

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – DESKTOP -DAY

A leather bound diary on a dark wood tabletop. A woman's hand (JULIA') opens the book and FLIPS a few pages.

JULIA(Voiceover)

I always thought that writing would be an easy job. At least, to me. Sitting there all day writing, letting your imagination flow. Adventure? All in the mind. Or so I thought. I was always popular with my readers in every publication my works appeared in. Every publication.

INT. JULIA'S STUDY – DESK - DAY

JULIA is sitting at a desk in her living room cum study. She is reading the book, flipping pages and apparently writing in it. She squints a little as she writes. Her pen SCRATCHES the paper as she writes.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I never meant to prove anything to anyone, I just liked writing. Maybe that was what made me famous. I don't feel famous, but still.

Julia puts on reading glasses, and continues writing into the book. Her pen SCRATCHES the paper some more.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Maybe I should've felt famous. It would've helped.

Dissolve to –

INT. LIVING ROOM/STUDY - JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Julia is typing at a computer with her glasses on. The keys CLACK as she types quickly and smoothly, a sign of a person with plenty of typing experience.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I am a writer. A very successful writer. I have written stories about every genre under the sun, and then some.

There is a waist high shelf of books is besides her. A BULLETIN BOARD sits atop the shelf.

Headlines pinned to board: Another sellout title by Julia!

JULIA (Voiceover)

I have my own forum and chat room. I believe in reaching out to my readers to know what they want. And I let them reach out to me. Maybe it was a bad idea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The shelf of books besides Julia contains all the titles she's written, and are all first publications. Titles like : "Blue Sunflower", "Living our lives", "Dark Nexus", "The Paradigm Shift" and "Ice Dagger".

JULIA (Voiceover)

And then one day, a reader requested that I write a story about life and what it meant, I was intrigued and agreed almost immediately

Julia looks intrigued at something in the screen, a challenge proposed by a reader under a BBS topic. The sender's initials are R.V.S. She CLICKS on it and reads it intently.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

Julia is looking at the computer screen as she types on the computer.

JULIA (Voiceover)

The reader challenged me to write a story about Life, about what I thought of it, how I thought it should be lived. I was definitely intrigued. I accepted the challenge immediately.

Julia smiles and HITS the Enter button. The ‘Submit Message’ dialogue box disappears, its last selection being ‘Yes’.

JULIA (Voiceover)

If I’d known what would happen, I’d have written it shorter, or maybe turned down the story altogether.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Insert Computer Screen

The ‘Sending Message’ dialogue box appears and a status bar notes the progress of the message (Julia probably has a slow connection). Julia starts typing something into the computer immediately.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Maybe I shouldn’t have been so eager to agree, that or I should’ve written it as a short story. Maybe both. Well, it’s too late to regret that now.”

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Julia is wearing her reading glasses and piles of paper and books surround her (notes on her story). She writes something on a sheet of paper, then switches to the computer and types something.

EXT. BOOKSHOP – SOMEWHERE IN L.A - DAY

A truck arrives and people unload boxes into the shop.

Sign on Shopfront : In store now! New Novel by Julia Julia!

JULIA (Voiceover)

I am Julia Wei. I have written many great titles, great stories one and all. Stories about love, stories about worlds so far removed from ours that they are unfathomable in our lives, stories about tragedies so profound my readers have claimed that it has changed their views on their lives. Apparently my works have found a place in every one of my readers’ hearts, but equally apparent is that it has festered in at least one of them.

INT. BOOKSHOP – SAME

A shelf being stocked up with Julia’s books by busy staff members before opening. They fill an entire bookshelf with Julia’s new title, and put up a large sign.

The Sign reads: Julia’s newest masterpiece! On sale now!

The store opens. The books are snapped up by eager customers and the shelves empty quickly. One customer comes too late as the last copy is grabbed by another customer, and he stomps his foot. He walks out angrily.

INT. BOOKSHOP – NIGHT

The bookshelves are empty in a darkened room. Tired employees hurry to close the shop. Time seems to pass in a flash as they clean up the mess left behind following the launch of Julia's new title.

EXT. NEWSSTAND – ALONG A STREET IN L.A - NIGHT

The VENDOR is sitting at his stall looking around as a few cars DRIVE by. Newspapers are on sale. A SUITED MAN comes along, stops, looks at and reads one.

Headline of newspaper : Julia does it again!

The suited man takes the paper and pays the vendor, then walks off into the night with the paper under his arm. A car HORNS in the distance.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I talk about my most recent, and quite possibly my last work, The Nine Days Wonder. It was a challenge from a reader of mine, a topic I myself had posted in a forum, to create a title that would befuddle me, a story that would be so fantastic as to be totally unreal. I gave the challenge and accepted the conditions, so to speak.

INT. LIVING ROOM/STUDY – JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Julia is sitting at her desk poring through her fan mail. She is wearing her reading glasses. Julia picks up and opens a letter to read it.

JULIA (Voiceover)

My work was an emotional tale about a terminally ill girl who went into a coma. Visited by a strange spirit, offered two choices. Live or die in nine days. Death meant a painless, joyful passing. Life meant torment and hurt. It was a hard choice. She chose death.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

Julia is reading the mail one by one. The stack on her left grows smaller as the one on the right grows bigger. (Use Dissolve)

JULIA (Voiceover)

After this grueling challenge of my penmanship, the response to my book was overwhelming. I was flooded in mail, congratulating me, envying me, praising me, wishing I could marry them. I was more popular overnight than I had been before, and money ended up pouring in by the bucketful. I thought I was living a dream, until the nightmare began.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

The phone RINGS. Julia looks at it, startled.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Not long after publication, I received a call from someone who claimed to be the 'Reverser'. He told me that he would offer me the same offer that the Reverser of my story had given the cancer-stricken girl. Enjoy the Nine Days of Wonder, or die in agony.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

Julia walks over and picks up the phone.

JULIA

Hello?

Julia listens to the FILTERED RESPONSE. She looks suspicious and holds the handpiece closer to her ear.

JULIA

Who is this?

Julia listens for a while longer, and her expression changes to one of anger.

JULIA

Stop calling me!

Julia SLAMS the phone down and goes back to her desk. She sits down heavily and resumes reading the mail.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

JULIA (Voiceover)

I put down the phone and thought nothing of it after that, thinking it was an overzealous reader making a prank call. I should've kept on listening, if I'd known what he had promised if I refused to give an answer.

Julia reads the mail a little longer, then sighs in frustration and switches off the table lamp, then walks off.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY – DAY

A BLUE BEETLE driving on a busy highway suddenly veers crazily with a SCREECH and crashes into an oncoming trailer truck. Parts fly everywhere and other cars veer and SCREECH crazily off to the sides to avoid the flying wreck.

JULIA (Voiceover)

The next day, a good friend of mine died in a freak car accident. A sudden engine failure in the middle of a crowded highway had resulted in a trailer truck slamming into her head on. Needless to say, there was very little left of her to pick up afterwards.

INT. KITCHEN - JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Julia is at her breakfast table reading the papers. She suddenly spots something and chokes on her coffee, spilling some onto the paper.

JULIA (Voiceover)

As soon as I received news of my friend's demise, the Reverser called again. He told me if I wanted to continue watching my loved ones die, I could put the phone down again.

Julia is intently reading the headlines of the papers.

Insert headlines: Freak accident on XXX bridge; 1 dies, 57 injured.

Julia looks at the photo of the deceased. It is her friend, of course. The phone RINGS. Julia looks at it apprehensively.

INT. LIVING ROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - DAY

Julia walks over to the phone and picks it up suspiciously. She utters a wordless ‘Hello’ into the phone. Julia’s expression changes into one of unpleasant shock as she listens to the voice on the phone.

JULIA (Voiceover)

What was I to do? I couldn’t ignore the threat if by any chance the threat was real. But if the threat was a hoax, I could pull out easily and possibly even get the police to end this joker’s tirade.

The Reverser’s filtered voice comes through the phone.

REVERSER

I give you this day to decide. Every other day that passes, another loved one will die.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

Julia’s expression changes to one of determination and she nods.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I agreed to go through with the Nine Days of Wonder.

Pause

JULIA

Alright, I’ll play it your way.

Julia SLAMS down the phone, turns and walks away angrily. There is a digital clock in the foreground. It is Saturday. Its numbers burn a bloody red.

Favor Digital Clock face (with date and time)

Dissolve to-

INT. BEDROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The time on the clock is now 11:59 PM. The time changes to 12 Midnight. The phone RINGS. The lights come on. Julia walks into the room dressed in her pyjamas and with her hair tied in a towel, having just taken a bath. She picks up the phone.

JULIA

Hello?

A filtered voice MUMBLES over the phone. It is the Reverser and his riddle.

REVERSER

A world where distinctions are simpler than black and white/A world where the intangible forms the world more solid than we might/a world where broken things are made right/If you but take the time to kneel and hold me tight.

I am the guardian of your faith. Who am I?

INT. BEDROOM – SAME

Julia listens halfheartedly, then puts down the phone with a click and goes back to bed and pulls up the covers. JOCK (her pet beagle) joins her and she pats him as he snuggles up to her.

JULIA

Come on Jock! Good boy!

The two go to sleep.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I thought things would get better in the morning.

EXT./INT. LIVING ROOM/STUDY - JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Fens is TYPING at the computer. There is the digital clock besides her. The CLICKING of her keyboard breaks the silence of the room.

JULIA (Voiceover)

If only I had taken this riddle more seriously, if only I had considered it for a moment more. I didn't expect him to carry out his threat, let alone in such a spectacular manner.

Time passes quickly. The passing of time is reflected on the clock.

Multiple Dissolves resolve the passing of time.

Jock trots up to Julia and curls up at her feet. Julia smiles, pauses from her typing and bends down to stroke Jock.

INT. BEDROOM – JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

The time is 11:59 PM on the same day. Julia is in bed sleeping. She is tossing and turning. The time changes to 12 Midnight. A shadow FLITS by. A short WHINE is heard, then nothing.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I really thought things would get better in the morning.

EXT. APT. BUILDING SIDEWALK – DAY

Early morning, a light fog hangs over the floor. The dismembered corpse of Jock lies on the sidewalk, guts and parts strewn neatly across the sidewalk. His belly is neatly slit from lip to tail. People are gathering around and MUTTERING.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Julia comes walking out to the window in her nightie, looking curious at the sound below. She looks out the window below.

EXT./INT. WINDOW – JULIA'S APT. BUILDING - DAY

Julia sees the corpse and GASPS.

INT. CORRIDOR – JULIA'S APT. BUILDING - DAY

She runs downstairs and goes over to the corpse quickly, where the crowd parts for her.

JULIA

Jock!

Julia stares at her poor dog's corpse, then kneels in front of it and starts to sob.

JULIA

Jock...

INT. DOORWAY – JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Julia walks in through her doorway, slumped, her hair a mess. She runs her hand through her hair, growls and turns around to POUND on the door. She screams.

INT. DOORWAY – SAME

The phone RINGS. Julia turns to look at it with a newfound sense of fear. Her eyes are red and puffy from crying. Julia walks over and picks it up. She speaks in a shaky voice.

JULIA

Who is this?

REVERSER

Consider this a warning. You have failed your first day. I have given you your second.

Julia stares at the phone as it GOES dead. She SLAMS it down. She looks in the mirror in front of her, looks incredulously shocked, then turns around suddenly.

INT. LIVING ROOM/STUDY – JULIA’S HOUSE – DAY

There is a wooden paneled wall behind Julia. There is some writing on it, done in blood. It is fresh, and some of it is oozing down the wall.

Insert the riddle: I am alone in my journeys neverending/I am alone in my life without  
crutch or cane/I have nobody to share my tears with/But the world shares my pain.  
Save my soul, for I am thy name. Who am I?

INT. LIVING ROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - DAY

A few hours later, there are some police officers sweeping the flat for evidence. Others are walking back and forth exchanging notes and talking. Julia is sitting down on a couch looking forlorn. She has since changed clothes and is a sight better than before. She is wringing her hands nervously. A pair of legs (MAHONEY’S) walks and stops in front of her. She looks up.

JULIA

Oh, er, yes, officer?

MAHONEY, a chubby, balding detective of middle age and a thick moustache is looking at Julia, no particular emotion evident. He speaks in a deep, warm, bassy tone.

MAHONEY

You alright, ma’am?

Julia looks surprised. She nods and pushes her loose hair back in a gesture to relax herself.

JULIA

Oh, yeah... I guess I’ll live.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Mahoney CHUCKLES.

MAHONEY

Don’t worry ma’am, we’ll find this guy. I’ve seen worse sickos than him. Oh,  
and call me Mahoney.

Julia looks nonchalant. She swallows, then nods.

JULIA

I hope so...Mahoney.

A YOUNG OFFICER walks up to the two. They look at him.

Y.OFFICER

Pardon me, but we've just finished the interviews with the neighbours.

Mahoney looks hopeful and smiles.

MAHONEY

And?

Mahoney looks convinced that anyone carrying a bucket of blood would be rather obvious in this neighbourhood. The Young Officer shakes his head.

Y.OFFICER

They saw or heard nothing.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

Mahoney stares dumbfounded at the Young Officer, then asks in a careful, measured voice with a stern expression.

MAHONEY

Nothing? Absolutely?

The Young Officer nods nervously. He apparently knows what Mahoney's temperament is like.

Y.OFFICER

No, sir. Nothing.

Mahoney nods and looks at Julia with his stern look. She looks twice as nervous as the Young Officer.

MAHONEY

Don't worry yet, ma'am.

He smiles again, and LAUGHS.

Fern looks at him blankly. Then she speaks suddenly, standing up as she does so. Mahoney and the Young Officer jump backwards.

JULIA

Is there a church nearby that's got my name on it?

The two officers look at each other, then they look thoughtful and HUM to themselves.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

After a few seconds, the Young Officer suddenly looks up brightly.

Y. OFFICER

Yeah, there's a Church a few blocks down that's run by a Julia Charity Organization... It's been called the Julia Church. But it's been abandoned for years.

Julia gets up quickly and gets ready to leave. She walks around and picks up a few things and stuffs them into her purse.

JULIA

That's fine. I need to go there.

The Young Officer tries to stop her by reaching out a hand to grab her shoulder as she walks past him.

Y. OFFICER

But ma'am, we haven't-

Mahoney raises a hand to stop him.

MAHONEY

That's ok. I'll go with her. Tell the rest.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SAME

The Young Officer looks at Mahoney respectfully and sketches a quick salute.

Y. OFFICER

Whatever you say, detective.

Mahoney joins Julia as she walks to the door. The Young Officer looks out after them. Then he turns around, shakes his head, sighs, shrugs and then tips his cap.

Y.OFFICER

Gonna be one of those days.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SOMEWHERE IN L.A - DAY

A scene of green, a field of wild grass growing in the background, creeper covered trees sprouting here and there and birds SINGING. A weather-stained church with vines (deliberately?) growing over its walls stands in the foreground. A patrol car PULLS UP besides it, gravel CRUNCHING under the tyres. Two people get out. Julia is carrying a grocery bag with some unknown contents inside. She looks considerably better. Mahoney, on the other hand, is scowling.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Mahoney looks at Julia skeptically. She looks at Mahoney cheerfully.

MAHONEY

Why'd you go buy all this stuff for? We're not having a picnic here are we?

Julia looks at Mahoney with a knowing smile and nods.

JULIA

No, but you'll find out.

The two walk into the church.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DOORWAY - DAY

A dark, quiet place. Light tinged with green streams through the church windows. Broken benches stand in where beautiful oak benches once existed. Cobwebs hang in disused corners of the church. However, the statues of Jesus

and Mary are remarkably well kept, and the place has a slightly lived in feel. Moisture DRIPS in some unseen corner. The door CREAKS open and light streams in like a flood. Julia and Mahoney walk in. Their footsteps ECHO in the silence.

MAHONEY

I still don't get what you're trying to do. You're being stalked and all you can think of is going for a picnic?

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – AISLES - DAY

The two walk down the aisle at a brisk pace, their footsteps go CLICK CLOCK in the echoing silence. Mahoney looks impatient.

JULIA

It's alright. I know what I'm doing.

Mahoney looks at Julia goggle eyed for a moment, then throws up his arms.

MAHONEY

Yeah. Whatever.

The two stop in front of the altar and a likeness of Mary. Julia puts down the grocery bag. Mahoney watches on, still not knowing what she's thinking. Julia stands up and dusts her hands.

JULIA

Now let's find a corner and hide.

Mahoney stares as Julia walks away smiling. He throws up his hands in exasperation.

MAHONEY

Why God made women, I'll never know.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SEATS - DAY

A few indeterminable hours pass. Mahoney and Julia peek out from behind a bench in a dark corner. Mahoney WHISPERS.

MAHONEY (whispering)

I don't see anyone.

JULIA (whispering)

Patience.

Mahoney stares at Julia as she sinks back behind the bench. A RUSTLE brings her back up.

JULIA (whispering)

Here we go, I was right!

Mahoney stares incredulously at her as she gets up and walks quickly towards the bag, stealthily.

MAHONEY

Oh, NOW she's right. Wonderful.

Mahoney gets up and follows Julia in a clumsy imitation of her stealthy approach.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAIS - DAY

A YOUNG GIRL, an urchin, is rummaging through the bag. Julia walks towards her quietly. One of her steps however, is too loud and goes CLACK, which alerts the urchin. The urchin turns, startled, looks at Julia, and runs away with the bag. Julia stops.

JULIA

Wait! I'm not here to take you away!

The urchin keeps running. Julia sighs and gives chase. Mahoney follows, grumbling.

MAHONEY

Definitely gonna be one of those days.

EXT. WOODED AREA – BEHIND JULIA'S CHURCH - DAY

The urchin runs out into a wooded area. Leaf litter covers the floor and vines grow everywhere. Her deft, light footsteps CRUNCH the leaves softly. Julia is chasing the girl with some difficulty, who is deftly navigating the terrain. Her footsteps CRUNCH much more loudly. Suddenly, Julia trips and falls with a THUD and a shout.

JULIA

Whoa! Ouch!

The urchin stops and turns around to look at Julia, who is groaning on the floor. Mahoney reaches Julia and tries to help her up.

MAHONEY

Miss Julia, you ok?

Julia looks up, dusts herself off, gets up and nods.

JULIA

I'm fine.

EXT. WOODED AREA – SAME

Julia suddenly looks surprised as her blouse is tugged at. She looks down at the urchin. The urchin is holding out a candy bar to her and smiling a relatively toothless, but brilliant smile.

URCHIN

Fer yu lady. Thanks fer de candy.

Julia takes the candy bar hesitantly, and the urchin runs off quickly before Julia can say a word. Fern looks at the candy bar in her hand. Mahoney sidles up to her and nudges her.

MAHONEY

I hope you're happy. Come on, let's go.

Mahoney walks away, footsteps CRUNCHING the leaves. Julia turns her body, but her head still faces the direction the urchin ran off in. She smiles wistfully.

JULIA

Oh yeah, I am.

INT. PATROL CAR – INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

Julia is staring at the candy bar in her hand as Mahoney drives along a bridge. She is turning the candy bar round and around in her hand, examining it.

JULIA

Did I do it?

Mahoney looks at her as he drives. She has opened the wrapper and is eating the candy bar.

MAHONEY

Do what? Help that little girl?

Julia shrugs as she chews her candy, then swallows.

JULIA

I'm not sure. I think so. I hope so.

Mahoney chuckles.

MAHONEY

Well, I hope you did it, whatever you wanted to do. At least it wasn't a picnic.

Julia shrugs again. She finishes the candy bar.

INT. PATROL CAR - SAME

JULIA

I wanted to complete today's puzzle before someone else dies.

Mahoney stares at Julia. Julia is looking inside the wrapper intently and doesn't notice him. It CRINKLES as she tries to look at something inside of it.

INT./EXT. DENNY'S FAMILY RESTAURANT – DAY

The patrol car pulls up to its parking lot and stops with a SQUEAK.

INT. PATROL CAR – OUTSIDE DENNY'S - DAY

Julia looks surprised. She turns and looks at Mahoney.

JULIA

What'd you stop for? We're not-

Mahoney turns and looks at Julia sternly.

MAHONEY

Listen, ma'am. Don't give in to this madman. We're gonna catch him, and we're gonna make damned sure he stays behind a padded door for a long, long time. Now don't give me that bullshit. He's only human, he'll make a mistake eventually.

INT. PATROL CAR – SAME

Julia looks at Mahoney skeptically.

Pause.

Then she smirks at him and nods.

JULIA

Oh. Right.

Julia looks inside the wrapper of the candy bar and turns it inside out with a lot of CRINKLING. On the silver foil is some writing.

JULIA

Then explain to me what this is.

She pushes the foil in Mahoney's face, who takes it and reads it.

Note written inside foil: You have completed today successfully. Congratulations. Examine this again tomorrow. –The Reverser

EXT. JULIA'S APT. BLOCK – NIGHT

The entrance to Julia's apartment is still cordoned off with police tape. Several officers are milling around and several patrol cars are parked there. A police car pulls up in front of the sidewalk. Mahoney and Julia exit the car and SLAM the doors shut. Mahoney looks angry.

MAHONEY

I'll be damned if I let that asshole get to me!

The Young Officer comes to meet Mahoney. He follows Mahoney as they return to Julia's apartment.

Y.OFFICER

Sir, a call came... it's the suspect.

INT. CORRIDOR – JULIA'S APT. BLK - NIGHT

Mahoney gives the Young Officer a poisonous glare. The officer swallows.

Angle on Mahoney

MAHONEY

And?

INT. CORRIDOR - SAME

Y.OFFICER

Well, he called us and told us to stop the investigation because we weren't going to find him. He's trying to psyche us out.

Mahoney stops right in front of the door. The Young Officer nearly bumps into him. Mahoney turns and holds up a plastic evidence bag with the wrapper inside.

MAHONEY

Then we find him, and lock him up.

Mahoney shoves the bag into the Y.Officer's arms and storms off.

Y.OFFICER

Yessir.

INT. BEDROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Julia is holding a Polaroid. She is sitting on her bed in her nightclothes, staring at it.

JULIA (to herself)

You have completed today successfully. Congratulations. Examine this again tomorrow.

Julia turns the Polaroid around and looks at the behind, then turns it around again, as if wondering if there’s anything hidden in it. Julia groans and tosses the photo onto a nightstand, before falling into her bed.

JULIA (to herself)

Inside a candy wrapper. It’s just not possible. Not all of them!

Julia looks outside the window. The lights of L.A shine back at her like warning flares.

INT. CORRIDOR – JULIA’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The YOUNG OFFICER is sitting on a chair outside her doorway reading a book. He is HUMMING to himself.

INT. BEDROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Julia looks at the lamp on the nightstand, the photo under it, a digital clock besides them. She switches the lamp off and snuggles under her blankets with a RUSTLE. The clock reads 11:45 PM.

Insert Clockface

The clock reads 11:59 PM.

Dissolve to –

It changes to 12 midnight.  
A shadow flits by.

INT. BEDROOM – JULIA’S HOUSE - DAY

The clock reads 7:45 AM. Its alarm goes off with a series of loud BEEPS. A hand reaches out, groaning, and hits the snooze button. Julia gets up from bed, staring at the clock on the nightstand. Julia looks at the clock, then at the photo. She stares at it for a while, then picks it up.

Insert on the new message on wrapper in the Polaroid.

REVERSER (Voiceover)

Follow me not, for I follow you/Round and round we go, the carrot and the tail/  
Following the same thing yet not the same shoes/Discover me, I will find you.  
Look for me not, I will look for you. Waiting for you, won’t you wait too?

EXT. CORRIDOR – JULIA’S HOUSE - DAY

The Young Officer comes to attention as Julia walks out with the Polaroid in hand. She looks distraught.

Y. OFFICER

Ma’am?

Julia looks left, then right, then at the Young Officer.

JULIA

Tell me, did you see or hear anyone or anything?

The Young Officer looks around, confused.

Y. OFFICER

No ma'am. Why?

Julia raises the photo to him. The Young Officer raises an eyebrow disbelievingly.

JULIA

He did it again.

INT. OFFICE AREA – LAPD PRECINCT 5 - DAY

Mahoney is walking very fast with the Polaroid in hand towards his office. He looks annoyed.

MAHONEY

So this guy just waltzed past one of our guys and planted this photo, right where you left your other one?

Julia is following him, jogging slightly to keep up.

JULIA

It appears that way, yes.

Mahoney stops. Julia bumps into him. He turns around, waving the Polaroid.

MAHONEY

And you're telling me, without proof, that this is the same photo you had yesterday, only it's... changed.

Julia looks at Mahoney irritably, like he was the biggest idiot in the world.

JULIA (impatiently)

Yes!

INT. OFFICE AREA – SAME

Julia sighs as Mahoney shakes his head. They arrive at a door. Mahoney sighs, KNOCKS, and walks into a room marked 'Labs'. He shouts as soon as he comes in.

MAHONEY

Hey, Lenny! Get a fix on this for me!

INT. FORENSIC LABS - LAPD PRECINCT 5 - DAY

The door opens into a police lab with a guy in a white coat (LENNY) looking up from a container. He wipes his hands and walks over to Mahoney. He takes the photo and looks at it for a while. Then he looks skeptically at Mahoney.

LENNY

It's a Polaroid. What's there to fix?

INT. FORENSIC LABS – SAME

Mahoney shrugs.

MAHONEY

Mystery Man told our friend to look at it the next day, and when she did, the writing totally changed.

Lenny stares at the Polaroid, looks at Mahoney and nods. He waves the Polaroid and turns around to close the door.

LENNY

Right. I got you. Get back to you soon.

Mahoney and Julia leaves , the door closes and Mahoney turns to Julia

MAHONEY

Right, let's go get ourselves something to eat, eh?

INT. RECEPTION AREA - LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

Mahoney walks with Julia towards the main entrance of the precinct. He's trying to reassure Julia.

MAHONEY

Don't worry, Lenny's the best. He'll figure out how Mystery Man's done it.

Julia nods empathically. They walk through the main doors.

EXT. STAIRCASE - LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

They are now on a crowded LA sidewalk. Cars BEEP as their slower counterparts block their way, and busy people WALK back and forth.

JULIA

I hope so. Oh!

Julia bumps into something. It's the young girl. The urchin falls down on her buttocks. Julia quickly goes over and helps her up.

JULIA

You alright?

The urchin nods at Julia. Fern suddenly recognizes her, and her eyes grow wide.

JULIA

You're that girl from yesterday!

The urchin nods again. She smiles toothily with two visibly missing front teeth.

EXT. SIDEWALK – OUTSIDE LAPD 5 – DAY

The urchin stands up and dusts herself off, then looks at Julia.

URCHIN

Wuz the candy nice, lady?

Julia stares at the little girl, then nods and smiles.

JULIA

Yeah, it was delish. Did you finish them?

The urchin grins another toothless smile and shakes her head.

URCHIN

Nah. I gave some to my friends. They live there too.

Mahoney looks at Julia. Mahoney raises an eyebrow and squats to eye level with the girl.

MAHONEY

Say, kid. How'd you know we were here?

The urchin holds out a scrap of paper. Something is scrawled on it.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME

*Urchin : "Dis man told me where ta find yu. He gave me a candy bar too."*

The urchin holds out an unopened bar. Mahoney stares at it. Julia also squats and looks at the urchin, who looks back innocently.

JULIA

Why'd you look for me?

The urchin grins.

URCHIN

Wuz hupin' you'd bring some more nice stuff, lady. We haven't eaten in days besides de candy.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME

Julia looks at the child piteously. She smiles.

JULIA

Well, maybe something more nutritious today. Should I buy something for them, Uncle Mahoney?

Mahoney stares at Julia incredulously. She looks back. He shrugs.

MAHONEY

Don't see why not. It's your money.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SOMEWHERE - DAY

A black saloon (Mahoney's private car) pulls up in the same place as the last time, gravel CRUNCHES again. The doors open and two adults with a little girl exit the car, arms filled with bags of groceries.

URCHIN

Dis way!

Julia and Mahoney follow the urchin, who runs through the doorway with her bag of groceries. Julia is beaming. Mahoney is scowling.

INT. DOORWAY - JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

The door opens in the church. Light spills into the church. Julia and Mahoney look inside from behind their bags, surprised.

Angle on GROUP OF CHILDREN.

A GROUP of CHILDREN from 4 to 14 are sitting around, looking at the newcomers suspiciously. The Urchin is waving to them.

URCHIN

This' are my friens'!

The LEADER (PEDRO) looks at the newcomers suspiciously. He stands up and walks to the Urchin. He pushes the Urchin over.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAIS/AISLE - DAY

The urchin hits the floor in front of Julia, her paper bag splits. Julia stares at Pedro, looking defiantly at him. He returns the look.

JULIA

You didn't have to do that! She brought food back for you!

Pedro walks up to Julia.

PEDRO

You don't trick us, you come here to take us to that 'home' of yours. Get lost.

Julia stares at Pedro.

Mahoney pushes Julia aside gently and looks at Pedro.

MAHONEY

Look, kid. This lady just wants to be friends. We can't explain why, but it's about that man who told your friend how to find her. He's bad.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH - SAME

Pedro gives Mahoney a poisonous look. Mahoney returns it. There is a tense moment as the two hold a staring match.

High tension pause.

The leader smiles.

PEDRO

Bad man, right. Pedro thought that too.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Mahoney looks at Julia with a surprised look. She shrugs. Julia looks at the leader.

JULIA

Why's that?

The leader rubs his nose with his thumb and snorts.

PEDRO

Pedro knows. Pedro smells bad people. Pedro meet many bad people before.

Julia stares at Mahoney. He shrugs.

MAHONEY

It grows on you.

Mahoney looks back at the leader.

MAHONEY

And what's that about us coming from a 'home' anyway? How come you didn't trust us just now?

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Pedro, the leader, snorts again, derisively.

PEDRO

Pedro don't say he trust you yet. Give us what's in the bags, maybe we trust you.

Julia smiles as she offers him the bags of groceries.

Angle on Julia

JULIA

Take it, I bought them for you anyway.

Pedro stares at the bags that Julia offers him disbelievingly. He beckons the other kids to come get the bags. Julia helps the little girl up as well, as she struggles to put everything back into the split paper bag.

JULIA

You didn't have to let him do that, you know.

The girl smiles at Julia as she holds up an apple.

GIRL

It's ok. Pedro isn't bad. I dun mind.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – A CLEARING BEHIND THE CHURCH - NIGHT

There is a small bonfire CRACKLING outside the church, with a bunch of kids singing and dancing around it in a disjointed group. Amongst them is a female adult shape laughing and dancing.

Mahoney is sitting on a rotting trunk watching the children and Julia enjoy themselves.

Julia walks over and sits down besides Mahoney. She is sweaty from all that dancing.

JULIA

Don't you want to join us? It's fun.

Mahoney shakes his head.

MAHONEY

Nah, nah. I was just thinking.

Julia looks interested. She sits down on the log besides him.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Mahoney looks at Julia as she sits down.

JULIA

About what?

Mahoney shrugs nonchalantly.

MAHONEY

My kids. I just watch them and wonder how those kids of yours survived like this, nowhere to go, nothing for them. I can't imagine people ever abandoning their kids.

Julia looks thoughtful, but sympathetic.

JULIA

I wish I knew why too. The world isn't perfect, but it just seems so unfair.

The two look at the bonfire as the kids pretend to be camping out, roasting the marshmallows Julia bought for them on sticks. Julia smiles.

JULIA

You know, this really isn't bad. I almost feel like living here myself.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH - SAME

Mahoney looks aghast at Julia.

MAHONEY

You better not mean that, Miss Julia.

Julia looks at Mahoney skeptically, then nods.

JULIA

Yeah, I know. But still, if the situation was different...

The two share another moment of silence as the kids howl and laugh. Julia breaks the silence.

JULIA

You married then?

Mahoney looks at Julia, at his engagement ring, then at the fire. A wistful smile crosses his wizened face.

MAHONEY

Yeah. Sylvia. Works in Forensics. Been married for over 20 years.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Julia nods.

JULIA

I need a boyfriend. Ever thought about having an affair?

Mahoney stares at her incredulously, shocked by her brazen statement.

MAHONEY

You gotta be kidding.

Julia laughs.

JULIA

You're right. I must be joking.

Just then, Pedro walks up to them. The two look up at him.

JULIA

How's the food? I hope you aren't just eating the candy.

Pedro holds up a stick with the remnants of a marshmallow, then points at Julia and Mahoney with it.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – SAME

Julia and Mahoney stare at the stick.

PEDRO

Pedro offer you a deal.

Julia raises an eyebrow at Pedro.

JULIA

A deal?

Pedro nods.

PEDRO

Yeah. A deal. You buy us food every week, we help you find this man. We remember what he looks like.

Julia looks at Mahoney. He shrugs.

MAHONEY

Can't hurt to have a few more eyes looking out for this madman. I don't trust their memory, but it couldn't hurt.

Julia looks at Pedro. She holds out her hand.

JULIA

You got it. Deal?

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Pedro extends his own hand, and the two shake on it. Pedro smiles, grips Julia's hand tightly, then pulls her back into the dancing.

PEDRO

Come on then, Pedro show you Pedro Special Dance!

They pass the rest of the night blissfully.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Julia is staring dumbfounded at a message scrawled in lipstick on her dressing table mirror.

The Message reads: Day Four : Broken strings and mangled limbs/Wooden dolls and ivory chests/Twisted fates and wide eyed whims/Unattainable I am best.

Orange and blue, silvery pool, finding you. What am I?

EXT. STREETSIDE – DAY

A HOMELESS BOY is walking along a busy sidewalk among a crowd of busy people, then turns into an alley in a quieter portion of the city.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I wonder why the Reverser would dare to appear in front of the girl, whom I found out was called Juliene. Mahoney cautioned me that he might've not been our suspect at all but hired help. I knew that, and yet I felt deep inside me that it was the Reverser. I don't know why.

INT. ALLEY – DAY

At the end of the alley is a TEENAGE TRAMP. The homeless boy offers him a candy bar and says something, both sides nod, and the homeless boy walks off. The tramp tosses the candy bar around in his hand, and walks out of the alley as well.

JULIA (Voiceover)

But I knew that so long as I could keep the Reverser happy for the next few days, I would find him. I could stop him. Pedro assured me that he could help me find out where the Reverser was last seen. I guess the word of a street kid could be trusted, once they trusted you.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

A busy park similar to Trafalgar square, with a fountain and plenty of pedestrians and traffic with high rise buildings in the distance. Julia is walking around with Mahoney, a brown paper bag in her arms. She is wearing an orange sweater. Mahoney is in uniform.

MAHONEY

I still don't see why you trust those kids. I mean, come on. They're kids.

Julia sits down at the fountain's rim, Mahoney follows.

JULIA

Relax, officer. I trust you guys, but I need to find him quickly.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Julia takes some bread crumbs out of a packet from the paper bag and tosses it to the pigeons. Mahoney sighs.

MAHONEY

We've already got you under police protection. So far everyone agrees that this isn't your

ordinary fruitcake.

Julia holds up a finger to point out a fact.

JULIA

Exactly. Which is why I need to cover all angles. This Reverser already got past one of your people.

Mahoney falls silent and stares sulkily at the birds. Mahoney looks up again.

MAHONEY

That reminds me. What's today's... Wonder?

Julia thinks for a while.

JULIA

Love.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Mahoney looks at Julia, stupidfied. Then he bursts out laughing. The birds scatter in a PATTERN of wings and CROOING.

MAHONEY

That's a good one! Love! What, don't tell me Prince Charming's gonna fall outta sky?!

A voice (SIMMONS) interrupts Mahoney.

SIMMONS

Julia? Julia Julia? Julie? Is that you??

Both of the people sitting at the fountain look up to see a well-dressed man walking up to them. He is grinning from ear to ear and holding a cloth shopping bag. Julia stands and stares at the newcomer.

JULIA

Simmons? Jeremy, is that you?

Simmons puts down his shopping bag, smiles and opens his arms wide.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

SIMMONS

The one and only. At your service.

Simmons performs a perfect gentleman's bow to Julia. She curtsies back. Mahoney stares dumbfounded. Julia suddenly realizes he doesn't know Simmons. She hurries to introduce them.

JULIA

Allow me to introduce my friend, Mahoney. Mahoney, this is Jeremiah Simmons, old acquaintance and painter. Jeremiah, this is Detective Mahoney.

Simmons smiles sincerely at Mahoney (who gives him a grudging nod of respect) He offers his hand. Mahoney takes it gruffly.

SIMMONS

Pleased to meet you, detective.

MAHONEY (gruffly)

Likewise.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Simmons looks at Julia and then at Mahoney.

SIMMONS

So, what trouble did you get into this time? Bar fight? Broke someone's arm again?

Julia laughs at his old joke. She shakes her head.

JULIA

Oh, no. Nothing like that. I've just got this stalker, that's all.

Simmons' expression sobers suddenly. He holds Julia's shoulders firmly and looks her in the eye concernedly.

SIMMONS

A stalker, and you're not concerned?

Julia nods.

JULIA

Not as long as I answer his crazy riddles. Have you read my latest work yet?

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Simmons looks confused, but nods.

SIMMONS

Yes, I did. The Nine Days Wonder. Good book, as always.

Then realization dawns on him. His eyes widen.

SIMMONS

Don't tell me he's going to kill you after nine days.

Julia shrugs, as if she didn't care about it at all.

JULIA

If I can find him, I'd kill him in less than that. But yeah, something like that.

Simmons looks at Mahoney, suddenly serious.

SIMMONS

Please take care of her for me, Detective. I would die if anything happened to her.

Mahoney nods solemnly, newfound respect already showing in his eyes.

MAHONEY

Already on it.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Simmons looks at and then grabs Julia's hands and grasps them firmly.

SIMMONS

Julia, you must be careful. I still haven't had dinner with you.

Julia chuckles and pulls her hands away from his. She gives Jeremiah a peck on the cheek.

JULIA

Then what about tonight? Call me. We'll meet again tonight. Now go already.

Julia presses something into Simmons' hands (her number on a scrap of paper) and turns to Mahoney. Simmons turns to leave, somewhat reluctantly. He picks up his bag and walks off, constantly looking back at Julia until eventually the crowd swallows him.

EXT. A BUSY PARK – DAY

Julia smiles at Mahoney.

JULIA

See? No worries.

Julia walks off with a bounce in her step. Mahoney grabs her paper bag and calls out after her.

MAHONEY

You're being terribly cheerful about all this!

Julia stops and turns around.

JULIA

I didn't think my broken puppet would come back to me after all this while! It makes so much sense now!

Julia walks off laughing merrily. Mahoney stares out after her, then chases the pigeons away angrily with a growl.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Julia is walking around preparing a table complete with white tablecloth and fancy plates. She is humming to herself.

JULIA (Voiceover)

In case any of you were wondering, Jeremiah belonged to a rich aristocratic family. We fell in love during high school, but of course our social difference meant being together was impossible. By then, Jeremiah was already trying to break the ties to his family... nicknamed himself Broken Puppet for that. Kind of ironic that as soon as he did leave his family, he left me too and went overseas with only a goodbye on a note and I never saw him again for years, even though I missed him badly. I must be getting old.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Julia, dressed in formal evening wear, is combing her hair in front of her dressing table, with the message wiped off cleanly. She smiles at herself in the mirror.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Maybe I should enjoy myself today.

The dressing table phone RINGS. Julia picks it up jauntily.

JULIA

Hello?

REVERSER

Hello Julia. Enjoy your dinner tonight.

Julia drops the phone, aghast. It CLATTERS on the dressing table.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

There is a KNOCKING at the door. Julia quickly composes herself, puts the phone back, and goes over to get it.

INT./EXT. Doorway of JULIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She opens the door and Simmons is standing there. He is formally dressed and has a bouquet of roses, baby's breaths and lavenders in his hands. He hands Julia the flowers with lavish and a bow.

SIMMONS

For you, the lady who's not lost her womanly charm over the years.

Julia stares at the flowers, speechless.

Julia

Erm, thank you...

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Julia takes the flowers into the house and puts them in an empty vase. Then she turns to Simmons, still waiting patiently at the doorway.

JULIA

Please! Come in!

Simmons walks in and looks around. Julia follows behind him after closing the door.

JULIA

How did you know I was living here?

Simmons sticks a thumb towards her doorway.

SIMMONS

The officer at the door told me. I happen to live in the same neighbourhood, it seems.

Julia stares at him, shocked. Simmons turns around and smiles, fully expecting that very response.

Julia

But... I thought that-

Simmons nods and continues to smile.

SIMMONS

Oh, that gossiping harridan? She moved out just yesterday. Quite a coincidence, isn't it?

Julia keeps looking at him, then quickly regains her composure.

Julia

Er.. er.. yes! Well, shall we eat...?

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Julia quickly goes into the kitchen. Simmons looks at the table and sits down. While waiting (CLINKING of glassware and utensils is heard in the kitchen), Simmons takes the opportunity to look around.

SIMMONS

Impressive. I thought you'd want to eat out.

From inside the kitchen, Julia replies.

JULIA

Well, Mahoney advises against it... it's not safe for me, he says.

Simmons nods, then smiles.

SIMMONS

True. Well, he obviously hasn't tried your cooking before. It might not be safe for me here too. I hope your cooking's gotten better.

Julia comes out of the kitchen with a tray of food. She looks at him petulantly.

JULIA

I hope for yours too it has. Now eat up or I'll make you eat it anyway.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Simmons laughs as Julia sets the food down.

SIMMONS

Yes, true enough. Smells good enough to eat too.

Julia sits at the table, and the two eat.

EXT./INT. JULIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The two are eating, talking, laughing and generally socializing over a candlelight dinner.

JULIA (Voiceover)

That night, I forgot all about my worries and troubles when I had that dinner with Simmons. I knew that something like this wouldn't happen again, which was maybe why I enjoyed myself so much. I didn't have much time left.

EXT. STREETSIDE - DAY

A homeless teen wanders the street, hands in his pockets, looking around. There are much fewer pedestrians on the street than the previous time.

JULIA (Voiceover)

The next two days passed quickly. In my story, the fifth day would be about Family, the sixth Fantasy. I knew something bad was going to happen. I would be surprised if nothing did.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD – JOHN HOPKINS HOSPITAL - DAY

JULIA'S FATHER (JORDAN) is lying in bed, tubes sticking out from his body. Julia walks into the room, where her grieving MOTHER (Kaitlyn) is crying. Kaitlyn looks up at Julia and hugs her tightly.

KAITLYN

Oh, Julie. I thought you'd never come!

Julia returns the hug tightly.

Julia

Never. How's daddy?

Kaitlyn looks at Jordan, and Julia follows her gaze. She walks over and sits by her father's side, who opens his eyes weakly and extends a hand towards her. He apparently cannot see anything clearly.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD – DAY

JULIA (Voiceover)

My father was dying, the doctor had told me. He had just suffered a major heart attack, and was dying. I never thought about it, but I had spent too much time away from my family... I should've visited them more often.

Jordan can barely see Julia as he tries to find her face. Julia guides his hand to her cheek, wet with tears. Jordan croaks weakly, his voice sounding like dry wood snapping.

JORDAN

Julie? Is that you?

Julia nods sadly. She is sniffing.

Julia

Yes, daddy. I'm here. Don't worry, you're gonna be all right.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD – DAY

Jordan smiles and tries to chuckle, but ends up giving a raspy cough. Kaitlyn looks worried all over again.

JORDAN

Ah, don't worry about me, Julie. I just want to make sure you'll be all right before I go.

Julia shakes her head violently.

Julia

No! I want you to keep wondering, because-

Jordan smiles again and pats Julia's lap.

JORDAN

I said don't worry. You've done a great job of your life, Julia. I've even heard you met your old boyfriend. We're all proud of you.

Julia is shocked that her father knows. Without even having to see her face, Jordan chuckles.

JORDAN

A friend of yours called and told me about it.

Julia looks at her mother, who nods, albeit sadly.

KAITLYN

He said that the two of you are even living in the same neighbourhood. I'm just glad you're getting on with your life.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD – DAY

Julia looks back at her father, who is smiling.

JORDAN

Yes...get married for me, huh? Heh heh.

Julia holds her father's hand tightly. She nods.

JULIA

I'll try.

Jordan smiles and nods.

JORDAN

Then I'll be watching you from Heaven.

Jordan's grip slacks and his head lolls to one side. Alarms BLARE their grim alert. Julia looks desperately at her father. Two nurses and a doctor come in quickly and usher Julia and Kaitlyn out. Kaitlyn is wailing.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR – DAY

A distraught Julia leaves the room and walks with her mother out. Mahoney is standing there waiting, a look of sympathy on his face. Mahoney puts a hand on Julia's shoulder, and the three walk out.

Fade to –

EXT. STREETSIDE - DAY

The teen is talking to some other homeless men and women. They shake their heads, and the teen thanks them.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Soon after my father died, I was too numb to do anything... Maybe I thought about meeting my father in Heaven too. But I couldn't just lie down quietly. Not like this.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The teen finds a bench in the park and sits down to eat a sandwich salvaged from a trashcan. He is about to take a bite when a figure in black slides past him, from behind. The teen looks up suddenly and looks around in alarm.

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

The setting sun paints the entire scene a burning yellow red. The teen is sitting on the staircase in front of the building entrance. A patrol car stops in front of the flat and two people get out. The teen meets Julia as she gets out. The two hold a quick discussion.

Julia presses a dollar note into the teen's hands and he runs off. Mahoney looks at Julia from his side of the car.

MAHONEY

Got a description?

Julia nods firmly at Mahoney.

JULIA

Yeah. I think we can catch this guy.

Mahoney smiles, assured.

MAHONEY

I think we can.

Julia stays by the car and watches apprehensively as Mahoney walks towards the building entrance.

JULIA (Voiceover)

But, did I really want him to?

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Julia is tossing and turning in her sleep. The digital clock glows blood red in the dark.

JULIA (Voiceover)

The riddles are coming slower, easier. It's like as if the Reverser just wanted to see how serious I was about solving his puzzles. It's like he wants me to solve them. I don't get it. Why would someone so sick allow me to finally get in touch with my life? Was it the anticlimax he wanted? It didn't strike me as such. But I didn't understand it. Not one bit.

EXT. BEACHSIDE - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia is standing on a concrete Breakwater with her father. Both are dressed in Angler's clothes. Jordan has just cast the line. Julia looks out into the sea as seagulls SQUAWK overhead. The waves of the sea LAP at the breakwater.

JULIA

Strange...

Jordan turns to look at Julia. He looks a sight better than his hospital incarnation.

JORDAN

What's strange?

Julia shrugs.

JULIA

I don't know.

Julia continues to look out into the oceanic panorama. There is not another soul in sight. A whoop. Julia turns to look at Jordan. Jordan is laughing as he holds up his line with a struggling fish at the end of it.

JORDAN

Yeah! Alright! Now we can have your favorite!

EXT. BEACHSIDE - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia smiles an affectionate, but half-forced smile. She has a memory of having had it so often she's nearly sick of it. But it is a sweet memory.

JULIA (Dryly)

Wow. Mother's baked fish rice.

Jordan nods.

JORDAN (Enthusiastically)

Yep, right!

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE - DAY (Dream sequence)

The whitewashed back door opens and Julia walks in, followed by the triumphant Jordan with his (now more subdued) fish. They are in the kitchen.

JORDAN

Honey, we're back! Guess what!

Kaitlyn walks into the scene wiping her hands on her apron, smiling. The two hug quickly, Jordan's fish safely out of the way.

KAITLYN

I know what this means, dear. Julie's favorite.

Jordan laughs again as Julia helps her mother get some utensils. Jordan puts the fish down. Kaitlyn looks at the two, particularly at Julia.

KAITLYN

Go on then, I'll cook. You go help your daddy unpack.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia nods and the two walk into the living room. The living room is a bright, airy affair with white rattan furniture and hanging plants. Sunlight streams in from the door's windows and other windows. Jordan and Julia put down their tackle box and such, then sit on the couch. Jordan turns on the television. It comes to life with a WHINE. The TV Anchor chatters animatedly about some fishing bait.

TV ANCHOR

And then we use the spinner lure for today's...

Julia looks at the television, then at her father, who is watching the television intently.

JULIA

Father.

Jordan turns to look at Julia, his face a bright red from standing in the sun all day.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

JORDAN

Yeah, Julie?

Julia looks around the house thoughtfully, at its unnatural brightness and silence.

JULIA

This isn't real, is it?

Jordan looks confused.

JORDAN

What do you mean? We're sitting here, aren't we?

Jordan pats the couch resolutely with a THUD. It echoes in the still air.

JORDAN

Solid as they come, Julie.

Julia smiles knowingly and shakes her head.

JULIA

No. I'm dreaming. The sixth day, Fantasy. This isn't real, but I wished it were.

Jordan looks at Julia like she's grown a second head. He feels her head for a fever.

JORDAN

Julie my girl, you sick or something? If you're not feeling well-

Julia pulls his hand off her head, gently.

JULIA

No, daddy, I'm fine.

Jordan looks at Julia worriedly.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia looks around the house. It hasn't changed. Julia pats the couch. It THUDS. Jordan looks smug.

JORDAN

See? Solid as it comes. I think you've been in the sun too long, Julie. Wear a hat next time.

Julia looks at Jordan long and hard.

JULIA

There's no riddle today. Something's not right.

Jordan looks queerly at Julia and puts a hand on her forehead again to be sure.

JORDAN

Are you sure you're alright, Julie? I really hope you're not having a fever.

Julia stares at the television, featuring some fishing program. The angler in the TV has apparently caught a large fish, judging from his ecstatic appearance. But the TV is strangely quiet now.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

This isn't right. Daddy, you know this isn't real.

Jordan looks at Julia resolutely.

A pause. A stoppage of time.

A car VROOMS by. Jordan speaks up, all serious now.

JORDAN

Julie dear, I know you wished this were real. I know you wished you were here with us, instead of being cooped up in that dingy apartment writing books. I wished the same things you wished. That you could be here with us.

Julia stares at Jordan.

JULIA

You're the-

Jordan holds up a hand and looks away, disappointed at her suspicion.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

JORDAN

No, I'm not. I'm really your father. You called me into your dreams. I was talking to St. Peter, actually. He's a nice guy. Let me come back for a while.

A moment of silence. Julia looks at the house again. The television has mysteriously been switched off.

JULIA

Then this is...

JORDAN

Your dream. Everything in this is what you wished it to be. Everything you wanted is in it, even yourself.

Julia looks at the kitchen, where her mother is busy humming to herself and CHOPPING something. A pot of something is bubbling on the stove.

JORDAN

Even your mother's dream is here. See? One big, happy family.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

Jordan is looking intensely at Julia now. Julia looks bewildered at this revelation.

JORDAN

Don't worry, Julie. It's not your fault you couldn't make it... it was ours.

Julia opens her mouth to protest, but Jordan holds up a finger to stifle her protest.

JORDAN

Enjoy it while you can. It's only a dream, you'll wake up. And maybe then, you can bring this life to reality with someone you love. You promised.

Julia looks at Jordan again. The two share a moment. Julia looks uneasy.

JULIA

Yes... maybe.

Jordan suddenly smiles broadly and pats Julia on the shoulder.

JORDAN

There's my girl now!

Jordan laughs, and leans back comfortably into the chair, which squeaks reassuringly.

JORDAN

Let's wait till your mother finishes cooking. You can wake up when you go to bed tonight. If you want, I can even tuck you in myself, just like old times.

INT. BEACHSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY (Dream sequence)

Julia nods, hesitantly.

JULIA

Alright...

Julia cuddles up to her father, who puts his hand around her shoulder. He speaks in a reassuring tone.

JORDAN

I'll be there. Don't worry.

Julia nods and snuggles up tighter with her father.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – DAY

Julia wakes up slowly, as the alarm goes off with an annoying BEEPING. Julia sits up and looks at the clock. Her cheeks are slightly moist. Mahoney calls from outside her room.

MAHONEY

Miss Julia? You up?

Julia shouts back.

JULIA

Yeah. Gimme a minute to change!

INT. JULIA'S CORRIDOR – DAY

Mahoney is looking at the wall when Julia comes out.

MAHONEY

So, found the mysterious riddle today?

Julia shakes her head as the two head into the kitchen.

JULIA

I won't need to. I've already solved it.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN – DAY

Mahoney gives her a strange look. Julia walks up to a coffee machine and pours a packet of Starbucks coffee into it, then hits a switch. It CHUGS as it spews steam.

MAHONEY

That's an odd way to put it.

Julia is expressionlessly watching the coffee machine spew out a viscous brown water. She nods.

JULIA

It's an odd solution. I dreamt it.

Mahoney scowls, skeptical of Julia's statement.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN – DAY

MAHONEY

Now you're losing me.

Julia shrugs as she hands him a steaming mug of coffee. He takes it gingerly.

JULIA

Don't worry about it. So how's the investigation?

Mahoney shrugs. The two sit down.

MAHONEY

We've already found a list of possible suspects from the description the kid gave us. We've tried narrowing it down, but so far finding a likely suspect isn't easy.

Julia nods over her cup of coffee.

JULIA

Two more days, not including this one. Two more days till I die.

A tense moment hangs in the air.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN – DAY

Mahoney slams the cup on the table and stands up. He leans over and looks Julia in the eye. Julia looks up at him curiously.

MAHONEY

Look, Julia. I'm going to put this nicely to you. You. Are. Not. Going. To. Die. Now, I've already promised myself that we're gonna stop this guy. I keep my promises. Do I look like the sort who doesn't?

Julia stares at Mahoney for a while. He stares back with a 'determined' (more comedic) look. She shakes her head and smiles. Mahoney's effort at looking serious and determined at the same time resulted in puffed, red cheeks.

JULIA

No, I guess not...

Mahoney sits down again, with a satisfied smile.

MAHONEY

Good, then I don't want that attitude. You got me?

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Julia nods and sips her coffee.

JULIA

Yessir.

The doorbell rings. Julia and Mahoney look up. Mahoney nods.

MAHONEY

I'll get it. Stay put.

A few seconds later, Mahoney comes back with Simmons in tow.

SIMMONS

Thought you'd like to go for a walk, Julie.

Julia smiles.

JULIA

Love to.

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET – DAY

Julia is walking down the curiously empty street with Simmons, Mahoney trailing after behind.

SIMMONS

So this stalker calls himself the Reverser?

Julia nods.

JULIA

Yeah.

Simmons looks thoughtful.

SIMMONS

And so far nobody's got a lead on him?

Julia shrugs nonchalantly.

JULIA

Well, we do, but it's not much.

Simmons suddenly stops, and Julia follows a second later when she realizes she's walking alone.

SIMMONS

Tell me about him.

Julia turns and stares at Simmons incredulously.

JULIA

What?

Simmons nods at Mahoney.

SIMMONS

You heard me. We need more eyes to look out for this guy.

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET - DAY

Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

No, you can't.

Simmons looks imploringly at Julia.

SIMMONS

Why not?

Julia looks worriedly at Simmons. She is apparently worried for his safety.

JULIA

It's too dangerous!

Mahoney and Simmons exchange a worried glance. Simmons looks back at Julia.

SIMMONS

Julia, I can take care of myself. You're the one who needs to be taken care of.

Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

No, not you, Simmons. I promised to keep you safe.

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET - DAY

Mahoney looks worriedly at Julia, then puts a firm hand on her shoulder.

MAHONEY

Miss Julia-

Julia shakes Mahoney's grip off violently and looks at the two of them, distraught.

JULIA

Don't look for him! I need to finish this by myself!

Mahoney grabs her heavily by the shoulders and shakes her firmly.

MAHONEY

Julia, he's getting to you! He's psyching you out. Don't give in, don't let him win.

Julia shakes herself free from Mahoney's grip with an unnatural strength and looks determinedly at Mahoney.

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET - DAY

JULIA

Something's coming. He wants to tell me something. I need to know what it is.  
Why he's doing it.

Mahoney looks really worried now. So does Simmons.

MAHONEY

Julia, you're losing it. Get a grip on yourself.

Simmons is slowly moving behind Julia while her attention is on Mahoney. Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

No! Mahoney, don't you see?

Mahoney shakes his head.

MAHONEY

See? No, I don't see. What?

Julia is hysterical as she screams at them.

JULIA

You can't catch him unless he wants you to!

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET - DAY

Julia runs away quickly before Simmons can grab her. The two stare after her as she disappears.

MAHONEY

I got this ba~aad feeling.

Simmons can only nod with his mouth open, dumbfounded by Julia's unusual response.

SIMMONS

Uh huh. Yessir.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Julia is sitting on one of the benches, head in her hands. Then she looks up, stands up and walks up to the statue of St. Mary and the crucified Jesus, the only two things in the church kept meticulously clean. She is crying.

JULIA

God, what's happening to me?

A CREAK. Julia turns around like a startled cat. A shape at the door withdraws quickly. Julia looks at the door carefully.

Another angle, favor Julia

JULIA

Who's there?

A head peeks in through the crack. It's Pedro.

Angle on Pedro

PEDRO

I knew you were here, miss.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Pedro walks over to Julia and sits down besides her, looking thoughtful. Julia looks apologetic.

JULIA

Sorry, I didn't bring any food today.

Pedro smiles.

PEDRO

Is alright, miss. Pedro know you sad.

Julia wipes her eyes. Pedro offers her a rag. She takes it.

JULIA

So... why are you here?

PEDRO

That policia, Mahoney? He look for you. Many of Pedro compadrés tell me. We tell him no see. But I find you.

Julia smiles, touched by his compassion.

JULIA

Thanks.

Pedro looks up and smiles.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

PEDRO

You take good care of us, miss. Now we got good things. We like you.

The door creaks again, and the rest of the homeless children come walking in through the door. Most have somewhat newer clothes than before, Julia's gift to them. Julia looks around, but can't find Juliene. She looks at Pedro worriedly.

JULIA

Where's Juliene?

Pedro looks at the bunch. They look at each other. They answer unanimously.

KIDS

Dunno.

Julia gets up. Pedro follows.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Pedro follows Julia to the entrance of the church as the kids watch on. Julia turns to face Pedro.

PEDRO

Where you going, miss?

Julia looks deathly worried about Juliene.

JULIA

To find her. Something might have happened.

Julia looks at Pedro pleadingly. He shakes his head, then beats his right chest with his right fist with a THUD.

PEDRO

No need, miss. We are tough. Smart. We can take care of ourself. Juliene come tomorrow, you see.

Julia looks at Pedro apprehensively, then at the rest of the children. Slowly, the colour returns to her face.

JULIA

Alright... I trust you.

The children smile, then a BOY, about ten, walks up to Julia with a grubby old children's BOOK. Julia looks at it, then at the child. He smiles with a mouth full of yellowed teeth.

BOY

Read it? We found it, but we can't read.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Julia looks at the rest of the children. A light flickers overhead. She smiles.

JULIA

Alright.

The children all cheer her on and gather around her. She starts to read the book.

JULIA

Once upon a time, there were three bears...

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – NIGHT

A patrol car with its headlights on is parked some distance away from the church. A figure (Mahoney) is leaning against the door watching the light streaming through from the church windows.

MAHONEY

Bah. Darn tramps, can't trust them.

Mahoney gets into the car and drives off.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

It is morning. A fog hangs over the entire place and light streams through the treetops. A bird SINGS.

INT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

A pile of sleeping forms cover the floor in the darkened chapel. One of them stirs. Julia wakes up and bumps another form. The other kids stir. One by one they wake up. Julia looks around her.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

The church door opens and Julia exits, accompanied by a swarm of teens and pre-teens. They are all in bright moods. Julia is holding the hands of some of the youngest children who can walk, and smiling as she promises them breakfast.

JULIA

I'm gonna treat you all today to a great breakfast!

KIDS

Yeaaaaaaaah

Suddenly the kids quiet down and Julia looks up. Simmons is waiting by his car, a huge MPV, and beaming at her. Julia walks up to Simmons, shocked that he knows where she is.

Angle on Julia

JULIA

Jeremy? How'd you find me?

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

Simmons smiles and bows again to her, apparently it is some sort of 'custom' for him towards her.

SIMMONS

Mahoney told me. He followed Pedro.

Julia looks aghast at Pedro. Pedro waves his arms frantically in defence.

PEDRO

I didn't know it, miss! Honest, Pedro didn't know!

Julia smiles at Pedro.

JULIA

It's alright. No harm done.

Pedro sags in relief almost visibly. Julia looks back at Simmons.

JULIA

So, you come to pick me up?

Simmons nods. He looks at the crowd of kids, then grins.

SIMMONS

But I don't mind a few hitchhikers, so long as they behave.

Julia looks at the car. It is pretty big even for an MPV.

EXT. JULIA'S CHURCH – DAY

JULIA

You must be doing well to afford this.

Simmons nods.

SIMMONS

Not just a painter. Come on, let's go. Kids're gonna have to behave themselves though.

At that, Julia looks at the kids and they all give her their best 'little angel' looks. Her heart melts and she nods to Simmons.

JULIA

Oh, I think they'll be good. Come on, kids.

Julia ushers them into the car, and the kids pile into the MPV while Simmons opens the door for Julia and they both get in. The MPV drives off.

INT./EXT. DENNY'S FAMILY RESTAURANT – DAY

A car pulls up in front of Denny's and a swarm of kids pile out from the car. Patrons and waitresses alike look on surprised as they come through the door and pile into the available seats by the windows. Julia and Simmons come in last. A waitress meets them.

WAITRESS

Erm... welcome to Denny's... can I help you?

Julia looks at the kids. They're fighting over what to order and throwing straws at each other. Julia CLAPS once to quiet them. They come to order in an instant.

JULIA

One at a time, all of you! Behave yourselves.

They nod, and in their most civilized manner give their orders to the worried (and flustered) waitresses.

INT. DENNY'S FAMILY RESTAURANT - DAY

Julia and Simmons sit down at another table while they wait. The kids are running around in the background amidst flustered waitresses trying to keep some semblance of order and the other patrons doing their best to stay out of their way. Julia is stirring her coffee, with plenty of creamer and some sugar.

JULIA

So, why'd you come to pick me up?

Simmons stirs his as Julia sips her coffee.

SIMMONS

I was worried.

Julia laughs as she puts the cup down.

JULIA

That's so sweet.

Simmons takes his coffee stirrer and points it at Julia.

SIMMONS

That doesn't sound like you, Julie.

Julia nods.

JULIA

No, it doesn't. But I don't care.

Simmons smiles.

SIMMONS

Now, THAT sounds like you.

The two CHUCKLE.

EXT. A BUSY STREET – DAY

Pedestrians are standing at a traffic crossing, waiting for the Walk light. Suddenly, they turn their heads to look at something off screen.

EXT. A BUSY STREET – DAY

A group of kids and teens are flanking Julia and Simmons as they walk down the street, they are yelling dancing and singing as they go.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I don't know why, but all of a sudden, I wasn't afraid anymore. Not of the Reverser, not of what might happen if I should die, not of anything.

EXT. A BUSTLING PARK - DAY

An ice cream man is mobbed by all the younger kids while Julia is helping him distribute the ice cream cones.

JULIA

One at a time! There's enough for everyone!

EXT. A fountain in the park - DAY

Julia and Simmons sit down together with their ice cream, then look and smile at each other. A short moment passes, then they suddenly look around them. They are surrounded by expectant kids waiting for them to kiss.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I felt like I was free like the birds.

EXT. A FOUNTAIN IN THE PARK - DAY

Julia takes a final bite out of the ice cream cone and kisses Simmons on the nose, leaving a white spot. The kids go wild.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Maybe it's because I've had everything I've always wanted. Good friends, a beau, happiness.

Julia looks up at the sky as Simmons tries his hand at sketching one of the kids with equipment from his bag.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Is that it? Was that what the Reverser wanted? Then why this trouble?

Julia looks troubled.

JULIA (Voiceover)

But there are another two days left. I can't let my guard down. He wants something.

EXT. JULIA'S APARTMENT ENTRANCE – NIGHT

Mahoney is standing by the doorway with his arms crossed, looking here and there. He suddenly sees something. Julia is walking down the street, smiling. He runs up to meet her.

MAHONEY

Where've you been?! I've been waiting day and night for you! I nearly thought-

Julia holds up a hand to stop him.

JULIA

I'm sorry Mahoney, but I know I'm wrong. We have two more days, let's get this guy.

Mahoney looks on after Julia as she walks by, humming to herself. Julia suddenly stops and turns.

JULIA

And, thanks for everything today.

EXT. JULIA'S APARTMENT ENTRANCE – NIGHT

Mahoney stares as Julia walks into her apartment, then sighs and shakes his head.

MAHONEY

And scientists say that women are from the same planet.

Angle on Julia

JULIA (Voiceover)

But I knew what I had to do now.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Julia is looking out the window in her bedroom, dressed in her nightgown. The sounds of life BLARE below her. A wind blows. She turns and looks at the clock.

Favor Clock

The time is 11:59 PM.

JULIA (Voiceover)

Two days, one minute left. I found it hard to think, to consider what would happen. Just because things were getting easier didn't mean much. I knew better than anyone that this was building up for a big fall. The question was : How big?

The time changes. It is now 12:00 Midnight. The phone RINGS. Julia picks it up.

JULIA

This is Julia.

REVERSER

Very perceptive. Your riddle. Forever I am/Solid I feel/Ethereal I should be/Unreal I shan't. The one who opposes me the most you shall find me. Enjoy.

The phone goes dead with a CLICK. Julia looks thoughtful without putting down the phone.

EXT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

It is morning, and the sidewalks are empty save for the omnipresent morning mist. It is a gray, bleak morning and sleepy officers start their day at work as soon as they walk up the stairs into the building. Julia is standing in front of the staircase.

EXT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

Julia sees a Police Officer walking towards her and she meets him as he walks by.

JULIA

Excuse me, where is Officer Mahoney? Mahoney Pines?

The officer looks at his watch.

OFFICER

I think he's in his office, Ma'am. Do you want to see him?

Julia nods at the officer happily.

JULIA

Yes, please. It's important. I'm Julia Julia.

The officer nods and tips his hat. Apparently Julia is well known in the department.

OFFICER

This way, ma'am.

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

The officer leads Julia into the building, past offices filled with the morning's paperwork and officers drinking coffee, talking and joking, as well as dealing with the morning's cases. Julia is led past a few offices before reaching a closed door. The door reads : "Offices"

OFFICER

Here we are, ma'am. Good day.

JULIA

Thank you.

INT./EXT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICERS) - DAY

Mahoney is drinking a cup of coffee as he mulls over the files he has in front of him. (MO of the Reverser & all relevant data collected so far) He looks up as soon as he hears the door CLICK, and sees Julia walk in. He stands up, surprised.

MAHONEY

Julia!? Whaddaya doing here this early in the morning??

Julia stops in front of Mahoney and sits down opposite him. Mahoney follows. Julia looks confident.

JULIA

Well, I just got my riddle and I couldn't sleep all night after hearing it. I was wondering if you could help?

Mahoney looks on intently, and nods.

MAHONEY

Sure, of course. What was it? I hope you wrote it down.

Julia nods and looks in her handbag, before pulling a notepad out. She holds it out to Mahoney.

JULIA

Here-

Mahoney stops her offer with a raised palm.

MAHONEY

Hang on. Lemme get some coffee for you. You need it, I know.

EXT./INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICES) – DAY

Mahoney sticks his head out the office door and shouts at a passing JUNIOR OFFICER, who stops and listens.

MAHONEY

Hey, you! Another cuppa coffee here for the lady, and make it snappy!

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICES) – DAY

Mahoney nods and looks back at Julia, then takes the proffered notepad. Julia looks incredulous at Mahoney.

MAHONEY

Sorry about that. Now... let's see.

Mahoney notices Julia staring at him.

MAHONEY

What? Can't I pull some weight around here?

Julia looks on a little longer, then nods, smiling widely. Mahoney leans back in his chair and rests an arm on the backrest indignantly.

MAHONEY

Hey, what? Is it so unnatural for me to yell at a rookie outside to get us some coffee? Even they know we need the stuff you know.

Julia nods knowingly, at some long remembered memory.

JULIA

You sound like someone I used to work for last time. He ended up having to get his own coffee when the secretary quit. He couldn't use the coffee machine.

Mahoney snorts derisively.

MAHONEY

Ah, so that's whatcha found so funny? You think I can't use the machine? Nah. I just can't walk out of this office without falling asleep is what. Anyway. Back to ya riddle.

Mahoney stares intently at the riddle on the notepad.

MAHONEY

Weird as hell is what I'd call this guy. How's he come up with these riddles?

Time passes as the two try to puzzle out the riddle. A wall mounted clock behind and above Mahoney changes to reflect this passing.

Focus on clock

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICES) - DAY

It is 9 AM. Lenny comes into the office, yawning and scratching his unshaven face. The two look up at him.

MAHONEY

'Morning Len. How's it going?

Lenny looks at Mahoney wearily and shrugs.

LENNY

Ah, nothing as yet. You sure this guy didn't just sneak in and switch photos? As far as I can tell, it's a perfectly genuine copy.

Julia stares at Lenny queerly. He notices her odd look.

LENNY

What? What'd I say?

Julia shakes her head and chuckles.

JULIA

Oh, nothing. It's just that... well... genuine copy sounds kinda... well, you know, odd. Oh, forgive me, I seem to be in unusually good spirits today.

Lenny shrugs and ignores the comment. He scratches the back of his neck like an unwashed man, which is what he looks like.

LENNY

Well, whatever. Been in the lab since last night, just came in to see if Mahoney can wring a cup of coffee for me... Jesus, I feel like a dead man. Mahoney, come on. Help a dying man out, eh?

Julia smiles widely as Mahoney grumbles and walks up to Lenny. He turns Lenny around and escorts him to the door.

EXT./INT. – CORRIDOR - LAPD PRECINCT 5 - DAY

Mahoney turns Lenny in one direction, stops him, and points.

MAHONEY

Coffee room. There. Go.

Mahoney gives Lenny a friendly pat and shove. Lenny walks off grumbling.

LENNY

So much for friendship in *this* part of the world.

INT./EXT. LABS - DAY

Lenny walks into the Lab, yawning widely and carrying a large, steaming mug of coffee. He walks over to the desk where a stack of papers lie, along with some stationery and the Polaroid photo. He puts his coffee on the desk, then looks at the photo and does a double take.

LENNY

The heck...?!

Lenny runs out the room, accidentally spilling some coffee on his lab coat.

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICES) – DAY

Mahoney and Julia are discussing the possibilities of the riddle's meaning, arguing over something.

MAHONEY

Someone who opposes him? What, do all of us count? Does that mean we can find him?

Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

No, it can't be. It's not the last day.

Mahoney looks exasperated.

MAHONEY

Well, maybe he wants us to catch him!

Julia sighs.

JULIA

It's Laughter. Today's wonder is Laughter. I wrote the book, remember?

Mahoney shakes his head and crosses his arms, leaning back in his chair.

MAHONEY

I don't see what's so funny about it. It's not like a clown's gonna come in and throw a party.

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (OFFICES) – DAY

Lenny bursts in at that moment, Polaroid in hand, looking disheveled. He has a fresh coffee stain on his somewhat stained lab coat.

LENNY

Guys! Take a look at this!

Mahoney and Julia look worried as Lenny puts the photo onto the desk. They stare at it. Lenny crosses his arms and points somewhat objectively at the photo.

LENNY

Damned if I know how he did it, but he did it again... and I don't even want to KNOW what it is.

Julia stares uncomprehendingly at the photo, which Mahoney looks particularly nervously at. It features a white lump of something with a black line in the middle.

JULIA

Give me that for a while.

She turns it around and reads the writing.

Insert : "Kiss my a\$\$! Told ya I'd make detective! –M.P."

Julia stares at it, then turns it around. She stares at the vast, naked butt in front of her. Then she realizes something. She looks at Mahoney, who by now is loosening his collar.

JULIA

Mahoney, this is you.

Lenny looks surprised and quickly walks over to Julia's side to take a look at the photo. His face lights up.

LENNY

I'll be damned. It is him! There's his ugly mug right there!

Julia and Lenny continue to look at and exchange comments on the photo as Mahoney watches on, unable to put in a word. Finally he cannot stand it.

MAHONEY

Hey! Knock it off!

Julia and Lenny look up at Mahoney, whose face is now red from embarrassment. They look at the photo, then at Mahoney.

JULIA

So it IS you.

Mahoney tries to look somewhat nonchalant, but is barely restraining his embarrassment.

MAHONEY

Sue me. I was young.

The two burst out laughing madly as Mahoney angrily paces one round around his chair and throws his arms up into the air.

MAHONEY

Right, laugh it out. Come on. Get it out of your systems. Go ahead. Have it your way.

EXT./INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 – DAY

Laughter emanates from the office as curious officers and plaintiffs alike look on wonderingly. The Junior officer stops in front of the door on the verge of knocking, then looks at the cup of coffee. He contemplates going in just before the door opens, Lenny waving the photo around as he walks out. The Junior Officer jumps out of the way just in time to avoid having a hot cup of coffee dumped on his uniform.

LENNY

Hey, guys, get a load of this! Mahoney's bottom's up!!

Everyone crowds around to see the photo before erupting into laughter.

INT. LAPD PRECINCT 5 (Offices) – DAY

Mahoney sits at his desk, head in his hands as the crowd outside ROARS with LAUGHTER.

MAHONEY

I'm ruined.

Julia shakes her head jokingly and chuckles.

JULIA

Everyone has their day.

EXT. A BUSY SIDEWALK – DAY

Busy pedestrians are going about their daily business, a dozen hundred feet hurrying busily along their way. In an alley just nearby, a girl huddles up on some black trash bags, shivering. It is Juliene. She looks bad, with swollen red eyes and pale skin, and mucus running down her nose. She is sweating profusely. She suddenly looks up as a man's hand reaches down for her.

JULIA (Voiceover)

It never occurred to me to look for Juliene that day. Pedro had told me she'd be fine. I should've looked for her. Laughter was the best medicine, they said. I knew I should've applied it where it counted.

EXT. A BUSY STREET – DAY

A black saloon car drives past. Its destination : A pediatric hospital.

INT. A BLACK SALOON CAR – DAY

Juliene is huddled up, wrapped in blankets and looking miserable. Pan up to see a reflection in the rear view mirror. It is a black shadow of a man at the wheel.

JULIA (Voiceover)

He had set me up for the big fall, as I'd expected. In the worst possible way.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Julia is pacing her bedroom impatiently. She looks at the clock. It is 11:59 PM.

JULIA (Voiceover)

I knew it was too good to be true, this day. There was a catch. I'd find out what it was soon enough.

It turns 12:00 AM. The phone RINGS. Julia goes to get it.

JULIA

Tell me what I have to do today.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello? Could you repeat that?

Julia looks surprised.

JULIA

Oh! Sorry, I thought you were someone else!

Julia looks really embarrassed.

JULIA

Erm, anyway, what is it?

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

FEMALE VOICE

Are you Miss Julia Julia?

JULIA

Yes.

FEMALE VOICE

I'm calling from John Hopkins Pediatric Department. We have a little girl named Juliene who says she knows you.

Julia is shocked. She hugs the handset closer to her ear.

JULIA

Yes, yes! What happened?

FEMALE VOICE

A man brought her into the hospital today, saying she's had a bad fever. Our doctors are looking at her now.

JULIA

I'll be right there.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE CORRIDOR – NIGHT

The Young Officer stares in surprise as Julia rushes out, pulling on a sweater.

Y. OFFICER

Ma'am! Where're you going?

Julia doesn't stop to answer. She speaks as she walks hurriedly down the corridor.

JULIA

To see a friend. In the hospital.

The Young Officer puts a hand on Julia's shoulder.

Y. OFFICER

I'm going to have to authorize that with Mahoney, ma'am. He said you weren't to go out at night.

Julia stops. She turns to the Young Officer. He swallows nervously.

JULIA

You tell him that Hell itself would have to open up and swallow me before he stops me from seeing my friends.

Julia stalks off angrily, leaving a nervous Young Officer behind.

Y. OFFICER

Ye-yes ma'am!

INT. JULIA'S CAR – NIGHT

Julia is driving extremely fast, and keeps looking at her in-car clock. Cars FLASH by.

EXT. JULIA'S CAR – NIGHT

The car is moving along a bridge. There are few cars on it.

EXT. JOHN HOPKINS PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL – NIGHT

Julia's Car pulls up in front of the children's hospital, where Julia gets out and runs in.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Julia is running, looking left and right at the tired looking nurses she passes. They look back at her. Julia reaches the information counter. The NURSE looks up at her.

Yes?  
NURSE

Julia looks breathless as she leans on the counter.

I'm Julia Julia. I received a call just now-  
JULIA

The nurse nods.

Ah, yes. You can find her at Room 3-12.  
NURSE

Thank you!  
JULIA

INT. JOHN HOPKINS PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL – NIGHT

The elevator bell DINGS and the doors open. Julia walks out. She looks at the corridor ahead of her. Left, then right.

Julia looks very nervous and scared. Suddenly a shadow appears behind her and speaks.

Miss Julia. Fifth door to the right.  
REVERSER

Julia shrieks and turns around. No one is there. Julia's heart is BEATING uncontrollably.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL – NIGHT

Julia runs down the corridor, counting.

One... Two... Three... Four... Five!  
JULIA

INT./EXT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

The door opens silently. Light slices into the room like a knife. Julia walks into the room carefully to not disturb anyone. She then pushes the door quietly but doesn't close it all the way.

A small light switches on with a CLICK.

Julia stares at a little girl lying in bed covered in tubes and surrounded by machines, looking in her direction. Julia nearly loses her self-control.

Juliene...!  
JULIA

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

Julia walks up to the bed and kneels by the bed. She stares at the frail form before her.

JULIA

What happened?

Juliene smiles weakly.

JULIENE

Hi lady. I'm alright, really.

Julia strokes Juliene's face gently.

JULIA

Did that bad man do this to you?

Juliene shakes her head.

JULIENE

No... I've had this all along. The doctors say it's lee... lee... erm. Some sorta lukey thing.

Julia looks devastated as realization dawns on her.

JULIA

No... leukemia? You've had it all this time and...

Julia shakes her head sadly.

REVERSER

Your final riddle, Miss Julia.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 - NIGHT

Julia stands up and turns around suddenly. She stares at the Reverser angrily.

JULIA

What do you want!?

The shadowy form of the Reverser RUSTLES slightly.

REVERSER

Living I am/Death becomes me/Giving my soul/Saving my Life; I am who you are, show me what I am. That is your riddle.

Julia looks at the Reverser, and suddenly the door SLAMS open. Mahoney and Simmons are there, staring.

Angle on the two in the doorway

MAHONEY

Julia! Are you-

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

The two stare as the Reverser walks between them and Julia. Mahoney suddenly pulls out his service revolver.

MAHONEY

*Freeze, scumbag!*

The Reverser turns, and we see it is actually wearing a hood and cloak. It raises its hands to its cloak and pulls it back. Everyone's eyes widen as they stare at the face that the light shines on. Mahoney's aim falls to the floor as he stares in wide eyed fascination.

MAHONEY

Oh my God.

The Reverser's hood falls to reveal... Julia's face. The Reverser turns around and looks at Julia. Now 'she' speaks in Julia's voice.

REVERSER

Choose wisely, Julia. That girl lives or dies on your decision alone.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

Mahoney shakes his head and trains his gun on the Reverser's head.

MAHONEY

I don't know what happened, but you're coming with me you scum.

Mahoney waves the gun at the Reverser. The Reverser smiles, then backs up towards the closed window, then jumps out without making a sound.

EXT./INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

The four of them stare as the Reverser disappears. Mahoney goes to the window and finds it locked. He POUNDS on it in frustration.

MAHONEY

Damn it! What the hell is this person!?

Mahoney looks at Julia, who is dead pale and trembling.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

Mahoney holsters his gun quickly and kneels down besides Julia. Simmons is hovering nervously nearby.

MAHONEY

Julia? Are you alright?

Julia is shaking and staring blank eyed at the window. Juliene grabs Julia's finger and squeezes. Julia snaps out of it.

JULIA

The...that... that was me.

Juliene shakes her head weakly.

JULIENE

No. That lady isn't you. You're nice.

Mahoney nods vigorously.

MAHONEY

Yeah, just a rubber mask. Don't fall for it!

Julia turns and looks at Juliene. Julia takes out her mobile from her purse and puts it to her ear.

JULIA

I have until midnight, right?

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 - NIGHT

Mahoney and Simmons look at Julia as she has a seemingly one-sided conversation. But they distinctly hear something from the phone. Julia nods.

JULIA

I understand.

Julia puts the phone back into her purse and stands up.

JULIA

My last day. Life.

Mahoney, Simmons and Juliene stare at her as she walks out of the room. Simmons and Mahoney run out after Julia.

Dissolve to -

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

A woman (Julia) is writing a diary on a darkwood desk, the diary is bound in leather. This is the continuation of the first scene that Julia debuted in. Her pen SCRATCHES loudly in the silence.

JULIA (Voiceover)

And now, I have to make a decision. The Reverser was very clear on that. I live and she dies, or vice versa. I am tired. The Reverser has played with me long enough, I will not let anyone die. My last few days have been wonderful, and I thank the Reverser for that, but I will not let him... her... get her way. She wants me to kill the girl, after the drug of Life she has given me. But I hold in my hands the life of a young, promising girl. I have accomplished everything in my life, I have nothing left to accomplish... sorry, dear Father. I cannot fulfill your wish.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Julia stands up and closes the book, firmly, with a THUD. Suddenly, someone THUMPS on the door. She goes to open it and is greeted by Mahoney and Simmons. Mahoney looks angry.

MAHONEY

Julia, where do you think you're going?

JULIA

I have my decision.

Mahoney shakes his head and crosses his arms.

MAHONEY

You aren't going anywhere, that's my decision.

Julia shakes her head. She knows the inevitable conclusion to all of this.

JULIA

No. You can't stop this. I have my answer, now I'll give it. You know what you saw.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mahoney shakes his head resolutely.

MAHONEY

A fancy parlour trick isn't going to stop me. Now get back inside.

Julia is pushed by Mahoney into the flat. Julia stumbles, then regains her balance. She glares at Mahoney.

JULIA

You can't stop the Reverser. Not anymore.

Mahoney SLAMS the door shut and looks at her seriously.

MAHONEY

Well, I'm damned well gonna try.

JULIA

You know you can't. In fact, she's already here.

Mahoney and Simmons stare as Julia turns around. The black robed figure is standing there. Julia walks up to the figure and nods.

JULIA

Take me to Juliene. I have my answer.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

A flash of black as the Reverser walks up to Julia, then, they disappear. Mahoney stares at the spot where Julia disappeared. He curses.

MAHONEY

Come on! We're going!

Simmons nods dumbly and follows after Mahoney.

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

Juliene is looking at a picture book in the lamplight. A flash of black and she is suddenly staring at Julia and the Reverser.

JULIENE

Lady? And that nasty one?

Julia kneels down besides Juliene and holds her hands. She is trembling.

JULIA

I'm going to save your life, Juliene. Thank you for everything.

Just then, Mahoney and Simmons come rushing in. They stare as Julia stands up and looks at the Reverser.

MAHONEY

Julia! You don't have to do this!

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

Julia looks at Mahoney. She shakes her head sadly.

JULIA

I'm sorry Mahoney, Jeremy, but I'm tired.

Simmons pushes Mahoney aside and rushes up to Julia.

SIMMONS

Julia, we have the Reverser in our hands. We can stop him. Mahoney can shoot him, whatever!  
And what makes you think you're going to die by just saying so? What's wrong?

Simmons shakes Julia. Julia shakes her head. Julia looks at the Reverser.

JULIA

I'll give my life for this girl.

Simmons looks horrified as soon as the words leave her mouth.

SIMMONS

JULIA!

Julia's eyes roll and she slumps in Simmons' grip. She is dead. Simmons shakes Julia's limp body.

SIMMONS

JULIA!!!!

INT. JOHN HOPKINS WARD 3-12 – NIGHT

The voices fade as Julia's life slips away from her.

JULIA (Voiceover)

And maybe, I thought as I blacked out, that this was indeed the end.

Many blurred voices are shouting out at her as she fades to black.

NOTHINGNESS. A BLURRY VOICE. – TIME UNKNOWN

It is black. A void. A voice swims into a consciousness.

MAHONEY'S VOICE

Miss Julia, wake up. Come on, I know you can do it.

NURSE'S VOICE

Sir, she's been in a coma for nine days. Her chances of remembering anything when she wakes up is very low.

MAHONEY

Well, I'm gonna keep trying till she does. I'm not letting the person who did this to her die satisfied.

INT. WARD – JOHN HOPKIN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Julia is lying in bed with 60% of her body in a cast. Mahoney is sitting by her bedside shaking her arm.

MAHONEY

Julia, I know you can hear me.

Julia's eyelids flutter, then suddenly open. Mahoney nearly falls back in his chair with a SHOUT. Julia looks around. Then she looks at Mahoney, who's standing and staring, mouth agape.

JULIA

Officer... Mahoney?

Mahoney blinks incredulously, then stands and shouts.

MAHONEY

Nurse! NURSE! She's AWAKE!

Julia blinks as two nurses and a DOCTOR walk in, as surprised as Mahoney is. Julia blinks and looks around curiously.

JULIA

What happened? I thought I was dead?

INT. A HOSPITAL WARD - SAME

Mahoney sits down again, grinning widely.

MAHONEY

You nearly were. That was a nasty car accident you were in, Miss Julia.

Julia is confused. She looks down her body at the cast.

JULIA

Car... accident?

Mahoney nods.

MAHONEY

Yup. Don't blame you for not remembering either. A madman trying to kill you. Ran his car right into you and off the bridge. He died, we found you like this. You're lucky you're even in one piece, let alone in such good shape.

Julia groans as she realizes half her body is stiff in a cast.

JULIA

Then... you were... but I thought...

INT. A HOSPITAL WARD - SAME

Mahoney laughs mirthfully.

MAHONEY

Don't worry about it. I've been here all nine days. You worried me, for sure. I didn't want you to die yet.

Julia looks even more confused.

JULIA

But I thought you were after a stalker... some... Reverser?

Mahoney stares at Julia like she's grown a third head. His expression grows solemn.

MAHONEY

Julia, I think you need to lie down more. Your head's been knocked pretty bad. Lemme go get some coffee, and I'll be back. Doctors say you can't drink the stuff yet though. Too bad, the coffee here's actually halfway decent.

INT. A HOSPITAL WARD – SAME

Julia looks at the ceiling as Mahoney gets up and leaves. She looks at the Doctor looking her over. The doctor notices the look and looks at Julia kindly.

JULIA

Doctor, was I really in a car accident?

The doctor looks at her and nods.

DOCTOR

Pretty bad. Last I heard, you'd accepted a challenge from a fan to write some book before you got run off. You're lucky you survived, we all thought you were a goner for sure.

Julia looks out the window confusedly. A KNOCKING. Julia turns to look. A nurse is at the ward entrance with a card in her hand.

INT. A HOSPITAL WARD - SAME

Angle on Nurse

The nurse walks into the ward, card in hand.

NURSE

Miss Julia, a friend of yours just sent this.

Julia takes the card from the nurse and thanks her.

Insert card

REVERSER (Voiceover)

Hello. Welcome back to the living world, I hope you are well. Enjoy the rest of your life.  
-R.V.S.

Julia drops the card onto her lap. She looks out the doorway. A small girl (Juliene) is passing by. She turns and looks, and sees Julia. She smiles and waves before moving on. Julia can only stare on.

INT. A HOSPITAL WARD – DAY

Mahoney comes back with his coffee soon enough and talks to the doctor. Julia watches the exchange impassively.

JULIA (Voiceover)

And then I realized, that I should write this book. Because I had been given another chance to live. Because this was going to be the first day for the rest of my life.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Julia is sitting in bed typing at her laptop. She has her reading glasses on.

JULIA (Voiceover)

And so I did. And it was a success. And I went to visit my parents and do all the wonderful things I didn't get to do because I only cared about my work. I had been shown the way, it was time to take it.

Julia types in large, bold letters : “The Nine Days Wonder”.

Julia looks at the computer screen, and smiles. The screen is reflected in her glasses.

Julia hits the enter key with a loud CLACK.

~Fin~