Genesis midnight showing.

Art chuckles. Gazes back at the theater screen.

ART

How could I let you two miss that movie you never stop talking about? I tell ya... Cinema, Gabe. It's...

Can't even finish the thought. Too filled with awe.

GABE

Actually, I... also wanted to talk about something... hypothetical... Have you ever had to balance something that you love with... something else you *might* love?

ART

It's not easy. I've always loved the movies; the big screen, the spectacle, the smell of popcorn. I gave up my career as an investment banker to buy the Pulaski.

GABE

I didn't know you worked at a bank.

ART

Yeah, paid well. Good hours. But the passion just wasn't there. But I found it when I saw the Pulaski.

Gabe nods. Eager. Comes closer to Art.

ART (CONT'D)

Yeah, she's got upkeep. And not a lot of profit. And kooks claiming to be inspectors trying to shut 'er down. But we're still together... unlike my ex-wife.

GABE

Oh.

ART

See, I loved her too, but she didn't love Miss Pulaski like I did. She put up with it for as long as it was convenient.

GABE

I'm sorry.

ART

Don't be. I still have my baby. And Keung. What's this about? You got a girl? Trying to make me a grandpa?

Gabe smiles as Art slaps him on the back and laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

Divorce is painful, but my first love never let me down. The movies have always been there for me.

Gabe nods with a semblance of understanding. Art glances up.

ART (CONT'D)

Ooop, reel's about to change. Say, Gabe. Look down by my feet.

Gabe glances by Art's boots. Glorious 35mm film cans.

ART (CONT'D)
That's Lunar Genesis right there.

Awe. Gabe slinks toward the cans like the Mona Lisa.

GABE
The future... in those little cans.

Art shakes his head and grins. Gazes into the theater and goes crusty.

ART
Aww, fiddlesticks. I see someone
textin' down there. Damn fool
ruining the movie for everyone.

Gabe's eyes pierce the film cans. Labeled "Lunar Genesis."

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Burrito stains on his shirt, Joe SNORES on the couch. After glancing at him, Lucy wiggles her wrists. Still trapped.

ON TV: POLIWOT'S MOM (Poliwot in The Far Side-esque glasses and beehive hairdo) berates Poliwot at the helm of his ship.

POLIWOT'S MOM
The Lunanites escaped again!
Poliwot, what is wrong with you?

POLIWOT
Mother, I just--

Lucy watches Poliwot's Mom insult her timid son... affected.

POLIWOT'S MOM
Silence! All the time I spent
raising you to live the life of a
Crouk warlord! You are a failure to
me and your own kind!

Poliwot has never looked so sullen. Neither has Lucy.

At the peak of a SNORE, Joe SHARTS his pants with a violent discharge. Instantly wakes up. Utter fear in his eyes.

JOE
I- I gotta check my emails.

He hobbles to the stairs like he's on stilts. Lucy stares back at the screen. Poliwot has tears in his reptile eyes.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Gabe escapes the elevator in a hoodie, sunglasses, mustache, and pizza box so inconspicuous that it's very conspicuous.

He waltzes to Lucy's door. Apt 303. RAPS on the door.

GABE
(Italian/Borat accent)
Pizza man. You like pepperoni?

He glances left and right. Pulls Lucy's keys from his hoodie and unlocks the door quickly.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Closing the door, Gabe removes his sunglasses. Stares around. PLOPS the pizza on the table. Takes a slice.

On the fridge, he spots a photo of happy five year old Ezra and Lucy. Obvious that a husband has been cropped out.

EZRA'S BEDROOM

Where all the color hides. Anime posters on walls. Gabe pops his head in. Chews on pizza. "MMM's" in approval. Spots a Poliwot t-shirt beside the hamper. Next to a French horn.

LUCY'S BEDROOM

Gabe finishes his slice and wipes his hand on the comforter. Glances around for the prescription bottle. Nothing.

He spots the My Weary Days Consuming poster. "MMM's" in disapproval. In the caddy beneath it, he finds her books and a sizable collection of DVD's. He pulls Earth Runner.

Earth Runner DVD: cover looks like a cerebral sci-fi movie with two concerned white actors gazing into the foreground. Definitely R-rated. Gabe flips to the back--

Planted in the tiny movie description, it reads:
...a box office smash that's "a feast for the eyes and mind"
(Lucy Argo, Chicago Daily Gazette).

GABE
Box office smash.

His smile is reassuring.

OUTSIDE BATHROOM

Nonchalant, Gabe turns the knob and--

INSIDE

EZRA RINSES HIS HAIR OVER THE SINK!

Dyed neon blue. Ezra's eyes are closed. Gabe is petrified.

EZRA

I know what you're gonna say--

Gabe eyes the sink. Lucy's prescription by the hair dye box.

EZRA (CONT'D)

--but I don't care. It's *my* hair.

Gabe leans in as Ezra turns his head. He snatches the pill bottle and POWERWALKS away. Ezra turns back and opens an eye.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Mom?

KITCHEN

Scurrying Gabe clears the door before Ezra spots him.

HALLWAY

Gabe sprints to the elevator and JAMS the button. Lucy's apartment door opens. Gabe LEAPS into the stairs door. Towel around neck, Ezra watches the door to the stairs close.

EZRA

Fine! I'm gonna spend another night at Asher's house. "How 'bout dah?"

Ezra wipes his hair on the towel. Spots dye on it. "Fudge."

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Late afternoon. The TV is on, but not Lunar Genesis.

ON TV: "Dreck to Video," Joe's poorly shot show. He sits on a recliner in a dirty room. Graphic T-shirt: "My Pen Is Huge."

JOE

(on TV)

I've never seen a shitty movie that wanted to give a blowjob to itself as much as Steel Eagle 3--

ON THE COUCH

Now in sweatpants, Joe smiles and nods along to his work.

JOE (CONT'D)

(on TV)

--it's worse than the Hulk Hogan sex tape. A true shitload of fuck. Joe from Dreck to Video out.

The video ends. Joe glances at Lucy.

LUCY

...topical.

JOE

C'mon. My followers love this. I was inspired by you, ya know. You should mention me in your next review. We could be a team.

LUCY

How is this... angry display of vulgarity anything like my writing?

JOE

You shit on movies with ten dollar words. I shit on movies with fuck, shit, and ass. We both got a ton of fans who listen to us. Let's team up and combine our viewership.

LUCY

But... that counter said your last video only got twelve view--

JOE

--let's watch another. You gotta see my review of The Wuzzles; I show those little furry bastards.

Lucy looks horrified. But thank God the basement door opens. Gabe plods down with a full trash bag and Lucy's meds.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh, hey, Gabe. We were just about to watch the Wuzz--

GABE
Why isn't Lunar Genesis on?

JOE
Uh, well, figured we take a break.

Annoyed, Gabe drops the trash bag by the couch. A bit of movie popcorn spouts out of the top.

GABE
I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that as you load season three, disc four or wherever you cut it off.

JOE
Gabe... babe--

GABE
Put it in. Now.

Joe kills the playful nature and wobbles to the DVD player.

GABE (CONT'D)
(to Lucy, kinder)
I got your medication. Two pills?

LUCY
Y-- yes.

Switching discs, Joe watches Gabe shake two pills out. Open a Dr. Pepper and handfeed Lucy the meds. Chases with the soda.

JOE
So, uh... you're on Poliwot and Circumstance.

GABE
Good. Leave us.

With labored breaths, Joe climbs the stairs; his nemesis.

JOE
(to self)
See if I help you kidnap the next bitch, ya glass bottom boat lovin'--

SLAM. Gabe and Lucy are alone. He sits on the couch.

GABE
So... Prozac...

LUCY
Are you surprised that even evil critics get depression?

GABE

No, it's-- no. Just... you seemed so... "problem-less."

LUCY

Anyone with a teenage son is far from that.

GABE

Oh... Ezra, right? Well, I saw him.

LUCY

What?

GABE

He was at your apartment.

LUCY

You were at my apartment?

GABE

Where else was I going to get your meds? I'm not a thief.

LUCY

So you draw the line at pills, but stealing people is okay--

GABE

Look, let's not argue. We're about to watch a great episo--

LUCY

Ezra?

Gabe pauses. Genuine concern on her face.

GABE

He's... fine. He's blue now. His hair at least.

Her concern morphs to vexation.

LUCY

No, Ez. I told him not to do that.

GABE

Why not? It'll turn back eventually-

LUCY

I don't want him *changing*.

Lucy halts. Thinks about what she says.

LUCY (CONT'D)

He used to be my little boy. My little Ezra. His smile could light up any room. I could watch him swing on the playground for hours with that beautiful smile. I haven't seen him smile in years. Or felt how it made me feel.

Gabe lets it breathe.

GABE

I... know how you feel, Lucy. I... don't like change either. Especially when things get worse.

After a beat of them gazing at each other, the happy and heroic Lunar Genesis DVD menu BLASTS.

EXT. GABE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Time passes. No lights on. A dog BARKS.

NEWTON (PRE-LAP)

Well, we've finally found the Crouk money laundering headquarters...

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

ON TV: The Lunanites watch a row of laundry machines full of paper money being washed.

SPINOZA

It's all washed up. Like Poliwot.

WATCHING: Gabe and Lucy, with an open trash bag of popcorn between them. Gabe shovels popcorn in his mouth.

Gabe's phone RINGS. Lunar Genesis ringtone. He hits ignore.

LUCY

If Polliwog can fly anywhere in the universe in minutes, why does he want domination of the Earth?

GABE

Poliwot. Because Earth has planet-exclusive natural resources and chocolate milkshakes. And there's no Crouk outpost in the Milky Way.

RINGTONE. Gabe ignores.

LUCY

Well, why doesn't he just form an alliance with those elephant people? They have that invincibility ray thing.

GABE

The Trunkian are a proud race who wouldn't use the Abide Carbine on who they consider a lesser species, of which human and Crouk are.

RING-- Gabe quickly ignores.

LUCY

Who's Isadora?

Gabe spots Lucy spying on the caller ID. Pulls it away.

GABE

Just a girl from work. Probably wants to change shifts.

LUCY

Sounds like she really needs to switch shifts. Or talk to someone.

RINGTONE. Gabe doesn't ignore. After consideration, he pauses the DVD, stands up, paces away from Lucy, and answers.

GABE

(to phone)
Hello?

ISADORA (O.S.)

Hey. Are you home right now?

GABE

...I may be.

ISADORA (O.S.)

Are you in the basement?

Gabe's head swivels to the window. She's outside?

EXT. GABE'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Isadora stands with a tray of homemade enchiladas. Adorned in makeup and out of her work tuxedo, she looks lovely.

Gabe opens and immediately closes the door behind himself.

GABE

Dora, hey. What's-- oh, food.

ISADORA

I figured, we're gonna see Lunar Genesis in a couple nights, why not have a mini marathon, right?

GABE

Oh, uh-- good idea'r erm... Uh, it's not the best time though.

ISADORA

Why not? You're not working again til Monday, right?

GABE

It's just... Dora, don't get mad--

ISADORA

Don't tell me you still have...

Gabe closes his eyes in pain. Bites lip. Nods fast.

ISADORA (CONT'D)

(harsh whispers)

Gabe, that's kidnapping.

GABE

No, it's not like--

ISADORA (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh I'm an accomplice--

GABE

--you're not an accomplice, Dor. It was a prank... kinda sorta. I just kinda saw that she needed Lunar Genesis in her life.

ISADORA

That's a TV show. She needs air and water and to not be kidnapped.

GABE

I'm gonna let her go. Very soon, I promise. It's just... it's changing her. Just like it changed me.

Isadora's mouth hangs open. Unable to process.

GABE (CONT'D)

I need a little more time. Just a little. I'll let her go.

ISADORA

Look, I love Lunar Genesis too. A lot. But there's a real world out here. And they punish people who kidnap other people.

GABE

I know.

ISADORA

And I love you too, Gabe--

Gabe goes into a trance. He can't hear what she's saying.

ISADORA (CONT'D)

(echoed)

--but your love of the show is dangerous to you and that critic. Why can't you see what's in front of you? In real life?

Gabe's emotionless face flutters into a smile.

He KISSES her. Unrestrained passion. She's off guard. Drops the enchiladas. And kisses back in his embrace.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

Two human shadows joined at the mouth.

Lucy stares at the window. She has a sullen look on her face.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MORNING

Gabe splays on his mattress, bliss on his face. His Descartes doll is off the bed.

Lucy wakes. Sees a plate of fruit at the table; a smiley face of cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, and a strawberry nose.

GABE

Figured you could use some vitamins and minerals that didn't come in a Lunanite Loops box.

LUCY

That's... very kind of you, Gabe.

He sighs. Content. She clocks this.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

ON TV: The Lunanites on a stage at a country music festival. All in ten gallon hats. Descartes: lead vocals & guitar. Newton: DJ's computer. Spinoza: cello. Voltaire: jug.

DESCARTES

(sings)

*"Oh, Mama don't worry 'bout me.
No, Mama don't worry 'bout me.
Goin' sing this song
For a hundred years long
But mama don't worry 'bout me."*

NEWTON/SPINOZA/VOLTAIRE

"He say Mama don't worry 'bout me."

Gabe feasts from the trash bag of popcorn. Lucy watches. No trace of irritation. Out of pure curiosity...

LUCY

So where's your mother and father?

Gabe stops chewing. Pretends he didn't hear it.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Gabe?

He pauses it.

GABE

Can we just watch this? They're about to stop the Crouk with the power of music.

LUCY

Come on. I told you about Ezra.

GABE

They're just not around.

He hits play. The episode continues.

LUCY

Is it a sore subject?

No answer.

LUCY (CONT'D)

It helps to talk... you remember when Spinoza kept all his feelings inside? He almost became Poliwot's pawn on the Thanksgiving episode?

Gabe glances at her. She has a knowing stare. He pauses.

GABE

My dad... wasn't nice to me. He liked to drink. Didn't like Lunar Genesis. Called me gay. I wanted to stand up to him, but I wasn't strong. Like Descartes. When he left me and my mother, it was one of the best days of my life.

LUCY

Do you know where he is now?

GABE

He could be in heck for all I care. I never want to see him again...

Lucy observes.

GABE (CONT'D)

My mother Ruby; she drank like dad. She had a stroke after he left. It gave her unrepairable nerve damage. She could only lie in bed. I had to feed her and change her catheter at 13. She died when I was 17.

Lucy waits. Gabe watches the paused screen. His Lunanites.

GABE (CONT'D)

Life really sucks. I've thought about ending it. Many times. But then I look at all my real family; their heroism, their courage. None of them would take the easy way out. And they're always there for me. No matter how sucky life gets.

Lucy struggles to say anything. Squeaks out--

LUCY

I wish it could have been better for you... I... know what this show must mean to you...

Gabe sniffs.

LUCY (CONT'D)

After this one, can we maybe go back and watch a few episodes in season one?

GABE

Really?

LUCY

Actually, I sort of want to see how it started again... if that's okay.

GABE

Y-- yeah. Su-- of course.

Gabe hits play. His face tries to hide his heart fluttering.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gabe looks in a mirror. Collar shirt. Doesn't know how to tie a real tie. Chucks it away. Looks better without it anyway.

Passes the urn without a glance.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

ON TV: The Lunar Genesis Christmas special. All Lunanites are dressed as Santa's elves at the North Pole. Poliwot hangs from a candy cane with wrapping paper over his mouth.

NEWTON

Huh. Turns out you can steal Santa, but you can't steal Christmas.

IN THE ROOM: Gabe spins, modeling his date clothes.

LUCY (O.S.)

That looks sophisticated.

Gabe smiles. Opposite, Lucy in her chair and Orange on the couch. Still masked and mute.

GABE

It's just TJ Maxx.

LUCY

I remember when Ezra went on his first date. Said he loved her more than anything. Never saw her again.

RINGTONE. Gabe picks up the phone.

GABE

H'lo?

INT. CHINESE BUFFET - BOOTH - NIGHT

Joe reclines with four plates of crab legs and General Tso's chicken. Howls with a full mouth on speaker phone.

JOE
Hey, sweet tits. When you coming over tonight?

INTERCUT GABE/JOE

Gabe stops. Turns away from Lucy.

GABE
I told you I'm going out with Dora.

JOE
Come on your face. We need to do my Othello 2 review. Ditch the bitch.

GABE
Don't call her that.

JOE
Look, you're gonna see her tomorrow night anyway. Can't you bump uglies after Lunar Genesis or something?

BUFFET GUESTS gape at Joe. Annoyed.

GABE
Joe, I'll see you at the movie tomorrow night. Good bye--

JOE
Wait, wait. You didn't read the Variety article?

GABE
No, gotta go, Joe--

JOE
The box office tracking for Lunar Genesis is terrible. Only gonna make eleven or twelve mil opening weekend. Off a \$125 million budget.

Gabe's face sinks. Clearly distressed.

JOE (CONT'D)
China's not gonna save this one. Looks like there will definitely not be any sequels.

Something in Gabe's eye dies. But...

GABE

Well, I got two words for you:
Earth Runner.

He hangs up quickly. Less worried, but still shaken. He rushes up the stairs.

LUCY

When are you coming back?

The door SLAMS. Lucy is concerned. Orange stares ahead.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER - NIGHT

Gabe leads Isadora past the curtain, a tub of popcorn in his hands. Wearing a lovely date dress, Isadora carries sodas.

Near the front row, a solo man in a FEDORA. Gabe sits three rows behind and lets Isadora in first.

ISADORA

You don't wanna stay for the movie?

GABE

Naw, I just wanna see the trailer
on the big screen.

ISADORA

Well, I'm sure Mr. Danielowski
appreciates it. On our night off.

Gabe looks to the booth. Art waves at him. Gabe waves back.

GABE

I'm sure he does.

The lights dim. Gabe turns to the screen.

Isadora gazes at Gabe's pollyanna face. It's cute and makes her grin. After an MPAA splash screen (PG-13)--

Over Gabe's evolving face of wonder, the colors of the TRAILER of Lunar Genesis play. Big budget. Gritty. These Lunantes have attitude... and celebrity voices.

SERPENTINE MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Earth. A planet of corruption.
Waste. Disease. Fear... *Humans*.

SFX: INCEPTION HORN

Isadora can't stop studying Gabe's carefree face.

SERPENTINE MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Good evening. My name is Poliwot.

SFX: INCEPTION HORN

But something bothers Gabe's joy. The Fedora in front of him; his phone's light dismays Gabe's eyes.

GABE
 I don't-- what is he even--

ISADORA
 What's wrong?

GABE
 That guy in front of us. His phone.

ISADORA
 Well, it's just the trailers--

GABE
 Does he not see the *gigantic* screen
 in front of us? I mean, it's the
 one theater rule you don't break.
 (ahead)
 Excuse me, sir?

Fedora turns.

GABE (CONT'D)
 Would you mind turning off the
 phone, please?

FEDORA
 Suck ma black ass.

NOTE: Fedora is a white guy.

Gabe is speechless. Wants to do something. Looks at Isadora. "Don't do it" in her eyes. Gabe resigns and sighs.

SPLASH! Fedora is soaked in a full soda cup from behind.

Gabe blinks. What just happened? Isadora clutches his wrist.

ISADORA
 C'mon! Let's go!

The giggling culprit pulls Gabe from his seat and out of the theater. Fedora sticks behind, frantically wiping his phone.

Gabe and Isadora's laughs PRE-LAP into--

EXT. GABE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Side-by-side. Losing it in laughter.

GABE

You're gonna get us killed, Miss
soda jerk.

ISADORA

That's not what a soda jerk is, you
soda jerk.

GABE

I'm the soda jerk? You soda psycho.

They both chuckle over each other. Right outside--

EXT. GABE'S HOUSE

They stop on the lawn. Isadora clocks the basement light on.
And gets less giggly.

ISADORA

Is she...

Gabe glances at the basement light. Uh oh.

GABE

Wha-- oh... No... I let her go.

ISADORA

You did?

GABE

Yes... She likes Lunar Genesis now.

ISADORA

When did you let her go?

GABE

This morning. She's not gonna press
charges. She actually thanked me.

ISADORA

Thanked you?

GABE

Yes. Lunar Genesis helped her see
the flaws in her life. It made her
a better person.

ISADORA

A cartoon show... made her do that?

GABE

You know it's more than a cartoon show, Dora. It's... life.

Isadora pauses. Unsure. Gazes into Gabe's innocent eyes.

GABE (CONT'D)

I know that look. The one you're giving me now. "You're crazy, it's a cartoon show, Gabe." I got it when I was five. From everyone.

Isadora keeps silent. Listens.

GABE (CONT'D)

I don't know why I shouldn't live in a universe where I'm happy. Because I'm not happy here... not with what I've been dealt.

ISADORA

Gabe--

GABE

I'm happy when I'm with the Lunanites. They never hit me. They never refused to sit next to me at lunch. They never called me fag--

He breathes. Only for a moment.

GABE (CONT'D)

Descartes and the Lunanites fight for a better future. For everyone. And I want everyone to see the future they fight for... and their future is in Lunar Genesis movies.

She gets closer. Hugs Gabe.

ISADORA

(in his ear)

I don't think you're crazy.

They kiss. Pity and passion. He slowly breaks it. They join foreheads, eyes closed. She takes his hands.

ISADORA (CONT'D)

Let me spend the night with you.

His mouth is unsure.

ISADORA (CONT'D)

Please. I love you. Let me in.

GABE

After... the movie tomorrow night?

Isadora slowly smiles. Nods. Kisses him again.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lucy's eyes water.

ON TV: The Lunar Genesis series finale. In a military warehouse, a green vortex spins and glows in front of the Lunanites. A display panel of buttons to its side.

NEWTON

That's our ticket home. We ready?

VOLTAIRE

I'm gonna miss kicking Crouk butt up and down Chicago.

SPINOZA

And I'm gonna miss that deep dish pizza and popcorn. Mmm-mmmmm.

NEWTON

I'm gonna miss Wrigley Field and the Field Museum.

Descartes looks at the vortex. Rare to see him solemn.

Lucy doesn't blink. She's hooked.

DESCARTES

I'm going to miss the people. For they are my brothers... my sisters... my family.

He PRESSES the display. The vortex disappears.

DESCARTES (CONT'D)

So why miss all of that?

After a beat of disbelief, Newton, Voltaire, and Spinoza join together and high five. WHOOPS and HUZZAHS.

DESCARTES (CONT'D)

The Lunanites will be here forever--

DESCARTES/NEWTON/SPINOZA/VOLTAIRE

And ever!

STILL FRAME. Followed by- "CREATED BY: JAKE MCGILL"

Lucy breathes in. Slowly. Touched.

Behind her, Gabe stands with a smile on his face. Orange watches from the couch, still masked.

GABE

So what did you think?

Lucy's eyes are trained to the TV. The credits THEME plays.

LUCY

After all of that; the election of Poliwot, the "Great Lunapurge," the bombing of the moon... they're still going to stay on Earth?

GABE

They're selfless, aren't they?

LUCY

Altruistic sacrifice. A virtue all humans could learn.

She turns her head to Gabe.

LUCY (CONT'D)

What a finale. What a show.

Gabe nods. A smile.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I... I don't know how to say this.

GABE

Just try.

LUCY

...I regret... writing my review.

Gabe's warm smile remains. Lets her speak.

LUCY (CONT'D)

It's this show... I don't know... it made me think. About my own life. About how I've been treating things... and people... my son...

GABE

Ezra.

LUCY

He's just... misunderstood. I feel like I have to be more like Descartes, you know?

GABE

I know.

LUCY

I've been a bad mother. And a bad, terrible critic--

GABE

--you're not bad, Lu--

LUCY

--yes, I am. I'm bad. I just didn't realize it. My readers, my Ezra. I've failed them all. But... this is going to sound peculiar--

He quickly takes the couch seat next to her. Orange watches.

GABE

Yeah?

LUCY

It's not easy for me to admit this, but... I was wrong. My initial approach to Lunar Genesis was snarky and flawed.

Gabe nods.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I understand if you can't, but if you can accommodate a request from a fool--

GABE

What's that?

LUCY

I need to type up a retraction of the Lunar Genesis film. For tomorrow morning's paper.

GABE

Just like you did for Earth Runner.

LUCY

Exactly... like that. You can watch me type it. The world needs to know about this.

Gabe stares into her eyes. She belongs to Lunar Genesis now.

GABE

I agree.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER

Orange cuts and wraps Lucy's rope from behind with a box cutter. Gabe holds a gift-wrapped box behind his back.

LUCY

Don't want to set high expectations
for the film but... four stars.

Gabe smiles. Orange pulls the last of the rope. Lucy is free. Stands with Gabe and stretches.

GABE

(to Orange)

Can you grab my laptop upstairs?

Orange goes up the stairs. Takes the cutter with him. Lucy makes a long stretch for the ceiling.

LUCY

Honestly, Gabe... I know this was
an unconventional way of helping
another person, but... thank you.

GABE

I wanted to give something to you.
To commemorate your salvation.

He holds up the gift. She opens the top. It's the autographed animation cel from the comic book shop. She gasps and grips it like a precious jewel.

GABE (CONT'D)

It's an animation cel from the
series finale. Autographed by
creator Jake McGill. Before his
death. One of a kind.

LUCY

Gabe, this means... Thank you.

Their smiles warm, he hugs her like his own mother, burrowing his face into her shoulder. She pats his arm.

He draws back. Sniffs. Eyes are sparkling.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Are you crying?

He turns from her quickly. Laughs.

GABE

No... okay, maybe a little. I guess
this is just a really happy moment.

She raises the metal frame above her head.

GABE (CONT'D)

Sometimes... sometimes I forget
what those feel like, you know?

SMAAAASH! Lucy BURIES the frame into the back of Gabe's skull. Glass shatters. He falls forward, out like a light.

Lucy pants. Drops the frame. The cel hits the floor. By Gabe's still body.

Hears upstairs FOOTSTEPS. Quickly glances around. Hobbles to the window. Won't budge.

The basement door opens. Lucy's head turns.

Orange slides down the stairs with the laptop, but--

Gabe is down. He's bleeding from the head.

Orange drops the laptop. Dashes to Gabe's side. Then--

From behind the chair, Lucy SWINGS the bedpan at Orange.

CLAAANG! Connects with Orange's face.

Urine SOARS all around the room--

SOAKING Lunar Genesis items. Notably the animation cel.

Orange's mask dislodges. KEUNG DANIELOWSKI hits the floor.

Lucy SHRIEKS as she POUNDS Keung with the bedpan once more. Just to make sure he's out.

She drops the pan. Steps forward--

GABE GRABS HER HEEL

His blood seeps over his forehead. Betrayal in his pink eyes.

She YELPS. Kicks him in the face. He lets go. She hobble-dashes to the stairs. Definitely not in the shape to run yet.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Lucy BURSTS through the door. Kids meal toys on the table. SLAMS it. Hobbles to the windows. Iron bars like a prison.

LUCY

Fuck!

Totters to the LIVING ROOM--

BASEMENT

Gabe stumbles. Touches the blood on his forehead. Trips up the stairs, daubing the wall with blood.

GABE

Luuuuuuu-ccccyyyyyyyyyy!

LIVING ROOM

Lucy opens the front door. A barred exterior door guards the front. She pulls, pushes, twists, and KICKS the knob.

LUCY

Open! Fucking open!
(shouts outside)
Hellllllllp!

O.S. the Basement door BURSTS open.

GABE (O.S.)

Luuuuuuuu-cyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!

LUCY

Shit!

She makes a limping beeline to the--

HALLWAY

And immediately bursts through the--

BATHROOM

Takes note of the window above the tub. Slides it open. Bars on the outside. "Shit."

FOOTSTEPS. She turns. Sees something in a reading caddy next to her toilet: A heavy book- "Insufferable by Lucy Argo."

LIVING ROOM

Gabe totters around. Hide and seek. Slurs.

GABE

Lucy! Loooo-cceeeee!

He curves into the--

HALLWAY

And takes a FACE-FULL of Lucy's book.

Lucy SHRIEKS as she STRIKES his bloody face with it. He tries to defend with his hands.

She loses her bloody grip on it. Gabe and the book fall to the floor.

LUCY

Asshole!

Lucy turns and erupts into the next door--

GABE'S BEDROOM

A quick glance: barred windows. Posters. The ruby URN.

HALLWAY

Lucy 180's and barges into the opposing door--

MASTER BEDROOM

And stops cold in her tracks. Because opposite--

RUBY: a PARALYZED WOMAN (late 50's, haggard, frail) stares back at Lucy from her bed.

Heavy BREATHING. Haunting eyes. Hooked to an IV.

Lucy stares. Frozen.

Gabe TACKLES her from behind.

GABE

You liar!

They struggle. She SCREAMS and tries to scratch his face. He mounts her and slaps her with open palms; he's not a fighter.

RUBY

(weak)

Gabe. Stop. Gabriel.

Gabe's face is crimson from blood and anger. Lucy holds her arms up. His slaps are quicker.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Stop it. Stop that now.

Gabe is a red demon. He SQUEES. Lucy can only defend.

No mask, Keung stammers in.

KEUNG

Stop. Now.

He pulls Gabe off of her. Lucy breathes in and out.

GABE
 (whiney, to Keung)
 Get her back to the basement *now*.

Uncertain, Keung nods and drags Lucy away.

Gabe turns from Ruby and breathes himself.

RUBY
 Gabe, what the hell is going on?

Gabe stews. Doesn't speak.

RUBY (CONT'D)
 I want an answer, little ma--

GABE
Shut the fuck up, Mom.

He exhales steam. Snatches a SLEEP AID bottle and syringe by her bedside. Then departs the room.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

With weak Lucy at his side, Keung opens the door to the basement. And--

KEUNG
 Oh, fuck!

TRIPS and falls down the stairs with her.

Gabe charges to the basement with the sleep aid.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

Lucy COUGHS and MOANS at the bottom.

GABE
 Oh, let me help you up, Luce.

He THROWS her into the trash bag full of popcorn, which bursts like an airbag.

GABE (CONT'D)
 I gave you Lunar Genesis. And you spat on my kindness.

Keung flies behind him. Puts a hand on Gabe's shoulder.

KEUNG

No more.

LUCY

(wheezing)

I have a... confession... about
Lunar Genesis... I actually...
hated every fuckin' second of it.

Gabe goes to KICK her but Keung holds him back.

LUCY (CONT'D)

And the movie... fucking hell...
it's the worst of the year.

Gabe BREAKS from Keung and pulls her to her feet.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Wait wait wait! Because... because
it's so fucking forgettable.

SHRIEKING, he HURLS her into the coffee table. Various toys
spill including Joe's gross NAIL CUTTER. Panting, Lucy belts--

LUCY (CONT'D)

A film like that, Gabe... gets
forgotten by everyone.

Gabe picks up a toy MALLET while Lucy turns into the trash
pile. Keung seizes Gabe's hand.

KEUNG

She have enough. Stop.

GABE

Let me go!

KEUNG

You Lunanite? Or killer?

Gabe pauses. Calms just enough to drop the mallet.

GABE

Hold her down. Now.

Keung obeys. Slinks over to Lucy. Grabs her arms.

Gabe picks up duct tape and pulls a line. Deposits it over
Lucy's closed mouth. She MOANS as he pulls a syringe.

GABE (CONT'D)

Never should've trusted a critic.

He draws from the bottle of sleep aid--

GABE (CONT'D)
 They don't create. Don't even
 attempt to make the world a better
 place. They destroy and lie. All
 for a tiny blurb on a poster.

And INJECTS it into Lucy's arm.

GABE (CONT'D)
 (echoed)
 So you know what happens to critics
 after they die? Nothing... Because
 nobody fucking likes critics.

Lucy goes out like a candle. Eyes shut.

FADE OUT.

GABE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
 You've never understood what it
 means to me, so why start now?

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

In front of Ruby's bed, Gabe sits in a chair. A Lunar Genesis
 T-shirt wraps his head. A splotch of blood at the wound.

GABE
 Whatever you think, whatever you
 say; I did this for a good reason.

RUBY
 Kidnapping.

GABE
 We gonna go in circles all night?

RUBY
 You are going to prison, Gabriel.
 How the hell am I supposed to live
 when you're in prison?

GABE
 I'm not going to prison. I just
 need to figure this ou--

RUBY
 --you've never been able to face
 reality. You think that stupid
 cartoon is your life.

Gabe stews.

GABE

And what's so great about the life
you and Dad provided for me?

GABE (CONT'D)

Because I loved getting hit.
All the time. I loved getting
called gay when I was 7.
C'mon, hit me some more--

RUBY

I was a great mother to an
ungrateful shit. You never
saw the sacrifices me and
your father made--

Ruby's eyes are daggers. Her weak voice fills with anger.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I coulda been a dancer! Then you
came along and ruined it all. Now
I'm stuck here while you kidnap
people over a cartoon.

Something in Gabe breaks. He stares straight into her.

GABE

Well, at least we have Dad.

Gabe bolts up. Dashes O.S. He brings back the urn. And POPS
off the top.

GABE (CONT'D)

He always did like calling me a
cocksucker, didn't he? That was his
"word," wasn't it? Well, you know
what, Mom?

(hand dips into ashes)

He can *suck my cock*.

Gabe's handful goes down his pants. He strokes his genitals
in ashes to the disgusted PROTESTS of Ruby.

GABE (CONT'D)

Yeah, suck me. Suck me all up, ya
fuckin' drunk asshole!

He CHUCKS the urn to the wall above Ruby. It SHATTERS in
ashes and clay remnants, coating the room and her.

GABE (CONT'D)

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna
shower daddy off of my dick.

Gabe escapes the room amid Ruby's violent HACKING.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - NIGHT

Desolate. Save for the Lunar Genesis poster. Gabe steps in. Head still wrapped in the bloody T-shirt.

A sign above: "Midnight showing tomorrow! Buy tickets now!"

His haunting face gazes at the poster. Memories ECHO.

JOE (V.O.)

The box office tracking for Lunar Genesis is terrible.

FATHER (V.O.)

Getcher head outta yer ass, boy.

RUBY (V.O.)

You've never been able to face reality. You think that stupid cartoon is your life.

LUCY (V.O.)

A film like that, Gabe... gets forgotten by *everyone*.

On his eyes: Scheming. Fiery. Deadly.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DARK BASEMENT - NIGHT

A bag is pulled from Lucy's head. She stirs. Drowsy.

HER POV- Hazy. A pair of costumed Lunanites: Pink (Joe) and Blue (Gabe). Joe chomps from a tub of movie popcorn.

JOE

Had a good nap?

Lucy's duct taped to a chair. Duct tape over her mouth.

She spots an OIL DRUM. Many oil drums. Over a dozen. Its label: FLAMMABLE.

Lucy MOANS through her tape. Shakes.

JOE (CONT'D)

Gabe told me what you did. Real ballsy... Or ovary-sy in your ca--

GABE

Shut the fuck up, Joe.

Joe's not used to assertive Gabe. Waddles to the door.

JOE

You shoulda teamed up with me, Lucy
goosey. Now you're gonna pay like I
paid while seeing The Phantom Mena--

GABE

Out!

Joe departs. Lucy spots an unmoving PAIR OF HUMAN LEGS; a
dead body hidden by barrels. She MOANS louder.

GABE (CONT'D)

Lunar Genesis will never be
forgotten, Lucy... But you will.

To Lucy's gagged WAILS, he turns and hoofs to the door. Over
the same pair of dead legs.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

A crowd of FANS, some dressed as Lunar Genesis characters,
talk excitedly at concessions. In his usher's uniform, Keung
sells popcorn.

From an EMPLOYEES ONLY door, Gabe and Joe escape. Put down
their Lunanite masks. Join the Fans heading into the theater.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER

Lunar Genesis midnight screening. Plenty of Fans.

Masked, Gabe and Joe stroll side-by-side to their seats.

JOE

Look, man. I think we should bail.

GABE

Shut up.

JOE

Fuck it. I can't be in here.

Gabe SWIPES the popcorn bucket from Joe, who turns away and
leaves the theater. Gabe lifts his mask at his seat--

Isadora on the aisle. In her green Lunanite costume. Smiles.

ISADORA

Where's Joe going?

GABE

I dunno. Want some popcorn?

Gabe sits between Isadora and an elaborate (well-made) POLIWOT costume. She accepts popcorn. Her smile warms.

ISADORA

Can you believe we're here? About to see *the* Lunar Genesis?

He grins. Sheepish.

Gabe glances up to the projection booth--

ART. Looks down at the Fans. Waves with a beaming grin.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - DARK BASEMENT

Lucy's tongue frees her mouth of duct tape. She takes a large breath. Shifts a concealed object to the front of her mouth--

THE GROSS NAIL CUTTER JOE USED

She turns her head. Deposits the cutter to her shoulder. It SLIDES into her hand, bound together behind the chair.

Her hands turn it into the cutting position.

She slowly cuts the duct tape binding her wrists together.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER

Isadora leans on Gabe's shoulder. He's sheepish.

ISADORA

What are you thinking right now?

GABE

Many, many things. Part of me wishes this night would never end.

ISADORA

What about the other part?

GABE

Thinkin' about... how you like... your eggs in the morning.

ISADORA

I didn't know you could cook.

GABE
I don't. Honestly, it'd probably
just be Lunanite Loops.

She grips tighter to his arm. Snuggles closer. Gabe gapes at the guy in the Poliwot mask.

GABE (CONT'D)
That's very nicely done.

The guy takes off the mask with a big breath... EZRA.

EZRA
Thanks, man. But I can barely
breathe in it.

Gabe's eyes melt. Mouth droops. Brain shuts off.

EZRA (CONT'D)
How long you been a Lunar fan?

GABE
Uhhhhh... Long... time.

EZRA
Yeah, I think the trailer was
great. *Some* critics are being real
bitches over it.

Gabe "mmm-hmmms" quickly. Whips to Isadora.

GABE
Hey, let me get you Junior Mints.
Not a movie without Junior Mints.

Gabe BOLTS from his chair. Stumbles up the aisle. Parries a couple dressed Fans. After Isadora's confused gaze--

ISADORA
(to Ezra)
Hey, I really like your hair.

EZRA
Aww, thank you.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - DARK BASEMENT

Lucy CUTS the last of the duct tape from her wrists with the nail cutter. She TEARS away the tape around her chest.

Slowly limps over to the pair of legs by the barrel. And makes a horrifying discovery...

SIX DEAD BODIES. In various states of decay.

(An apt viewer will notice one of those in the dead pile is FEDORA; the one who said "Suck ma black ass.")

The legs belong to--

LUCY

Sam?

Lucy's colleague. Strangled to death. A mark around his neck.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh... holy shit. Sam... no.

She stumbles backward to the doorway. Escapes.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - MEN'S BATHROOM

In his Descartes mask, Gabe breathes heavily over the sink.

GABE

I know it's her son. I know he's...
innocent. But we'll have Dora.

He looks at his reflection. The Descartes mask stares back.

GABE (CONT'D)

I... I have to do this... for you,
Descartes. For the Lunanites. You
understand, right?

His breathing INTENSIFIES. He quickly removes the mask,
revealing a red, upset face.

GABE (CONT'D)

Oh, shit... oh, shit.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY

Lucy BURSTS through the Employees Only door. Definitely needs
a shower and a change of clothing.

Fans in line for the concession stand. No one turns.

Gabe exits the Men's Bathroom.

The two leer at each other. Then, SCREAMING--

GABE

You critic!

LUCY

Murderer!

Gabe trips into a Fan while Lucy seizes a velvet STANCHION. He steals a red LICORICE ROPE. They CHARGE at each other.

The two SCREAM. He WHIPS and she SWINGS. Fans react like it's a prank. LAUGH, pull their phones and record.

Art joins the lobby from a stairwell. Eyes double upon seeing the silly brawl.

ART

What in the name of Georges Méliès
is going on?

Gabe stops whipping for a moment.

GABE

Art, she--

POOOMP! The Stanchion connects with his face. Down he goes. Art rushes to Lucy.

ART

Stop! Stop this madness n-- uh--
are you Lucy Argo?

LUCY

There are bodies in your basement!
Of critics! He killed them all!

Gabe rubs his head on the floor.

ART

Bodies? Wh-- Gabe?

LUCY

We need to call the police!
(screams to Fans)
There's a bomb!

GABE (O.S.)

No! The movie's not going to bomb!

Before Lucy can shout, Art grabs her arm and pulls her away.

ART

If you're telling the truth, we
have to get everyone out. There's a
phone in the projection booth.

LUCY

Don't let him escape! He's killed
many people!

Art pulls her through the stairwell door.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - PROJECTION BOOTH

Keung looks out into the audience. Many Fans.

LUCY (O.S.)

He had me in his basement for four days. He's not sane.

The door flies open. Art and Lucy. Freezes upon seeing Keung.

ART

Keung, there's a mess in the lobby. Take care of it.

LUCY

This is one of his friends. He wore an orange bunny suit and kept me down there.

ART

What? Keung's worked here all week. Go on, Keung.

Keung obeys and leaves the booth. Art goes to the projector.

LUCY

I'm not crazy, he's an accomplice to kidnapping!

ART

Phone's by the splicer.

Lucy races to the landline. Picks up the receiver and sees--
Gabe STUMBLING into the booth's door. Heavy breathing.

LUCY

You are gonna pay for--

CLAANK! Art BASHES Lucy in the head with a film reel.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Back when Gabe was in front of the poster with the bloody T-shirt wrapped around his head. His eyes are haunting.

Art exits the lobby door in a jacket. Notices Gabe staring.

ART

Gabe?

He hikes up to Gabe. Still staring. And discovers TEARS in Gabe's eyes.

ART (CONT'D)
Gabe, what's wrong?

GABE
I'm afraid, Mr. Danielowski. The future of Lunar Genesis is in peril. It's not going to make a lot of money and there's not going to be any sequels.

Gabe forces a hug into Art. Sobs harder.

GABE (CONT'D)
And it's all because of critics. They're murdering the movie with their lies. I don't know what to do. I... I have to do something... something--

ART
--radical.

Gabe glances up at Art. He's dead serious.

GABE
Wh- what do you mean?

ART
If you want your Lunar Genesis movie to be remembered, you have to make it popular yourself.

GABE
But how do I do that?

ART
Tragedy. You have to blow up the theater on opening night, Gabe.

GABE
What... blow up the thea--

ART
It will give the film a legendary status, ensuring many sequels.

GABE
With people there too?

ART

Of course. You don't make any difference in the world without human lives being sacrificed.

GABE

But... I don't--

ART

You have to choose, Gabe. The lives of your bunny friends... or the opinion of critics.

GABE

Well, I... kidnapped this critic... who gave a bad review to Lunar Genesis. Lucy Argo--

ART

Good. Good good good, we can work with t-- Bring her to the basement! She wrote an *bad* review and you can blame the bomb on a deranged critic-

Gabe's face is reluctant. Unsure.

ART (CONT'D)

--and you will save the Lunar Genesis film franchise.

Art's signature grin is now twisted. Blood-hungry.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - PROJECTION BOOTH (BACK TO PRESENT)

Very drowsy, Lucy wakes up. She's tied to a chair by the CELLULOID of Lunar Genesis.

ART (O.S.)

That'll do, Gabe. That'll do.

Gabe emerges from behind Lucy. He tied her up. In front of her, Art and Joe.

ART (CONT'D)

Movie's about to start. You may want to... you know...

GABE

Sure thing, Mr. Danielowski.

JOE

Big ass titties.

ART

Stay, Joe. I could use your help.

Gabe gives Lucy one final scowl. Then leaves the booth. Leaving Lucy, Joe, and Art with a pillowy smile.

LUCY

I'm really getting tired of getting conked on the head.

ART

I am a fucking genius... Managed to solve my financial issues and give my employee some sweet revenge. Two birds, one (explosion noise).

JOE

Yeah, boom, bitch.

Art gives Joe an annoyed glance.

LUCY

I knew this place had to be a big money pit.

ART

The bank was gonna take it away. My love... So if they're gonna kill something I love, I'm gonna kill it first. What does a bank need with a fuckin' movie theater anyway?

LUCY

Insurance fraud; fitting for a man who screens lies for a living.

ART

Yeah, well, no one *appreciates* the movies; the spectacle, the community experience, the popcorn.

JOE

No one!

LUCY

So you're gonna kill 'em all, huh?

ART

They're the killers. Everyone out there. Look at 'em all.

He points to the window overlooking the Fans in the theater. A glower of disgust on his face.

ART (CONT'D)

Every one of 'em wants what's most convenient to them. This "Netfucks" and "on demand digital HD" shit have ruined everything.

LUCY

How did I manage to get abducted by two different psychopaths?

ART

But you know the worst thing about 'em all? The fuck-king phones.

Before Lucy can retort, she stops. "Huh?"

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

--INT. PULASKI THEATER - MEN'S ROOM - Fedora wipes spilled soda from his shirt.

ART (V.O.)

I don't understand it. Why would people rather watch a movie on their *fucking* telephones than on a big fucking screen?

Art enters and JAMS a pen into the back of Fedora's neck. Fedora falls down in anguish.

--INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER - An alone TEXTER types on his phone. Art walks down the aisle with a fire axe.

ART (V.O.)

Watch movies on their phones. Play games on their phones. Email on their phones. Phones phones phones. Well, I'm fucking sick of phones.

Art raises the axe above the Texter's head and before the blade caves in his skull, CUT TO--

--INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY - Sam passes the red curtain from the theater after his Lunar screening. On his phone.

ART (V.O.)

It's the most impolite thing to do in a theater. Distract other people with your own stupid shit.

Art emerges behind the concession stand. WRAPS a piano wire around Sam's neck, who drops his phone. He's dragged back and behind the concession stand and hidden from sight.

ART (V.O.)
Well, I'm sick of people fucking up
the movie experience.

The clique of teen Critics walk and talk past the curtain,
not seeing or hearing the murder.

--INT. PULASKI THEATER - DARK BASEMENT - Sam's dead body is
cast at the pile of corpses. Making it number six.

ART (V.O.)
Bodies piled up. So did bills. So I
thought of a solution.

Art looks up. Deposits a box of Milk Duds in his mouth.

--INT. PULASKI THEATER - DARK BASEMENT - LATER - Gabe and
Joe, dressed as Lunanites drag a sedated, still Lucy inside.

ART (V.O.)
And it just happened Gabe needed a
critical problem fixed too.

Gabe notices the pile of bodies on the floor. He's concerned.
Glances at Art, who steps in front of the bodies.

ART (V.O.)
All he needed was some this-and-
that about space bunnies avenging
their kind and he was convinced.

Art nods. And Gabe carries Lucy to her chair.

BACK TO PROJECTION BOOTH (PRESENT)

Art's smile returns. Joe's grin competes with Art.

ART
So I bundled all our problems
together like popcorn, Coke, and
movie night.

Lucy stares at them with an appalled gaze. Art goes to the
first reel of Lunar Genesis. SNAPS IT to the first projector.

LUCY
No one is going to believe I blew
up this place. Something like this
would take months to plan and
execute. The police are going to
see your financial trouble and
connect the dots. You're never
going to get away with this.

Art smiles. Sets his hand on her cheek.

ART
Aww... Yes I will, slut.

JOE
Heh heh, yeah, *slut*.

Art's face turns to stone.

ART
Of course, I promised Gabe we'd
blame it on *critics*--

His head turns to Joe, dead serious.

ART (CONT'D)
--of all sizes.

Joe backs up. Suddenly not so cocky.

Art unpockets a box cutter (the same Keung used cutting Lucy's rope). Extends the blade.

JOE
Art, babe... what are you doing?

ART
May I see your press pass...
"slunt-waffle?"

Joe backs against the cutting table. Gets very afraid.

JOE
Art, no... no!

Art THRUSTS the blade into Joe's fat stomach. Joe SCREAMS.

Lucy. Horrified at the bloody murder in front of her.

Above the murder, a sign: SPLICE HERE. A bit of blood paints the sign. The SCREAMS finally stop.

Panting Art turns around; his shirt is bloody. He wipes his brow and puts on a jacket.

ART
He had a real dirty fuckin' mouth,
didn't he?

Lucy can't look at the body. Tries not to cry.

Art raises the second reel of Lunar Genesis... which has SIX HAND GRENADES duct-taped to it. SNAPS it to the second projector. Locks a steering wheel Club on the grenade reel.

ART (CONT'D)

One reel. Eleven minutes. Once we switch over, the pin is pulled. Then you and everyone below go to the cinema in the sky. And I get mailed a check.

He kisses the reel. And turns a dimmer.

THEATER

Lights dim. Ezra glances up. A big smile.

EZRA

Oh, Lunar Genesis, here we go.

Happy Isadora leans on Gabe. But he's troubled.

PROJECTION BOOTH

Art lifts the power lever to the ON position, then SNAPS the lever off. Lucy panics. SCREAMS at the top of her lungs.

ART

In this space, no one can hear you scream... it's sound-proofed, ya dumb broad. Anything to enhance the theater experience.

Art presses his Casio stopwatch: 11:00 COUNTDOWN.

Then he lifts two vintage FILM REEL CANISTERS from the floor. A third one remains behind.

ART (CONT'D)

Ahh, my favorite film. Y'know, they say film's a dying art...

He chuckles. Lucy tries to break out of her constraints. Nothing doing. Art goes to the door, opens up, and--

ART (CONT'D)

Oh, and by the way... Fuck 3D.

--he SLAMS the booth door. Leaving Lucy for real this time.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY

Art whistles "Let's All Go to the Lobby." Sees Keung standing at concessions like an abused dog.

ART

Keung, run upstairs and get daddy's last canister. Then meet me out front. And never mind the fat mess.

Art whistles out the front door. Unnerved, Keung stares at the projection booth door.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - NIGHT

Still whistling, Art slides to his 1973 Oldsmobile Junker parked across the street. Opens the trunk.

Inside, he places his film canisters next to a .44 MAGNUM.

SLAMS the hood.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - PROJECTION BOOTH

Lucy wiggles. SCREAMS. Can't break free.

Keung opens the door. Sees Lucy. Fat 'ol Joe with a box cutter erect in his man boob.

LUCY

If you have any decency for life...

Keung trudges over to the final film can. But SNATCHES the box cutter out of Joe's tit.

He goes behind Lucy and CUTS the celluloid binding her. She is speechless.

KEUNG

I am not son of him.

LUCY

What?

He pulls the film strips off of her while she wiggles.

KEUNG

He say help bring family from Shanghai. But no. Big lie. Must do what he says. Says report to USA. And never see family again.

LUCY
You're his slave?

KEUNG
Yes. Learn English from movies.
"Home Loan?"

LUCY
What? Home Loan?

Keung does the Macaulay Culkin Home Alone face.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Oh... oh... yeah. Home Alone.

He pulls the last of the film strips from her body and she launches to the projector.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Can you turn it off?

KEUNG
He break. Can't turn off.

LUCY
Can't we just snip the film?

KEUNG
Other projector start turning then.

She tries to pull the grenade reel from the projector. But the Club keeps it locked on there.

LUCY
Do you have the key?

KEUNG
No key.

LUCY
This is just full of *contrivances*.

Lucy glances at the final film canister. Kneels over to it.

LUCY (CONT'D)
This is his favorite film?

KEUNG
He love it. Worth money, he say.

Lucy checks the label. In marker: "CAN 3/3."

She glances up. Gears turn.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - THEATER

Isadora and Ezra smile at the screen. Gabe doesn't enjoy the FIGHT SCENE and sweeping SCORE. Peers over to Isadora.

GABE

Hey, I... I think we should leave.

ISADORA

Are you serious? Look at this.

GABE

I haven't been fair to you. I think you're right and I need to grow up.

Isadora doesn't respond. Lets him speak.

GABE (CONT'D)

Why don't we just get out of here?
We can see this some other time.

ISADORA

You've wanted to see this film
since... forever maybe.

GABE

Well, I want you, Dora. I want you.
Let's spend the night together.

O.S. SHHHHH's. She looks impressed.

ISADORA

Okay, Gabe.

She gets up. And heads up the aisle. Gabe takes a quick glance at the big screen:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Thank you for saving my orphans.
But who... who are you?

The CGI-rendered MOVIE DESCARTES talks to the frame, almost right to Gabe.

MOVIE DESCARTES

Lunanites. *You can count on us to
fight for good in all galaxies.*

The Fans CHEER at this. Gabe looks all around him. Happy, innocent faces.

He spots a delighted Ezra. Before he can leave, he backtracks and leans next to him.

GABE

Dude, you're not gonna believe this: Vaughn Hartley is outside.

EZRA

Wh-wh-what? The friggin' director?

GABE

It's some viral marketing promo thingy. Hurry before he leaves.

EZRA

Geez, couldn't have waited til after the movie?

Right behind Isadora, they rush to the--

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY

Ezra glances around. It's empty.

EZRA

Where's he at?

GABE

Outside. He's one block down. Keep looking if you don't find him.

ISADORA

Who?

Ezra almost makes it to the front door. The projection booth door FLIES open. LUCY and KEUNG rush out. She's got Art's last film canister.

LUCY

We have to evacuate the audience--

Everyone sees each other. Stops.

GABE

Lucy!

LUCY

Gabe!

ISADORA

Gabe?

EZRA

Mom?

LUCY
Ezra!

ISADORA
Ezra?

GABE
Dora!

KEUNG
(looks outside, worried)
Art!

EZRA
Mom?

LUCY
Ezra!

GABE
Lucy!

LUCY
Gabe!

Keung points to the door.

KEUNG
(screams)
Arrrt!

BLAAAAM! A bullet SHATTERS a front door window. And DINGS the popcorn machine's kettle.

Outside, Art grips his .44 magnum. All hit the floor. Gabe on top of Isadora. Ezra to the floor. Lucy dives behind concessions with the film can. Keung in front of her.

Art steps over the shattered door. And notices--

ART
Keung, I asked you *very simply* to get daddy's film and everything gets *fucked up!* We only got--
(checks watch)
--*shit*. Four fuckin' minutes.

ISADORA
Mr. Danielowski, what's going on?

LUCY
He's going to murder everyone! He has a bomb!

ART
Keung, you get my fuckin' film can
from that critic right fuckin' now.

LUCY
Asshole!

GABE
Mr. Danielowski, I think we should
consider calling off the... thing.

ISADORA
Gabe, what is going on?

EZRA
Mom? Is this all part of the viral
marketing?

Art glances at Ezra.

ART
Mom? Well, luck be a lady.

Art pulls him to his feet, wraps an arm around Ezra's neck,
and holds the barrel to his head.

EZRA
Hey! What the hell, man? Don't I
have to sign a form first?

Lucy peers over the counter.

LUCY
No! Let him go!

ART
Give me my movie. Now!

Art inches toward the concession stand with his hostage.

KEUNG
Give him movie. We all dead.

GABE
Mr. Danielowski--

LUCY
Let him go!

ART
Give me my fucking Cool Runnings!

A brief pause to let that echo. Lucy quickly checks the
marked writing on the can: "Cool Runnings- Can 3/3." Then--

EZRA

Wait, is *Cool Runnings* that movie about the plane that crashes in the mountains and they eat each other?

ART

No, you fat little moron. It's about the Jamaican bobsled--

EZRA

Haha!

While Art sways the .44 in annoyance, Ezra GRABS the gun. PUSHES it out of Art's hand and right in front of--

GABE.

ART

You stupid Smurf!

Art SOCKS Ezra to the floor... ENRAGING Lucy, who LEAPS from the concession stand, and becomes a SHRIEKING barbarian.

She's a furious and primal warrior we've never seen before, going to work on his face with her claws.

Gabe picks up the .44.

Keung takes the Cool Runnings can and dashes to Ezra. Lucy and Art FLY over the concession stand, next to the popcorn.

Gabe and Isadora go in front of the stand. He raises the gun.

GABE

Hey, stop it! Stop it now!

They do. Slowly get to their feet. He aims between the two.

ART

Gabe, shoot her now.

LUCY

He's going to kill everyone here!

ART

Do it for Lunar Genesis!

LUCY

He killed your fat friend upstairs!

ISADORA

Joe?

LUCY

And he's using you, Gabe. He's doing it for insurance!

ART

She's a liar! You can't trust a critic, Gabe. She lied to you! I'd never lie to you!

Lucy gapes into Gabe's eyes. No deception this time.

LUCY

Gabe, it's true. I lied to you. It was a horrible thing to do for someone who had a terrible upbringing. I know you were just trying to share something you love so much with other people.

He keeps the barrel pointed to her face.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I guess we both have problems connecting with people. We're both so focused on keeping ourselves content that we don't see that we're pushing away the people that matter the most to us.

She looks at Ezra. Gabe glances at Isadora.

Both are heartfelt.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I know what Lunar Genesis means to you. It's your family. And no one wants to lose their family.

Ezra connects with her eyes. Without a word.

LUCY (CONT'D)

But I ask, as a mother, can we please evacuate this theater?

Gabe eyes between Isadora and Lucy.

ART

What about the Lunanites, Gabe? What about their legacy? Who's going to save them?

Gabe's eyes narrow. He cocks the .44. Still trained on Lucy.

GABE

I need *my* family too, Lucy.

Lucy is sick. Prepares for a bullet--

GABE (CONT'D)

Art... what are the names of the Lunanites?

ART

...what?

GABE

The names of the Lunanites.

Art's a blank. "Um... er..." The barrel moves over to Art.

ART

..."Slappy?" "Dopey?" "Jiggy?"

Lucy takes a breath. Trots around the concession stand--

LUCY

Descartes, Newton, Spinoza,
Voltaire.

--and puts Ezra in her arms. KISSES his hair.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Ezra. I'm never gonna let you go.

EZRA

Aww, c'mon, Mom.

Gabe's eyes pierce Art. Hand grip tightens.

GABE

It was you. You were Poliwot this whole time.

ISADORA

Gabe, don't do it.

ART

Come on, Gabriel. After everything I've done for you--

GABE

Deceptive. Cunning.

ART

Is this *really* because I forgot some space bunny names? C'mon!

KEUNG

No. Because you fucking asshole.

Art checks his stop watch. 02:15 left.

ART

(sigh)

After all the free popcorn I gave you, Gabe? You want some more?

He turns and grabs the scoop and a bag.

ART (CONT'D)

Free fuckin' popcorn for all.

He scoops it in as he rants. Isadora touches Gabe's cheek. He looks at her, attention diverted.

ISADORA

Should we pull the fire alarm?

GABE

I don't think it actually works.

ART

Who wants extra butter on theirs?

Art scoops aside kernels, revealing an UZI hiding at the bottom of the popcorn.

In a flash, he SNATCHES the Uzi, turns--

And PULLS THE TRIGGER, spraying bullets.

Gabe grabs Isadora. Makes himself a human shield. FIRES--

Lucy TACKLES Ezra and Keung behind the candy stand--

THEATER

Fans hear the Uzi GUNFIRE. Return GUNFIRE. Panic--

SCARED FAN

Active shooter!

SCREAMS! Everyone bolts to their feet--

LOBBY

Hiding behind the stand. Art's Uzi clicks. No more ammo.

Dozens of SCREAMING Fans erupt from the theater.

Lucy cradles Ezra and Keung.

LUCY
Boys! Are you hit?

They aren't. But they're hanging on to her pretty tight.

Isadora gasps. Gabe lies on top of her. Three bloody holes in his costumed stomach.

GABE
Oh, crap.

ISADORA
No! No! Gabe! No!

In the screaming confusion, Art takes his film can. And joins the fleeing Fans out the front door.

Lucy, Keung, and Ezra gather around Gabe.

EXT. PULASKI THEATER - UNDER MARQUEE - NIGHT

Art stumbles into his car. Puts the can in the passenger's seat. Checks his watch: 00:21 to go!

Turns on his car. HONKS against the fleeing fans.

ART
Out of my way, fuckin' nerds!

And floors it. Pedal to the metal.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY

Surrounded, Gabe breathes slowly.

GABE
Lucy... I'm s- sorry.

LUCY
Just... stay still.

ISADORA
Don't talk, Gabe. Call 911!

Ezra tries to get pry his phone from his costume. It's hard.

GABE
You should all run. The bomb...

I/E. ART'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Art checks his rearview mirror. He's far away from the Fans and his theater.

His watch BEEPS. He HITS the brakes. Turns around for the explosion... but nothing.

ART
Fuckin' reel change. Come on.

He gets impatient. Glances at his Cool Runnings can. Curious, he opens it up. Hears an odd click. And a heavy item CLANG.

INSIDE- No film reels, but six grenades. One of the grenades' pin was pulled upon the opening.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - PROJECTION BOOTH

No grenades on the reel. The duct tape hangs loose.

BACK TO ART

Art looks up. Yep, he's screwed.

ART
Oh, popcorn.

KABOOOOOOOOM!

Art and his car are vaporized in a fiery explosion. Taking no other lives with him.

INT. PULASKI THEATER - LOBBY

All look outside. Can't see the explosion. But feel it.

EZRA
Um, did I just become an accomplice to murder?

LUCY
No, baby. Just... shhhhh.

GABE
(whispers)
Isadora.

All back to Gabe.

GABE (CONT'D)

You can have my Lunar Genesis stuff.

ISADORA
Don't say that--

LUCY
Ezra, call 911.

EZRA
I can't get my phone in this thing!

GABE
Thank you for sharing this with me--

He's fading away. Isadora begs for him to stay awake as we--

FADE TO WHITE.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Isadora and Keung in black. Amid a casket. Not a big turnout.

She is sullen. So is he. A hand places a Newton action figure on top of the casket. Next to Spinoza and Voltaire.

ISADORA
At least we got to say goodbye.

Then, Gabe steps next to them. Wearing a white jumpsuit.

GABE
Good bye, Mom.

The casket is lowered. With the Lunanite figures.

Behind Gabe, two brawny ORDERLIES in suits. A POLICE OFFICER. A transport van- "North Aurora Psychiatric Hospital."

ISADORA
I'm sorry for your loss, Gabe.

GABE
I think I'll be fine.

KEUNG
I sorry, Gabe.

GABE
Thanks... where are you living now?

KEUNG
Isadora basement. She have kind family. Good cooks. Gain weight.

ISADORA
He's good company... how's therapy
been going?

GABE
Okay. They don't let me on the
internet, but I still found out.

ISADORA
About what?

He bites his lip. In excitement.

GABE
Lunar Genesis II.

She deflates.

GABE (CONT'D)
Because when a movie makes that
much money, how could you not make
a sequel?

ISADORA
Gabe--

GABE
All the media coverage at Pulaski
Theater. All that publicity. I--
saved Lunar Genesis.

ISADORA
Gabe... it's only a movie.

Her comment subdues him.

GABE
I hope to see you again soon.

He pecks her on the cheek. And returns to the Orderlies.

INT. CDG - LUCY'S OFFICE - DAY

Lucy's belongings have returned to their original space.

POP! Champagne. A group of smiling PRESS huddle around a
sheet cake with icing: "CONGRATS LUCY ON YOUR 5TH NEW YORK
TIMES BESTSELLER!" Flutes of Champagne passed around.

A stack of hardcovers: "CRITICAL MASS by LUCY ARGO" She
smiles in her bio photo now.

In the corner, Pepper Ann and Howie read from the book.

PEPPER ANN

No way half of this stuff in here
is true.

HOWIE

Maybe not, but she said she always
liked a good story.

Ezra, with PURPLE hair, passes by with two plates of cake.

EZRA

Mom?

He walks out into the--

INT. CDG - HALLWAY

And passes by a framed front page - "CAPTIVE DAILY GAZETTE
FILM CRITIC SAVES MOVIE THEATER."

EZRA (O.S.)

Mom?

He finds an open door. Lucy inside, her back to the door.

INT. CDG - CLOSET

Now returned to a janitor's closet. Lucy types on her phone.
Her wardrobe is way more colorful.

EZRA

What are you doing? You're missing
your party.

LUCY

I have to get the filter right.

He looks at her phone. She's scrolling through photo filters
for a picture of her and Ezra hugging and smiling by the
cake. To her two million plus followers.

LUCY (CONT'D)

"Rustic" looks fun, but "retro"
looks classy.

EZRA

Will you get off that thing?

LUCY

Okay, okay, "rustic" it is.

She hits send and puts her phone down. Smiles.

LUCY (CONT'D)
So, what do you want, kiddo?

EZRA
You to eat this.

She hands him a slice of cake. She takes a bite.

LUCY
(prim and proper)
Buttercream and marble. How trite.

Ezra tilts his head. "Really?"

LUCY (CONT'D)
Just kidding. I love it. Like I
love you, Ez.

Lucy kisses her son on the forehead.

EZRA
I think I liked it better when you
were tied up in that basement.

They smile. Both of them amble out of the door.

LUCY
So... you wanna go see a movie
after this?

The door SHUTS.

INT. TRANSPORT VAN - MOVING - DAY

Gabe rides in back. Bars on windows. He watches Isadora and Keung in the cemetery as the Orderlies drive him away.

Gabe looks down... in his hand, a Descartes action figure.

DESCARTES (V.O.)
Ready for our next adventure, Gabe?

Gabe smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.

DURING CLOSING CREDITS, INCLUDE:
"Based on the book *Critical Mass* by Lucille Argotsinger"

THE END...
...FOR NOW