

[illegible]

a cyber-noir screenplay

by

Matthew Thomas Farrell

© 2006 Matthew Thomas Farrell

Opening Credits)

Movie begins with black screen and silence for 5 seconds.

Pixel flash of a monitor coming to life (as if theatre screen were a computer monitor) accompanied by the sound of a computer turning on. Soft mechanical noises, ending in a *beep*.

A neon green progress bar captioned “initializing” appears, with the corresponding percentage below it [takes 5 seconds to fill/reach 100%]

A neon green progress bar captioned “loading” appears beneath the previous, with the corresponding percentage below it [takes 5 seconds to fill/reach 100%]

A white computer window titled ‘Voynich’ appears, filling 2/3 of the screen. A flashing text cursor is in the upper left corner.

In real time, Voynich letters/characters [see this screenplay’s cover] are typed across as a word processor, accompanied by sounds of keystrokes. At the bottom of the screen [in subtitle format] the names the various people for the opening credits [production, director, cast, etc.] flash/appear in English, synchronized with the typing. This continues until minimum credits are done, and serves as the jump-off into Scene 1.

Pause/hold shot when credits are complete.

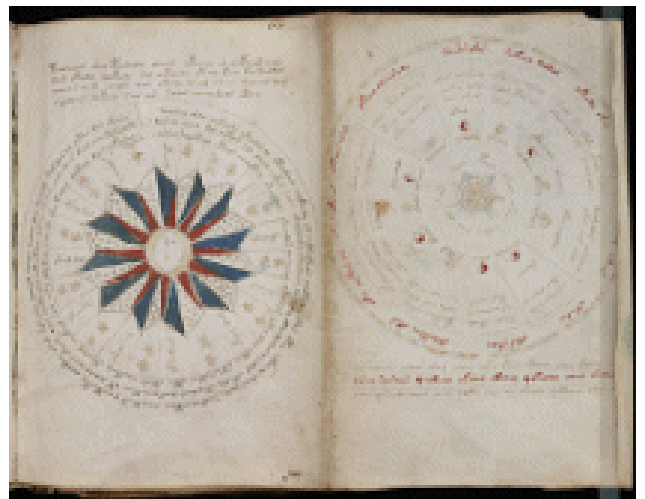
Sound of a book’s pages being turned.

1)

[continue] shot of computer monitor screen, half-filled [as appropriate from opening credits] with Voynich script. Typing sounds as more Voynich characters appear. Shot pans back to show NIMBUS at keyboard. He stops typing, then looks to his left on the desk, where an open book is. Reads from a page, slowly typing as he goes. Looks back at screen, does more typing on his own. Another *pause*, to look back at the book.

Quick cut to a book full of Voynich script and pictures. Illustrations are of the ‘cosmological’ variety.

Cut back to NIMBUS; he turns several pages, and then begins slowly typing as he copies a sentence. Camera cuts back to NIMBUS from left rear; his lone reflection can be seen in the monitor. He types a few words, then consults the book again. Camera follows as he does this. He looks back at the monitor, and sees the reflection of someone [CENTAUR] standing behind him. NIMBUS stops, then slowly turns around.



Cut to pov shot of staring down a pistol's barrel. The gun has a silencer, the hand holding it wears a white surgical glove. CENTAUR's face takes up the space behind the barrel.

CENTAUR: "Keep typing."

NIMBUS (sounding both tired and defeated): "I'm almost finished."

CENTAUR: "Well, yes."

NIMBUS resumes typing. Brief montage of NIMBUS, his keyboard, and the book to indicate a short time is passing. Resigned exhale when he finishes.

NIMBUS: "Done."

CENTAUR: "Any *other* last words?"

NIMBUS: "Yeah," and turns around to face CENTAUR again. "What the hell *is* this thing?"

Cut to pov looking down the barrel, filmed farther back this time.

CENTAUR (shrugs): "It's the written equivalent to *this*." [pulls trigger]

Cut to computer screen with Voynich script; sound of "silencer" shot, and blood and gunk splatter across it. Image holds, we hear NIMBUS's body slump to the floor. As goo drips down the screen, the cursor moves up to the 'print' button. *Click*, and the sounds of a printer starting. Sound of typing, and a small black window opens.

[typed in real time]: `sudo rm -rf /`

Computer responds with a warning message: **Are you sure you want to reformat all your drives? Data lost will be unrecoverable. Yes / No**

Sound of a single keystroke, and 'Y' highlights a moment. A progress bar appears, and after a few seconds the printing suddenly stops. CENTAUR realizes his error: he'd killed the computer too soon — the document hadn't finished printing.

CENTAUR (mutters in disgust): "*Ahhh*, shhhhhhheol."

CENTAUR goes to the printer; below the green 'on' light, an amber error light is flashing. He presses the button, ending the blinking. He removes the 2 pages that had printed, and puts them in the open Voynich book. The book goes into a pocket in his jacket (a black army surplus field jacket with a 'Hanged Man' tarot card painted on back.) He does a quick scan for anything else on the desk, and looks at the screen.

Format successful

CENTAUR steps back, takes aim, and shoots the computer where the hard drive is; the machine dies with brief shower of sparks. CENTAUR bends down and picks up/pockets the ejected shell casing. Again looks around the desk for more incriminating evidence, and notices NIMBUS.

High-angle shot of CENTAUR walking around to NIMBUS, who is not yet dead: he is writing something in Voynich with his own blood on the wooden floor. CENTAUR stops and hovers. Pregnant pause, then shoots NIMBUS in the head.

Cut to: close-up of the message in blood.

He will die if

A black cowboy boot sweeps right to left across the writing. Screen remains black as the boot passes over.

Title superimposition (with subtle rise/fall of violin tension):

Voynich

Title fades to black for five seconds.

2)

Fade in: a very dark parking lot (at night) as seen through the glass door of a Circle K-type convenience store. Camera pans back to show the door and setting.

[1 take tracking shot] MUFON walks in. He is unbathed, unshaven, and through the entire movie wears the same dirty jeans, shirt, and black baseball cap. Without breaking stride, he grabs a Big Gulp cup and heads over to the coffee. Fills the huge cup half way. Grabs the half&half, pours that in to the top. He unscrews the top of a restaurant-style sugar dispenser, and pours in half. As he recaps and replaces the sugar, he sees a cute COED holding wine coolers, looking at him, clearly perplexed by his beverage.

MUFON (lamely): "Counts as a meal."

COED nods and smiles politely, clearly thinking he is cute but strange. COED puts coolers on counter; MUFON returns his attention to his coffee.

CASHIER (off-screen, faint but authoritative): “Let’s see some i.d.”

MUFON’s eyes snap up.

Reverse-angle shot of COED handing CASHIER her driver’s license. In the background, MUFON looks back down at his coffee, stirs it, sips, and smiles. MUFON walks over to the counter just as COED leaves. She does not look back at him, but his eyes follow her a moment. MUFON puts the coffee down and digs in his pocket for a small wad of singles.

MUFON: “Pack of Wisp unfiltered, and a book of matches.”

CASHIER tosses a pack of cigarettes and matchbook on the counter, and rings up the total.

Cut to register led display: **\$6.65**

MUFON (off-screen): “Wow, one short.”

CASHIER: “Oh if you only got six bucks, that’s cool; you’re in here enough for smokes anyway.”

MUFON: “No, I’m good.” He tosses seven bucks on the counter. “Keep the coinage; kick it down to the Jerry Jar.”

In the background (and meant to seem incidental) CONVEX walks by, ignoring them. MUFON pockets the smokes and matches in his shirt, and walks away while drinking his coffee.

Cut to parking lot, looking into the Circle K. CONVEX can partially be seen at the register, pointing at something behind the counter, but then is obscured by MUFON exiting. Camera follows MUFON through strip mall parking lot, around the side, and down the street. Dimly lit; moon behind clouds. After several seconds of walking, mismatched footsteps echo behind him. Slowing his stride, he spins around, and the echo disappears; he sees no one. MUFON double-checks before turning back around, and his pace quickens. Into an apartment complex, and wends the walkways to his building. Up a flight of stairs to his 2nd-floor door. Has brief smoker’s coughing spasm as he pulls out his keys; loudly clears his throat and spits a lumpy glob over the railing onto the ground.

Sounds in succession: spit smacking, deadbolt turning.

Cut to: inside lock on apartment door, MUFON’s hand turns the deadbolt locked with a loud *click*. Cut to apartment interior. Not furnished and empty. In the bedroom: sole light is an overhead fan lamp. All that is in the room are two suitcases, small pile of dirty clothes, a pillow and a blanket. MUFON sets the coffee and unopened cigarette pack by a Big Gulp cup brimming with butts, and pushes aside the laundry; underneath is a laptop jacked into the wall. He fishes under his shirt for a necklace with a tiny key on it, uses this to unlock the laptop.

Cut to laptop screen. Image flickers to life, runs through a quick progress bar boot-up [identical with this film’s opening sequence] and then prompts him for user name and password. (Responses typed in real time)

user name: muffin

password: *****

A new progress bar quickly fills, and then windows begin popping up.

Sound [from Monty Python/Holy Grail]: “Message for you, sir!”

MUFON moves the mouse to click ‘mail manager’.

New window:

New messages: 3

<u>Sender</u>	<u>Subject</u>
friendish	nimbus
friendish	ahem, nimbus?
	Robert Mufon

MUFON *clicks* the top e-pistle. Cut to mail window:

nimbus said he’d be done by dawn, and that was this morning. no word from him; don’t suppose you’ve talked to him? let me know either way.

MUFON closes that. *Click*, and next message appears:

no word from nimbus, and no word from you, either? call me when you can. got a bad feeling re this.

MUFON closes that, looks at the anonymous message with his name on it, and opens it:

ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ
ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑ ꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑꞑ

MUFON opens a new [translator] program, copies the text from the mail to the new program’s window. Mouse-*clicks* ‘translate’. Quick cut back to the Voynich mail; it changes to:

Robert Mufon

If you can read this, you’re dead.

MUFON gets up and goes to his pillow. His cellphone is underneath. Enters an 11-digit number, and then puts the phone up to his ear while staring at his watch.

Sound of 2 *rings*, then *click* of pick-up.

FRIENDISH (phone voice over): “Hey, Muffin Man! I don’t have a watch; you timing?”

MUFON: “Fuck yeah, Friendish, and I got good reason to: someone just sent me a death threat.”

Cut to: FRIENDISH, seated in the corner of a moving subway train, cellphone in hand.

FRIENDISH (dismissively): “Ah, you’ll get used to it. They’re like spam. I get 3 or 4 a week.”

MUFON: “Someone just sent me a death threat written in *Voynich*.”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, 3 or 4 a week. Welcome to Voynich. Look, have you heard from Nimbus?”

MUFON: “No. Guess you haven’t either?”

FRIENDISH: “Fuck. If he was done, he would’ve told me immediately, and if he had a delay, he’d have given me the new e-t-a. Last he said, he had less than a half-dozen pages left to work on. He’s the fastest scribe I know, so he’s way overdue.”

MUFON: “So you think something bad happened to him? Because that book...”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, something’s up. He’d have called if he’d finished it, if only because it’s payment on completion. You know what a cash hound he is.”

MUFON: “I know; I’m buying a copy off him, too, and probably at twice what you’re paying.”

FRIENDISH (phone voice-over): “Hey, look on the bright side: at least he’s not just making *one* copy and auctioning it off.”

3)

Cut to: Auction, styled like a dimly lit board-room. Walls are barely visible. AUCTIONEER is at head of table; seated clockwise (with nameplates and other curios before them) are MR. EAGLE [dressed/looks the leather boy from the Village People], MR. CARDINAL [dressed as priest] MR. TURKEY [dressed like ayatollah], COUNT [his nameplate says ‘Mr. Nuthatch’], PEGASUS [nameplate says ‘Mr. Albatross’], MR. GANNET, MR. PENGUIN, and MR. ROBIN. Seated in shadows behind the AUCTIONEER is DI MEDICIGAN <<pronounced “dih·meh·dih·CHEE·gen”>>.

AUCTIONEER: “...6 million...”

COUNT (thick, throaty Slavic accent): “6 and a half.”

MR. ROBIN: “7.”

AUCTIONEER (*pause*): “Bidding is at 7 million euros.”

COUNT (sourly, with a dismissive wave of his hand): “*Bah*, it is yours, my friend.”

AUCTIONEER: “Any other bids?” *silence*. “Sold to Mr. Robin.” Knocks on the tabletop lightly with his knuckles.

MR. ROBIN pulls out a cell phone, hits one button; faint *beeps* of autodial.

MR. ROBIN: “Seven million; do it... ...Good.”

MR. ROBIN *clicks* off. He nods to DI MEDICIGAN. A few moments later, a light goes green on a small panel in front of the AUCTIONEER. DI MEDICIGAN hands a small velvet bag to the AUCTIONEER, who passes it across the table to MR. ROBIN. Sticking out of the bag are the gold handles of scroll-ends.

Brief cut of PEGASUS watching the AUCTIONEER.

AUCTIONEER: “Alright then, moving on to our next item,” and he looks over to DI MEDICIGAN in the shadows.

DI MEDICIGAN holds up a thick rectangular piece of glass; there is a page of paper inside. AUCTIONEER nods.

AUCTIONEER: “This is the Epistle of Philemon. This is *the* original letter in the Bible that Saint Paul sent to the disciple Philemon, written around the year 62. It does have Paul’s signature on it, at what is traditionally considered verse 19. The spelling is terrible, but once corrected or otherwise adjusted for, all copies of this Epistle that ended up in the New Testament are faithful reproductions.”

DI MEDICIGAN chuckles slightly.

AUCTIONEER looks over to see if he has anything to add; DI MEDICIGAN merely nods.

AUCTIONEER: “So for the Epistle to Philemon, what am I bid?”

MR. PENGUIN (with a bit of contempt): “Give ya a ton of flax for it.”

Everybody looks at the young bidder, puzzled. PEGASUS grins slightly at the comment.

MR. CARDINAL: “One euro, and we will revoke your excommunication.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “No. But I will entertain €1 and a *trade*?”

MR. CARDINAL: “Not today. I guess we will do this in cash then. We will give you €100 million euros for our heritage.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Fine, Cardinal, then you will consider this sale as my gift to you in spirit.”

MR. CARDINAL (*half-jokingly*): “Perhaps your selling us our heritage is your indulgence to atone for some sin?”

MR. PENGUIN: “I’ll do two.”

Everyone turns to him.

MR. CARDINAL: “Oh, are you a collector of Biblical literature, Mister, *uh...*” (looks down at nameplate)
“...Penguin?”

MR. PENGUIN: “Nah, I’m just sick of hearing about your heritage, and thought I’d cock-block you on it.”

[mute soundtrack for *complete* silence] Starting from AUCTIONEER, camera does a counterclockwise pan from center table to show the bidders’ responses:

AUCTIONEER = outrage

MR. ROBIN = mild shock

MR. PENGUIN = leaning back in chair, arms folded, smiling at MR. CARDINAL

MR. GANNET = disbelief

PEGASUS = puzzled frown

COUNT = wide, bemused grin

MR. TURKEY = outrage and insult

MR. CARDINAL = like someone had just broken into the Papal apartments and *piddled* on the carpet

MR EAGLE = surprise

[end soundtrack mute]

MR. EAGLE: “Damn.”

View continues to pan, we vaguely see DI MEDICIGAN in the background shadow, ending up over the shoulder of the AUCTIONEER. Pan stops.

AUCTIONEER (coldly, unammused): “Serious bids *only*, please. Do you even *have* two hundred million euros, Mr. Penguin?”

Quick cut to PEGASUS.

PEGASUS (quietly, to himself): “Do you even have a ton of flax?”

Cut to MR. CARDINAL giving a sour look to AUCTIONEER.

MR CARDINAL: “500 million.”

MR. PENGUIN makes an amused shrug.

AUCTIONEER: “Bidding is 500 million.”

Awkward pause as everyone looks at MR. PENGUIN.

MR. PENGUIN (flippantly): “Oh, it’s all *you*, dude.”

AUCTIONEER looks around; views of other disinterested bidders, including PEGASUS.

AUCTIONEER: “Sold to Mr. Cardinal.” Knocks on the tabletop lightly with his knuckles.

DI MEDICIGAN hands the auctioneer two thick pieces of glass, with a piece of parchment inside. The edges are dipped in gold, holding the two panes together. MR. CARDINAL nods, accepts the glass, and looks at it lovingly, reading it. The AUCTIONEER glances at the pannel in front of him; the green light is on again. He looks over at DI MEDICIGAN, who holds up a small book the size of a trade paperback; it is visible only in silhouette. The AUCTIONEER nods, and turns to address the table.

AUCTIONEER: “Next we have an unidentified Voynich Manuscript. No title. 223 pages, hand-written and hand-illustrated. Mr. di Medicigan has looked through it, and he has described the contents as ‘predominantly botanical illustrations with unfamiliar text.’ The complete history of this book is unknown, at least to myself and Mr. di Medicigan. He did indicate to me he believed it was most likely written... uh...” (struggles to remember)

DI MEDICIGAN: “Certainly before 1911, and probably before 1776... I am honestly not sure, but it is easily several hundred years old.”

AUCTIONEER (pause): “Anything you wish to add to that?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “No.”

MR. TURKEY: “I will pay you one million euros just to answer a yes or no question about it?”

DI MEDICIGAN (long pause): “Si.”

MR. TURKEY writes something on a piece of paper, folds it four times, and passes it to the AUCTIONEER, who hands it to DI MEDICIGAN. DI MEDICIGAN unfolds it.

Cut to close up of note:

are any of the illustrations architectural?

DI MEDICIGAN picks up the Manuscript and flips through it. Close-up of this, showing the book is written in Voynich script, with various illustrations of bizarre plants. After a cursory pass-through, he writes on the paper.

Cut to close up of note; DI MEDICIGAN writes with a fountain pen in rich blue ink:

no

Four-fold, and passes the note back; MR. TURKEY reads and nods. He turns to MR. NUTHATCH, and reaches across to a lighter he has in front of him.

MR. TURKEY: “May I borrow this?” and he picks the lighter.



MR. NUTHATCH grunts and gesticulates approval. As MR. TURKEY lights the note on fire and tosses it into the COUNT’s ashtray, the camera pans to the AUCTIONEER.

AUCTIONEER (initially off-screen but will pan into view): “This Manuscript comes with no guarantees, so bidder beware. It is, after all, a *Voynich Manuscript*. So, where shall we start?”

Quick cut to PEGASUS, looking around to see who does what.

COUNT: "€100,000."

MR. PENGUIN: "2."

COUNT: "Are you cock-blocking me, sir?"

MR. PENGUIN (earnestly): "No, I actually want this."

COUNT: "Well, me too. I have always wanted a Voynich for my collection." Turns to AUCTIONEER: "300."

MR. PENGUIN: "5."

COUNT: "Seven hundred fifty." Gets thoughtful look. "Hey Cardinal! Why not you bid a million, just to cockblock the Puffin here? Hell, I even loan you the money, then just up my own bid, no?"

MR. CARDINAL looks over at COUNT with a distasteful sneer, then returns his attention to the Epistle; he and MR. TURKEY resume a quiet conversation about it.

PEGASUS: "Five million."

Everyone looks at PEGASUS. COUNT grins and nods. MR. PENGUIN looks awkward, and then pulls out a cellphone.

MR. PENGUIN (to AUCTIONEER): "Just a moment, please." (long, awkward *pause*, then to phone) "Hey, bidding just hit five mill.... ...No idea; look, what do you want me to do?"

COUNT: "I *really* want a Voynich. I will do five five."

MR. PENGUIN (still to phone): "Aw crap, it just went up to 5 and a half... ...yeah... ...Let it go? Okay." *clicks* off.

On a laptop in front of him, PEGASUS starts typing.

Cut to laptop screen; a program titled 'notes' opens, and text is typed across in real time:

see if anyone we know got a <1 minute call from zurich/cellphone

AUCTIONEER (off screen): "Bidding is at 5 and one half million... is there an increase?"

PEGASUS (off-screen, when he finishes typing): "Six million."

4)

Cut to sign:

LottoBall Jackpot:

\$6,000,000!

Shot pans back; it is a billboard in an airport. FRIENDISH emerges from the terminal; his only luggage is a laptop tote. He hails a cab on the curb.

RASTACABBIE: “Where to, mon?”

FRIENDISH pulls out several pages of printout from a pocket. He reads an address off the paper.

Cut to close-up of paper:

James MacLeod
1187 Hunterbasser #2
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19191

It is part of an email transcribing a traffic ticket. Several emails are on the page; one of them has a sentence in Voynich.

FRIENDISH (voiceover): “Eleven eighty-seven Hunterbasser.”

Cut to RASTACABBIE, nodding happily.

RASTACABBIE: “No prob, mon. I give you flat rate, twenny bucks.”

FRIENDISH: “Sure.” He deliberately ignores the cabbie by studying/reading the pages.

Cut to: cab pulling up to a curb. FRIENDISH hands RASTACABBIE a Jackson and gets out. Up the steps of a 3-story brownstone. FRIENDISH looks at the windows of the middle floor. Venetian blinds are down, but at an angle to see that a ceiling light is on. Tries the door, finds it locked. Looks at doorbell: 3 buttons, jabs the middle. Nothing for 5 seconds; tries again. Nothing. *Pause*, then hits top buzzer.

MRS. NAYBORS (over intercom): “What’s wrong, hon?”

FRIENDISH (awkwardly): “*Um*, I’m a friend of Jim MacLeod’s, and I need to leave him a note...”

MRS. NAYBORS (over intercom): “*Who???*”

FRIENDISH: “Jim; Your downstairs neighbor. He isn’t answering.”

Door swings open and a young teenage girl [JENNA NAYBORS] comes out with a young German Sheppard [SCHNAPPS].

MRS. NAYBORS (over intercom): “Well, I don’t know what to tell you.”

Door swings closed; FRIENDISH’s foot is in the way to wedge it open.

FRIENDISH: “Okay, I’ll try later, I guess. Thanks.”

Intercom *clicks* off, and FRIENDISH looks over his shoulder at JENNA & DOG, down the street. FRIENDISH flips open door with his foot, and stealths inside. Up a flight of stairs to the second floor. Door is closed. FRIENDISH leans against the wall, listening a few moments, and then tries the doorknob. It turns and opens.

Cut to: interior of Nimbus’s house. Sound of several flies buzzing (about 10 in total.) Door opening as FRIENDISH enters. After a moment, he wrinkles his nose, in obvious distaste at the smell of decay. Inside, he pushes door shut,

but it does not quite close. Over course of shot, it will continue to swing back open. FRIENDISH walks in, and looks over towards the camera. Part of Nimbus's computer is in view. Look of clear displeasure, and he walks over to where the body (not shown) is.

Off-screen we hear the front door open, and JENNA and SCHNAPPS come in. SCHNAPPS begins barking.

SCHNAPPS (off screen): "Bark! Bark!"

JENNA (off screen): "Schnapps! Calm down!" Sounds of scampering up the stairs. "No, you don't want to go in there..."

Camera pans to focus on door as FRIENDISH disappears off-screen. After a few seconds, SCHNAPPS half-drags JENNA inside. View tilts to show FRIENDISH pressed against a wall (out of JENNA's sight.) He has a pistol in his hand, pointed straight for the door.

JENNA sees the body; she drops the leash as her hands go up to her face as she screams. SCHNAPPS makes a bee-line for the body. After a moment, JENNA recovers and runs off screen. Sound of quick footsteps up a flight of stairs.

JENNA (off screen): "Mom!"

Sounds of SCHNAPPS doing *something* to the body; camera catches the occasional glimpses of his tail wagging *vigorously*.

FRIENDISH quickly makes his way out. Faint sound of front door opening and closing. A few moments later MRS. NAYBORS comes in and curses.

MRS. NAYBORS: "Schnapps! *No!*" She runs over and grabs the dog by the leash. Dragging SCHNAPPS away, yells "Jenna! Call 911!"

JENNA (off screen): "I'm on-line, and the download won't quit to hang up the phone."

MRS. NAYBORS mutters obscenely and quickly looks around the room. She sees a phone.

Close up of phone: index finger dials 9-1-1 [touch tone sounds with this] and then hand pulls away, leaving image of the phone.

5)

Cut to/continue shot of same phone type. Hold for several seconds then begin pan back.

PEGASUS (off screen): "Thank you. Please, put him on." [sound of phone hanging up]

Shot pans back from telephone to landscape painting on a wall. PEGASUS looks at it expectantly. After a second, the picture flickers to black, and then CENTAUR appears on it.

CENTAUR: "Hey, Pegasus, you getting this patch? I'm linked to a crappy hotel lan connection."

PEGASUS: "You're coming in fine; I'm at di Medicegan's suite, obviously, so we're on a clean line."

CENTAUR nods.

PEGASUS: “Anyway, we have something in common: we both just got a Voynich book.”

CENTAUR: “Oh, the auction went well?”

PEGASUS: “I got the book, but it almost got ugly. Count Lugosovich was there and buying things; he wanted it for his collection. Just before bidding broke eight figures, I told him that if I bought it and it was something I already had, I’d sell it to him; so he backed off.”

CENTAUR: “I can only hope you didn’t actually mean that.”

PEGASUS smiles wryly but says nothing.

CENTAUR: “Well, Lugosovich is a crude loonie, but at least he never shows his collection — at least to anyone who matters. Then again, I never really bought that yarn about his collection, anyway.”

PEGASUS: “Hell, Centaur, I’d be a useless fool if that hadn’t crossed my mind, if it was all a cover story he concocted. Hassan seems to be one of the few people who’s actually seen his collection, and he assures me the guy’s just some eccentric spectator, not a bona fide player. He and Hassan seem to get on, actually, but even Hassan agrees the guy’s a genuine *flake*. Di Medicigan had a bird theme going this time, and he was Mr. Nuthatch.”

CENTAUR (cracks smile): “*Nice*. What were you?”

PEGASUS: “Mr. Albatross. Actually, there was a new bidder there; Mr. Penguin. Never seen him before, but he wanted to buy the Voynich, too.”

CENTAUR: “Aw, nnnnuts. *Who* was this guy?”

PEGASUS: “Only di Medicigan knows who he is or why he was invited, but he has a partner he called during the bidding. So we may have some new players on the board.”

CENTAUR: (whines) “*More?*” (frown) “Huh. Well, *I’m* not cool enough to get invited to a di Medicigan auction, so Penguin’s not one of mine — unless this partner he called is an operation we’re running. I’ll double-check my end, but I think you’re right: might be some new players in the game.” (shrug) “It happens, but this is a *lot* in such a short span of time.”

PEGASUS: “Too true, and too many. I’m starting to wonder if I need a damned scorecard.”

CENTAUR: “Well, thanks for the courtesy call, though I suppose you would want to know if he was ours.”

PEGASUS: “Oh, I know he’s not yours. Too amateurish, and low bankroll. I don’t know who Penguin was, but I took an active dislike to him. He was a rude to Cardinal Spumoni.”

CENTAUR: “That’s a reason to dislike him? But hey, if you’re concerned, why don’t you send Hassan to talk to him?”

PEGASUS: “Didn’t get the chance. After the auction, he went straight to the airport and took the next flight back to the States. He’s in transit right now, actually, and arrives in New York in about 5 hours.”

CENTAUR: “Oh really? I can be in New York in less than that.”

PEGASUS: “I was kind of hoping you’d say that, ’cuz I can’t, obviously, and neither can any of my people back Stateside. I thought it would be mutually advantageous to farm this one out to you.”

CENTAUR (sourly): “Gee, that’s right kind of you, sir.”

PEGASUS: “How about I send you his flight info and a detailed description of him?”

CENTAUR: “Send me a bar of soap, too, in case I get my hands dirty on this one. Or my boots, like I did at Nimbus’s.”

PEGASUS: “Well, *yeah*, admittedly that’s *another* reason I’m outsourcing to you. I’ll have Hassan send you the parties when we’re done talking. I’ll also send 10 questions I’d like him to answer; feel free to ask your own as well, but at least let me know what he says to mine.”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “Well, I’ll sniff Mr. Penguin out. Audition him. If he’s nobody who’ll be missed, you won’t miss him. If he’s a bona fide player with portfolio, I’ll add him to the who’s-who libretto.”

PEGASUS: “That works.”

CENTAUR: “Okay. So anyway, care to tell me about the book you picked up at the auction?”

PEGASUS: “Only if you tell me about the book you picked up from Nimbus.”

CENTAUR: “It’s disguised as an ephemeras. Post ’76 script. Nothing new to *us*, but downright shocking at the time. Everything I glanced at had expired, though. Now, how ’bout you?”

PEGASUS: “Haven’t actually read it yet; but it’s a compendium. Glanced through it and recognized a few parts, some I’d never seen. I got muh nigga Hassan runnin’ off a color copy of it right now.”

CENTAUR (pause): “Did you just say ‘nigga’?”

PEGASUS: “Oh, sorry. I just spent the weekend with my son before flying out here, and all he listens to is ghetto rap. I’ve had this one loop from a Public Enemy song stuck in my head ever since.”

CENTAUR (shrug): “Well there are worse things. (*pause*) Such as [as ultra-smarmy *Love Boat* theme] *lovvvve...*”

PEGASUS: “Don’t!”

CENTAUR: “*Exciting and newwwwwww!*”

PEGASUS: “Stop!!! I’ll send you the stats on Mr. Penguin. Find out who he is and let me know.”

CENTAUR: “Will do.” Wry, sour smile. “Eweige Blumenkraft.”

PEGASUS (matching smile): “Eweige Blumenkraft.”

6)

Cut to: MUFON in his room, on cellphone, looking at his watch.

MUFON: “Excuse me, what’d you just say? Hava Nagila Bloody Crap?”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Sorry. [*sniffs*] I was trying to say, have a good long ponder about that crap. Rob, I really think you’re pushing your luck on this, and should get out before you get strung along too far.”

MUFON: “I don’t think I am getting strung along though. Some *weird shit* is happening, and that actually confirms I’m on the right track here.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “I can tell *you* believe that, but *I* won’t until you deliver some proof. Such as a translation of this book you keep talking about.”

MUFON: “Hey, like I said, my man was supposed to deliver, but he’s gone Houdini.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “So you said.”

MUFON: “Fifteen second warning.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Fine. Your turn to call.”

MUFON: “Actually, it’s yours, but whatever. Ten seconds.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Gotcha.” *Click* of hang-up.

MUFON hits redial. Touchtones in rapid succession for 1-555-UFO-NUTS [836-6887]. Sound-over of half a *ring* cut off by the *click* of pick-up.

MUFON: “Streiber? Anyway, I’m dead in the water until my friend gets back from out of town, or at least pings me an update.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “I know, and I wonder if you’ll even hear from your friend again. You know my thoughts on this: you’re getting suckered.”

MUFON: “Well, tell you what: give me one more week, and if it’s a dead end, I’ll come back.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Don’t *you* become a dead end, Muffin. Get out now. I think you’re wasting time, and we need you back here for productive projects. Not to mention the money.”

MUFON: “A week, Streiber. *Please*. I still got a few other leads I can follow, but let me at least find out what happened to this book, or at least its translation.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Well, okay: a week. But you’d better wow me, or you’ll get put on some shit duty like answering junk mail.”

Sound [from Monty Python/Holy Grail]: “Message for you, sir!” Shot pans to include Mufon’s computer behind him.

MUFON: “If I’m right about all this, it’ll wow you. Just give me a week. Which brings me to the next point: can you front me some survival funds to get me through the week?”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “I *knew* that was coming. How much?”

MUFON: “Couple hundred, half of which is for gas to get back to you.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “You’re killin’ me, kid.”

MUFON [glancing at watch]: “Thirty seconds.”

STREIBER [phone voice over]: “Fine, fine, I’ll wire you in the morning. But now you got a week to wow me, or you’re *persona non grata* and will spend *years* in the mail room paying off your bad karma.” [click of disconnect]

MUFON goes over to his computer, opens his email program.

New messages: 1

<u>Sender</u>	<u>Subject</u>
	Voynich

Furrowed brow, and with hesitancy and trepidation he opens it. Immediately alerts start going off on-screen about virus programs attacking. MUFON curses.

Cut to close-up of one of the computer pop-ups; it has a ‘stop’ sign on it.

7)

Cut to: stop sign on a street corner. Camera pans back: it is the street outside Nimbus’s brownstone. A cab pulls up, and Detective WILSON gets out. He is holding a box of donuts. He is greeted by OFFICER FRIST.

OFFICER FRIST: “HI, Wil’. Was hoping it’d be you, ’cuz those donuts look good, and I haven’t even seen them yet.”

WILSON: “So what do we got?”

OFFICER FRIST (begins to lead WILSON up the steps): “Victim is James MacLeod.” <<pronounced “muh-‘CLOUD”>>. “Shot in the head. Twice. Upstairs neighbor found the body while walking her dog. They came back in, the guy’s door was open, and the dog went nuts. She sees just enough that she freaked and got her mom; the dog got up close and personal with the body.”

WILSON: “Oh great. How bad’s the contamination?”

OFFICER FRIST [shrug]: “That’s your call.”

They reach the door, both blanch at the smell, though not badly. Through remainder of scene, flies [about 8] can still be heard.

He is prompted for the permutation key: he types in 88888. The Voynich script changes to completely different Voynich characters:

[illegible]

He clicks ‘translate’. A long jumble of random English words appear on the screen [‘indigo fork nebraska idol mop butte’ etc.] Mouse *clicks* a new icon: the ‘select: first letter of each word’ option. The first letters of each word highlight. More *clicking*; blank window appears, *click*, and the highlighted letters appear.

If Nimbus is stiff, then Hamlet 1:4. No idea who(m?); feel free to Magic 8 Ball it. Gotta wonder, though: has Koresh quit smoking yet? I do not want to resort to the mixolydian gambit, but I'm not Calvinist about it like T.H.E.Y. are. Noon blue apples?

FRIENDISH *clicks* the mouse in a blank field; the cursor appears, and begins typing in English:

agreed on hamlet, but too soon for noon blue apples. if the council goes calvanist in any set direction, priority ping me. i'm in dervish mode, hammerback fer sure, so avoid friendly fire. smoke signals next time i have roots.

FRIENDISH mouse-clicks an encrypt icon, and selects from the options: **random word fill**. On the screen each letter gets a whole word and spaceband after it [**‘apple gum red egg eye doubt’** etc.”]. He highlights all of them, and selects **‘translate’**. The text is replaced by Voynich.

[illegible]

From the encryption menu: **enigma**. He is prompted for the permutation key; he enters **88888**. The letters change to different Voynich characters.

[illegible]

He copies it to the email, and hits ‘reply/send.’

The program cycles mail, and he gets a notification of a message:

Autonotification: your mail to "Muffin" has been returned as undelivered. The recipient's home domain mail server client is rejecting all incoming mail.

FRIENDISH (under breath): “Fuck.”

He looks at a wall-mounted clock, then drinks heftily from his coffee. Wipes lips, lost in thought. His cellphone rings. He pulls it out, opens it.

Cut to cellphone display:

Incoming call from: 708-491-2633

FIENDISH closes his phone and puts it away. Begins closing up the laptop and putting it away in a padded pack.

Outside: hails a cab; it is RASTACABBIE.

RASTACABBIE: “Hey mon, I remember you. You gwan to that house at Hunterbasser and Dickens again?”

FIENDISH: “No. Airport.”

RASTACABBIE: “No problem. You cool guy, so for airport I do you flat rate twenny dollar. What airline?”

FIENDISH: “Just drop me off at the first terminal.”

RASTACABBIE: “Coo’; what time you’ flight?”

FIENDISH (weak chuckle): “Whenever I get there. I haven’t booked yet.”

RASTACABBIE: “Just wondering how fast I should drive.”

FRIENDISH’s cell phone rings. He pulls it out.

Cut to cellphone display:

Incoming call from: 708-491-2633

FRIENDISH puts the phone away.

RASTACABBIE: “Someone you doan want to talk to?”

FRIENDISH: “There are some calls you never want to take, and some you never want to make. That was one that would have required the other in response.”

RASTACABBIE: “Gotcha.”

Phone *beeps*: a message has been left.

Cut to shot of cab moving down the street; next car drives up to the camera; Cut to black.

9)

Cut to: dark, confined room; no visible walls. Table in the middle with an unseen overhead lamp. <<camera is mounted on the center of the table, and revolves steadily/non-stop clockwise through the entire scene [1 take].>>

CENTAUR swings into view, seated. He is twirling a hypodermic syringe in one hand like a drumstick. Several items (wallet, passport, ashtray, etc.) are set before him.

Camera continues to turn, at the other end of the table, MR. PENGUIN comes into view. His mouth is duct taped, and his arms are secured behind him. His head lolls, in a partial stupor. There is a cd recorder deck and microphone in front of him.

Camera swings off MR. PENGUIN, and quickly CENTAUR comes back into view. He is still twirling the syringe, but is looking at his watch. He shrugs, satisfied enough time has gone by. When he is center screen, he stops twirling and addresses the camera.

CENTAUR: “Hello there. You’re probably a bit disoriented right now, so let me start with a situation update for you. Right now, you have disappeared off the face of the Earth.” [by this time he is off-screen] “I am the only person in the world who knows where you are. And ultimately, I am the one who decides if you leave this room alive or not. [pause, and MR. PENGUIN begins to swing into view.] “With me so far?”

Just before the camera swings off him, MR. PENGUIN nods.

Camera continues to turn into darkness.

CENTAUR [off screen]: “Good. We will start with some simple Q & A.”

CENTAUR comes into view; he is smiling sardonically. As camera turns, we see CENTAUR’s arm reach out. *Click* of recorder deck being started. As MR. PENGUIN comes into view, we see the hand remove the duct tape. MR. PENGUIN takes a deep breath, fades out of view.

MR. PENGUIN [just as he goes off camera]: “Who the fuck are you?”

CENTAUR comes into view; he looks displeased. He reaches under the table, pulls out a gallon can of gasoline, and sets it on the table. Begins unscrewing the cap as camera turns.

CENTAUR [off screen]: “I am the one who asks the questions.”

Camera brings a wide-eyed MR. PENGUIN into view. When he is center-screen, gasoline begins to pour over him from above. Camera swivels off, eventually coming back to CENTAUR, leaning back and setting the empty can on the floor. He picks up the wallet and passport.

CENTAUR [now off screen]: “Let’s start with who *you* are. Are these your *real* i.d.s?”

MR. PENGUIN [coming into view] nods.

CENTAUR [off screen] makes a frustrated exhale. We hear the sound of a match being lit. CENTAUR swings into view; he is lighting a cigarette. *Puff*, then he takes the still-lit match and lights the tips of the remaining book.

CENTAUR tosses the lit matchbook at the camera as he fades out of view.

MR. PENGUIN [off-screen, desperately]: “No! My name is Dennis Marshall...” The rest is drowned out by the *phwoomph* of combustion. He screams as he is engulfed in flames. Camera pans on him to show a writhing pillar of fire, moves on quickly. **MR. PENGUIN** cries in agony off-screen.

View pans back to **CENTAUR**, who reaches under the table and pulls out a fire extinguisher. Camera rotates away as he unhooks the nozzle.

Camera turns from black into a huge fog bank as **MR. PENGUIN** is doused. Camera quickly turns away, soon comes back to **CENTAUR**. By this time, **MR. PENGUIN** is just making low moans off-screen.

CENTAUR (puffs his cigarette): “Sorry, I didn’t quite catch what you said after ‘Dennis’...”

Fades/rotates away into black.

10)

Cut to: split screen, both focusing on black baseball hats. Both shots pull back quickly to show their wearers. On the left is **MUFON**, pacing his empty living room. On the right is **RIGGS**, in an empty conversation pit. Behind him in another room are various people, all wearing hats. Partially visible is the ‘I want to believe’ X-Files ufo poster.

MUFON (initially off screen as shot pans back from his hat): “...Dennis the Mennis on his ass or get the hell out!”

RIGGS (likewise): “What can I say: some people just need to get their ass kicked. Of course, that’s what’s Streiber’s saying about you.”

MUFON: “I know, I talked with him earlier today. But my gut says there’s something to this.”

RIGGS: “I know, and I defend you to Streiber every time he starts trash-talking you, which is increasingly frequent, I might add. Dude, come back to base camp. Streiber’s right: anyone who tells you they’re from Area 51 is talking out of their ass, because anybody who really worked there would never tell it to assholes like us.”

MUFON: “Yeah, but he might tell my guy.”

RIGGS: “Well, how well do you really know this guy? Want me to check into him on my end? Tell me who he is, and I’ll do some digging, see if this smells fishy. Could be a couple of guys trying to scam you out of the cash. How much you say that guy’s charging?”

MUFON: “Streiber can chill, ’cuz I still have the cash. I haven’t paid yet, because I haven’t seen anything.”

RIGGS: “Well that’s good.”

MUFON [glances at watch]: “Fifteen seconds.”

RIGGS: “God, you have *no* idea how annoying that is, Muffin.”

MUFON: “Deal with it; if you were in my spot, you’d do the same. Ten seconds. I’ll call you right back.” Disconnects, and pulls out a cigarette. Light, *puff*, redial.

RIGGS: “Hey. Yeah, anyway, all I can find out about this Voynich shit is what’s on the Internet about that book at Yale. Sounds like bullshit to me.”

MUFON: “Well, even in the Yale book, the astrological illustrations are too much of a coincidence, but there’s no denying about the one I physically saw and was going to get translated. Those patterns are just too close. I don’t see why Streiber is being so stubborn: if I’m right, all this will prove what he and we’ve been saying.”

RIGGS: “Maybe... which is why he’s being so lenient. Hell, it’s why he fronted you that long green you still got. But you need to get a copy of the translation, and you’re not delivering.”

MUFON: “I told you: I’m looking into it.”

RIGGS: “Yeah, whatever happened to that nigga you sent looking for the guy writing it?”

MUFON (pause): “Did you just say ‘nigga’?”

RIGGS: “Oh, sorry. I hung out with my dad this weekend, and all he listens to is ghetto rap. I’ve had a loop from some damned Public Enemy song stuck in my head ever since. But...”

MUFON: “Hey, could be worse. Remember our senior year graduation trip to Disney World? [sings] ‘it’s a small world after all...’?”

RIGGS (joins in for one verse): “It’s a small world after all... Oh lord, yeah, I had that burned into my head for *days*. That was terrible. Hey, you ever talk to Dennis or Tim or any of them still?”

MUFON: “Naw, just you, and that’s largely ’cuz we’re both in Streiber’s network. You?”

RIGGS: “I just get Tim’s mass mailing howdy at new years. When all this calms down, we should road-trip back to Florida, look him, Dennis and Dave up, and grab a beer.”

MUFON: “Fuck yeah and much needed. Anyway, thirty seconds, and I should probably book anyway.”

RIGGS: “Alright, Muffin Man, good talking with ya. Let me know when you get a new email account set up.”

MUFON: “Sure thing. Hell, I may use my old spam mail from school. Whatever, I’ll deal. Peace, Riggs.”

Hangs up; RIGGS’ side of the screen disappears.

MUFON goes into the bedroom, and looks at his computer.

Cut to screen:

Scrub unsuccessful. Do you wish to retry? Y/N

MUFON clicks **no**, and he gets options to **restart** or **shut down**. He ejects a compact disc from the machine, hand labeled “Scrub 2” and then tells the computer to shut down. Screen goes black. MUFON shuts it; *click* of lock as it closes. He leans back, and takes his hat off for a second to run his fingers through his hair. Although attention is not called to it, the inside of his hat is lined with aluminum foil. MUFON gets up and goes to the kitchenette, to the refrigerator. Opens, looks inside. A Big Gulp cup full of water and half a packet of processed cheese slices.

MUFON (rapping to himself, Public Enemy’s “Megablast”): “In his refrigerator — bread, water, cheese. A mega-blast please, oh gimme just one mo’ hit. A mega-blast please, oh gimme just one mo’ hit...” [realizes he is rapping]

“Aw, Riggs, you asshole!” Slams fridge door shut. Has a sudden sharp coughing fit, and the cigarette drops out of his mouth. He recovers quickly, and picks up his cig. The filter tip is gooey with saliva; MUFON frowns in displeasure and drops it into a Big Gulp cup quarter full of cold coffee and floating butts. He picks up a pack of cigarettes; one left, flipped upside-down. He closes the pack, tosses it down on the counter, and snags his keys. Shot holds on cigarette pack and begins zoom in.

Off camera sounds of keys jingling, the door being open/closed and locked.

Cut to: carton of Wisp cigarettes on the Circle K counter. [1 shot] Pan back to show CASHIER pulling packs out of the carton to fill the bin. MUFON enters. The CASHIER puts a pack aside then resumes packing the overhead tray. MUFON swings by the fountain and snags a Big Gulp cup as he passes. Over to the coffee, and pours the entirety of one pot into it, and then tops it off with most of a second. Puts a cap on it and heads one aisle over to the candy bars. He passes by a shelf of bread, and flips playfully at a loaf.

MUFON (quietly to himself): “...Bread, water, cheese; a megablast please...”

Off to the side, two girls (KIM and ALANA) walk in. Both are barely 21, heavy, and not particularly attractive.

Cut to KIM and ALANA. They head for the beer cooler, chatting inaudibly.

Quick cut to MUFON, who turns his attention to the power/energy bars but eyes the girls passively.

ALANA opens the cooler, bends down, and pulls out a six-pack of some cheap lite beer. When she does that, a tattoo on her back can partially be seen: Voynich script.

MUFON sees this peripherally, and his attention snaps fully to the two girls. ALANA has turned; her tattoo is not visible. MUFON moves to better observe them; they are heading up to the counter. He moves to join them.

KIM pays for the beer as ALANA notices MUFON checking her out.

MUFON (awkwardly): “Your tattoo,,,”

ALANA (smiles): “Oh, it’s Sanskrit. I think it means *tranquility*.”

MUFON: “Sanskrit?!?”

She turns around, and flashes the tattoo. Sure enough, it is now in Sanskrit.

MUFON: “Oh.” [pause, remembering to be polite.] “Cool. I thought it was something else...”

ALANA: “Yeah, it’s what happens when you get a credit card for your eighteenth birthday.”

MUFON notices her purse: it is shaped like an electric guitar’s body, and the strap has a pattern of frets and dots of a guitar neck. “I like your purse, too.”

ALANA: “Actually, it’s a laptop cozy, but I’m using it as a purse because my laptop is screwed. It has a virus, and keeps flashing animation saying ‘Impeach the President’.”

MUFON: “Sorry to hear that; I was just hit with one m’self.”

ALANA (moues sympathy): “I’m on my way over to her place to use hers right now. I have to write a paper, and obviously I can’t do it on mine.”

MUFON: “Hey, I don’t suppose you have Scrub 3 or higher, do you?”

ALANA: “What’s that? A game?”

MUFON: “Naw, anti-virus program. I’ve got Scrub 1 and 2, which take care of most anything, like what you probably got, but I got hit by something they’d never seen before. Was wondering if Scrub 3 would work.”

ALANA: “If I had Scrub 3 or whatever, I’d have used it already.”

KIM: “I have no idea what either of you are talking about.”

ALANA: “I’m thinking of just throwing it out and asking my dad to buy me a new one.”

MUFON: “Oh, don’t do that. Just get some anti-virus software.”

ALANA (smiles): “Or find someone with a Scrub who’ll do it for me?”

MUFON (takes on a guarded look): “Um...”

ALANA: “I’ll bribe you with beer if you can fix my system, because I hate her computer and mine actually has some notes on it I don’t want to ad lib again. But if it’s a problem, I can just use hers.”

MUFON (long pause): “When do you need it done by?”

ALANA: “The paper’s due Friday, but this is the only night I have to do it if it’s to actually have a chance of passing. Boring, too: it’s on teeth.”

MUFON (smiling, showing his; they are nicotine yellow and fuzzy): “Teeth can be interesting.”

ALANA: “Yeah, but it has to be one page on each type, so this is a four-page paper plus footnotes. Trust me: there are things I’d rather do than write it.”

MUFON: “I hear ya: I got ten thousand things to do, but half of them involve waiting on people who’re slower than sloths, so I can probably do my good deed for the day. You live near here, or at least is your computer near by?”

ALANA: “No; I’m out by the freeway; she lives just up the street.”

MUFON: “So do I.”

KIM: “At Meridian?”

MUFON: “No; across the street from that, at, *uh*, Corners.”

KIM nods.

ALANA: “Oh, I’m Alana, by the way.”

KIM: “Kim.”

MUFON: “*Uh,,,* Randy.”

ALANA: “Cool. Well, *uh*, Randy, like I said, I’ll bribe you with beer to fix my pc.”

MUFON puts his coffee Big Gulp and the energy bars on the counter.

ALANA: “Oh my god, are you planning on *eating* those things? We’re ordering Greek food from The Athenaeum at 9 o’clock when Destiny Island comes on. So how about you fix my machine for beer and gyros?”

MUFON: “Destiny Island? I thought you had a paper to write.”

ALANA: “Yeah, on teeth, but...”

KIM and ALANA in lusty chorus: “...*Destiny Island*...”

MUFON: “I *see*...”

ALANA: “So will you do it?”

MUFON: “Yeah, sure. Greek salad sounds good, actually.”

ALANA (to **KIM**): “Actually, you don’t mind driving us back to my place, do you?”

KIM: “No, that’s fine, because your tv has better reception, anyway.”

MUFON (to **CASHIER**): “Wisp unfiltered, hard pack.”

CASHIER: “And a book of matches.” The **CASHIER** already had them waiting with the coffee.

MUFON: “Hey, books are a good thing.”

Camera focuses/holds on matches on counter.

11)

Cut to: a book of matches, ideally matching last shot. Shot *slowly* pans back to show that the matches are atop a closed Voynich book in a large silver bowl.

HASSAN (off screen; elderly Arabic accent): “Hey, so what is the harm then if you sell it to the Count? You told him you would, and this way you’ll at least get some of your money back. Beside, then he stop looking for Voynich, and not pick up something more important in future, *eh?*”

PEGASUS (off screen): “I don’t want him to have this. I know Centaur don’t buy that ‘private collection’ cover story of his, and sometimes I’m not sure I do, either. Sometimes I wonder if it’s just a camouflage act.”

HASSAN (off screen): “*Act?* He once bought a surrender treaty signed and accepted by Napoleon, just so he could wipe his ass with it!”

PEGASUS (off screen): “*Huh*; yeah, I heard about that, actually.”

HASSAN (off screen, outraged): “*Heard* about it?!? Hassan fucking *saw* it! Di Medicigan nearly had a fucking heart attack!”

[sound of loose pages being shuffled]

PEGASUS (off screen): “I haven’t seen some of these in decades. And even then, it was in the original Hebrew.”

HASSAN (off screen): “So nothing new then? All the more reason to sell it to that dracula bastard.”

PEGASUS (off screen): “Nothing new to *us*, but I was probably the only one at that auction who knew any of this.” [pages ruffled slightly for emphasis] “This isn’t content we want floating around. Maybe not even in a private library.”

HASSAN (off screen): “Hey, Hassan has seen this picture before.”

PEGASUS (off screen): “Oh yeah?”

HASSAN (off screen): “It is in the Yale book, he thinks.”

PEGASUS (off screen): “No shit? That would be... *Odd...*” [long pause, slight paper ruffling] “Y’know, you might be right.” [sound tapping on paper] “Yeah, this little nymph in the corner; I remember her ’cuz it looks like she’s drowning while all the others play around her.” Sound of the page rustling against others. “Or at least I’ve seen something a lot like it. Here, you got a copy of Yale scanned? Go find it and pull it up; I’d like to do a comparison.”

HASSAN (off screen): “Hassan will be right back.”

Silence. Occasional pages being turned.

PEGASUS (off screen): “Hey Hassan? You’re going to have to scan one of these again; it’s blurry.”

HASSAN (off screen): “Oh, that is sorry. Pull the page aside; and Hassan will get to it after he finds the Yale page.”

PEGASUS (off screen): “All right. Folio 69.”

HASSAN (off screen): “Woo hoo!”

Sound of the pages being set down, and then PEGASUS’s hand comes into view. Picks up the matches and opens the book. Flips to a page, folioed LXX in the upper right. The printing is smeared in part of the page, either wine or water damage.

PEGASUS (off screen): “Actually, looks like it’s already fucked up.” His finger move along, trying to follow the text—which is exceedingly blurry.

12)

Cut to: color picture of the Voynich script message Nimbus had written in blood. Blurs between this and previous image should match as much as possible. Shot pans back: picture is attached to a clip board, along with several faxes and a yellow post-it note. It is being held by SUPERINTENDENT, who walks down the police department hallway to detective WILSON's office. On the wall by him are several Reward posters, including one for Chubbs the mouse. SUPERINTENDENT stands at doorway a second. WILSON has obviously just gotten in; he is still taking off his coat.

SUPERINTENDENT (entering office): “Ah, there you are, nice timing. I was going to put this on your desk. It’s for the MacLeod homicide; they know what language the writing is.”

WILSON is still settling into his office; he takes the clipboard, glances at it.

WILSON: “Oh?”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Yeah, something called Voynich.”

WILSON: “Voynich? Never heard of it. Sounds Slavic.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “The FBI identified it, and they sent with it one of the most incomprehensible explanations I have ever read. It’s the top two sheets on your clip. You will also notice a post-it on top, with a phone number. That’s someone at the NSA who wants to talk to you about this.”

WILSON: “NSA? Who the hell is this guy?” Tosses clipboard into his “In” basket.

SUPERINTENDENT: “Who, the guy from NSA? He’s an Admiral.”

WILSON: “Actually, I meant James MacLeod.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “What a coincidence: I was gonna ask you the same question. Especially with NSA showing an interest.”

WILSON: "Ah; I was wondering why you would stop by in person, boss."

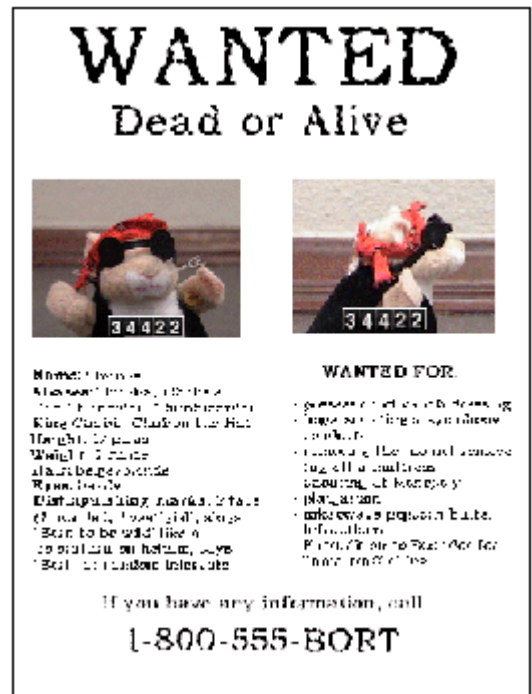
SUPERINTENDENT: “I realize you just got in, but can you give me a short version of what’s going on?”

WILSON: “Short version? We don’t know *bo*.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Can you expand on that?”

WILSON: “We have no idea who MacLeod was. DMV said he’s had 2 parking violations, but otherwise so far no one’s heard of him. He’d lived there for 4 years; and his neighbors never knew him. MacLeod himself is at the morgue, awaiting his turn in the autopsy queue. Shot twice, nine millimeter. Last I knew, lab was still working on a time of death.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “And he wrote something in his own blood that the NSA is interested in.”



WILSON: “Which is odd, because like I said, we already checked city, state, and national databases on him, and no one had ever heard of him except for a few old traffic tickets.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Well, if he *is* NSA, they might not admit to it at first.”

WILSON: “Maybe he didn’t *work* for NSA, but was someone they were *watching*?” Shrug. “The neighbors hardly ever saw him, and knew nothing about him.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Are you about to tell me they described him as the quiet type who kept to himself?”

WILSON (grins): “They didn’t use those words, but yeah. He never made any noise, and they didn’t hear any shots or loud bangs over the past few days. They don’t remember him ever getting mail or visitors. The mystery visitor who showed up right before the daughter found the body was the first they could recall.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Right; anything on this person?”

WILSON: “We found four prints, on both buzzers and both doorknobs. No match on record, or at least none so far. I really doubt he’s the murderer, since the murderer knew how to get in already. More likely he’s someone who showed up looking for MacLeod not knowing he was dead, saw the body, and bailed out. He said over the buzzer that he was a friend and wanted to leave a note. The girl who saw him hardly paid attention to him; white male, 40s, short dark hair, black jacket.” [tailor description to fit actor playing FRIENDISH.]

SUPERINTENDENT: “Listen, do you think you’ll need help on this? ’Cuz if you want...”

WILSON: “Dan, it’s too early to tell. But if this is big, I won’t hesitate to ask.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Good. Because if the NSA is asking, I think this might be big. So do me a favor: try catch whoever did this, so it’s over with.” Glances at watch.

WILSON (surveying the various things in his “In” basket): “Let me get through this and I’ll call you when I’m up to speed.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Thanks, but call that guy at NSA first.”

WILSON: “It’s on my ‘to do’ list. Right after ‘catch murderer’.”

SUPERINTENDENT starts to leave.

WILSON: “Can ya get the door?” *pause* “Please.”

SUPERINTENDENT shuts it on way out.

Cut to WILSON rifling through papers. The top is a rap-type sheet about MacLeod; it includes a drivers licence-type picture of him. Two parking violations are mentioned, both of them 4 years old. Flips a page: blurry copy/fax of a 1040 form. Bottom line shows he was due a refund of \$421. Occupation is given “Writer.”

Shot slowly zooms in on a blank part of the page, filling the screen.

13)

Cut to shot of Mufon's door, which is the same color as the piece of paper from previous scene end. Camera pans back, showing the doorframe and wall.

STORMTROOPER #1 (off screen, muffled behind door): "Federal agents!"

Door jarringly bursts in.

Camera gives a quick glimpse of black-clad/gas masked STORMTROOPERS holding a battering ram; another tosses in two round grenades. There is a quiet yet blinding flash; when it clears a second later, view shows the room full of positioned soldiers, one of which is pointing a submachine gun directly into the camera.

STORMTROOPER #1 (off screen): "Clear. No one home."

STORMTROOPERS all stand frozen, and after a moment AGENT walks in, wearing sunglasses, an earpiece, a surgical mask and latex gloves. Looks around, pulls out a walkie talkie.

AGENT: "We're in, but he's not. Missed him." Sniffs air. "Smells like a tobacco factory in here, though, so probably not by much." [*long pause*] "No." [walks into bedroom.] "His shit's still here... ..No. Hey, you thought he'd be here as much as I did." [looks around] "No, stay put; I'll be down in a few."

AGENT looks through the suitcases. Prods pillow, and finds cellphone. This goes into an evidence bag. Shuffles through the laundry, and finds the laptop. It is locked shut. AGENT picks it up and smiles behind his mask. Looks in closet; empty. AGENT goes into the bathroom, checks the medicine cabinet (empty) and the sink cabinet (empty) and notices there is no toilet paper on the dispenser bar. Hall closet is empty. Into the kitchen; checks the refrigerator and freezer (both empty except for the water and cheese). Cupboards are empty. Looks in stove, and smiles. Pulls out a small black valise. Opens it up.

Cut to: shot of valise; inside are dozen bundles of \$100s, probably \$50,000 total. Hold shot for several seconds.

14)

Cut to a \$100 bill being placed on a cheap formica counter.

FRIENDISH (voice-over): "Room for one night, under the name Franklin."

Fat, dirty fingers appear and pull the money across the counter out of shot. A moment later, a key gets tossed in its place, landing with a loud clank. Attached to it is a gaudy orange plastic tab with "124" poorly printed in white. FRIENDISH's hand reaches out and grabs it.

FRIENDISH's phone rings. Sigh of despair; and he pulls out his cell.

Cut to: open phone screen display:

Incoming call: MOLEBACK (520) 230-4732

Cut to: FRIENDISH looking amused.

FRIENDISH: “No shit?!?” [presses a button and takes the call.] “M.B.! What’s up?” He begins walking to his room.

Cut to: MOLEBACK, curled up in a comfy papasan cushion, phone in one hand, a blurry black and white photocopy of a Voynich illustration in the other. The walls around her have poster-sized reproductions of Voynich-type plants (minus any writing.)

MOLEBACK: “Hey, Friendish! How you doin’?”

FRIENDISH: “Mole, you don’t *wanna* know. Put it this way: you’re one of the few people I’d answer the phone for right now.”

MOLEBACK: “Well, glad to make you’re ‘A’ list. Sounds like you’re bogged down, though, and I was hoping we could talk shop.”

FRIENDISH: “That eerie calm you hear over the phone right now is the eye of the hurricane passing over Camp Friendish, so book time while you can. Whatcha wanna talk about?”

MOLEBACK: “Well, Klaustina’s contact in Germany just passed down some crappy scans of what he says are VMP’s from Russia, from around the time of the Revolution. I’m pretty sure they’re pages from a book. I have a hunch I know what these plants are, I think a few in particular I are just what we’re looking for, but I need cleaner copies to know for sure. Think you can help me out?”



Cut to FRIENDISH, unlocking his room.

FRIENDISH: “Uh, you said Russia? Doesn’t sound familiar. Russia wasn’t a hotbed of historical Voynich use. Do you mean *written* in Russia, or *found* in Russia?”

Cut to MOLEBACK. She looks at KLAUSTINA (off screen).

MOLEBACK: “Hey, Kay, did Klaus say those were written in Russia or found in Russia?”

KLAUSTINA walks into shot. She is holding a large bowl with assorted pepper strips.

KLAUSTINA: “I think he said ‘they were Bolshevik bullshit.’ Whatever that means.” Offers bowl to MOLEBACK; she reaches out and plucks a few strips, smiles a ‘thank you.’

MOLEBACK (into phone): “I’m not sure. He’s supposed to call in a few hours; we can double-check.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’d have to see what you have to know if I can get a cleaner copy or not. I gather you don’t know the name of the book they’re from, or any of the contents for me to go on?”

MOLEBACK: “No.” (munch munch munch) “Each is a photocopy of an entire leaf: 2 pages on each side of the sheet, and folios. Only half of the pics are plants. It actually looks like a page that fell out of a manuscript binding. You can tell from the folios: the plants are grouped together at the beginning, the other crap is all at the end.”

FRIENDISH (phone voice-over): “Your pages have folios?”

Quick cut to: photocopy of a page; MOLEBACK’s thumb can be seen holding it. The nail is painted grass green. In the upper right corner is the number 109.

MOLEBACK: “Yeah. Upper right, Arabic numerals.”

Cut to: **FRIENDISH**, struggling to get out of his longcoat while still talking on phone.

FRIENDISH: “About how many of these did you acquire?”

MOLEBACK (phone voice-over): “About 8, that pertained to plants. I gather Klaus said there were a few others, but he knew Kay and I only wanted herbals. Why, do you know what this is?”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, I think I know exactly what it is. How did your friend’s friend get these?”

MOLEBACK (phone voice-over): “I don’t know. Here, you can ask.”

Cut to **MOLEBACK** trading the phone to **KLAUSTINA** for the bowl of veggies. **Klaustina**’s nails are the same shade of green.

KLAUSTINA: “Hello?”

FRIENDISH {phone voice-over}: “Hey, Kay, how are you?”

KLAUSTINA: “Oh, doing good, but busy with all this. Do you think you can track down better copies for us to go by?”

FRIENDISH {phone voice-over}: “I think I know what you got, and gotta say, I’m impressed. I didn’t even know these still existed until now. Mind if I ask who you got them from?”

KLAUSTINA (dreamy sigh): “Klaus.”

FRIENDISH: “I don’t know anybody, by that name or nic but your friend Klaus pulled a coup. You got some very rare photocopies, and I’m betting the only way you can get better is to see the original.”

KLAUSTINA: “Well, Klaus can’t get them, so we were hoping you might be able to help.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, introduce me to Klaus.”

KLAUSTINA: “He lives in Germany, just outside Stuttgart, but I’m probably going to call him later. We talk all the time.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, where is the 520 area code, anyway?”

KLAUSTINA: “Tucson. We’re looking into trying to buy Biosphere 2 for our little hybridizing project.”

FRIENDISH: “No shit? You got *that* kind of bank these days? Nice.”

KLAUSTINA: “Well, you know we got that angle inside financial printing, so as long as the SEC doesn’t look in, everything’s above-board and actually quite lucrative.”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, but if you’re going to try to grow your chimeras, wouldn’t you want to be more discreet? Biosphere’s high profile.”

KLAUSTINA: “Sometimes the best place to hide something is right out in the open. You know that.”

FRIENDISH: “True I do. Actually, I’m sick of this seaboard, so would it be a problem if I book out to where you are for a few days? I’d like you to introduce me to Klaus next time he calls you.”

KLAUSTINA: “Let me check.” [to MOLEBACK] “He wants to come over.”

MOLEBACK panics and grabs phone. Shot pans to include rest of room; there are several other women (SMELLY, TRASH, and TREE), dressed in jungle fatigues and cleaning/assembling HK-33 assault rifles. All their nails are painted the same green as Moleback’s.

MOLEBACK: “You want to come out *here?* Tonight?!?”

FRIENDISH [phone voice-over]: “I can already tell from the tone of your voice that tonight is a *special occasion* you don’t wished to be disturbed on, but that’s good because I’m Custer and need to crash for a few hours. But if it’s not a problem and I got an invite, I’d like to take you up on that and come out soon. I’m in dervish mode.”

MOLEBACK: “Hammerback?”

FRIENDISH (pulls out his pistol from a holster and sets it on the bed): “Hammer back, safety off.”

MOLEBACK: “Why’s *that*, Friendish; you got *problems?*”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, but nuttin’ I can’t grapple.”

MOLEBACK: “Do we *want* you around here, meat eater?”

FRIENDISH: “You do, if you want better copies of those VMP’s. As long as no one knows I’m there, there shouldn’t be a problem.”

MOLEBACK: “Well, let me ask: did you step in some shit? ’Cuz if flies come by, sometimes they bite indiscriminately.”

FRIENDISH: “Hell, woman, while I’m there I’d have the personal protection of a platoon of heavily armed Vegan Lesbian Terrorists. I know who *I’d* be more scared of. Besides, if you want me to get you cleaner copies of those pages you got, I’d need to talk to, um... Kay’s connection...”

MOLEBACK (with little warmth): “Klaus.”

FRIENDISH (sits on bed and begins taking sneakers off): “Yeah, I want to talk to him about those copies you have.”

MOLEBACK: “That’s Kay’s department.”

FRIENDISH: “And she’s cool with it; she just wanted to check with you.”

MOLEBACK: “Oh, that’s fine. Are you local, though?”

FRIENDISH: “No; eastern seaboard. It’d probably take me at least half a day to get out there anyway, but I absolutely have to sack out for a few hours. I can probably be at Sky Harbor by noon.”

Cut to pan shot across the VLT: SMELLY (short brunette in a tight black tanktop) screwing a night-vision scope onto her rifle; TRASH (tall blonde wearing a grey ‘Air Force’ sweat shirt) is loading 30-round magazines; TREE (bone thin redhead in a green tie-dye) is using a pair of chopsticks as roach-clips to hit a poorly-rolled joint. An unloaded crossbow rests across her lap.

MOLEBACK (off-screen): “Well, unless tonight goes badly, we’ll be here tomorrow. Call me or Kay when you hit Sky Harbor; we might even be able to spare a femme to pick you up and bring you back.”

FRIENDISH: “Oh hell, hun, you’re my *hero*. Cool. I’ll call you sometime tomorrow. Be good to see you two, anyway.”

MOLEBACK: “Yeah it will. So think happy capybara thoughts, and we’ll talk tomorrow.”

Cut to close-up of her phone hanging up.

15)

Cut to: same type of phone on a cluttered desk. Phone *rings*. ADMIRAL’s hand pick it up.

ADMIRAL (off screen): “Admiral [name].”

Shot pans back to show ADMIRAL, sitting behind his desk, amid a project.

WILSON (phone voice-over): “Admiral, I’m Detective Wilson with Philadelphia homicide. I’m calling about the James MacLeod murder.”

ADMIRAL: “That would be the victim with the Voynich script, right?”

Quick cut to WILSON in his office; phone in one hand, the other is poised to take notes on a legal pad.

WILSON: “Yes.”

ADMIRAL: “Right. My friend Agent [name] at the FBI actually recognized the pictures your department sent out; she’d seen Voynich from me. She sent me a copy just to make sure. It’s definitely Voynich, or at least what isn’t smeared is.”

WILSON: “Agent [name] wrote a paragraph explasummation that I, uh, don’t quite understand. She cites you as confirming the language, and says I can call you if I have any questions.”

ADMIRAL: “And I’ll bet you *do*.” (laughs) “Well, Voynich is a complex set of questions into itself, so I told her you could call me.”

WILSON: “Thanks, because to be honest, I’m confused as hell.”

ADMIRAL: “Hey, no need to thank me, I am a giver. Besides, you have a murderer to catch, and all I have to do is keep our country safe. I think your job is the more important, and I actually mean that.”

WILSON: “Appreciate the civic pride, Admiral. Anyway, let’s start fresh. What *is* Voynich?”

ADMIRAL (laughs): “Where, oh *where* to begin? Well, the name itself comes from Wilfred Voynich. He was an antiques dealer, specialized in rare books. Back around 1910, he was at a sale or some auction being held by a Jesuit monastery in Italy, and he found this one book in the library, written in a bizarre alphabet. The pages had strange drawings, too: mostly plants, but also signs of the zodiac and things. Nobody knew what it was. Mr. Voynich bought

it, and it's become known as the Voynich Manuscript; the alphabet is also known as Voynich. Very distinctive looking, unique. And based on that pic I saw of your crime scene, that's what you got."

WILSON: "I realize that only a few letters are visible, but is there *any* idea what it says?"

ADMIRAL (chuckles): "Unfortunately, Mr. Voynich was never able to decipher the book, and neither has anyone else that's tried. Myself included."

WILSON: "You're kidding."

ADMIRAL: "No. No one's ever been able to tell if it's even a language or a code, or both. We've even put supercomputers on it; nothing."

WILSON: "Huh. I've never heard of this thing."

ADMIRAL: "It's not well-known outside of academia, but you *can* Google it. Hell, when Mr. Voynich died, the book ended up getting donated to Yale University. Last I knew it's still there in their library; I've even seen it once, back in the '90s when I was in New Haven for a lecture. Like I said, it used to be something of a pet hobby of mine. Actually, quite a few of us at the agency are, uh, Voynich *aficionados*. Since we deal with codes, the challenge of an unbreakable code has a certain appeal. Back during World War 2, some of our best boys would actually tackle the Voynich in their spare time. These are the guys who broke the Japanese codes—the best in their fields—but they couldn't crack Voynich."

WILSON: "Wow, the guys who broke the enigma code couldn't break Voynich?"

ADMIRAL: "Actually, enigma was the German code and was broken by the British at Bletchley Park. Nothing to break really: enigma was a machine-generated cipher, with a series of dials that had the German alphabet on each. The way they broke the Enigma code was to build a primitive computer to crunch the permutations until one made sense. That's *brute force*. We rely more on *finesse*."

WILSON: "Do I detect some professional jealousy?"

ADMIRAL (laughs): "Sorry; World War 2 is another pet hobby of mine."

WILSON: "I'm sure it is, but let's just stick to Voynich. I'm still unclear on this. So this book was written in 1910?"

ADMIRAL: "Well, Mr. Voynich found the book around 1910, or whenever that auction was, exactly; I forget off the top of my head. But inside the book was a cover letter written in Latin, from a professor in Prague to some Jesuit linguist in Rome named, uh, Kircher or Kirchner, or something. Anyway, the guy in Prague had acquired this strange book, couldn't make heads or tails of it, and asked Kircher to try to translate it. Since no one had ever heard of this thing until 1910, I'm gonna guess he couldn't. Hell, maybe someone stole it in the mail, and it never even reached him..."

WILSON: "When was all this?"

ADMIRAL: "The letter to Kircher's dated 1666. Y'know, 6-6-6, *hehe*, you don't forget a date like *that*. Anyway, based on the letter, they were able to track the book back to the court of King Rudolph of Bohemia in 1600. You can tell just by looking at it: this thing's *old*."

WILSON: "So this book's about 400 years old? And no one's seen the writing in it before...."

ADMIRAL: "...or since, really..."

WILSON: “Um, what do you mean by ‘*really*’? Has the language shown up elsewhere?”

ADMIRAL: “Oh, you get occasional rumors or misidentified reports. So there’ve been things like that: false-positive sightings that collapse under scrutiny. But no, *true* Voynich, or whatever language the Manuscript was written in, has never turned up anywhere else before or since 1600...”

WILSON: “... Until *now*, when it shows up on my crime scene.”

ADMIRAL: “Apparently so, but I actually thought about this after Agent [name] sent me that pic. Can I toss off a theory to you?”

WILSON: “Please do.”

ADMIRAL: “Like I said, *anyone* can Google Voynich and see what the alphabet is. You seen the full alphabet yet? It’s kinda creepy. The pictures in the book suggest it’s an herbal, and that’s often associated with alchemy and the occult. You probably have a killer with Internet access who is nuts enough to think he can understand Voynich, and is leaving helter skelter-type messages. Call the rare book library at Yale, and see if anyone’s checked out or into the Voynich Manuscript recently who doesn’t have a rank in front of their name or ‘Ph.D’ after it. That’s probably your killer. But that’s just *my* call, not knowing the facts like you do.”

WILSON: “I like it, but your idea’s fundamentally undermined. The murderer didn’t write the message on the floor; the victim did.”

ADMIRAL (long pause): “Oh. I’m sorry; somehow I got the impression that it was the other way around: the killer wrote it, and the victim tried to erase it.”

WILSON: “Nope, MacLeod wrote it, and it would seem the killer smeared it with a size 12 Justin Roper.”

ADMIRAL: “Well, that changes things.”

WILSON: “Any idea why a dying man write a message in a language that no one can read?”

Cut to ADMIRAL, looking genuinely perplexed, silently shaking his head and shrugging.

WILSON (phone voice-over): “I kind of get the impression you’re not all that active in the current loop of Voynich research?”

ADMIRAL: “No. To be honest, I basically gave up. It was just too frustrating, and I had to focus on my career here, anyway; so I shelved it. So to speak.”

WILSON: “I’m just wondering someone could have cracked this language in the time since you quit.”

ADMIRAL: “*Oh*, every decade or so, someone claims to have worked out a solution or translation. But it’s usually all fluff anyway, disguised as a Ph.D. thesis. Some of ’em were pretty fun to read, actually, because they’re just so *obviously* wrong.”

WILSON: “But maybe someone cracket it for real?”

ADMIRAL: “If someone had actually cracked Voynich, I think I’d have heard about it. Like I said, it’s obscure, but among those who *know*, it does have a certain cult status with us spooks and codebreakers, so I’d think word would get out if it’d been beaten. Like I said, back during World War 2, the Naval Intelligence guys had a bragging rights

bet with OSS over who could break it. These rivalries still exist and have expanded, and since *bragging rights* are at stake, the fact that I haven't heard about it tells me no one's done it."

WILSON: "At least, no one in the U.S. intelligence community. Are there other groups studying the Voynich Manuscript?"

ADMIRAL: "I don't know of any formal ones, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were. I'm sure there's a blog or two on the Internet somewhere, because it *is* a genuine and intriguing mystery. Hell, I even remember attending an informal conference on it back in the '80s, sort of a meet 'n greet among armchair researchers and the curious. Mainly it was this flakey Count from Albania or something, and I couldn't take him or the conference seriously."

WILSON: "Well, the main reason I was asking was a so I can check with them to see if MacLeod was known to any of them. We're trying to get any and all information we can on Mr. MacLeod, and this is the closest we have to a clue. Especially if the killer thought it was worth erasing."

ADMIRAL: "Of course. Like I said about the Manuscript, you can probably Google Voynich discussion groups, too. Whether they know who your victim is, of course, is another matter. But by all means check into it."

WILSON: "I definitely will. This is a very bizarre subject, even without the murder element. I can't believe that I've never heard of this."

ADMIRAL: "You know, one reason you don't hear much about Voynich is a large part of the people studying it think it's a hoax."

WILSON: "In what way?"

ADMIRAL: "Well, none of the flowers shown in it exist, and no one has ever deciphered the language. It could just be random gibberish. I could probably generate something similar with an alphabet template and a Cardan grille. There was even a little cottage industry in Italy at about that time that churned out fake magic books for charlatans to flash around and impress potential clients. That Latin cover letter in the book said King Rudolph bought it for 600 gold coins. That's a lot of money for back then; probably about 50 grand today. That's a good reason to whip up a fake book. Rudolph was rich, and would have dropped that kind of money for something like this. Plus, Rudolph was *nuts*. He collected dwarves."

WILSON: "Dwarves?"

ADMIRAL: "Seriously! Largest collection of dwarves in Europe. He was also into alchemy and the occult, too, so it's reasonable that he'd blow 600 coin on the Voynich if he thought it was a real alchemical herbal. So like I said, some people think Voynich was originally just a forged hoax to scam some insane dwarf-hording nobleman out of some cash."

WILSON: "What do *you* think?"

ADMIRAL: "I'll let you know if I ever translate it. Then again, I'm too busy with, well, *things*, to devote any real time to it any more."

WILSON: "Well, I'm sure you are, so I'll let you get back to keeping our country safe."

ADMIRAL: "And I'll let you get back to catching a murderer. Like I said, that's the more important job. If I can be of any more help, let me know."

WILSON: "You know, I might take you up on that. Thanks again, and goodbye." WILSON hangs up. Looks through the clipboard that has the Voynich, and then turns to his computer.

Cut to screen: police engine search page. He changes the search option from 'police database' to 'the web'. In the field he types "Voynich Manuscript" and clicks 'search'. Screen changes: shows 23 hits, displaying the first 10. WILSON looks mildly surprised, but smiles. First is "Voynich Manuscript Home Page" hosted by 'yale.edu'. WILSON clicks it to open in a new window, goes back to the search results. Next two are from on-line encyclopedias. He opens those in separate windows. The Yale window finishes loading, showing a page from the Manuscript. Curious, WILSON enlarges it.

Cut to: close up of the screen, showing a random Voynich page.

[phone rings]

WILSON (off camera): "Wilson... ..Huh... ..I'll be right over."



16)

Cut to: a similar type "real" plant that landscapes the Circle-K parking lot. Shot pans back and up to show ALANA's car, engine idling.

MUFON (off screen): "I'll be right over."

Shot continues to pan behind car; through rear window we see ALANA behind the wheel and MUFON sitting shotgun.

ALANA: "Oh, take your time. Kim doesn't have to leave for work until 3:30."

MUFON: "Which is 15:30 in military time, and also her apartment number."

ALANA: "Uh, *sure*. But yeah; just come on over."

They smile at each other, and as she starts to lean in as if to kiss, he turns and gets out of the car. She watches him close the door, looking slightly jilted.

Cut to exterior shot of MUFON walking into the Circle K. Jump-Cut to him walking out the same doors, lighting up a cigarette. Begins walking across parking lot, and has another coughing fit. He is able to keep walking, and at the end when he clears his throat, he hawks up a huge loogie.

Cut to loogie hitting concrete; it is phlegmy and has a membrane of blood. View tilts up to show MUFON walking away. MUFON jogs across the street, wends his way through an apartment complex. Camera pans to side while he is on a walkway, shows him looking through gaps in the apartments at the parking lot.

Cut to a midnight blue Ford Mustang with Florida plates. The trunk is ajar, and both doors are open; a pair of legs (in black fatigues and combat boots) stick out of the driver's side.

Cut to MUFON backtracking and blending against a building. Does a quick look-around to assess his situation, and begins walking quickly away.

Cut to overhead shot of AGENT walking across the parking lot toward a van. In the distance, MUFON can be seen running across the street and hopping a low ornamental wall. AGENT opens the van doors, gets in. Camera pans in to

show the van: the interior is full of computers, reel-to-reel tapes, etc. 2 additional agents [CDC#1 and CDC #2] are inside. AGENT closes doors behind him.

Shot begins to pan back from the van's doors.

AGENT [grainy voice-over]: "He's near-by. He wouldn't leave without his pc, phone, and the money."

CDC#1 [grainy voice over]: "Unless someone else found him up first before we got here."

Camera continues to pull back, it is now half way across the parking lot.

CDC#2 [grainy voiceover]: "Anything in the garbage?"

AGENT [grainy voiceover]: "There was no garbage, except for empty cigarette packs, tons of used matches, and Big Gulp cups. Tons of butts, too."

Shot pulls through the tinted windshield of a car, where the driver [CONVEX] is holding a small bullhorn-like receiver dish pointed at the van. Wires go up to headphones.

CDC#2 [grainy voice-over]: "Actually, if his lips were on them, we can run some tests off the saliva. That'd be a good indication if we have to do a quarantine scrubdown."

CONVEX: "Aw, *shit*."

[grainy *beep*]

CDC#1 [grainy voice-over]: "Atlanta on line 1. Probably want a status."

CONVEX: "Shit shit shit." [pulls out a cell phone with his free hand.]

AGENT [grainy voice-over]: "Well, we should set up some observers around the complex, because I really think he'll be back. And he'll probably notice that his front door is broken down."

CONVEX: "You fucking *amateurs*..."

Cut to close up of Convex's cell phone display:

redial: 7081911247770

AGENT: [grainy voiceover]: "Well, we've got 6 people upstairs, plus the other 6 in zoot suits by the tennis court. Tell everybody to change into casual and camp out around the place."

[grainy *beep*]

CDC#1 [grainy voice-over]: "Atlanta, sir..."

AGENT [grainy voice-over]: "Tell them I'm still inside." Van door opens, AGENT exits.

CONVEX pushes one side of his headphones off to put the cell phone up to his free ear.

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Speak to me, Convex.”

CONVEX [into phone]: “I just figured out who these keystone kops are.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Let me guess. NASA?”

CONVEX (laughs): “No, but close. Alas, our black-clad Rambos are CDC.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “CDC?”

CONVEX: “Yeah, straight out of Atlanta.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “What the hell is the Center For Disease Control doing in this?”

CONVEX: “I dunno, but from what I gather, they’re just physically interested in Muffin Man, and not so much in anything else except by proxy.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Anyone say the ‘V’ word yet?”

CONVEX: “No. They nabbed Muffin’s laptop, but it’s locked and don’t seem overly interested in it.” Through window, sees AGENT walking his way. “Hang on a sec...” CONVEX sets down the radio dish, and his hand drifts to the keys in the ignition. AGENT looks around, changes direction for an activity center which has the apartment complex’s mail room. “We’re cool.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “No, we’re *not* cool. This is getting way out of hand.”

CONVEX: “Not disastrously so. Muffin’s missing. I don’t know where he is, but neither do these CDC cockdockers. I’ll betcha I’ll find him before they will.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “So that just leaves the laptop.”

CONVEX: “And they got that.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Yes they do. So what you gonna do about it?”

CONVEX: “His lap’s locked and they don’t have a key, plus I doubt they got any passwords. Even then, it’s got some type of bug on it.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Locks can be picked, passwords can be hacked, and bugs can be scrubbed. If Muffin’s laptop gets into circulation, we will have a crisis on our hands the likes of which we haven’t seen since 1911, or even 1666. So *anything* you can do to counter that.”

CONVEX: “Well, let me ask you: which is more important: my finding Muffin Man, or my getting his laptop? I can do one, but not the other. And remember: if I lose Muffin, I’ll almost certainly lose Friendish.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Friendish and Muffin are long-term problems, but right now that laptop is dynamite. Definitely. You can’t allow it to reach Atlanta.”

CONVEX: “That’s gonna be a bit of a trick, but if you want me to get drastic, I can, but it might cause more problems than it solves.” CONVEX wedges the phone in his ear, and pulls out a pistol. He begins screwing on a silencer. “I need to be clear on this: you averse to federal fatalities?”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “What, you just gonna walk up and jack it at gunpoint?”

CONVEX: “Something like that, and actually *now* is the time to do it. I’ll either call you back in 5 minutes, or be dead.” Keys the engine; an impressive hemmy rev, then idling. Softly over the stereo, the violin rhythm riff from “Spanish Nights” by Blackmore’s Night.

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Shit man, you got *big* balls. You got anything incriminating on you if this doesn’t pan out?”

CONVEX: “Uh, just my phone. Actually, thanks; let me take care of that. I know your number, so if all goes well, I’ll call you from a pay phone in half an hour. But if I do this, I gotta get out of Dodge, so I’ll lose Mufon for now. And Friendish, of course.”

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “Long term problems. Right now, get that lap out of unclean hands.”

CONVEX: “I’ll do what I can, but I gotta do it *now*. Bye.”

CONVEX puts his cell on the passenger seat. He shoots it. Picks up eavesdropping antennae, and quickly points at van.

CDC#1 [grainy voiceover]: “...normal Geiger readings in every room, consistent with the surrounding...”

CONVEX swings the dish to the mail room. *Silence*. Swings it toward the apartment: faint music and low incoherent mumbling.

STORMTROOPER #1 (very, very faint voiceover): “Man, these suits make my balls numb.”

CONVEX drops the dish, takes off the headgear, and reaches into his coat pocket. A moment later, he pulls out a bullet casing full of cocaine, and snorts it. Shake of head, flips the casing onto the floor, and then shifts out of ‘park’.

Cut to CONVEX’s muscle car driving up parallel to the van. CONVEX leaves car, engine running. One last look around the lot around, and goes over to the van’s back.

Cut to interior of van: CDC#1 and #2 are filling out paperwork. Back doors swing open, and both look up to see CONVEX, pointing a pistol inside.

Cut to exterior of van. CONVEX fires two shots inside and quickly climbs in. Eight seconds later he jumps out, holding Mufon’s laptop, cell phone, and money valise. Hops back in his car, and drives off fast.

Cut to mail room door. AGENT is exiting, looking through a small stack of junk mail, “have you seen me?” flyers, etc. Hears the sound of tires hitting a speed bump too fast, and reflexively looks up.

Cut to shot of CONVEX’s car driving away; CONVEX is dimly visible through the tint. Faint strains of music. Agent looks over at van, sees the back doors are open. Frowns, and begins to walk over. Speed increases as he gets closer, and eventually can see a limp hand on the floor. Drops mail; one hand pulls out a Glock, the other his walkie talkie.

AGENT: “Everybody get down here *now*.”

Gets to van, looks inside. CDC#1 & #2 are dead. A phone begins ringing.

Cut to telephone inside van; line 1 is blinking.

Cut to aerial shot exterior of van, also showing street. A car with KAY and ALANA is driving down it; MUFON is in the back seat, hunched down to hide himself.

AGENT [voice over]: “This is Agent [name], and we have a *situation* at the van. We need people here immediately. Two of our men are dead... ..no, they were shot. It just happened... ..I don’t know, but I don’t think it was Mufon. It was a man with out a hat—I repeat—*no hat*.... ..We don’t know where he is....”

Shot tracks KAY’s car, driving away. Camera holds as it hits a [random billboard], zooms in enough so that billboard fills the screen.

17)

Cut to: same [random billboard] that ended Scene 16. Shot pans back to show this is on the side of a building. A squad car drives into view; camera tracks it to Nimbus’s brownstone. WILSON exits and jogs up the stairs.

Cut to: WILSON walking into living room Faintly, flies [about 5] can be heard buzzing (continues throughout scene). OFFICER FRIST peers out from the kitchen, a look of utter gut-churning disgust on his face.

OFFICER FRIST: “I just found something wrong on *several levels*. MacLeod’s got a two gallon tub of generic ranch dressing in his fridge. Half of it’s been eaten. There’s a huge spoon still stuck in it. But by now it’s expired, and kind of coagulated into *ranch pudding*.”

WILSON shudders at the thought, and moves through to the room where murder took place. NIMBUS’s body is gone, replaced by a tape outline. PROP, a tubby, 20-something techie in jeans and green denim dress shirt, is lounging in chair behind the computer. His legs are on the desk, there is a half-full bottle of gatorade/sports drink by his feet. He is holding/reading a half-dozen pages, but looks up as WILSON comes in.

WILSON: “Hey Prop. You said something about a good news clue?”

PROP : “I noticed MacLeod’s printer was still on, and the head was offset. My guess was it was in a print job when the drive got capped. Most printers have a resident memory buffer which stores a print job until it gets an okay to move on to the next page. On a hunch, I hooked it up to my laptop and went into it. Sure enough, it asked if I wanted to purge the buffer. I had it print out, instead.”

WILSON: “And?”

PROP (waves the pages): “Six pages of gibberish.”

WILSON: “Let me guess: its all an alphabet you’ve never seen before, except on the floor over there.”

PROP: “No, it’s all ASCII English. Just random letters.”

WILSON takes the pages.

Quick cut to a full page of random English letters.

PROP: “Memory buffers are delicate. Sometimes what’s left over is just residual corrupted slush. But if I get 6 pages of it and it’s not repetitive, I think that maybe that is the whole print job, or at least what didn’t print before the machine fried.”

WILSON: “So you think this is what he was writing when he died?”

PROP: “Yeah, I do. Those are the keystrokes, anyway. If he did anything to it with his mouse like translate or encode it, I wouldn’t know. This type of printer buffer doesn’t store fonts, colors or any of the other add-on crap, so hard to say what it was meant to look like.”

WILSON: “So if this were intended to print as another alphabet, we’d have to know what alphabet font MacLeod was using, right?”

PROP: “Right. Most fonts transliterate to the phonetic equivalent on the keyboard. So that might be a phonetic message, but it sure doesn’t read like one. Vowels are universal, and that’s just way too many consecutive consonants. It could also be a code, or a cipher, or both. Actually, there are a mind-numbing number of possibilities...”

WILSON: “I don’t suppose there’s any way to find out what font this was intended to be?”

PROP: “That’s only on the hard drive, and that has a bullet in it. Or at least it did ’till the lab came down and bagged it. Anyway, I gather you’re asking ’cuz you think it was supposed to print out like the letters over there?”

WILSON: “Yeah.”

PROP: “Oh, so you know what language that is?”

WILSON: “Voynich.” (sees PROP shrug in ignorance) “Yeah, I never heard of it either until right before you called. Near as I can tell, it’s either an artificial language or a cipher from Renaissance Europe. There’s only one known instance of it, from a 400 year-old book. No one knows how to read it.”

PROP: “No one? Except him, I guess.”

Quick cut to tape outline of Nimbus.

WILSON: “If this is supposed to be Voynich, we’re screwed, but I’m hoping there’s an English base in here somewhere. Who’d be a good person to run this through?”

PROP: “Depends. FBI, maybe even the NSA...”

WILSON: “I just talked to someone at the NSA today, actually.”

PROP: “Or, you could go through *alternate* channels.”

WILSON: “Like what?”

PROP: “Find some blue-haired granny who’s a whiz at the Sunday paper’s acrostics puzzle, or a kabbalist mystic who can do ASCII gematria, or smoke a joint and read it while standing on your head.” WILSON grins. “Or, let me farm it out to one of my unconventional friends.”

WILSON: “Who’d you have in mind?”

PROP: “Doctor_who.”

WILSON stares at him blankly.

PROP: “Nutty professor friend of mine; goes by the name doctor_who. He’s an actual doctor, as in Ph.D., in math. He teaches and does research at a university up in Massachusetts. He’s real good with computers, and with all the possible permutations on that paper, I’d recommend sicing a number cruncher on it. He’s not computer god like I am, but he’s a patron saint of something. I don’t doubt FBI & NSA will try the same, but for some *alternative perspectives*, try the doctor.”

WILSON: “Alright, so fax it over to downtown and have them farm it to the DC initials you mentioned, plus your wacky mathematician friend up in Boston.”

PROP: “Arkham, but whatever. I already did, right after I called you.” (winks smugly)

WILSON: (tosses papers onto desk.) “Good job.” Looks around. “So, what else is going on?”

PROP: “Frist and Deacons are still pulling the house apart. When I was done with the printer, I decided to help out, and I looked through his whole bedroom. MacLeod’s got a Modigliani. And I mean a *real* one, signed. There’s even a coffee spill stain on the canvas, like it was done over lunch in some Paris café... You know, that’s the closest thing to ambiance this place has. He’s got about 2 weeks worth of clothing and just the one set of bedsheets. No personal curios. I don’t think MacLeod actually *lived* here, Wilson; this strikes me as a workshop or studio.” (WILSON nods) “No tv, no stereo, no porn...”

WILSON: “Just a computer and a butt-load of books.”

They look into the library/den. OFFICER DECONS is sitting lotus position on the floor by a shelf. He pulls a book off the shelf, catalogues the title on a laptop in front of him, fans through the book to see if there is anything inside, and places back; *repeat*.

OFFICER DECONS: “I got the *shit* job.”

PROP (off screen): “How’s that coming along?”

OFFICER DECONS: “Ol’ boy did some interesting reading. Spine’s cracked on almost all of them, too.”

Cut to: tracking shot of shelves. A bizarre mélange of titles flashes by. These include, Blade, essene, First Hit’s Free, and Lady Gretta’s Discovery, all by Matthew Thomas Farrell. Shot pans out on room as WILSON walks in.

OFFICER DECONS: “Near as I can tell, it’s arranged by author, except biographies or specific subjects. I’m pretty sure I’ve seen at least one title from every genre and Dewey decimal category. That case is Bibles and reference.” He points at the first case, which WILSON standing by and examining. “Those have a *ton* of highlighting in them, plus marginal notes and stuff. I stopped reading them after about the tenth; I started to get dizzy and see Jesus.”

WILSON looks at the Bibles: multiple copies in multiple translations and languages. Next to it are apocrypha, Talmuds, the Book of Mormon, the Quar’an, etc. Many are printouts bound together with paperclips. Curious, he takes one of the home-made copes out and glances at the cover page.

Cut to: page of print, very poor quality. It is titled “The Coptic Gospel of Thomas,” a Ph.D. translator is listed. Lines of Coptic text with literal English translations beneath. The gospel’s opening and first five or so verses/sayings are listed. Each verse number is offset to the side in large, bold print. After a few seconds, camera pans back to show whole page is in that format (numbered list).

WILSON puts the thin volume back in place, and looks on the next shelf below. Pan back in: dictionaries, thesaurus, and many translation dictionaries. Camera pans the titles: Arabic/English, Coptic/English, Farsi/English, Greek/English, Hebrew/English, Hieroglyphics/English, Latin/English, Maltese/English, Pict/English, Ugaritic/English. Gap. Yiddish/English is at the end of the shelf.

WILSON (to OFFICER DECONS): “Have you done the *m*’s yet?”

OFFICER DECONS (fanning a copy of The Complete Stories of Mark Twain): “Yeah.”

WILSON: “Did MacLeod have any of his own books?”

OFFICER DECONS: “No. Unless he wrote under a pen name.”

WILSON: “A writer kept none of his stuff around. Or never gotten published.”

PROP (off camera): “Obituary’s a sucky way to get your name in print.”

OFFICER DECONS (fanning a copy of Letters from Earth by Mark Twain): “So’s your tombstone epitaph.”

WILSON squats down next to him, and begins looking the shelves over. Camera pans over titles: numerous works by Gore Vidal and then Kurt Vonnegut, and then a five-inch gap before titles pick up again [the book immediately after the gap simply says YALDABOATH and then the collected scripts from the show “Yes, Minister”]

WILSON: “Have you seen anything with the word ‘Voynich’ on it?”

OFFICER DECONS (stops to think for a second): “Is that ‘Voynich’ with a ‘ch’?”

WILSON: “Yeah.”

OFFICER DECONS (puts book down and starts typing): “Yes I have.”

Cut to laptop screen. Window titled “Find”, the letters “voynich” fill in. Sound of a single *click*; window disappears, and a long list of book titles appear, filling the page.

*kircher	kircher commentary on Voynich
*kircher	kircher correspondence
*kircher	kircher/hieroglyphics
*kircher	kircher on music
*kircher	kircher translation of Yale/Voynich
*kircher	kircher translation of Yale/Voynich w/parallel
koresh	the 7 seals revealed and other teachings
kung	christianity
kung	infallible?
[etc.]	

OFFICER DECONS (off screen): “It’s under Kircher. It’s a print-out, not a real book.” *click, click, click*; the bolding on the jumps to the next two occurrences, then returns to the top. “There’s 3 of them. All there under Kircher.”

Cut to WILSON finding the ‘K’ section on the shelves. Several off-sized printouts (including 1 on legal-sized paper) have been grouped together, between Immanuel Kant and David Koresh. Wilson pulls them out. The collection on top is hand-titled “kircher commentary on coptic” Flips through stack and sees several sheets paperclipped together; it is an email printout. At the top is hand-written in black magic marker “kircher commentary on voynich”.

Quick close-up of top line of email:

nimbus,

sorry this took so long. my latin is lousy, so I took some liberties when it got goofy. and it *does* get goofy, but you already knew that. if i wasn't sure, i just put [???

this was hilarious! i don't even know what he's talking about, but already i know he's wrong. [etc.]

OFFICER DECONS [off camera]: “Hey, I think I remember looking through those. Is that the guy with the goofy hieroglyphics?”

WILSON flips several binds to see a thick collection clipped together, about 200 pages — a photocopy of a photocopy of a book cover:

[in black marker]: **kircher/hieroglyphics**

[in badly-photocopied hand-written Latin]:

Treatise on the Nature of

Hieroglyphics

by


Jr. Anastasius Kircher

WILSON: “Yeah.”

OFFICER DECONS (laughs): “That one’s pretty funny.”

Camera pans down from the title. The page is in a 3-column format: the left column being hieroglyphics, the middle one short English phrases, the right one long paragraphs.

Cut to top one:

actual hieroglyphic	correct translation	Kircher translation
	Osiris says	The treachery of Typhon ends at the throne of Isis; the moisture of nature is guarded by the vigilance of Anubis.

PROP [off camera]: “Kircher must’ve been from before the 1800s, when they found the Rosetta Stone.”

Cut to prop peering over WILSON’s shoulder to read. WILSON nods and flips through the titles collected. Reaches second-to-last. Finds: ‘Kircher translation of the Yale Voynich Manuscript’.

WILSON: “Here we are.”

PROP: “Well, if he handles Voynich like he does hieroglyphics, I’m sure this should be a rivetingly accurate read.”

Cut to top page. Exceedingly-poor quality nth-generation photocopy of a hand-written letter. Writing is in Latin:

**It is with great pleasure and honor that I present forth this survey of the
mysterious book passed on to my by my friend in Prague, over which I have
labored... [etc.]**

WILSON [voice-over]: “You read Latin?”

PROP [off-screen]: “No.”

Shot shows several other pages being flipped; more of the same. He skips to the next sheaf. The sides have been punched and have spiral plastic binding. title is typed: “Kircher translation of Yale/Voynich w/parallel.”

WILSON [voice-over]: “Here, hold these.”

Cut to WILSON handing prop the previous booklets, to free up his hand. Opens book.

Cut to close-up of open “Book.” Left page has a color picture of the first page of the Yale VMS. The right has a crude reproduction of the plant picture, and 2 sets of typing, corresponding to where the script is on the other page. Top line is Latin, below (in a different ink and handwriting) is an English translation.

WILSON [voice-over]: “Coriander is such a potent plant that the (good) Lord made it a part of the manna provided to the Jews while in the desert.” [pause] “Is that coriander?”

PROP [voice-over]: “I wouldn’t know coriander is I choked on it, but I’m gonna guess ‘no’.”

WILSON flips several pages. Same format: Yale on left, dual translation on right. WILSON taps a small set of circles by the bottom of the picture. They are double-labeled English-Latin “noon blue apples”/“meridies caeruleus pomum”.

WILSON [voice-over]: “Noon blue apples?” Finger moves to the other page, and finds the corresponding part of the Yale page. They are small nuts or seeds by the root, with a small label of Voynich script. “Those don’t look like apples.”

PROP [voice-over]: “They’re not even *blue*.”

Cut to the WILSON and PROP looking over the book, frowning. Suddenly, MacLeod’s phone rings. The men look up and stare at each other in surprise. On second *ring* cut to phone in the other room (that Mrs. Naybors used in Scene 4). When phone stops ringing, Cut to a small answering machine phone in the bedroom. Machine snaps on.

MACHINE [NIMBUS's voice; very dry, monotonous, yet oddly warped out of phase as if the reel were uneven]: "If you're hearing this, then either you're a telemarketer or I'm dead. Either way, don't bother leaving a message."
[beep]

Quick static *click* and then dead dial tone with an odd, off-kilter background static. After 3 seconds, the double-*click* of disconnect, and then the machine *clicks* off. Messages reads: '0'.

Cut to: everyone standing around the machine in the bedroom, looking at it intently. After an awkward, dumbfounded *pause*, WILSON looks up and about.

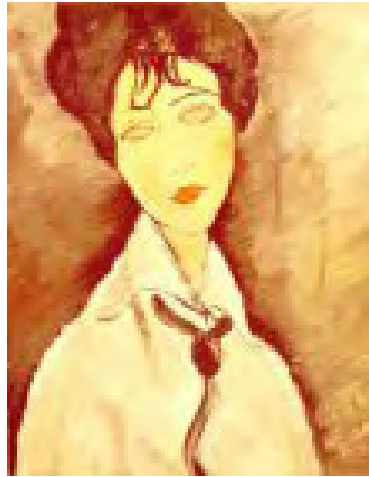
WILSON: "That the Modigliani?"

PROP: "Yeah."

WILSON: "Nice."

Close up of the painting.

COUNT [voice over]: "Modigliani?!?"



18)

Cut to: COUNT at di Medicegan's Party. He is drunk and hobnobbing with various guests, currently PRALINE.

COUNT (very boisterous): "You paid *how much* for a Modigliani?!?"

PRALINE (grins sheepishly and shrugs): "I know, I know..."

COUNT: "My friend, you have been fucked up the ass without *lube*! I insist that you give me the name of the dealer who did this to you — I will have him castrated as a matter of *honor*!"

PRALINE: "I *know* it was pricey, but I saw it and just fell in love with it. Besides, no one had ever seen it before, and if I didn't buy it right then, it'd have hit mass circulation and probably be in some museum or art gallery by now."

COUNT (laughing): "Ah, this is true. Well, congratulations, my friend, on your latest painting, and I hope you get your money's worth out of it in enjoyment."

PRALINE: "Thank you, Count." He reaches for his glass on the table, then notices it is all but empty. "Shall we have another, and celebrate my Modigliani?"

COUNT nods and lustily grunts "*aah!*" in approval.

PRALINE [Holds up hand, waving index finger for pointed attention]: "Oh, *cabana boy*?!?"

Camera pans to show the party. Although no one is singled out in the shot, MR. ROBIN, MR. GANNET, and MR. EAGLE are present.

After many moments of not getting service, COUNT downs his drink and sets it on a table.

COUNT: “*Bah*, I go get us some.”

COUNT excuses himself and heads up to the bar. He passes by MR. ROBIN, who is has a fresh drink in one hand and a leather leash in the other. In tow is a beautiful LEASHED ASIAN ESCORT with a thin dog-collar; she carries two full drinks as well. COUNT slaps MR. ROBIN on the shoulder and gives him a friendly “*Bah!*” and arrives at the bar. He is immediately waited on.

COUNT (instantly acting sober): “A glass of Canadian rain water, with glacier ice. Also another glass of whatever Jesuit sangria Praline was drinking.”

BARTENDER: “Yes Count; I know the vintage.”

COUNT: “Good.”

BARTENDER moves off. COUNT surveys the crowd. DI MEDICIGAN is at a table with two others, watching them have an animated discussion and nodding. Survey ends with COUNT finding a small, shriveled arab in a short black fez standing behind him and grinning mischievously.

COUNT: “Hassan! How are you, you old Persian pervert?”

HASSAN: “Count. It is always good to see you. Hassan was not sure he would see you before we left.”

COUNT: “*We? Heh*, where is your master, anyway?”

HASSAN (grins wryly at the comment, not altogether pleasant): “Back at the suite making calls. He said he would come over and be social if he had time.”

COUNT: “Ah, good, I had hoped that if I bumped into you, you would be alone.”

HASSAN: “Why, my friend, is there a problem?”

COUNT (unconvincingly dismissive): “No, no problem...”

HASSAN: “Is... *everything* treating you alright?”

COUNT (nods with false nonchalance): “No complaints. *Heh*, at least I don’t look like you.”

HASSAN: “Not yet. Wait 400 years.”

COUNT: “*Pah*. By then, it won’t matter.”

BARTENDER returns with the water and a glass of dark wine.

BARTENDER: “I just open up a fresh bottle for you.” He hovers.

COUNT: “Excellent! Now please get something for my old friend Hassan! Whatever he wants!”

19)

Cut to: CONVEX (looking haggard and like hell) in a low-key country/sports dive. Buck Owens is on the jukebox.

CONVEX: "I'll take a white russian with a double-shot of espresso in it."

Cut to waitress (BELLE) behind bar, looking at camera with incredulity.

BELLE: "Sorry, son, but we don't *do* espresso 'round here."

CONVEX: "Espresso."

BELLE stares at him.

CONVEX: "There's no 'x' in it. Sorry, but saying 'espresso' has a *nails on chalkboard* effect on me."

BELLE: "Well, we don't do *essss*presso, either. Y'all *might* wanna go a couple hunnerd miles up the highway to Cedar City; they *might* have ye a Starbucks there."

CONVEX: "Starbucks don't do booze. You got coffee?"

BELLE looks over to the pot; quarter full.

BELLE: "Yeah."

CONVEX: "How *fresh* is it?"

BELLE: "Y'know, somehow I already suspect that *any* answer I give you will make it a little too old for you."

CONVEX (smiles weakly): "If you could brew up some fresh, that'd be great. Extra-strong."

BELLE: "Uh huh. You want your white russian while you wait on that?"

CONVEX: "No. In the coffee. By the way, do you use milk or cream?"

BELLE (after an incredulous stare): "I'm gonna hazard a guess that y'all ain't from *anywhere near* 'round here, are ye?"

Cut to counter. CONVEX puts down a crisp \$100, keeps his middle finger atop it.

CONVEX (voice-over): "No, ma'am, I'm not. But I'm probably gonna be here a few hours, so tell you what. This is your tip." His other hand comes into view, and rips the bill in half. "I'll give you half now in good faith of your catering to my eccentricities, and leave the other half when I leave. I'm sure a bank'll take it taped." He pushes half the bill toward her with his middle finger; the others curve back slightly, subliminally suggesting he is flipping her a bird. "I'm most likely going to be here for several hours, but most of that time I don't want to be disturbed. Is that a problem?" His hand withdraws.

Pause, then BELLE's hand comes into shot and picks up half the \$100.

Cut to CONVEX, smirking.

CONVEX: “Good.” Looks around the bar. A few people shooting pool, sitting at tables. There are a few booths along the wall. “Any of those booths near a power outlet?”

BELLE: “Booth Number 7. The one in that corner; I use it for vacuuming.”

CONVEX: “Good. Is it smoking or non?”

BELLE looks around the bar; a seedy haze of smoke fills the air by various lights. Shot includes 2 trucker types shooting pool, both of which have lit cigarettes dangling.

BELLE: “Whole bar’s smoking, but no chewing except on the patio.”

CONVEX grunts and walks off toward the booth, putting his fragment of the \$100 in his coat’s breast pocket.

BELLE goes over and pours the coffee down the drain, and begins making a fresh, extra strong pot. When she starts the cycle, she looks up to find CONVEX standing across from her.

CONVEX: “Do you have a phone?”

BELLE (pointing): “Pay phone in between the rest rooms.”

CONVEX nods and walks back toward the bathrooms.

REGULAR: “Hey, Belle, how ’bout another pitcher?”

BELLE pours him a beer, and finds CONVEX has returned.

CONVEX: “Where exactly *are* we?”

A couple of the people sitting at the bar turn their head to look.

BELLE: “Martinsberg.”

CONVEX: “Martinsberg?” He shrugs, and walks back. BELLE watches him; the phone was dangling; he picks it up and begins talking to someone.

REGULAR: “Hate to bust yer buns, Belle, but this is *lite*.”

BELLE looks at the pitcher, surprised.

BELLE: “I’m sorry, hon. Well, you can have it on the house if you don’t want to wait for me to pour another.”

REGULAR happily wanders off with the pitcher, to be replaced by CONVEX.

CONVEX: “My friends have never heard of Martinsberg, but they ain’t from ’round here, neither. How would someone get here from I-11?”

BELLE: “Take the 23 west to Martinsberg. There’s only one exit, and we’re at the second stoplight.”

CONVEX skulks off. BELLE watches him while mixing his white russian. Sure enough, CONVEX drops the phone and comes back a forth time.

CONVEX: “What’s this place called?”

BELLE: “Bob’s Baseball Bunker.”

Cut to BOB, a fifty-ish cracker wearing a Nashville Elite Giants (Negro Leagues) baseball hat.

BOB (unfriendly and un-amused): “I’m Bob.”

Cut to CONVEX, who nods courteously yet dismissively at BOB and then drifts back to the phone. Camera follows him from front; behind him, BELLE and BOB have an animated conversation, culminating with her holding up the ripped bill.

CONVEX [into phone]: “Bob’s Baseball Bunker... ..yeah, that’s what I thought too, but there’s no stage with chickenwire. Anyway, trust me, you can’t miss it... ..cool; about how long? ...no idea; I came from a different direction.... ..well I’ll try to wait as long as I can, but if it’s more than 4 hours, understand if I ain’t here.... ..I know, I know, I appreciate your even doing this on such short notice, and you *know* I want to see you, anyway... ..okay, talk to ya, *whenever* I guess.” [hangs up]

CONVEX returns to his booth, sits down, and pulls out a laptop bag. At the back of the laptop is a small power adaptor on a rewindable cord. He pulls it out and reaches under the table to plug it in. When he comes up, BOB is standing there.

BOB: “Howdy.”

CONVEX (rests his hands atop the laptop bag protectively): “Hello.”

BOB puts down the coffee/white russian on the table.

BOB: “Got some company coming?”

CONVEX: “Couple friends; probably be a while, though.”

BOB: “Well, state law says we can’t serve alcohol past 1.”

CONVEX glances at a neon sign in the window.

Quick cut to neon sign: “ **Open all night** ” [the ‘t’ is burned out]

CONVEX: “Yeah, but you are open ‘all nigh’ though, right?”

BOB: “Well, *yeah*.”

CONVEX: “Not a problem.”

BOB stares at him, unsure how to handle this.

CONVEX: “How late’s your kitchen open?”

BOB: “As long as I’m here.”

CONVEX: “How long are you here?”

BOB: “Son, I’m *always* here.”

CONVEX: “Fine, can I get a menu?” CONVEX reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a prescription pill container. He pops several into his mouth, and washes it down with almost all of the white russian. He notices BOB has not left. CONVEX pulls out his wallet and fishes out a \$20. “While you’re up, change the music. Something other than this.” He points with the bill to a speaker, which is right over his table in the corner. Hands the bill out to BOB. “You can even pick a couple for yourself.”

BOB (looking at the bill held out to him as if it were diseased): “Actually, *I* picked this.”

CONVEX: “Who is that, Hank Williams Senior?”

BOB: “Yes sir.”

CONVEX: “Well, can you at least knock the volume down a notch: that fiddle frequency’s just chiggin’ out my ears.” He makes a quick, repeated stabbing motion toward his ear with the bill.

BOB nods, and looks at the jukebox.

BOB: “You kinda look like a rocker. I think there’s some Skynyrd and Eagles on there. Good enough?”

CONVEX gets a glassy eyed gaze, and there is a blur transition to a fantasy scene of the bar. He is sitting alone at the booth, and “Freebird” is playing.

JUKEBOX: “If I leave here tomorrow....”

CONVEX gets a look of utter disgust and stands up, whipping out his pistol. He cracks off four shots in rapid succession into the jukebox; the machine (and music) die with sparks. Complete silence, as everyone stares slack-jawed at CONVEX.

REGULAR: “I like that song.”

CONVEX shoots REGULAR from across the room, hitting him between the eyes. He falls with a thump.

Cut to close-up of CONVEX.

CONVEX: “I *don’t*.”

Reverse fantasy blur to bring back the present.

CONVEX: “*Please*.” Drops the money on the tabletop. “No Skynyrd. Just *trust me* on that.”

BOB continues to stare at him.

CONVEX: “Did I mention a menu?”

BOB: “Yeah.” Doesn’t leave.

CONVEX downs the rest of his drink.

CONVEX: “Actually, I’ll take another, plus a coffee straight up on the side. With that menu.”

BOB: “Sure. Did Belle start a tab for you?”

CONVEX: “Not that I saw.”

BOB: “Well, I’ll get one going for ya. What’s yer name, son?”

CONVEX: “Booth Number 7.”

BOB smiles condescendingly and finally leaves the booth. Walks to the bar, over to BELLE.

BOB: “He wants a menu, another russian coffee, and a side of coffee.”

BELLE: “Is there a full moon or something?”

BOB: “Let me know if he orders.”

Camera tracks BOB across the bar, through the kitchen, and into a small office. BOB picks up the phone; we hear 3 touch-tones [9 1 1]

BOB: “Hey, who is this? Ruth?... ..oh, sorry Hannah. This is Bob out at the Bunker.... ..Well, I’m not so sure. Jeff still there?... ..Actually, can I talk to him?... ..sure.... ..Sheriff? It’s Bob out at the Bunker... ..well, not yet... ..*Hehe*, last call won’t be for another few hours... ..This is true, but let me tell you ahead of time: I got some weirdo freak in here. He hasn’t actually *done* anything, but he’s flashing a lot of money... ..No idea; sounds like from up north. And he has friends driving in to meet him, too.... ..Well, I can’t rightly say, other than my *gut* tells me there’s something *wrong* here... ..Jeff, I’d appreciate that. Let me ask you: what time do you get off duty? ...Uh huh, well, I think he’ll still be here by then, so if you wanna stop on in for a freshly grilled catfish hoagie... ..Fine, fine. Like I said, I might well be overreacting, but Belle picked up on it, too... ..She’s fine; out manning the front... ..Fine. So stop on by in a few hours.”

BOB hangs up phone, rummages on desk for a pack of cigarettes. Pulls one out, and tosses the pack back on the desk.

20)

Cut to: pack of Wisp cigarettes landing on the floor of Alana’s apartment.

(MUFON coughs violently off screen)

Cut to ALANA, looking concerned.

ALANA: “You should really cut down; that sounds terrible.”

MUFON: “You should hear me when I *don’t* smoke.” MUFON heads into the bathroom, closes the door, and flips up the toilet seat. He hovers over the bowl, gets clammy and after a moment convulses. A dry-heave wracks his body, but he doesn’t spew. It happens again; he looks like a cat having a furball. Puts an arm out to brace himself against the wall.

ALANA (off screen, muffled by door): “You okay, Randy?”

MUFON (strangled): “Yeah.” Takes a deep breath, repeats “Yeah” more clearly. Shakes head, tries to get up, but spins dizzily and falls to the floor.

Cut to: low-angle floor shot of bathroom light over mirror, blurring and morphing into the next scene.

21)

Morph into dawn, sun rising over Alps crag. The view is quite beautiful. Morning noises (birds, etc.) Shot pans back to show PEGASUS sitting on a bench, taking in the view. He is still not completely awake.

COUNT [off screen]: “Ah, I had wondered when I had started up the path if I would find someone already here,,,” walks into shot, “,,,and I find that it is you.”

PEGASUS (still looking at the panorama): “Morning.”

COUNT (sits on the edge of the bench): “Heh, yes, it is.” Looks at the view, takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly. “Ahhh, I love the air, here, no? It is good to fill your body with it, first thing in the morning. Your brain has purer oxygen to work with from the start of the day.”

PEGASUS ignores him.

COUNT: “Hey, have you seen the Madonna?”

PEGASUS (turns to him, puzzled): “I’m sorry?”

COUNT (smiles, points to the peak the sun is rising behind): “That peak. The erosion kind of makes it look human, like a woman with long hair in profile.”

Cut to scene of peak, sun still rising behind it. It does have a *vague* anthropomorphic form.



ie: "Madonna with Child" spire
in Sedona, Arizona

PEGASUS (off screen): “I don’t see it.”

COUNT: “Hehe, neither did I at first. But one night, many, many decades ago, we had come here with our Tent, and our Lamp, and our Tent, and our Lamp, and we do *not* increase the dose, except that night is a *special occasion*. Come the morning, I look out of the Tent, and I see that spire there. The sun was rising behind it like now, but it was at the top. Look like a halo. And I thought to myself, *hehe*, Madonna with a halo. Several of us saw it. Enough that the di Medicigan built us this bench should we wish to sit and see the Madonna at dawn again.”

PEGASUS: “Still don’t see it.”

COUNT: “Maybe psilocybin helps.” *Chuckles*, then holds up a finger. “Hey, you ask Hassan. He was there. I bet he remember seeing Madonna.”

PEGASUS ignores him.

COUNT: “Hey, where is your master, anyway?”

PEGASUS (gives him the same look and smile that HASSAN did when asked the same question in Scene 18): “Back at the suite, packing.”

COUNT: “*Ah*, you are leaving for America, then?”

PEGASUS: “Yeah.”

COUNT: “You will be taking your book with you?”

PEGASUS: “Yeah.”

COUNT: “*Bah*. This is too bad for me.” *Pause*, coy smile. “And too bad for Mr. Penguin, too, *eh?*”

PEGASUS looks at him sideways, poker faced.

COUNT: “*Ah*, you know that the Penguin got iced.”

PEGASUS: “I heard it.”

COUNT: “Admittedly my mind immediately sprung to you as doing this, but di Medicigan thinks it was the Centaur.”

PEGASUS: “That’s funny, ’cuz that’s who I heard it from.”

COUNT: “Oh, you two talk?”

PEGASUS: “Time to time.”

COUNT: “Ah, keep your friends within reach,” (holds out an arm) “But your enemies close, *eh?*” folds arm in as if hugging someone around the neck, then makes a fist and a knife-in-the-back motion.

PEGASUS (smiles wryly): “Something like that.”

COUNT: “I am actually curious: what did Centaur say of the Penguin?”

PEGASUS: “He said Penguin was a bit player not even worthy of a pawn.”

COUNT: “And what did *you* think of the Penguin?”

PEGASUS: “At the auction Penguin struck me as small fry and harmless.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, that cock-blocker was an asshole, and it is rare the asshole who is harmless.”

PEGASUS: “Centaur said he had no portfolio. He gave me the impression he didn’t think Penguin would be missed by anyone important.”

COUNT: “Well, di Medicigan misses him; it was he who invited him to the auction, after all. And you know what? Even *I* kind of miss him. *Hehe*, he added color. That boy had some big bales of flax to say that to Spumoni. Of course, if he had tried that cock-blocking crap on *me* and *my* heritage, I’d have ripped off his nipples and epoxied them to his eyelids!”

PEGASUS: “It’s too early in the morning for images like that.”

COUNT nods, takes another slow breath. They sit in silence, taking in the day.

PEGASUS: “How are things back in the homeland?”

COUNT: “*Bah!* Still tied up in court. The bastards are actually making me come to the Hague for it. The accused has a right to see who is accusing them, and I am accusing the bastards of stealing my ancestral land. *Bah*, it is a delaying tactic legal formality; do not get me started.”

PEGASUS: “Never been to the Hague.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, I spend as little time in the lowlands as possible. The ground does not feel right under my bare feet. But it is not for a couple of days, so I am flying to Crete first.”

PEGASUS: “Never been to Crete, either.”

COUNT: “I have scouts among the archaeology digs down there. One of them tells me a rare and unusual sculpture just turned up in a bank vault deposit box. He has piqued my interest, so I go check it out. I have a soft spot for sculpture.”

PEGASUS: “Hassan once said that you had one of the arms from the Venus di Milo, and had broken off 3 of the fingers at the knuckle so it looked like it was flipping a bird.” PEGASUS demonstrates.

COUNT (outraged): “He told you about *that*?!? *Bah!* You tell that Farsi cocksucker to go *fuck* himself! See if I ever invite him to *my* castle again!”

Both turn back to the panorama.

PEGASUS: “Hey,” and extends arm toward the peak, “Is that what you were talking about?”

Cut to: mountain peak with sun behind it. View blurs/morphs into next scene.

22)

Blur/morph in a neon beer sign, roughly shaped like the preceding scene. Shot pans down and out to show Bob’s Baseball Bunker.

SHERIFF walks in (armed and in uniform), waves at BELLE, and walks straight up to the bar. He deliberately ignores CONVEX, who is watching him intently.

BELLE: “Evenin’, Sheriff. How you doing tonight? Just getting off duty?”

SHERIFF pulls up to a stool at the bar that gives him an askew view of CONVEX.

SHERIFF: “Yeah, Vern caught the Forrest brothers up at the high school spray-painting Ozzy Osbourne lyrics on the principle’s parking space. Quiet night, otherwise. Bob still here? I was hoping to catch a catfish hoagie before heading home.”

Cut to CONVEX's hand sliding under the table; rests on his crotch, with the fingers inside his jacket so he can make a quick grab for his gun.

BOB is at the other end of the bar, chatting with REGULAR and TRAILER TRASH GIRLFRIEND.

BELLE [off screen]: "Bob?" BOB turns to look at her. "Is the grill still on?"

BOB nods, then sees the SHERIFF sitting next to her. Waves.

BELLE: "Take a catfish hoagie."

SHERIFF: "Chips too, and no pickle this time."

BOB (grins): "You just won't let me forget that, will you?" Excuses himself from REGULAR, and heads back into the kitchen.

Cut to CONVEX, watching the SHERIFF and BELLE at the bar. She asks the SHERIFF something, he shrugs and points at one of the taps. BELLE goes to pour him a pint of red beer. CONVEX looks at his watch: 11:23.

23)

Cut to: wall-mounted clock reading 11:23. Shot pans back to show it is the clock on Nimbus's wall in his computer room. A single green fly (the BEELZEBUG) lands on it briefly, zips off; will be heard sporadically [with 2 others] throughout scene. Camera continues panback to show PROP: sitting on the floor, back against the wall, looking through a thick sheaf of papers and printouts. As view pans, we hear a page turn off-screen. Camera focuses on entry to library room; WILSON is leaning back in a chair, reading a Kircher print-out.

OFFICER DECONS leans into the open door.

OFFICER DECONS: "I'm going home."

WILSON (without looking up): "Alright."

PROP (off screen): "Night."

OFFICER DECONS exits.

PROP (off screen): "Will, I'm probably gonna pack it in, too."

WILSON: "I'm still plowing through Kircher's commentary on the book. This is *painful* to read. It's all flowery fluff bragging about himself and how he cracked the language."

PROP (off screen): "Oh? How did he crack it, anyway?"

WILSON: "Hasn't said yet, but it seemed to be with the help of the Holy Spirit. That's who he gave credit to, and then went off on a tangent about the Book of Acts, and how the Holy Spirit gave the Apostles glossalalia at Pentecost, so they could speak and read all tongues."

PROP wanders in.

PROP: “Sounds like standard pious Jesuit fare.”

WILSON: “Probably.”

PROP: “Hey, mind if I smoke in here?”

WILSON: “I don’t remember seeing an ashtray, so sure, if you can keep it clean.”

PROP shrugs and lights up. WILSON returns to the papers.

PROP: “Noon blue apples. Sounds like a good name for a bad band.”

WILSON: “Huh; I was thinking the title of a collection of poetry, by some nature-loving poet like Whitman or Emily What’s-Her-Dickens.”

PROP (points at Kircher Yale book on the floor, open to conspicuous plant illustrations): “I don’t think those are the Leaves of Grass that Whitman meant.” *Puff*. “So does he say what the book or language is?”

WILSON: “He claims the writing’s a cipher, which he only broke through the Holy Spirit. He calls the contents blasphemous; I think the term he used was ‘compendium of heretical horticulture and alchemy.’ Right now he’s rambling about the Deuteronomy injunction against astrology.”

PROP: “It’s stone ya to death, isn’t it?”

WILSON: “Yeah.”

PROP: “Right; I couldn’t remember from [judaic sabbath school].”

WILSON: “Oh, are you Jewish?”

PROP: “Well, there’s nothing ‘ish’ about it: either you’re a Jew or you aren’t. No ish.”

WILSON: “What about the Amish?”

PROP (chuckles): “Anyway, I am, but I practice sporadically. That’s why I wasn’t sure if it was stone ya for stargazing or not.” PROP pulls up sleeve: there is a tattoo in Hebrew of Leviticus 19:28 circling his bicep.

WILSON: “Neat; what’s it say.”

PROP: “ ‘Thou shalt not tattoo thyself.’ It’s from Leviticus.”

WILSON: “You’re about to ash.”

PROP sees this, and cups his hand under it. He retreats back to the desk and taps the ash into the empty Gatorade bottle. Shot freezes.

24)

Identical empty Gatorade, on the bar of Bob's Baseball Bunker. BELLE grabs it and throws it in the trash. Over the jukebox, Neil Young's "Country Home" starts up. Camera pans to show outside window, view of parking lot. 3 motorcycles pull up: a Harley easy rider and 2 crotch-rockets. Headlights shine in brightly, then die. CHUBBS get off the Harley, and VIXEN and FOX get off the crotchrockets. They come in, taking off their helmets. VIXEN spots CONVEX, nods, and leads the others back to his booth.

VIXEN: "Convex!"

CONVEX: "Convixen." Thin smile.

VIXEN (to FOX and CHUBBS): "He's Convex, so he used to call me Convixen." CHUBBS and FOX smile politely. She turns to CONVEX, and introduces "Fox and Chubbs."

CONVEX (low voice): "Before you sit down, you saw the bar, right?"

Cut to the three of them facing table; in the background SHERIFF is animatedly telling a story with a half-eaten hoagie in his hand, but his head is tilted enough to watch. VIXEN, FOX, and CHUBBS nod.

FOX: "Should we move somewhere else?"

CONVEX: "I doubt this town has a lot of "Somewhere else's" open right now."

CHUBBS: "Well, do we have anything to worry about anyway? I gather we're not actually doing anything illegal, or at least that would be recognized as such by some hick sheriff?" He looks at CONVEX to see if he agrees.

CONVEX nods, and puts Mufon's laptop on the table.

Close-up of laptop: it is cracked open, with a ball-point pen wedged in. The lock is pried, tampered with.

After a moment, a cd in a jewelcase slides across the table and lands next to it; it is elegantly labeled "Scrub 3".

FOX (off camera): "That what you're after?"

CONVEX: "Yeah." He swings out of the booth. "Cool; I'll let you get started. Right now I gotta take a piss."

VIXEN: "Me too, actually. Where's the lady's room?"

CONVEX (to VIXEN): "I'll show you." (to CHUBBS and FOX) "Don't close it, or it might lock again. I'll be back in a squirt or two." FOX sits down in the open booth, and CHUBBS takes CONVEX's seat so he can watch the SHERIFF. Camera follows CONVEX and VIXEN through the bar, to a small, walled alcove where the payphone and restrooms are. When the two are hidden from the bar, they immediately kiss and paw each other. He pushes her against the wall, grinding against her unabashedly. She is more than willing in reciprocation.

VIXEN: "How much time do we have?"

CONVEX: "Depends on your friends, and how fast they can fix it."

VIXEN pushes CONVEX into the ladies room. Shot holds on door. Sound of zippers being undone.

CONVEX [off screen]: "I don't have a rubber."

VIXEN [off camera]: “I bought a box last time we stopped for gas.”

Sound of stall door being opened, with giggling.

Cut to FOX and CHUBBS in booth. Laptop is open, facing CHUBBS; screen is blank except for a progress bar, 1/4 of the way. FOX is on a cellphone, finishing up a conversation.

FOX (to CHUBBS): “Where are we again?”

CHUBBS (watching bar): “Martinsburg.”

FOX (into phone): “Martinsburg... ..uh huh... ..well, it wasn’t *that* much of a detour, so this shouldn’t set us back by more than a couple hours. ... depends how well this little mission of mercy works, maybe 3, 4 hours, including travel time....” In background, VIXEN comes out of the bathroom, looking flushed and coy. Slides into booth next to FOX.

VIXEN: “How’s it coming?”

CHUBBS (slyly): “You tell me.”

She smiles smugly at him and looks over at FOX.

FOX (still on the phone): “Yeah, we’ll still make it, just later than we planned.... ..Okay, Dawn, we’ll see you soon... bye.” Hits disconnect.

CHUBBS: “Waitress warning.”

BELLE has come out from behind the bar, and is walking toward the booth, menus in hand. CHUBBS puts the pen in the hinge and lowers the lid.

BELLE: “Howdy.”

CHUBBS: “Evenin, ma’am.”

BELLE: “Your friend’s been camped out here for a while, and I have a hunch that y’all’re gone a settin’ up tents yerselves, so what can I get to start off?”

CHUBBS: “Take a Gatorade, if you got one, or some sports drink. Anything with electrolytes.”

BELLE: “Son, Gatorade’s what we call a *seasonal* item ’round here. We only got it during the summer, and even then just mixed with rum after a game. *No one* drinks it straight up...”

CHUBBS: “Okay, don’t suppose you have espresso?”

BELLE: “Normally yes, but it’s been so popular the machine broke down through continuous use.”

VIXEN: “Is your kitchen is still open?”

BELLE: “To the chagrin of our long-suffering cook, it’s *always* open.”

FOX: “Well, we’re low-maintenance.” Smiles flirtatiously with BELLE.

BELLE: “I *see*.”

VIXEN: “What kind of cheese you got?”

BELLE: [robotically, like a Manchurian Candidate]: “American, cheddar, swiss, and provolone,, [returns to normal] “*Um*, but it’s all in strips, for burgers and hoagies and stuff. We got mozzarella sticks, I guess.”

CHUBBS: “Tell you what, to start, can we get three coffees?”

FOX: “How’s the water?”

BELLE: “Fresh from the well out back.”

FOX: “Oh good! I’m sure it will be naturally delicious. A glass of that, if you please.”

BELLE: “Y’all wanna start your own tab, or should I put this on your friend’s?”

CHUBBS (scoffing, as if it wasn’t even an issue): “Oh, *him*, of course. Make that evil fiend pay for this mission of mercy.” FOX nods in complete agreement.

VIXEN reaches out and tilts CONVEX’s cup, to see how much is in it. Residue.

VIXEN: “And get a refill for him, too.”

BELLE: “Sure. Where is your friend, anyway?”

Cut to: ladies’ room interior. 2 stalls are aligned; shot is from the side, showing the wall of one. In the far stall, CONVEX’s feet are seen, his pants down around his ankles. Sound of a cocaine-type snort can be heard, followed by another in rapid succession. Silence, then sound of unrolling of a lot of toilet paper, and then a hearty nose honk.

Sound of door opening, boots walking on tile. In the nearer stall, the SHERIFF’s legs come in. Sound of unzipping, and then urination, very brief.

SHERIFF: “Guess you had the same problem I did: men’s room was full.” *Zip*. “Bob swears that Otis lives in that one stall.” *Silence*. “What do you think?” *Silence*. “*Huh?*”

CONVEX [from behind stall]: “Wouldn’t know, officer.”

Brief sound of flush, and SHERIFF’s legs turn around. CONVEX’s stay put.

SHERIFF: “*Sheriff*, actually. Sheriff Jefferson Davis the Second.” *Silence*. “And *you* are...?”

CONVEX: “Just passing through.”

SHERIFF: “Where you passin’ through *to*?”

CONVEX: “New Mexico.”

SHERIFF: “That right? Where you comin’ from?”

CONVEX: “New Mexico.”

SHERIFF: “Get lost?”

CONVEX: “I *knew* I shoulda taken that left turn at Albuquerque.”

Long pause.

Sound of CONVEX unrolling some toilet paper.

Long silence.

Sound of more toilet paper being unwound.

SHERIFF: “Damn, son, you alright in there? Y’know, it kinda smells like *fish* in here.”

CONVEX: “Yeah, I’m fine. Food’s just a little greasier than I’m used to.”

Cut to menu. Various food items typical to bars are listed, all of them vegan-unfriendly. FOX’s index finger traces down the list; her nail is painted the same shade of green as Moleback’s.

FOX (voiceover): “Oh no, I can’t eat *any* of these.”

BELLE (voiceover): “Sorry, but Bob says frying in animal fat adds flavor.”

VIXEN: “I’ll just take the motz sticks, but with barbecue sauce to dip them in.”

Cut to laptop: it *beeps* once.

CHUBBS uses the pen to lift the lid up, to see what it says.

Scrub failed. Do you wish to retry? y/n

During this, FOX is talking to waitress:

FOX (off screen): “Do you have any raw fruit or vegetables? I’ll just take a whole onion and a couple of whole bell peppers, and eat them like an apple. I would appreciate it if you would thoroughly wash them in ice cold water first, to get any pesticides off.”

CHUBBS closes the lid on the pen.

CHUBBS: “Crap.”

Cut to BELLE, holding her order pad and a pen.

BELLE (to CHUBBS): “You want *fries* with that crap, hon?” Smiles sourly.

CHUBBS: “Actually, just a top-off on the coffee. We’ll be leaving shortly.”

BELLE: “Oh? Well, hell, let me go get that coffee right away.” Turns to the girls. “If your friend’s leaving you still want them veggies?”

FOX and VIXEN look at CHUBBS, who glances at the laptop and shakes his head.

FOX: “Just coffee top-offs, I guess.”

BELLE (sounding the most enthusiastic of the evening): “Should I close y’all out?”

CHUBBS: “Hey, that’s all on Convex’s tab, so do what you want when he gets back.”

VIXEN reaches across the table and sticks her finger in Convex’s coffee cup, shrugs that it’s still hot enough not to order a fresh one.

BELLE eagerly leaves to go get the coffee pot. CHUBBS watches her off, and when she can’t hear, he leans forward over the laptop.

CHUBBS: “Didn’t work.”

FOX: “Wow, what the fuck kind of virus hit his machine?”

VIXEN: “He didn’t say; he just said it was bad enough to need Scrub 3.”

CHUBBS: “Well, whatever hit his laptop has scorched it. This thing’s a crispy critter; no way to save or retrieve anything on here.”

VIXEN: “Oh, that’s too bad. But at least the detour wasn’t a total waste,” and she grins lustily.

FOX: “God, we detoured all the way into bum-fuck Appalachia for a goddamn booty call.”

VIXEN (husky but overly-melodramatic): “What can I say, I got needs, and neither of you ain’t putting out.” Leans into FOX, smiling.

FOX: “Not to *you*, cheese-eater.” She grins, and then licks the tip of VIXEN’s nose before turning to CHUBBS, who is watching this amusedly. “I’m still kinda curious to know what could withstand a third-degree Scrub.” Indicates the laptop. “That thing’s got one bad-ass bug in it. Could you even tell what it was?”

CHUBBS: “Naw. I’d need a diagnosis program to identify it. I don’t got one on me; I’m guessing you don’t either?” The girls shake their heads briefly. “Whatever it is, only way to kill this virus is to wipe the drive clean and reformat from scratch. It’s a nice box, near as I can tell, and it should run fine from a fresh start format. Otherwise, junk it.”

FOX: “Well, that’s his call, and he can make it when he gets back. We’ll tell him and split.” The other two agree, though VIXEN only half-heartedly.

CHUBBS ejects the scrub disc, and puts it back in the jewel case. He shoves it across the table to FOX, and sips his coffee. Looks at laptop.

CHUBBS: “Vixen, *did* he say this was *his* lap?”

VIXEN: “Um, I don’t know. I guess. I just assumed so.”

CHUBBS: “Just wondering about the lock.”

FOX: “I saw that, and specifically decided not to ask.”

VIXEN: “I don’t know. Maybe he lost the key. Ask him when he gets back.”

FOX: “Where the hell is he, anyway?”

Cut to women’s room; same side-stall angle as before.

SHERIFF: “...get a couple Andy Griffith/Mayberry jokes now’n again, but at least we don’t got crack or smack in our schools, and come Sunday Sabbath, you walk into church you’ll find near-full attendance, half-of who’m actually *want* to be there.”

[long *pause*]

CONVEX: “The Sabbath’s on Saturday.”

SHERIFF: “Come ’gain?”

Pause, then sounds of toilet paper unrolling. CONVEX blows his nose. Stands up in stall; sounds of his pants fastening. After a moment, the toilet flushes. Under this, the sound of CONVEX cocking his pistol’s hammer back. Sound of toilet stops, and we hear the sound of the doorlatch opening, the squeak of unoled hinges.

Cut to: booth. BELLE is topping off coffees; it is steaming hot.

CHUBBS: “Thank ye, ma’am.”

BELLE (smiles unctuously): “If you don’t mind my askin’, where’re y’all from?”

FOX and VIXEN (and **CHUBBS**, off-screen) in unison: “Canada.”

BELLE nods, somehow believing this to explain their eccentricities. She walks off to the bar; camera follows. She gets to the bar, where BOB is closing out REGULAR’s tab at the cash register. BELLE sidles up to BOB, waves good night to REGULAR, and nods her head toward the booth.

BELLE: “Canadians.”

BOB gets a Zen-like look of understanding. Looks at the cash drawer, which is still open.

BOB: “Hey, that half-hundred you got, that wasn’t Canadian, was it?”

BELLE: “No...” pulls it out to make sure. “Yeah, it’s U.S.” They both look at it. (*aside*) “You know, I wonder...”

BELLE reaches over to the till and pulls out a counterfeit detection pen. She puts the bill on the bar and draws a mark. BOB looks over her shoulder eagerly.

BOB: “Shit, what is that? I can’t tell in the light.”

Off-screen, a muffled yelp of pain.

BELLE and BOB quickly lookup.

Off-screen, gunshot.

BOB and BELLE quickly look to the bathroom.

Cut to booth: all heads snap to the bathroom.

CHUBBS: “Oh shit.”

FOX (turns around to address the others): “Let’s bail.”

CHUBBS (starts sliding out of the booth) “I’m already gone.”

VIXEN is still frozen, staring at the bathroom. FOX nudges her in the belly to get her to move. She gets out awkwardly. CHUBBS realizes he forgot his helmet, so reaches in to get it. As he grabs it, he looks at the laptop. Quick glance to the bathroom, and he yanks out the power cord from under the table; it quickly begins winding back into the laptop, and is completely retracted by the time CHUBBS is out of the booth with it.

Once VIXEN is out, camera follows her as she goes quickly to the bathroom area. She pushes open the men’s room door.

Cut to shot of men’s room; mirror shot of how the ladies room is. The far stall is occupied and has fat pants pulled around ankles.

VIXEN: “Convex?”

OTIS (behind stall): “Other room, ma’am.”

In the background, the sounds of 2 motorcycles revving to life.

VIXEN lets the door shut, and opens the ladies' room. From over VIXEN’s shoulder, we can see the SHERIFF dead. VIXEN sees enough, lets the door close, and turns to run. She encounters BELLE, looking terrified, and BOB, uncertain.

VIXEN: “Call 9-1-1.”

BOB moves beyond, to investigate. BELLE stares at VIXEN for a second, then flees to the bar. Camera follows BELLE. The few patrons are looking around in puzzlement, or oblivious. BELLE grabs the phone, and dials (as in rotary phone) three numbers.

BELLE (to phone): “Ruth?... Oh, sorry Hannah. This is Belle out at the Bunker.... Someone just shot the Sheriff, or the Sheriff just shot someone, but...”

Loud roar of a motorcycle starting up; a sole headlight flashes through the window, and VIXEN peels out. Shot pans to follow her through the window, rests on a glass of water on the wooden bar. Noises fade to silence.

25)

Cut to: similar glass of water on an identically-grained table. Sound of door closing, and ripples go through the water. Camera pans back to reveal PEGASUS’s suite [same as Scene 5.] PEGASUS walks into shot.

HASSAN (off screen): “Oh, you scuff your shoe!”

Cut to shoe, badly scuffed.

PEGASUS (off camera): “The rocks had dew on them, and I slipped on my way up.”

HASSAN: “Oh, the shoe-shine bag is packed right now, but you give to Hassan. He take care for you. Hassan fix everything.”

PEGASUS: “I saw the Madonna. And her halo.”

HASSAN (amused): “What? You saw the Count’s Madonna? God, it was all he talked about that day. We figured it was just the psilocybin.”

PEGASUS: “Oh, you didn’t see it?”

HASSAN (grins mischievously): “No. While the Count was out sun worshipping, Hassan was in the Tent romping with the Count’s mistress.”

PEGASUS smiles wryly at this, prompting HASSAN to grin more. He pulls up a pant leg.

Quick cut to: gnarled old kneecap. A wizened finger points to a small inch-long scar.

HASSAN (voice-over): “That is from the *Lamp*.”

PEGASUS: “How are we coming along in here?”

HASSAN: “We are all packed. Your toiletries are in a bag in the bathroom, if you had wished to shower first.”

PEGASUS: “Hassan, you read my mind.”

HASSAN: “Hassan do that sometime. It is the fez.”

PEGASUS (begins taking off shirt): “I need a shower anyway. When I got back off the path, di Medicigan was in the garden, having tea with Spumoni.”

HASSAN: “Do you mean spumoni the dessert, or Spumoni the Prince of the Church?”

PEGASUS: “Cardinal Spumoni. That guy’s just naturally *slimy*, and every time I’m around him, I feel like it somehow osmosises onto me.”

HASSAN: “*Ah*, it is the olive oil. He eat *nothing* else. Your predecessor, he once have dinner with Spumoni, when he was ordain Bishop of Milan. Hassan ask him who he’s going to eat with, and he say ‘the next Pope.’ *Haha*. But he say later that Spumoni ate nothing but fresh-baked bread and extra virgin olive oil the whole night. Hassan hear same from others who have dines with him, too. A diet like that, it comes out in the skin.”

PEGASUS goes into bathroom.

HASSAN: “So what did you, di Medicigan, and Spumoni talk about?”

PEGASUS: “The future of flax.”

HASSAN (laughs politely): “But there is no problem?”

PEGASUS: “There *are* problems, but they’re not mine.”

HASSAN: “*Ah*. This is glad.”

PEGASUS: “Okay, so call down and get a car ready. You can also start taking our bags down.”

HASSAN: “Hassan is pleased to be your beast of burden, sir.”

Bathroom door closes. HASSAN goes to a screen on the wall; it has a painting of a landscape. He touches it, and it turns into a computer screen, as in Scene 5.

Close-up: HASSAN touches a button marked “Front Desk”

FRONT DESK (in Italian): “Scrittorio anteriore.”

HASSAN: “Hello, this is Hassan. Can you have a car brought around for us, and a couple of flunkies sent up to take down our bags?”

FRONT DESK (in English): “Yes sir. Anything else?” Sounds of typing. From the bathroom, the shower starts.

HASSAN: “No. You have a nice day.”

The screen goes back to the menu; we see HASSAN’s reflection in it. HASSAN looks at the bathroom door, then goes to the bed, rifles through his bags, and finds a small book. Returns to screen flipping through it.

Quick cut to book: dual columns of Voynich script, like an address/phone number book.

Cut to HASSAN, changing the screen to look like a telephone pad. Looking back and forth between the book and the screen, he dials a long number and waits patiently.

Cut to: receptionist [MARY] on screen, wearing a headset. She is 30, and nondescript. She looks out professionally, but shows happy surprise at seeing HASSAN.

HASSAN: “Mary, *haha*, Hassan had hoped it would be you who answered. You are the most beautiful of all the girls there in the Bat Cave.” MARY blushes and looks away coyly, obviously falling for the false flattery. “This is Hassan. You need to get a message to the Centaur and have him call me within the next fifteen minutes. It cannot be after that. He will understand.”

MARY: “Well, I’ll *try*...”

HASSAN: “Hassan understands if it cannot be done, but it is much worth the effort. You get dozen roses from Hassan if you can get him the Centaur. And it is likely the Centaur give you dozen roses too, for what Hassan has to tell him is important.”

MARY: “You can be reached at this number?”

HASSAN: “Yes. It is the di Medicigan villa, he will probably have to go through the switchboard.”

MARY nods.

HASSAN: “Goodbye Mary” and hits the disconnect. Screen goes back to menu. HASSAN hits ‘picture’ and it turns into a yacht on the sea.

Camera pans to other side of the room, where there is a clock. 9:23

Shot blurs, fades back on clock: 9:34

Shot pans to show room. HASSAN is on the edge of the bed, polishing the badly scuffed shoe. Half the luggage is gone. The shower is still going [will run through scene]

Telephone *rings*. There is an ornate 1950s-style phone right below the picture-phone on the wall—same from Scene 5. HASSAN drops the shoe and leaps to get it.

HASSAN: “Hello? ...*Aah!* This is good! Glad to see that Mary is as talented as she is beautiful.... ...Yes, he is in the shower, but you will forgive Hassan if he suddenly hangs up on you?... ...*Ah*... ...No, no, that is no problem. I am sure you do not wish to see Hassan’s wizened face, anyway, *eh?* *Haha*, good... ...well, my friend Centaur. Some people are not pleased with the icing of the Penguin. You may have thought he was a pawn player with no portfolio, but it would seem the Penguin was connected enough that your response has been deemed, *eh*, *drastic*... ...*Haha*, hey you don’t have to tell *Hassan!* You should have seen what the Shah did to the Ba’abists. That was fucking *brutal*, but even half the Ba’abists still lived to tell the tale... ...Yes, these thing happens. But it *shouldn’t* have. My friend, that has always been one of your greatest strengths and weaknesses: you don’t delegate to the less-enthusiastic.” [pause, long enough to say ‘if you want something done your way...’] “...do it yourself! *Haha*, true. As Hassan said, it is also a strength, but don’t let your zeal for being *hands on* be your downfall. Hassan would miss you... ...*Haha*, you know, di Medicigan, he no call you the Centaur, he call you the Cowboy... ...*Hahahaha*, well, Hassan hopes you never call him that to his face! But listen, my friend, the icing of the Penguin, do not let this be your downfall... ...*Ah*, Hassan will put this in way you can appreciate: the Penguin may have been fair game play-wise, but he should have been *invested* or *neutralized*, not *taken out* of play completely. You overreacted, and the Referees are thinking of calling a foul on you... ...No, Hassan does not know, but possibly some type of penalty, and to be blunt, if you fuck up again, you may well get ejected yourself, yes?... ...*Haha*, touché, my friend. Yes, but the other game players may not take that point of view. You should watch yourself carefully, Centaur, and possibly think about atoning for your actions on the board... ...*Oh*, you are welcome. Your predecessor, he make Hassan promise that he watch out for you. Beside, Hassan had meant it when he said he would miss you if you weren’t around. *Hehe*, you add color. ...*Haha*, thank you...” HASSAN looks at bathroom door.

Cut to bathroom door; shower is still on, various showering noises can be heard. Very faintly, PEGASUS can be heard singing the theme from The Love Boat.

HASSAN: “Yes he is; how long have we been talking?... ...Maybe another 5 to 15 minutes... ...*Ah hah*, sure... ...The book? Oh, we have only skimmed it; he is going to read it cover to cover on the flight back... ...yes, a compendium... ...*ah*, nothing you don’t know already, but maybe not explained in this way... ...yes, they are nice. La Nada, of course. Hassan has made color copy of it already, so he can read it on the flight back too. Pegasus has asked me to burn them when we get back, but... ...*Haha*, Lugosovich already has... ...*haha*, how much flax? My friend, they are worth much more than *that*.” (catches himself sheepishly, then gets all apologetic) “Oh, listen to Hassan — he sound like the Count...”

Shot has been panning slightly, and focuses on a screen/painting of the yacht in the water.

26)

Cut to: Large yacht, sailing out of a port in the Aegean, as close to painting from previous scene as possible.

COUNT (off screen): “*Bah!*”

Cut to Captain's Cabin. OWNER sits behind desk, DEALER to side, and COUNT in front. On the desk is a small, *extremely* ugly wooden sculpture.

COUNT (outraged): "Do not even *bother* naming a price! I would not give you the flies off my *shit* for that abomination! I am outraged a tree had to *die* for this artistic abortion!"

DEALER: "Count Lugosovich, it *is* an authentic Bramante."

COUNT: "*Bah!* If this is an example of Bramante's sculpture, Pope Julius was lucky he only had Bramante *design* the Sistine Chapel, not actually *build* it. I would not commission him to carve the notches in my bedpost!"

OWNER (shrugs): "That's fine if you don't like it; I'm sure I can unload it on a museum for a hundred grand or so."

COUNT: "The museum would have to pay people to enter the room with this in it." (To DEALER) "I am very disappointed in you. I flew all the way out to Crete for this? I should cut off your ballsack and use it for bait fishing off the back of this boat."

OWNER: "Actually, I was gonna offer to do some fishing after we dealt with this..."

COUNT: "No, turn this tub around. There is nothing here I want, except to leave."

DEALER: "Excuse me, Count?"

COUNT glares at him and is about to harangue, but DEALER speaks up for himself.

DEALER: "There are two things about this sculpture that caught my attention and made me think you'd be interested, and I think you haven't noticed them yet."

COUNT cocks his eye, but holds his tongue.

DEALER: "First, if you look closely at the grain of the wood, it's very vaginal in places. Some of the knots suggest clitorises."

COUNT turns to the sculpture, but then looks away with a dismissive wave.

COUNT: "*Bah*, it is too ugly to look at to find them." The OWNER leans in curiously to see.

DEALER: "Second, Donato Bramante was mostly known for his architecture, but also his paintings, and to much lesser extent his sculpture. I know you own a building and some paintings of his, and I believe even a marble sculpture or two which came with the building. But this is *wood*. A different medium, one I was not even aware Bramante dabbled in until Mr. [OWNER]'s grandmother passed away and this was discovered amongst her possessions. So it is not only unique, but if you got it, you would have a complete set of his *style*."

COUNT tilts his head at the DEALER, and then looks at the sculpture. He even leans in for a close look.

COUNT: "Hey, those do look like pussy." Thinks it over for a second. "*Ah*, you make a good point. Two, actually. Why not." (To OWNER): "Hey, I give you ton of flax for it."

OWNER (frowns): "*Um...*"

COUNT: "*Ah*, one hundred thousand euro. *Ohhhh*, make it two; after all, it *is* a Bramante."

OWNER is surprised, but then nods happily.

COUNT (to DEALER): “Hey, you good guy after all. Your ballsack off the hook if we go fishing later.”

OWNER: “That was a serious offer, actually. There’s a great place a kilometer up current that rarely does me wrong. I brought my personal chef on board, and if we catch something good was going to offer to cook it up fresh for us.”

COUNT: “No, I do not to eat seafood. Fish swim in the same water they shit and fuck in, and I can still taste that no matter how well the thing is cleaned. But I do enjoy the sport of fishing, even if I do not eat what I catch. The idea of some leisurely fishing is a nice one; it is a good day out, and we can talk while our lines are in the water.”

OWNER: “That’s one reason I like it. Very passive; you set a trap and let them come to you. And talk in the meantime.”

COUNT: “I also like the randomness, because you never know what you might catch. It is a bit like chess. You put out a pawn as bait, and see what takes it. Some times you get another pawn, sometimes you might get the queen.”

OWNER: “You like to play? I have an antique set back at my bungalow. Used to belong to an English Grand Master and mountaineer named Crowley. Ivory and onyx. Beautiful.”

COUNT: “Hey, I have it on my laptop. We play a game or two while the lines are in the water. I have 500 different graphics; you love them. I let you choose.”

OWNER: “Sounds like a plan; let me get some reels ready.” Raises hand and waves (gaily): “Oh, cabana boy?!?”

[sound of gong from ‘The Addams Family’]

27)

Cut to PROP’s computer monitor, a black pc tower next to it. On screen is a mail program w/progress bar (50%). Says “ receiving 2 of 2 ”

Voice of LURCH from ‘Addams Family’: “You rang?”

Shot pans back to show PROP at home, hovering over his computer. He is wearing reading glasses, there is an unopened bottle of Gatorade by him.

Cut to screen:

<u>Sender</u>	<u>Subject</u>
dr._who	re: crime scene script sqmd3qskwe

Mouse moves over to the top mail; *click*

Prop, long time no talk. Too bad it took a murder to get you in touch with me. Since the characters are English, I assume the “Message” is supposed to be in English as well? I realize this is from an open investigation, but any context is helpful. I’ll see what I can do.

-Dr. Who

“I’m all in favor of keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of fools. Let’s start with typewriters.” – Frank Lloyd Wright

Image is on enough time to read, then click and it closes. Mouse selects the second message:

o&sghy5, fgffw

„laekd0tu 2mc ewfe so# fgffw

Cut to PROP, frowning.

Voice of LURCH from ‘Addams Family’: “You rang?”

Prop glances at computer screen.

28)

Cut to ALANA’s laptop computer screen. The mail program tells her 15 incoming messages; they begin filling out, and are all spam and joke forwards from friends.

ALANA: “Damn, that’s a lot of spam.” Laughs. “And like I even need Viagra.” Reads another. “Find horny teen girls in your area.’ Hello?!? I *am* a horny teen girl?!? (reads another) ‘Do you like spicy bort?’ What the hell is ‘bort?’ anyway?”

MUFON (off screen): “You should get a spam account.”

ALANA: “I have enough spam as it is.”

Shot pans to show MUFON on all fours, at the edge of the bed leaning over her shoulder. He is shirtless but still wearing his baseball cap and necklace with the laptop key. Outside the window, it is morning.

MUFON: “No, it’s an email account to use if you ever have to give one out on-line. I’ve got a junkmail account I use for purely spamnable offenses; I think at one point filled up with 50,000 messages.”

ALANA: “Now *that’s* a lot of spam.”

MUFON: “Actually, when you’re done on there, can I check my mail?”

ALANA: “Not if you’re going to read 50,000 pieces of spam. Oh god, you know, I don’t have time for this. I gotta finish my paper.”

MUFON: “Well, I won’t be long.”

ALANA shuffles out to the kitchen.

ALANA (off screen): “Want a red bull?”

MUFON: “Coffee?”

ALANA (off screen): “Nooo, sorry.” *Noises.* “Want some fruit?”

MUFON: “No thanks, but those peaches smell good.”

ALANA (off screen): “Um, I don’t have any peaches.”

MUFON: “Really? Do you have peach air freshener or perfume, maybe? ’Cuz I smell peaches.” Sniffs around. “Or I did, a second ago.”

ALANA (off screen): “You’re hallucinating. *Ewww*, these bananas are baby-shit brown...” Sound of them landing in the garbage.

MUFON puts the browser at junkmail.net.

Cut to:

User name: muffin_man

Password: *****

Inbox: 915 unread messages.

<<List of spam>>

MUFON ignores it and *clicks* ‘compose’. Opens address book, selects ‘Riggs.’

Riggz,,, MIB swarmed my place, they have \$\$ laptop and cellphone. I’m on the lam, but I ain’t no sheep. Make sure Streiber knows I am *so* sorry about this. I wouldn’t write if I weren’t. He should probably expect MIB to pay him a visit. So at least I can warn you of that.

-Muff

Hits ‘send’.

ALANA reenters, holding a partially eaten apple. MUFON is about to close email when notices a piece at the top of his in-box.

Polaris [Mufon, does your Nimbus Friend itch?](#)

MUFON hesitates, and opens.

Dear Robert Mufon

We hope this email finds you, as our records are not up to date.

Does your nimbus friend itch, or do you miss your friend itch-ing? Please let us know if you have information on either of these conditions. Our flax salve might be the answer. We even have photographic proof of this that might be just what you're looking for. Or not. Contact us today, and we can arrange a demonstration with one of our sales representatives. Just understand that curing the cause may not eliminate the symptoms.

Polaris Enterprises
P.O. Box 51
Groom Lake, NV

ALANA (off screen): "You don't know how to do a bibliography page, do you?"

MUFON (off screen): "No."

Cut to ALANA; she picks up a textbook and flips to the back.

ALANA: "I guess I'll just copy this one and change the names."

MUFON: "That's what I always did."

ALANA: "Are you almost done?"

MUFON looks at the screen and closes the windows, logs out.

MUFON: "Yeah."

ALANA: "Well, let me slap together some kind of works cited thingie and print this out."

MUFON: "Okay." They trade places, she begins typing and clicking furiously.

ALANA: "So what are you doing tonight?"

MUFON: "*Uh*, no plans as such."

ALANA: "You're supposed to say *me*." Kisses him lightly on the lips, "Well, I guess you'll be home, so I can stop by when I'm done with class. We can hang out at your place until Kim gets back from work."

MUFON: "You two girls planning on watching Destiny Island?"

ALANA: "It's a repeat, but it's a good one. Hey, what's a good name to use; I've already done Smith and Jones."

MUFON: "How about 'Carlton Ridenhour'."

ALANA: "Haha, that works." Typing.

MUFON: “That’s Chuck D, from Public Enemy.”

ALANA: “Well, now he’s Chuck D.D.S.” Still typing. “So I’ll just drop you off at your place on my way to class, and swing by after 5? I’ll be starving by then, and...”

MUFON: “Actually, *no go* on that. *Uh*, if you’re going onto campus, can you just drop me off there?”

ALANA: “Sure.”

MUFON: “School’s got a computer center, right?”

ALANA (shrugs): “I guess. Probably.”

MUFON (aside): ‘Naw, that’s too obvious.’ “Does the library have computers?”

ALANA: “I don’t know; never been there. Kim would know. She’s there all the time, in this little nook up on the fifth floor. Her boyfriend’s an English major, and he gets off on her giving him blowjobs and him spilling onto books he doesn’t like.” MUFON grins, begins getting dressed. “Okay I need one more name, and some type of book title.

MUFON: “ ‘Barbers in the middle ages’ by Don Figaro?”

ALANA: “No. Oh, Dr. John Barber, World Journal of Dentistry, volume 5, issue one, page... 88.”

Print. Closes book, looks around.

ALANA: “Hey, do you see an apple running around yelling ‘I’m free, I’m free’?”

MUFON sees the apple, and tosses it to her. Way too weak: a falls out of shot, and we hear it land on the floor.

29)

Cut to: apple rolling across concrete floor to a capybara’s snout.

TRASH (off-screen): “Think he’ll eat it?”

Shot pans back. A capybara is sitting on the floor of what might be a small airplane hanger. Some straw and a kiddie wading pool have been set up for it. SMELLY is petting it, MOLEBACK has just rolled the apple to it.

SMELLY: “I think they just eat plants and bark.”

Shot continues to pan back, showing FRIENDISH looking on, bemused.

FRIENDISH: “Capybara,, well I’ll be damned. Got a name yet?”

MOLEBACK: “Herb.”



FRIENDISH: “I kinda see what you’re saying: so ugly that they’re cute.”

MOLEBACK: “World’s largest rodent.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, now that you’ve liberated him, where will Herb go?”

MOLEBACK: “We got contacts in the Amazon. There’re herds of them wild down there, and they’re social animals, so he’ll be fine.”

KLAUSTINA shuffles in, looking like death warmed over: frizzy hair, frumpled pajamas.

FRIENDISH: “Hey, Kay.”

KLAUSTINA grunts, shuffles by HERB and scratches him between the ears, moves by MOLEBACK. They both hold out hands, and fingers glide as she passes, moving off camera into another room.

KLAUSTINA (off screen): “There’d *better* be coffee.”

MOLEBACK: “I just made some.”

Sound of refrigerator opening.

KLAUSTINA (off screen): “Hey, which one of you vicious harpies drank all my carob soy milk!??”

Cut to MOLEBACK, quickly grabbing her coffee cup and downing the evidence. Looks around innocent and angelic.

MOLEBACK: “You can use some of my rice milk; it’s on the door.”

KLAUSTINA (off screen): “Bleh!” Sound of cupboards being opened. “Is there anything to eat besides these matzos? They’re so stale they were probably leftovers from the Last Supper.”

TRASH: “Smelly and I are going shopping later, plus Tree’s out in the garden right now.”

MOLEBACK: “Dawn called. Fox and her friends got in earlier this morning. I gather they had a mishap along the way, but it didn’t directly affect them.”

KLAUSTINA (off screen): “But everything’s okay, right?” (shuffles back in): “Fox is okay, and that *mishap* doesn’t affect *us*?”

MOLEBACK: “I guess. Somebody got killed, but it was a man, and no connection to us anyway. I was in the shower when Dawn called and she spoke to Trash.”

TRASH: “Yeah, she didn’t really seem all that concerned about it. Said it was over an unrelated computer matter.”

KLAUSTINA: “I’ll call her when I wake up. Besides, I wanna talk to Chubbs.”

FRIENDISH (amusedly): “Chubbs?”

KLAUSTINA (laughs): “Yeah.”

FRIENDISH: “’Scuze me for intruding, but does Chubbs ride a Harley?”

KLAUSTINA: “Yeah!”

FRIENDISH: “I know 2 dudes named Chubbs, actually. One is a short blonde barbarian biker that kinda looks like a fat hamster; other’s a Canadian compugeek. Both ride Harleys.”

KLAUSTINA: “You know what’s funny: I know two Chubbs’s too, and you just described both of them.”

FRIENDISH: “Small world. So is this bikermouse, or moseheadhead?”

KLAUSTINA: “The laptop jockey. That’s cool that you know him. Both, actually.”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, he’s a good dude. Bought software from him before. Hell, you probably have, too.”

MOLEBACK: “We’re denying that!”

KLAUSTINA: “You didn’t hear us say *anything* about that.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, it’s all happy.”

KLAUSTINA: “Well, I’m gonna be talking to him in a little while, want to say hi to him?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, *no*. I want nobody to know where I am right now. But the person I *do* want you to introduce me to is your man Klaus.”

Quick cut to MOLEBACK’s nose wrinkling.

KLAUSTINA (pining): “*Ohh, Klaus...* Yes, he’s supposed to call me tonight some time. I had already asked him if he could get cleaner copies, but he said that was all he had. He didn’t even know what they were, really.”

FRIENDISH: “That’s the thing: he *didn’t* know what he had. Let’s just say that Klaus scored a coup by landing you those particular pics. I might be able to find the originals for you, but I need to talk to Klaus first.”

MOLEBACK: “Well, that would be wonderful. So you looked over those pictures then?”

FRIENDISH: “On the drive from Sky Harbor. I’m almost positive what you got is most, if not all, of the missing Yale pages. Does that mean anything to you?”

MOLEBACK: “Well, the Yale book’s common knowledge; hell by definition I could drive to Yale University and look at it. I didn’t know anything was missing from it.”

FRIENDISH: “What’s in Yale is common knowledge, but these pages were suppressed long before Wilfred Voynich found the book at that Jesuit monetary. Possibly before Kircher received it in 1666, even. These are important.”

KLAUSTINA: “Obviously, if they have the plants we need.”

FRIENDISH (cracks a smile): “Well, ladies, this seems to work out to our mutual advantage. I’m in dervish mode, and am wondering if I’m even welcome in this whole hemisphere. I’ll make a deal with you: fly me to Germany, let me dig around, and if I can find the original pages, or at least cleaner copies, I’ll *give* ’em to ya.”

MOLEBACK looks at KLAUSTINA, both shrug and nod.

MOLEBACK: “That works.”

FRIENDISH: “Now, I’m hot right now, can you get me out without a passport?”

MOLEBACK: “We can print up something for you.”

FRIENDISH: “And some starting cash.”

MOLEBACK: “Had a hunch that was coming.”

KLAUSTINA (to MOLEBACK): “Women’s intuition?”

MOLEBACK (to FRIENDISH): “How about a thousand to start? Understand, I’m not being stingy, we just don’t want quantity circulating.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, whatever you can float me. Euros, too.”

KLAUSTINA: “Oh, good point. I’ll call the loft and tell them to change plates, and get right on it.”

MOLEBACK: “Klaus is usually in the company of our German sisters, the Vegetarian Volksfrei. And they are very Voynich-savvy, so I’m sure they’d be happy to help.”

FRIENDISH: “Thanks, but again, try and keep me low key. There may be people in Europe after my ass, too.”

KLAUSTINA: “I am starving. Ooh! Is that an apple?”

30)

Cut to: Photocopy of Kircher Voynich Manuscript translation: picture of apple, with capybara-like creature next to it. Paragraphs of script underneath. Shot pans back to show the book is open on WILSON’s chest. He is asleep. Light is on. Very faintly from the other room, buzzing of the BEELZEBUG.

Sound of front door unlocking, whining open, closing. Footsteps.

OFFICER FRIST: “Hello?”

WILSON starts awake.

OFFICER FRIST (pokes his head through the door): “Oh, hey, Will. Fall asleep reading?”

WILSON (still disoriented): “I dreamed in Voynich.”

OFFICER FRIST: “Oh?”

WILSON: “Yeah, I was outside somewhere, and the plants were all Voynich plants. They looked creepy. And all the signs and writing, was Voynich.”

OFFICER FRIST: “From your tone, it doesn’t sound fun.”

WILSON: “What time is it?” Turns to look at the clock on the bed, next to the phone. 8:05

OFFICER FRIST: “Well, if you’re still waking up, how about I run up the street and get some Dunkin’ D for us. My treat. That’ll give you enough time to wake up and get your books in a row.”

WILSON (to himself): “Get that dream out of my head...”

OFFICER FRIST: “Okay, I’ll be back.” Starts to exit, but stops to duck as he is dive-bombed by the BEELZEBUG. He swats, misses. “You still have flies in here.”

WILSON: “Just the one.” His head cocks as he tracks its path across the room. “I’ve named him, too. The Beelzebug. Satan in the form of a fly.”

OFFICER FRIST smiles with polite condescension, and makes good his escape.

WILSON looks around aimlessly, then picks up the Voynich book. Stares at it a moment, then puts it aside. Reaches down beside bed, and pulls out his notebook; the clipboard with the Admiral’s phone number is inside. WILSON picks up Nimbus’s phone and dials.

31)

Cut to: ADMIRAL’s office. SECRETARY, wearing a phone headset, is behind a desk. ADMIRAL and COMMODORE are leaving, thick briefs under their arms.

SECRETARY: “Admiral [name]’s office...” The ADMIRAL glances her way as COMMODORE gets the door. “I’m sorry, detective, the Admiral is just leaving for a meeting.”

ADMIRAL’s ears perk at ‘detective’ and he quickly walks over, nodding. He holds up a single finger to COMMODORE.

SECRETARY: “Actually, the Admiral will speak to you; please hold.” Presses two buttons and then picks up a traditional hand-held phone, hands receiver to ADMIRAL.

ADMIRAL: “Detective Wilson! ...Yes it is, actually, but I’m glad you called. I don’t suppose you’ve solved the case? ...Ah, well give it time. I suppose you are calling then with more questions about Voynich?”

Quick cut to COMMODORE’s eyes reacting.

ADMIRAL: “Yes, yes, I’m sure you do. The more you learn, the less you understand. Fascinating subject, isn’t it? But like I said, I have to be in a meeting in ten minutes.” Looks at SECRETARY “What time is lunch?”

SECRETARY (consults something on her desk): “TBA.”

ADMIRAL: “*Oh*, that’s right. *Marvin*.” [to phone] “Well, when I get the chance, how about I call you? ...Fine, leave your number with my secretary... ...Okay, bye.” Hands phone to SECRETARY.

Turns and gets door for COMMODORE.

ADMIRAL: “Sorry about that.”

COMMODORE: “Detective? Hope you’re not in trouble or being investigated.”

ADMIRAL: “No, no. Actually, I’m helping a detective on a homicide. It’s kind of interesting. Do you remember the Voynich Manuscript?”

COMMODORE: “*Uh*, yeah. Or at least what you’ve told me of it on occasion.”

ADMIRAL: “Well, there’s a murder in Pennsylvania, and someone wrote letters in blood that look like Voynich.”

COMMODORE: “*Huh*. And the NSA is okay with your helping?”

ADMIRAL: “All I did was identify the writing. It’s not like this is classified or anything.”

COMMODORE: “Who was murdered?”

ADMIRAL: “*Uh*, some guy named MacLeod.”

COMMODORE: “One of ours?”

ADMIRAL: “No idea; never heard of him.”

They reach an elevator. A man in a WHEELCHAIR is waiting.

ADMIRAL: “Hi, Stan.”

WHEELCHAIR: “Admiral, Commodore. You’re about due for your meeting with Marvin, right.” Sees the pained look on their faces. “Good luck.”

Elevator *pings*; it is empty. WHEELCHAIR zips in, does a sharp 180, and jabs a button. ADMIRAL and COMMODORE follow, and press a button. Sound of doors closing behind camera. Elevator noise of descent.

WHEELCHAIR: “Last time I briefed Marvin, it took 2 hours.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow, how’d you get off so light?”

WHEELCHAIR: “I carefully avoided content.”

COMMODORE and ADMIRAL look at each other, impressed.

ADMIRAL: “Nice”

COMMODORE: “Yeah, that’s a good one.”

ADMIRAL (to WHEELCHAIR): “Unfortunately, that’s not an option: we have to *explain* Australia to him.”

COMMODORE: “Depending how this goes, if I’m lucky, I’ll have to spend a week in Alice Springs with Marvin.”

WHEELCHAIR: “Ouch. And if you’re *not* lucky?”

COMMODORE: “Probably a *month*.”

Elevator *pings*, jilts to simulate stop.

WHEELCHAIR: “Can Marvin even find Australia on a map?”

ADMIRAL: “You’d be surprised: Marvin has his moments.”

Sound of door opening.

WHEELCHAIR: “Yeah, Maalox moments.” Wheels himself out.

Sound of doors closing.

ADMIRAL: “Actually, *do* you think Marvin could find Australia on a map?”

Sound of elevator descending.

COMMODORE: “You never finished what you were saying about that homicide.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh, right. Well, they found something that looks like Voynich script, written in this guy’s blood. I guess the detective was wondering if it said ‘helter skelter’ in Voynich.”

COMMODORE: “Did it?”

ADMIRAL: “*Uh*, we can’t read Voynich. Remember?”

Elevator *pings*.

COMMODORE: “Oh, sorry. Right. Stupid question. My IQ’s dropping; we must be getting near Marvin.”

Sound of door opening. Camera pans back first, showing a different corridor. ADMIRAL and COMMODORE walk out, following the camera.

COMMODORE: “So what’s your take on the case?”

ADMIRAL: “I think Marvin should take a flying...”

COMMODORE: “No, I mean the murder.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh. I don’t know. Probably some nut job into the occult. (*laughs*) After all, who the hell else would write in *Voynich*?”

COMMODORE smiles. They turn off at a side corridor.

ADMIRAL: “Actually, you haven’t heard anything about anyone cracking Voynich, have you? Recently?”

COMMODORE: “Nooooo. But I’d think you’d know more than I would.”

ADMIRAL: “I’ll ask around.”

COMMODORE: “Word probably would have gotten around already, don’t you think?”

ADMIRAL: “Ah, shit...”

Their pace slows down, but camera continues on.

The low incoherent drone of MARVIN fades in, growing louder as camera moves closer.

COMMODORE: “Yeah, this looks *bad*.”

Camera continues to pan back, past a harried young man (NORTON), dressed like a Blues Brother w/o hat & sunglasses. He is leaning against the wall, looking at the ceiling in despair.

NORTON: “I don’t want to go in there.”

Camera now passes by SENATOR, sharply dressed but looking equally despondent.

Camera passes by open door, from which rants come.

MARVIN [off screen, sounding like Simpson’s Comic Book Guy]: “...specifically asked for a *large* chair, and this is not a large chair. I am especially upset with this complementary gift coaster of yours; it is not wide enough to encompass my cup. Which brings us to the *next* item: worst... latté... *ever!*” [etc. – ad-lib rant continuously through scene]

Camera stops when it has just passed the door. COMMODORE and ADMIRAL reach NORTON and SENATOR, and stop.

ADMIRAL: “Agent Norton, Senator Halsey,”

COMMODORE: “Who’s he in there with?”

SENATOR: “Nobody important. Janitor, I think.”

MARVIN [off screen]: “I shall register my disgust with you on the NSA intranet!”

COMMODORE (looks at watch): “Actually, we got a couple minutes, I’ll be right back.”

ADMIRAL: “You jumping ship, Commodore? I’m not going in there alone.”

NORTON: “Yeah, there are strength in numbers.”

COMMODORE: “I’ll be *right* back.”

ADMIRAL: “You have 4 minutes. If you’re not back and I start this alone, I will explain things in such a way that you get a year with Marvin at Alice’s Café.”

COMMODORE: “I just gotta take care of this.” Holds up 4 fingers and runs down corridor. Camera quickly pans to catch up. COMMODORE turns another corridor, quickly finds out of way place that has 3 privacy booths. Camera pans to side, showing them from the front. Left booth has woman in it, talking on her cell phone. Right booth has black blind pulled, and sign: ‘out of order’. Middle is empty; COMMODORE walks in and shuts door. Mute all hall noise on soundtrack: only sounds are in the booth [COMMODORE’s breathing from the quick jog, etc.] Through top window, we see him pull out his wallet and dig out a card. Sound of cell phone dialing. 5 *rings*.

SINISTER VOICE [same as Scene 16/CONVEX conversation]): “Commodore! What can I do for you?”

COMMODORE: “I’ll keep this brief, I have a meeting with Marvin.”

SINISTER VOICE: “Oh, I’m sorry. [imitation of Marvin’s voice] ‘worst... meeting... *ever*...!’”

COMMODORE: “You told me that if anyone ever mentioned Voynich, I should give you a call. Well, I’m calling. Don’t know if you know this already, but you got a spill. Apparently there’s a murder scene in Pennsylvania that has Voynich at it. The investigating detective talked to Admiral [name] about it.”

SINISTER VOICE: “Aw shit. I know we have spills, some even with fatalities, but none are in Pennsylvania. What did the Admiral say?”

COMMODORE: “I haven’t had a chance to really pump him, yet, but I gather he thinks it’s a hoax.”

SINISTER VOICE: “What, the murder writing, or Voynich itself.”

COMMODORE: “Both, I think.”

SINISTER VOICE: “That’s good. What about the detective?”

COMMODORE: “No idea.”

SINISTER VOICE: “You said Pennsylvania, right?”

COMMODORE: “Yeah. Victim’s name was, uh, MacLeod.”

SINISTER VOICE: “Never heard of him... Aw, shit. MacLeod... Nimbus... *shit*.”

COMMODORE: “So this all means something to you then?”

SINISTER VOICE: “Yeah, it does. Thanks for calling. I’ll deposit some flax into your account.”

COMMODORE: “Greatly appreciated. We traditionally go out for post-Marvin cocktails, so I can sniff around more then.”

In the right booth, the black curtain pulls back, and CAPTAIN QUICKIE looks out.

SINISTER VOICE: “Do that, and more flax might be coming your way.”

Right booth opens, CAPTAIN QUICKIE walks out, followed by MAGGIE. CAPTAIN QUICKIE exits stage right. MAGGIE pauses to remove the ‘out of order’ sign.

COMMODORE: “Not a problem. Anyway, you have a spill to mop up, and I have Marvin to, uh...”

SINISTER VOICE: “Mop up. Don’t forget to pack a bib if you go to Australia with him.”

COMMODORE: “Thanks for that vote of confidence.” Hangs up.

COMMODORE exits booth. Sounds of hallway resume. Sees MAGGIE, quickly straightening her dress.

COMMODORE: “Maggie! Fancy meeting you here.” Winks at her, and runs off the way he came.

Camera follows MAGGIE, heading in the other direction. MAGGIE turns a corner, but camera continues straight through short hall until it opens up to a huge Amphitheater-sized room. [matte painting or cgi is fine for this] Room is patterned after the ‘Ministry of Information’ foyer in the movie ‘Brazil’. Camera enters from the second floor balcony and homes in on the sign “Ministry of Information” Closes in so that just the word ‘Information’ is on screen.

32)

Cut to: identical sign reading ‘Information’ Camera pans back to show that it is hanging above the information desk at the campus library. SABRINA comes into shot, sitting at the help desk. She is in her 40s, has graying hair ponytailed, and oversized wire-rimmed glasses. An anthropomorphic skunk is tattooed on her shoulder. She looks harried, but smiles helpfully and hopefully.

SABRINA: “Can I help who’s next?”

Cut to counter. A hardback copy of Atlas Shrugged slams down.

BOOKNURD (off screen, *extremely* whiney): “I can’t read this Ann Rand novel. The pages are stuck together!”

Cut to SABRINA, looking at him with a mixture of sympathy and contempt.

SABRINA: “Awww, well that’s too bad.” She slides the book over. “We’ll just have to order a fresh copy of it, but that’ll take a couple of days. Let me see if we have another copy.” Typing. “*Ohhh*, checked out. Since the beginning of the semester, actually, it’s been overdue since then.”

BOOKNURD: “Well how my gonna read it then?” [Shot shows MUFON is standing impatiently in the background.]

SABRINA: “I’ll put Claude on the job; he likes shaking down late fees.” Behind her, CLAUDE looks over his shoulder and fussily wrinkles his nose at her. “Give me your card, and I’ll put you at the top of the hold list for both the new one and the overdue. We’ll see which one you get first.”

BOOKNURD had been about to hand over his library card, but talk of shaking down late fees scared him.

BOOKNURD: “Naw, that’s okay.” Quickly shuffles off.

SABRINA puts the book in a bin, and smiles expectantly at MUFON.

MUFON walks up, quickly and nervously.

MUFON: “Hi, I didn’t see a computer lab on your map up front, do you have one. With Internet access?”

SABRINA: “Wow, easiest question all day. Sure we do. It’s all the way in the back, and in a left alcove. We keep having to juggle it because of our budget, which is why it’s not on the map.”

MUFON: “So back and to the left?”

SABRINA: “Yeah, you need a student id or a library card, though.”

MUFON: “*Oof!* I forgot mine. Can I just check my email? I gotta see if my lab partner wrote her half of a paper on teeth.”

SABRINA: “Well, okay.” Takes a piece of construction paper with the word ‘pass’ written in military block letters.

Quick cut of SABRINA stamping it, leaving a blurry ink skunk.

SABRINA (handing him the pass): “Here. Just no porn surfing.”

MUFON: “Yes, ma’am.” Smiles.

SABRINA (slightly flirtatious): “And don’t make me come *shush* you.”

MUFON turns and walks off. Behind him, FAT BLACK RAPPER bustles up to the desk.

FAT BLACK RAPPER (loud, gesticulating with bravado): “Yo, I need the phone book for *Atsugi, Japan*.”

MUFON hears this, turns around to look, and chuckles at the sight. Camera follows him as he heads off; he cuts behind some bookshelves and follows the wall towards the back.

MUFON slides his black hat around backwards.

MUFON: (low, to himself): “Yo, I’d like to dedicate this one out to all my homies in *Atsugi Japan!*” Starts making drum/bass/rap noises, and quickly starts laughing. This turns into a coughing fit that brings him to a complete stop, doubled over. Ends with a dry heave. Shakes his head, looks up, clammy. No one is looking at him. Makes his way to the end, and turns into the left wing of the library. Spots a water fountain, and grabs a quick drink.

Cut to: fountain basin, water swirling around the drain. MUFON spits into it, slushy with hint of blood. Water stops pouring in, sounds of gulping, as the unhealthy gummy stuff gets caught over the drain holes: it is too large to go down.

Cut to MUFON, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, and then heading into the wing. He quickly spots an alcove with computers in it.

Cut to computer alcove interior. MUFON enters, looks around. GLADYS is helping PRINTING PRINCESS, pointing at the screen. A couple other students are present, immersed in surfing. MUFON heads toward the back corner.

GLADYS: “I need an i.d. or a card, please”

MUFON holds out the pass and hands it to her as he passes; she reaches to accept it, sees the skunk, and smiles. Returns to helping PRINTING PRINCESS.

Cut to MUFON’s screen. Browser id on a university-type home page. Typing; he changes it to junkmail.net

Close-up of field, typing in real time:

User name: `muffin_man`

Cut to MUFON peering at screen. Sound of 23 keystrokes, punctuated after a pause by a final one.

Cut to screen:

Inbox: 919 messages

Riggs	re:
tawny	barely legal wet teen prawn
sindy	barely legal wet teen prawn
stacy-x	barely legal wet teen prawn
Team Bort	Do you like Spicy Bort?
Polaris	Mufon, does your Nimbus friend itch?
grateful	burn cds, dvds, for free!

[etc.]

MUFON looks them over, then clicks on the top one.

MUFON minimizes the window. Opens up the one from ‘Riggs’:

Dude,. You fucked up. MIB already talked to Streiber, something about you being wanted for murder, or at least in connection with some dead MIB. Streiber disowned you. You’re on your own.

But if it’s any consolation, I believe you. r.p.r.t. Look me up when this shit blows over. Good luck; Maybe you should just go home to Florida?

-Riggatoni

Mufon closes the window. After a moment, he opens the purple one from Polaris.

Cut to message:

Dear Robert Mufon

We hope this email finds you, as our records are not up to date.

Does your nimbus friend itch, or do you miss your nimbus friend itch-ing? Please let us know if you have information on either of these conditions. Our flax salve might be the answer. We even have photographic proof of this that might be just what you’re looking for. Or not. Contact us today, and we can arrange a demonstration with one of our sales representatives. Just understand that curing the cause may not eliminate the symptoms.

Polaris Enterprises
P.O. Box 51
Groom Lake, NV

MUFON notices at the side of the screen, the scroll bar is there, and there is much more to the message. He drags it with his mouse, causing a long blank message to appear, until he gets to the bottom.

This email is not spam. This email was sent to you because we know mutual people, and are concerned about them. If you are concerned about your future, and do not wish to receive further emails in it, please reply to this with the subject ‘opt out’

MUFON hits reply; new mail opens. He sees the address is polaris_enterprises@junkmail He deletes the subject.

Cut to close-up of the subject line, real time typing.

opt in

Cut to MUFON looking at the screen, typing. This is about 10 seconds. He pauses to reread what he has written.

Cut to screen: 'send' button close-up. Bolds and bevels.

Cut to button: 'log out' Bolds and bevels.

MUFON gets up and leaves.

Cut to MUFON walking back into the lobby. In the background, SABRINA is dealing with PROFESSOR TWEED.

PROFESSOR TWEED: "No, that's Dickens with 2 k's, the well-known Dutch author."

MUFON reaches the library's enormous double-doors, and looks out, surveying the situation. Decides it is safe, and leaves.

Cut to MUFON walking out of library. Several students are standing around. MUFON approaches one who is smoking.

MUFON: "Hey, can I pooch a cigarette off ya?"

SMOKER: "Menthol okay?"

MUFON: "I just need the nicotine, so I'd be happy with what ya give me."

SMOKER quickly pulls out a pack, and hands one to MUFON.

SMOKER: "Need a light?"

MUFON pulls out a Circle K book of matches.

MUFON: "I got it." Lights one and puffs cig. "Fire's a good thing to have handy. Thanks."

Quickly walks away. Down the steps he passes FAT BLACK RAPPER on a cell phone.

FAT BLACK RAPPER [in flawless Japanese]: "Tanaka is not the sports dynamo I had hoped, for he commits too many errors during the games. We would still be interested in your young boy Kobiashi, however.... ..yes, he is brilliant at hockey, and smart enough that a scholarship would be a believable cover..." [etc.]

MUFON sees this, and breaks into a big grin. Quickly walks down steps, to get out of the open. Jogs quickly away from the quad, and crosses the street.

MUFON [faint rapping to himself]: "...send a ninja nigga ova to Osaka, stick a katana up yo' ass,, got my posse in Atsugi, get all Bruce Lee on yo' ass..." [etc.]

Singing morphs with classical violins, growing increasingly loud: up the street, a blue Ford Escort is coming. Behind the wheel is the AUTHOR, riding shotgun is SEAN. The windows are rolled down, and Beethoven's Third Symphony is blasting top volume. Camera pans to follow car as it cruises by, oblivious.

33)

Cut to: entrance to Neutral Ground. Same Beethoven is playing, subdued in volume. At the coat check, there is a sign saying “NO WEAPONS, NO SHOP TALK, NO CREDIT, NO EXCEPTIONS.” Two people looking like MULDER and SCULLY from the X-Files are handing their guns over to a clerk dressed like CHE GUEVARA. A bouncer dressed like OSAMA BIN LADEN sits on a stool to the side with an AK-74 across his lap.

ADMIRAL, COMMODORE, SENATOR, and NORTON walk in. OSAMA sees them and nods. They proceed straight through an arched metal detector next to OSAMA, and enter the club proper. Camera pans to show club Neutral Ground. Dimly lit, full of mostly older men in some type of uniform or smart suit. More than a few have bodyguards with sunglasses and earmics standing by silently.

They stop and scan for an open table; NORTON spots one and points. Nods of agreement, and the four head down to it. They sit around the table.

NORTON: “I did the least amount of talking, so I guess first round’s on me?”

ADMIRAL: “Yeah, get a Fosters for the Commodore.”

COMMODORE: “Fuck you, Admiral.”

ADMIRAL: “Hey, salute when you say that, sailor, or I’ll have you up on charges of insubordination!”

Laughter.

CRONIE creeps up to the table

CRONIE (unctuously): “Senator Halsey! So glad to run into you.” Holds hand out to shake.

SENATOR (with obvious loathing): “Uriah.” They begin low volume smalltalk.

NORTON (looks around for service, sees none; raises hand gaily): “Oh, cabana boy?!?”

Cut to WAITRESS, holding a tray of drinks. She is dressed like Patty Hearst in her SLA days, complete with toy machine gun.

WAITRESS: “Here you go, and I’ll just take these” Clears away empties; it is obvious some time has passed. They are tipsy but by no means drunk. The SENATOR is gone, and COMMODORE and NORTON are talking about the history of computers. ADMIRAL is looking around, and sees OSS vet in wheelchair and army uniform, sitting at a table with several other people.

ADMIRAL frowns, then gets up and goes over with his drink.

ADMIRAL: “Excuse me, it’s Captain Sherman, right?”

Cut to OSS’s wheelchair p.o.v. looking up at ADMIRAL. Shot pans to name badge, then to rank, then to face.

OSS: “Admiral [name]. Of course, I think remember meeting you a few birthdays ago.” [ADMIRAL nods encouragingly] “How are you?” Holds hand out to shake, he does so vigorously.

ADMIRAL: “I’m fine. How are you doing?”

OSS: “*Oh*, I’m doing great. Still up and about every day. Hell, I wouldn’t need this” taps wheelchair with an artificial hand “if it wasn’t for this” taps artificial leg. “But at least it got me this,” taps his chest.

Close-up of chest adornments, they include a purple heart and a bronze star.

ADMIRAL: “Yes sir, you and your OSS men did your country proud.”

OSS: “Damn right we did. Son, World War 2 wasn’t won on the battle field, it was won in the code rooms, ’cuz that’s how we knew what to do on the battlefields.”

ADMIRAL: “Yes sir, absolutely.”

OSS: “You’re, uh,, I forget: you’re Naval intelligence or NSA?”

ADMIRAL: “I was with Naval Intelligence when we first met; I’m with the NSA now.”

OSS (smiles): “Then I’m sure you can appreciate what I was just saying.”

ADMIRAL: “You dealt with codes, right?”

OSS: “The OSS did, but not myself. 20 at the time I signed up, on December 9, 1941. Woulda done the 8th, but I wanted to take a day and get my affairs in order before going out to kick some Jap ass. Yeah, I was keen to get back at that sneak attack by Japus Iscariot, but they sent me to Europe, instead. I started off as Wild Bill Donovan’s chauffeur.”

ADMIRAL: “You ever heard of the Voynich Manuscript?”

OSS (at first puzzled, then remembers): “That book up in Yale?”

ADMIRAL: “Yes, sir.”

OSS: “Yeah, I remember that. Back Stateside, some of our boys took a crack at it in their spare time. We had a bet going on with Navy Intelligence on who could break it first. Don’t suppose either side’s done it yet?”

ADMIRAL: “Not to my knowledge. Did you know any of the people working on it?”

OSS: “In the OSS, or in civilian?”

ADMIRAL: “Either.”

OSS: “Well, the one I remember most was civilian, some Slavic Count I met. This was just before the war ended; we’d liberated Bavaria. Donovan had dinner with him. Lugosovich. My god that man was an ass. He strikes me as typical of most Voynich researchers outside of academic hacks. I assume you mean *real* attempts to crack it?”

ADMIRAL: “Yes, sir.”

OSS: “Well, I guess you could say I served with them but didn’t know them. Naw, they were all Stateside, so we just knew *about* ’em. *Oh*, but one of them got rotated out in ’44 or so. I remember him talking about the Voynich book. He tried to get me interested in it, but there was a war on and all.”

ADMIRAL: “What’d he say about it?”

OSS: “Oh, I don’t know; I don’t remember. It was interesting, but it didn’t seem important. It was written long before the war, and had nothing to do with it. Why?”

ADMIRAL: “I once heard a story that during the war, the OSS found a cache of Nazi documents, and one of them was written in Voynich, or at least that’s what our man thought it was, but they were destroyed in a bombing raid, so no one ever got a chance to know for sure.”

In the background, CAPTAIN QUICKIE and WAITRESS can be seen coming out of the restroom; WAITRESS’s beret is askew, her hair is massively mussed.

OSS: “That would be him, then... what was his name? Lee? Can’t recall if that was his first name or last. Anyway he was killed in a bombing raid in Italy. Some type of monastery Mussolini’s men had appropriated. We sneaked Lee in one weekend to look around. He radioed back that there was a bunch of things in Italian or Latin which he got pics of, but I guess there was this codebook written in some unknown cipher that was too long to take shots of quickly. Someone up high sent him back in to microfilm that, too, but he never got it out; RAF bombed the spot out of it the night he tried. We hadn’t told them he was there; that’s how secret his mission was.”

ADMIRAL: “Friendly fire; that’s a shame. But he thought it was Voynich?”

OSS: “I can’t remember what he said. Most likely someone knew he was on the unofficial Voynich team at the Pentagon, and got confused. Doesn’t matter: the book’s destroyed.”

ADMIRAL (aside): “Was it?”

OSS: “Sorry?”

ADMIRAL: “That would be weird if the Nazis used Voynich.”

OSS: “Well, I don’t know if they did, but it’s not implausible. They could take the Voynich alphabet and use that as a cipher for the German alphabet. It wouldn’t be ‘true’ Voynich, or whatever language that Yale book was written in, but it would make a good cipher code. Just tell someone who you want to read it what letters are what. Hey, why am I telling you?”

ADMIRAL: “Do you think the Nazis might have done that?”

OSS: “Doubt it. They generally stuck with that enigma permutation cipher.”

ADMIRAL: “Do you think *anyone* might have done that? Historically?”

OSS: “I have no idea. It would make a neat cipher. And hard to crack, unless you knew what alphabet it went into and the order of the letters. Kind of like that Yale book, eh?”

ADMIRAL: “That’s always been one of the big questions about the Voynich Manuscript: is that a language, or a code, or both?”

OSS: “I don’t know, Admiral, and I don’t think any answers will be coming in what’s left of my lifetime, so I try to not think about them things. I got more important things to think about.” He picks up a teacup, and sips it back. “And right now, I think I can afford myself one more drink.” Raises artificial hand gaily. “Oh, cabana boy?!?”

COMMODORE (appears out of nowhere): “Actually, I’m on my way over to the bar, so can I get you two something while I’m up?”

ADMIRAL sees COMMODORE, nods. OSS does the same face/rank/name look. Nametag says “Vic XX”

OSS: “Commodore.”

COMMODORE: “Captain Sherman, always a pleasure to see you grace Neutral Territory.”

OSS: “Each visit might be my last, right? Naw, I’m a Taurus. We’re stubborn.”

COMMODORE: “What can I get you?”

OSS: “My usual is cambric tea. I picked up a taste for it in Wales.”

COMMODORE (amusedly): “*Did* you, now...” He looks at ADMIRAL expectantly.

ADMIRAL: “Actually, I should probably get going; I still have some work to do. And I should call that homicide detective. *Oh!* I just had a fascinating talk with Captain Sherman about the Voynich Manuscript.”

COMMODORE (un-amusedly): “*Did* you now...”

ADMIRAL: “Yeah,” leans over to shake OSS’s hand. “Captain.” Gets up, slaps COMMODORE on shoulder. “Commodore, have a happy holiday downunder. If I don’t see you before you leave, please get me a didgeridoo.”

COMMODORE: “I will, and if *you* don’t do the next mission with Marvin, I will shove it up your bunghole and blow taps on it.”

ADMIRAL: “Bunghole?”

COMMODORE: “Sorry; just getting in character for the Outback.”

ADMIRAL (turns and leaves): “Well, g’day, mate.”

COMMODORE (snaps to attention and salutes): “Fuck you, Admiral.”

ADMIRAL (walking away with out looking): “You’d better be saluting.”

COMMODORE turns to OSS.

COMMODORE: “Cambric tea. Sugar?”

OSS: “2 lumps on the side. I like to watch them dissolve. And a cap-full of vanilla. They know how I like it; I’m a regular here. I was probably drinking it here while you were still bouncing around in yer dad’s ballsack.”

COMMODORE: “Then I’m sure it’s quite good. I’ll go get you one, and then I’d like to talk.”

OSS: “It’s why I come here, Commodore. People love to pump me for old war stories, and since I’m so senile, I never tell ’em the same way twice.”

COMMODORE: “Let me get your drink.” (starts to leave)

OSS: “I’ll be here, unless some 80 year old groupies come by and drag me back to their hotel room.”

COMMODORE: "I'm sure."

OSS: "That actually happened once."

COMMODORE stops, partial turn.

OSS: "Yeah, V-E Day. Me an' one other OSS man got dragged off by three 80-year old groupies."

COMMODORE: "Oh yeah? Well, I'm sure they were good-looking 80 years ago."

OSS: "No, they were 80 years old *at the time!* Christ, they'd be like 140 or 150 now."

COMMODORE: "You mean to say you got it on with a..."

OSS: "She had 5 bottles of schnapps, enough for each of us. Besides, I was after her granddaughter, or great granddaughter, or whatever she was. She was *tasty*. But no luck; I think she was gay. Vegetarian, too. Lousy artist; had ugly paintings of plants all about her room. *Ah*, she was too young, anyway,,,"

COMMODORE: "...And you had an 80 year old grandmother and a bottle of schnapps to comfort you."

OSS laughs.

COMMODORE: "Let me get that tea for you."

34)

Cut to: generic bag of tea. It is on a counter at the coffee station of a 7-11 store [different from Scene 2 etc.] MUFON looks at the coffee, and then at the CLERK. CLERK ignores him, instead reading a Weekly World News-type rag [cover is an Elvis crop circle, 'The King of all Crop Circles!?!']

MUFON goes over to the CLERK.

MUFON: "Hey, if you brew up a fresh pot of coffee, I'll buy the whole thing off of ya."

CLERK shrugs, gets up, and ambles over to the coffee machine. While he is busy setting up a fresh brew, MUFON swipes 4 packs of different cigarettes, and stashes them in his pants.

Cut to MUFON leaving the store with 2 big-gulp type cups. Heads behind building, and follows alley away, sipping his coffee.

Cut to MUFON, arriving at Alana's house. He sits down and leans against the door. One of the Big Gulps is 1/3 empty. He pulls out a pilfered pack of smokes, and lights up.

Close-up of MUFON, inhaling; puts cigarette down out of view. When he raises it up again, it is at it's last dregs. Takes a final puff, and tosses it aside. Camera pans to show it land among 8 others amid an overturned Big Gulp cup. It is dark now. Headlights shine on the scene. Sound of car pulling up.

Cut to ALANA getting out of her car. She leaves the lights on.

ALANA: “Oh, *there* you are! We were wondering what happened to you.”

MUFON: “I left my keys here. I couldn’t get into my place.”

ALANA: “Oh my god. What did you do?”

MUFON: “Took a bus here.”

ALANA: “Why didn’t you just go to the landlord. Or Kim’s? We thought you’d show up.”

MUFON: “Oh, I figured I should let you two enjoy Fantasy Island by yourselves.”

ALANA: “*Destiny* Island. But tonight’s episode was called Fantasia Isle.”

MUFON: “You left your lights on.”

ALANA: “They turn off. So how long have you been waiting here?”

MUFON: “Since you weren’t here with me, entirely too long.”

ALANA: “*Ohhh*, that’s so sweet.” Kisses him on the scalp and opens the door.

Cut to interior; she turns on the lights.

MUFON: “Mind if I check email?”

ALANA: “God, you’re addicted to that thing. Go right ahead. But then you’d better pay attention to me.”

MUFON goes to the bedroom, and boots up the laptop. The sequence is identical from the opening sequence of this film. MUFON waits patiently.

MUFON: “How’d your paper go?”

ALANA: “Fine, I guess, professor’s going to grade them over the weekend. God, he’s such a dork. He wears blue tweed.” [she begins ad-libbed litany that drones on in the background off-screen] Camera pans to her monitor. MUFON has opened up junkmail and is logging in.

Inbox: 930 messages

eBay	There is a problem with your eBay account
XDR	Canadian medz, delivered to your door
Friendish	I'm alive
Medz	Canadian medz, delivered to your door
Mountie	Canadian slutz, delivered to your door
Polaris	re: opt in
jacuzzi	Free DVD-quality downloads
Toolbelt	re:[6]
Citibank	Account verification
Bowne	re: American spirits
Johnson	more pussy than u can shake your dik at

Viagra Vic	V!@gr@ to your door in 24 hrs!
waiting4U	barely legal wet teen prawn
Sin D.	barely legal wet teen prawn
Jucy Lucy	barely legal wet teen prawn
DCM direct	discount canadian meds
Riggs	re:
tawny	barely legal wet teen prawn
sindy	barely legal wet teen prawn
stacy-x	barely legal wet teen prawn
Team Bort	Do you like *spicy* bort?
Polaris	Mufon, does your Nimbus friend itch?
grateful	burn cds, dvds, for free!

[etc.]

Opens top one from 'Friendish':

Muffin man. I'm laying low, I'm sure you know why. Visit to Nimbus yielded interesting results. Found something in his desk you might like. Care to meet me in Shreveport? I know a good safe house there from previous employment. Reply to this addy if you get this, so I know you're alive.

MUFON minimizes the window. Opens up the " re: opt in ":

Robert,

First, if I was able to find this email account, I wonder if others can, too. Treat all mail you get here with suspicion. You will probably be contacted by someone claiming to be either Friendish or even myself, trying to arrange a physical meeting with you. These are certainly traps that will get you killed.

Cut to MUFON, looking at the minimized mail from "Friendish", then back at the screen.

I don't know where Friendish is. After this long with no word, I'm guessing dead. Likewise Nimbus.

I still have what was looking for. He seemed to think you would find them of interest. He also thought you were legit, and not a sting operation to get me.

The offer is open, but my options are limited. My absence for more than 4 hours would be noticed and questioned. You'd have to come to me to see. No offense, but I'm not going to compromise myself to get these to you--the risks I took with Friendish were more than enough.

If you're interested, we'll work something out.

And for Goddess's sake, get another email account.

Polaris
P.O. Box 51
Groom Lake, NV

On screen enough to read, ALANA's rant ending toward the end.

ALANA [off screen]: “God, are you even listening?”

Cut to MUFON, looking at screen.

MUFON: “Blue tweed.”

ALANA: “Yeah, what is *up* with that? I don’t think he’s washed that thing since he got it back in the Victorian Era...” [rant continues]

MUFON looks pensive, and types a reply.

Close up: ‘send’ button *clicking*.

MUFON: “Hey, Alana?”

ALANA: “Yeah?”

MUFON: “What are you doing this weekend?”

ALANA: “You.” Leans in and kisses him.

MUFON: “But you have no actual plans, though, right?”

ALANA: “Nothing set.”

MUFON: “I just got mail from a friend of mine who works for the governor’s office. A job opened up in their computer division, and they’re hiring for it right now. Since it’s a government job, they might go internal, but my friend said if I get to the capital this weekend, he can introduce me to h.r.”

ALANA: “Wow. So you want me to like drive you to Atlanta?”

MUFON: “*Oh*, no, I wouldn’t subject you to that. I was wondering if I could just borrow your car for the day. Maybe the weekend.”

ALANA: “You want to borrow my car?”

MUFON: “It’s a sweet job. Pulls in 6 figures. I may not even get it, but I’d kick myself if I didn’t try, ’cuz my friend says it’s right up my alley.”

ALANA: “Wow, that would be cool if you got it, but that’s like 2 hours away, isn’t it. God, you’d spend half your time commuting.”

MUFON: “So can I do it?”

ALANA: “When, tomorrow?”

MUFON: “Yeah.”

ALANA: “How about I just drive you. Tomorrow night Kim and her boyfriend have a date on the fifth floor library with the Oprah Winfrey autobiography, so I’m free.”

MUFON: “Oh, I’d feel bad making you wait. It’s a job with the *government*, so I’m sure I’ll spend tons of time filling out applications paperwork. Hell, they may not even get to me until Sunday. Besides, I don’t think you’d get along with my friend. He’s an acquired taste, and...” he shakes his head at her.

ALANA: “But what if I need my car?”

MUFON: “Borrow Kim’s while she’s at the library. Hey, I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

ALANA: “Well, you promise you won’t steal it?”

MUFON thinks a second, then pulls his keys out his pocket and tosses them on the bed.

MUFON: “Here, you can have my apartment for collateral.”

ALANA: “God, I was joking.” (Picks up keys.) “Hey, I thought you said you lost your keys.”

MUFON: “I found them by the bed. So can I?”

ALANA: “God, I guess.”

MUFON: “Hey, you should be happy. If I can pull in 6 figures, I can be your sugar daddy.”

ALANA: “I already got a sugar daddy. Promise you’ll take care of it?”

MUFON: “Absolutely.”

ALANA: “Do you have any pets I need to feed?”

MUFON: “No.”

ALANA: “How about plants I have to water?”

35)

Cut to Dawn’s Garden, inside a greenhouse. Pots of small, sickly looking Voynich-ish plants are lined in rows. DAWN is filling empty pots with dirt. At the far end of one glass wall are about 20 hydroponic chambers, empty. All are wired to a large box on a table, which itself is hooked to a large pc tower. CHUBBS and FOX sit next to it, open laptops in front of them, backs to the camera. Camera starts at far end, slowly zooming over the plants to home in on FOX, who is reading the pc tower’s screen aloud.

FOX: “If x equals zero, then function 25.”

CHUBBS (reading silently along on his laptop): “Right.”

FOX: “If x plus y is greater than t sub 3, then function 18.”

CHUBBS: “Right”

FOX: “If x plus pH is greater than 5, then function 200.”

CHUBBS: “That should be ‘greater than or equal’ to 5.”

FOX: “Aw, shit, hang on.”

Camera should by now be zoomed in on the tower’s screen; which is lines of mathematical formula/code. She changes the ‘>’ symbol in one equation to a ‘≥’.

FOX: “I betcha that’s the problem: the solution’s too acidic.”

CHUBBS: “Probably, plus why none of the alarm routines kicked in.”

FOX: “Hey, Dawn?”

Quick cut to DAWN, looking up from a pot.

FOX: “We think we found your problem, or at least one of them.”

DAWN: “Wowi zowie!”

FOX (to CHUBBS): “Think we should go through the rest of the code, just to see if there are any other slop-ups?”

CHUBBS: “Well, probably, but I need a break from this.”

FOX: “Agreed. Damn, this is tedious.”

DAWN (overhears): “Yeah, but you know it’s for a good cause, and we all really appreciate it.”

FOX air-kisses her. She stretches in her chair; CHUBBS gets up and heads for a sliding glass door.

Cut to: Dawn’s Kitchen, CHUBBS walking in through sliding glass door. VLT#1 is at the sink washing cucumbers while getting a sensuous shoulder rub from VLT#2. Both of their hands have the bright green nail polish.

CHUBBS watches the two; VLT#1 is clearly enjoying the massage.

CHUBBS: “Looks yummy.”

VLT#2 turns, unclear expression.

CHUBBS: “The cucumber.” Innocent smile. “Never picked up a taste for ’em until Fox turned me on to them a few years ago. Raw with paprika. Yummy stuff.”

VLT#2 nods coyly at him, then returns her attention to VLT#1’s neck.

CHUBBS: “What’s for lunch?”

VLT#1 (holds up one of the cucumbers): “Cuke salad. Dawn made her special dressing earlier. It might even have a dash of paprika in it.”

CHUBBS: “Sounds delish, so I’ll let you two get back to it.”

CHUBBS Goes to refrigerator, searches a moment, then grabs a beer. It is (naturally dyed) green, and the glass bottle has a bizarre, home-made label. *Hiss* as he uncaps.

VLTF#2: "Recycling's sorted in the bags under the table."

CHUBBS: "Yeah, I saw." He snaps the cap across the room; it hits the bin perfectly. "Nothin' but bucket." Smiles, and walks through a door, into a large, cluttered garage. It is open and exposing the outside driveway.

Cut to: Driveway, which is a double-rut path through tall grass, heading out into tall, thick Australian pines 100 feet away. The Harley and 2 crotch rockets are parked out front. VIXEN is reclined atop of hers, her feet propped up on a radar detector strapped to the handlebars. She is half way through a thin joint.

CHUBBS: "How you doing, girl?"

VIXEN (sounding tired, depressed): "Doin'." *Pause* "I guess. Trying not to think about things."

CHUBBS: "Hey, if you want to head back to Halifax, I'm sure everyone would understand and be fine with that."

VIXEN: "No, I'd rather be helpful, useful. Work will distract me." Inhales crisply, then holds out the joint to him as he reaches her. "Want any of this?"

CHUBBS (sniffs air): "What is it? Weed, or one of *those* plants?"

VIXEN: "Y'know, I'm not sure, actually. [*puff*] Dawn kicked it down to me. Kinda tastes like bananas and gasoline."

CHUBBS: "I had some Jamaican bud once that tasted like that. The boat that brought it had a gas leak." Goes to his bike.

VIXEN: "It's pretty good shit. Kind of a reverse head-rush: all the blood goes to your clit."

CHUBBS: "Then it probably won't do anything for me." Over his back tire he has 2 leather saddlebags. Opens one and pulls out Mufon's laptop and a small cd-rom binder.

VIXEN coughs, then motions the cigarette to him encouragingly.

CHUBBS: "No thanks, I'm still working."

VIXEN: "How's that coming anyway?" She swishes saliva in her mouth, and then puts the joint out on her pierced tongue.

CHUBBS: "We're almost done with the hydro; think we fixed it. Still need to do climate control and the sprinklers."

VIXEN: "Cool; call me when you need me." Looks up at the sun, eyes closed.

CHUBBS (begins walking back into the garage): "Hon, I *always* need ya."

VIXEN (all serious): "That's good to hear, Chubbs."

He looks over his shoulder, smiles, and disappears into the garage.

Cut to Kitchen; camera pans to show CHUBBS walking through and to the glass door. The sink tap is still running; VLT#1 and #2 are kissing lightly. CHUBBS ignores them and goes back into the greenhouse. Back at the table, he pulls out the power jack from the back of the laptop and plugs it in.

Cut to FOX, squatting next to DAWN amid sickly plants.

FOX: "Whatcha doing?" DAWN begins grooming a plant.

CHUBBS swings the lid on the laptop open, and sets the pen aside. The screen is black.

CHUBBS: "These are decent machines when they actually work, so I figure if we can't kill the cootie on it, just wipe the slate and start over. I know a locksmith up in Ottawa who can fix the lock, so I should be able to sell it on the Market for enough to keep me in gasoline and cigarettes for at least a year."

FOX: "You don't smoke. Do you?"

CHUBBS: "No, but Vixen's trying to get me to start." He pushes a button on the keyboard, and there is a *beep*. He turns his attention to the cd binder, and pulls one out of a jacket. Sets it aside by the laptop; it is hand-labeled "Linux 13.0 format".

While he is doing this, the laptop goes through the following: pixel flash [as at the start of this film] followed by a green progress bar. The text block above and the percentage below are solid, unreadable blocks. The progress bar stops a quarter of the way; error messages [in solid block] begin scrolling along the side as the bar. Another *beep*, and the screen blanks. CHUBBS looks over at the screen briefly; a green text cursor is flashing across the screen (as if someone were holding the 'space bar'); when it reaches the bottom, it starts again from the top. CHUBBS picks up the Linux format disk, and hits a button on the laptop. The cd tray creeks out. He puts in the disk and starts it up.

DAWN has come up behind him.

DAWN: "I'm getting us some lemonade; would you like some?"

CHUBBS (picks up his beer): "Naw, I'm good. I kinda like this, actually." Takes a drink for emphasis.

DAWN: "Oh, I'll be sure to tell Holly. She runs the microbrewery that came from."

CHUBBS: "One o' you, I presume?"

DAWN: "Oh yeah. Whole brewery is. Out in Kansas. You'll notice that it's a *wheat* beer."

CHUBBS: "Nice. Never had one before; we don't get much call for 'em up north: wheat doesn't grow in the snow." Looks appreciatively at label. "I was wondering what 'hefeweizen' meant..."

DAWN: "Well, Holly's part German. I think she and Moleback were roommates in college, actually."

The computer *beeps*. CHUBBS turns to the laptop; DAWN goes to the glass doors.

Cut to screen: **Format aborted at Sector 0**

DAWN (off screen and faint): "Get a room!"

CHUBBS pushes 'eject' twice; the cd tray opens and closes. Sound of cd starting, loud grinding, and then *beep*.

Format aborted at Sector 0

CHUBBS looks at this. After a moment, the cursor begins doing it's space-bar zip. Sips his beer, then hits eject. Tray slides out. CHUBBS holds down the 'shift' and 'Esc' keys, then presses the cd button. As soon as it is in, the machine *beeps*, and the cd starts spinning madly.

Formatting: Sector 0 0% complete

After a moment, it updates:

Formatting: Sector 1 1% complete

Then to:

Formatting: Sector 2 1% complete

Still holding the shift and escape keys, CHUBBS smiles.

CHUBBS: "Gotcha." Reaches for his beer with his free hand.

On screen, Mufon's translation program opens. There is a flash [2 frame length] of Voynich script, then an English sentence replaces it:

Do not format the drive. All information will be permanently lost and unrecoverable. This includes me.

CHUBBS leans forward, wide eyed.

CHUBBS: "FOX?"

Cut to FOX and DAWN, standing amid pots. Both have glasses of lemonade.

FOX: "Yeah?"

CHUBBS: "Can you come here?"

FOX excuses herself from DAWN, and walks up the rows of pots to CHUBBS. He is still holding down the keys.

CHUBBS: "Read this."

FOX: "What's up?" as she leans over.

Cut to full screen, showing both the format progress (Sector 23 1%) and the translation box with the text message.

FOX: "What the fuck?"

CHUBBS: "Whatever's on this laptop is strong enough to survive a Scrub 3, and was able to abort a formatting. I tried a brute force from disk, which is working, but then I get this weird pop-up."

FOX: "Jesus, it's pleading for its life."

CHUBBS: “You ever seen anything like this?”

FOX: “Never. What the hell kind of virus is this?”

CHUBBS: “I dunno, but it’s one bad-ass one.”

FOX: “Well, do we want to kill it? This might be something we VLT can use. I’ll bet you could do some nasty sabotage with it.”

CHUBBS: “Actually, hon, I’m not all that comfortable with this thing even being around. Since we don’t know what this is and there’s no Scrub or cure for it, I say we kill it now.”

FOX: “Well, apparently a brute force format will wipe it away, plus it’s not going anywhere from this laptop, so we’ve got it contained. Hell, let me look at this thing. Like I said, this might be something we could use.”

CHUBBS: “Don’t call up what you can’t put down.”

FOX: “Tell you what: you were going to sell the laptop, right? I’ll buy it off you. Whatcha want for it?”

CHUBBS: “*Hmmmm*,” and polishes off his beer. “Let’s say \$1,000 in cash... real cash, not Moleback money...”

FOX: “I’ll talk to Dawn or M.B. even; so sure.”

CHUBBS: “...*and...*” arches his eyebrows and grins libidinally, “...come hang out in my hammock tonight. At least for a little while.” He nods toward the screen; cut to the progress bar:

Sector 88 2%

CHUBBS (voice-over): “No pressure intended, but the clock is ticking on your decision.”

Sector 89 2%

FOX (smirks): “I just want you to know you are an evil fiend.”

CHUBBS: “You know I’m your hero.”

FOX: “Chubbs, why couldn’t you have been born a woman?” Blows him a kiss. “I could call you Chubblina.”

CHUBBS: “I thought it was Chubbette?”

FOX (mischievous grin): “Well, no promises, but I’ll *think* about it. *Hard.*”

CHUBBS: “Yeah it is.”

FOX (whispers coyly): “Masturbuddy.” Playful, quick grin. “But you may have to take a rain-check on it while we’re in Rome; I don’t want to offend Dawn Caesar.”

CHUBBS: “That’s cool. Just one last thing then: *promise me* that you will never let this thing out of here until you have found an immunization or a Scrub for it *first.*”

FOX (snorts in contempt, as if the obvious had been overexplained.): “As Crowley said: ‘Don’t call up what you can’t put down’.”

CHUBBS lets go of the keys, and slides the laptop over to FOX. It’s up to **Sector 95**, 2%. FOX presses the eject button; it pops out and the machine *beeps*.

Format aborted

FOX: “Cool.” Looks at the disk in the tray. “Can I burn a copy of this? I don’t have any Linux on me.”

CHUBBS: “*Ooh*, that may require an additional hammock fee.”

FOX: “Don’t press your luck, cheese eater.”

CHUBBS: “Mmmm, *cheese*.” Turns to kitchen. “Actually, I think I saw some soy faux feta in there for the cucumber salad...”

FOX (points towards Mufon’s laptop): “Well, this can wait; I’ll play with it when we’re done.”

CHUBBS: “Like a cat with a mouse?”

FOX (smiles): “How much code we got left for the fluid?”

CHUBBS (looks over at his laptop): “Probably about 30 lines. Maybe 5 minutes, if there are no more errors.”

FOX: “That’s good; go tell VIXEN to set up the sprinklers, and we’ll probably be done with this when she’s ready.”

CHUBBS: “All right.” Gets up and goes off screen through doors.

Faintly in background, dialogue from Deleted Scene 35a can be heard as rest of scene plays out.

Cut to FOX, putting aside the cd-rom and closing the bay. She looks at the screen a moment, about to shut the system down, when she notices a new line of text in the translation window:

Thank you

FOX looks at this in disbelief. She looks closely, actually studying the window. There are radio buttons for ‘Voynich to English’ (selected) and ‘English to Voynich’, and a ‘translate’ button. A smaller window is at the bottom, where text can be entered. The cursor is flashing inside it.

Hesitantly, FOX hits ‘w’ on the keyboard. The letter appears in the window. She quickly types:

who are you?

She hits ‘enter.’ The machine *beeps*. After a moment, she changes the radio button to ‘English to Voynich’ and hits enter again. A quick flash of Voynich text in the top window (5 frames). In the text box, a single word in Voynich appears, with the radio button jumping to ‘Voynich to English’ (2 frames). This clears, as does the top window, which now has a single English word in it:

Voynich

FOX types: “ what are you? ” and hits enter.

Her message flashes in Voynich at the top; the same voynich word appears in the input box, and then translates as:

Voynich

FOX: “The *Hell*?” Steeples her fingers, looking perplexed.

VIXEN enters from side, and FOX turns to look to see who it is. A moment later, CHUBBS comes out, grinning mischievously.

CHUBBS: “Oink oink, *eh*?”

FOX: “Hey, ladies, Chubbs, can you come here?”

DAWN: “What’s up?”

VIXEN: “What’s up?”

CHUBBS: “What’s up?”

36)

Cut to WILSON.

WILSON: “What’s up?”

Shot pulls back to show him in Nimbus’s Computer Room. PROP and LAB RAT are hovering over a fancy machine that resembles a miniature covered wagon, labeled ‘Deux Ex Machina 2000’. It is set by the chalk outline.

LAB RAT: “Well, if we’re lucky, this will be able to tell us what was written before it was smeared. It takes an imaging of the soak patterns.”

LAB RAT rolls the DEM2K over the blood smear. He has a small remote with a collapsible monitor on top; he presses a button, and the underside of the wagon flashes. A green light move from one end to the other (like a scanner) accompanied by humming. While they wait, the BEELZEBUG flies by.

Cut to LAB RAT, WILSON, and PROP, hovered around the screen. On screen is an image of what the floor looks like, with the 1 clear character, 1 partially clear, and the swipe.

LAB RAT (voice over): “So this works on the assumption that what’s absorbed the deepest is the oldest. So, moving down into the wood...”

Click, and the image begins to change as the blood disappears. A vertical progress bar shows the depth of the wood. The wipe undoes itself and more letters becoming visible until about 10 are shown, and then they start disappearing from right to left as the writing becomes more pronounced left to right. Finally the first letter disappears.
[cinematography: just film someone writing in real time and then wiping it — then run that film backwards for the actual scene]

LAB RAT: “Wow, that worked better than I thought it would.”

PROP: “Yeah, you gotta love DEM technology. Those guys up at Stanford can do wonders these days.”

LAB RAT: “Actually, the crew at Stanford are *hacks* that just got to the patent office first. They reverse-engineered this from a working prototype at Harvard; guy in the archaeology department named Don Krutchner is the one who discovered the effect in ’93.”

PROP: “Yeah, I heard that *myth* about him, but I still think Stanford should get the credit on this, especially Pohl Leoloeb. The actual principle for the process was worked out back in 1974, when he and another undergrad...”

LAB RAT (outraged): “*Oh*, don’t you *dare* mention Kheller...”

WILSON: “Excuse me, I hate to interrupt tonight’s game of Dueling Geeks, but can I get a print-out of this, from just before it was wiped?”

LAB RAT: “Of course. What format you want it?”

WILSON: “*Uh*, printed on paper.”

PROP: “Actually, can you make me a bitmap?”

LAB RAT: “*Ooohhh, bitmap*. You must be running something *old*, Prop. But sure and sure.” He presses ‘print’ and the machine scrolls out a fax-ish copy of the screen. LAB RAT looks at it, to make sure it printed okay.

Cut to print-out:



LAB RAT (voice over): “I’ve never seen writing like this before. What is it?”

WILSON: “Voynich.”

LAB RAT: “Oh. Thought it was Elvish or something.”

PROP (scoffs): “Oh God no. Tolkien actually has the alphabet in one of the appendixes; looks nothing like this. Tolkien Elvish is basically just inverted variations of 8 characters, all depending on ascenders or descenders.” He makes some swishing with his index finger.

LAB RAT: “*Technically* true, but Gary Gygax came up with his own workable model for Elvish in one of the early Dungeon Master’s Guides. In fact, I believe one of the power artifacts a level 30 player could pick up was the *Voynich Manuscript*.”

WILSON (looks up from paper): “No shit? What the hell are you talking about, exactly?”

LAB RAT and **PROP:** “Dungeons and Dragons.”

WILSON: “And the Voynich Manuscript is mentioned in this game?”

LAB RAT: “It might be. I’m dredging high school memories here, but I kind of remember it being some type of unique magical item high-level players could get. Druids, I think.”

PROP: “I never heard of it before. Maybe I just never ran into a campaign that had it. But Gygax was a nut for esoteric, so I can see him putting in the Voynich as a joke.”

WILSON: “Wonder if it’s worth looking into?”

LAB RAT: “I can ask my uncle Marvin. He’d know. He was our Dungeon Master, and he had all that stuff memorized in and out. If you had to roll for something, he could tell you what it was without even looking it up.”
LAB RAT gets a sudden, enlightened look. “Maybe that’s why he always won and we kept dying when he was in a pissy mood....”

WILSON takes the printout and looks at it, then at the floor, and then back to the printout.

PROP: “You think you can find it that the Yale book, Wilson?”

LAB RAT (off screen and to himself): “Worst... module... *ever!*”

WILSON: “I’m hoping so. I’d like to see what Kircher translates it as.”

PROP: “Well, knowing Kircher, it’ll probably be something like ‘The treachery of Typhon ends at the throne of Isis; the moisture of nature is guarded by the vigilance of Anubis’.”

WILSON: “Wasn’t Anubis the guardian of the dead?”

PROP: “Sounds about right.”

WILSON is looking out into the computer room at MacLeod’s outline. Camera begins to home in on it over WILSON’s shoulder.

WILSON: “Did Anubis ever let the dead give up their secrets?”

Camera is now completely focused on the outline. Holds.

LAB RAT (off screen): “Hey, if I’m done here, I’m gonna take off.”

37)

Cut to ALANA’s House.

ALANA: “So you’re just gonna take off?”

MUFON (making a shit-eating grin): “Well, let me just make a quick call, and then I should be all set.”

ALANA nods resignedly. MUFON picks up the phone and dials a 10-digit number.

Cut to close-up of MUFON with phone to his ear.

OPERATOR VOICEOVER: “At the beep, the time will be 7:32 am...” [etc.]

MUFON: “Hey, Jimmy? It’s, uh, Randy.... Yeah, I’m coming down. Should take, what, 3 hours to drive? 4 with the construction? Whatever, I’ll try to be there before noon... ...cool; hey, can I shave and shower at your place first? ...right, yeah, and you’re about the same size as me, so I’m sure you have nicer suits and ties than I got... ...cool, cool, well, I’ll call you from the IHOP in a couple of hours.” Hangs up.

ALANA: “Well, good luck.”

MUFON: “Yeah. If I’m lucky, I should be back around midnight; if not, I’ll be back by tomorrow sometime.”

ALANA: “You’d better be.” Picks up his keys. “You know, I don’t actually know where you live. I’ve never even been over there.”

MUFON: “Oh. It’s on the north side of Corners, the plex next to Kim’s. At, uh, 710. I think it’s building 24N.”

ALANA looks at his keys. Sees a car key on it.

ALANA: “Is this a car key?”

MUFON: “Yeah, to a Mustang that doesn’t work. That’s why I’m borrowing yours, remember?” He kisses her lightly. “And I truly appreciate this.”

ALANA: “Well, of course. You seem cool, and I like you, plus it will help you out. And who knows, if you can land that job, I can always use another sugar daddy. Especially one who doesn’t insist I go to college.”

MUFON: “What, aren’t you having fun learning about teeth? You use them so well.” Grins at her.

ALANA: “Yeah, to eat. God, I am so bloated with blubber. I am a whale.”

MUFON: “Then call me Ahab, and I’ll harpoon ya when we get back. Hell, you got my keys, you can be naked and waiting for me.” Kisses her lightly. “And on that note, I’m off.” Kisses her again, lightly, politely. Starts to pull away, but she grabs him back and Frenches him.

ALANA (when they stop): “Call me when you know.”

MUFON (coprophagial grin): “*Of course* I will.”

ALANA: “God, 4 hours is so far away.”

MUFON: “Hey, it’s not like I’m leaving the country.”

38)

Cut to: Berlin International Airport.

Over the course of this scene, announcements will come over the Airport p.a. They are intended to be in the background and unobtrusive, and are thus presented here ahead of time. They are:

OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #1 (in German): “Attention. This is the final boarding call for flight 821 to Antwerp. Please have a ticket pass and photo identification ready at gate 18 if you wish to be on flight 821 to Antwerp.”

OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #2 (in German): “Attention. This is the final boarding call for Hindenburg Flight 13 to Lakehurst, New Jersey. This is the final boarding call for Hindenburg flight 13 to Lakehurst, New Jersey.”

OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #3 (in German): “Attention, Mr. I.G. Farbin. You have a call on the black courtesy phone next to the showers by gate 4. Mr. I.G. Farbin. You have a call on the black courtesy phone next to the showers by gate 4.”

OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #4 (in German, and distorted to sound like Frank Zappa’s ‘Central Scrutinizer’): “The White Zone is for loading and unloading only. If you have to load, or if you have to unload, go to the White Zone. You’ll love it. It’s a *way of life*.”

Scene begins in a large waiting room next to the ‘customs’ tunnel exit. It is nighttime outside the observation windows, and the darkness has seeped into the drab interior.


OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #1

FRIENDISH emerges through the customs doors, a laptop tote over his shoulder. He looks around. The airport is busy, but the people he is looking for are easy to spot among the throng.

Two women [FRIEDEN and ANAÏS] are leaning against the far wall by a window, arms crossed, foot propped on the wall behind them, staring deadpan expressionless. Their nails are painted Moleback green. FRIEDEN is 30, has shoulder-length black hair, wrap-around sunglasses, and vintage West German army surplus fatigues. ANAÏS is 15, has an identical haircut except with green highlights, deep green wraparound glasses, and her pants are hacked to bermuda shorts-length. Her legs are unshaven, but the blonde hairs are hard to see.

FRIENDISH walks over towards them and pulls out his cellphone. FRIEDEN uncrosses her arms, and reveals she is holding a compact phone. She keys in a thirteen-digit number, and after a second, Friendish’s phone starts ringing.

Cut to Friendish’s cell screen:

Incoming call from: 

Camera pans back from the display as FRIENDISH puts the phone to his head; he has almost reached the two women.

FRIENDISH (into phone): “Hello?”

Camera angles to include *Frieden* in the shot.

FRIEDEN (phone voiceover): “Hello.”

Friendish reaches her and stops at arm’s length. They fluidly trade phones.

FRIEDEN (phone voiceover): “Goodbye.”

FRIENDISH (phone voiceover): “Goodbye.”

They trade back their phones, and hit ‘disconnect.’

FRIEDEN (smiles slightly and nods): “Herr Friendish. I am Frieden.” Slight nod of the head toward ANAÏS. “This is my daughter Anaïs.”

FRIENDISH nods to both, then holds up his cell and looks at FRIEDEN expectantly. She nods, readies her phone, and they simultaneously dial numbers; his is a lot longer than hers. The two have separate, simultaneous conversations while ANAÏS keeps watch of their surroundings.

FRIENDISH: “Moleback? It’s me. I just got into the Berlin terminal...”

FRIEDEN (in German): “Lance? Yes, he is here; he just came through customs...”

The two stop talking at about the same time, then trade phones.

FRIENDISH (into other phone): “Hello, and thank you in advance for your hospitality... ..okay, hang on...”

FRIEDEN (into other phone, in English): “Moleback! It is Frieden, and we see no problems so far. ...okay, hang on...”

OVERHEAD ANNOUNCEMENT #2

The two stop talking at the same time, then return the original phones. They quietly listen to the other end for four seconds.

FRIENDISH: “Bye.”

FRIEDEN: “Auf.”

The two hang up at the same time. FRIENDISH smiles politely at the two ladies.

FRIEDEN: “So welcome to Deutschland. Klaus expresses regret that he could not come to welcome you personally, but Lance and Moleback have sent us to meet and greet you for him.”

FRIENDISH: “He hinted this might happen. I didn’t give much notice, though, so it’s cool and I appreciate the meet ’n greet. You have a car, I presume?”

FRIEDEN: “Yes. Do you have luggage?”

FRIENDISH shakes his head *no* and then holds his hand out, indicating for them to lead the way out of there.

FRIENDISH: “Naw; I always travel light. Next day or two, I should probably buy some new clothes, help me blend in better. Camouflage.”

ANAÏS (heavy accent): “Camouflage?”

FRIEDEN: “Tarnung.”

ANAÏS: “Ah, ich verstehe.” (to FRIENDISH) “Do you speak German?”

FRIENDISH: “Nein.”

OVERHEAD ANOUNCEMENT #3

They reach an alcove with elevator bays to the parking garage.

ANAÏS: “How was the flight?” Presses button for the elevator.

FRIENDISH: “Slept through most of it, zenned out the rest. Used the time to think about how to handle this.”

FRIEDEN: “Good. Are you hungry? We could get a bite to eat before dropping you off at our safe house.”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, no thank you. I try to eat as little as possible.”

A FAMILY OF 3 comes up to the elevator, all toting luggage strollers. They chatter amongst themselves in German while they wait for the elevator.

FRIEDEN: “Oh really? Why is that?”

FRIENDISH: “Food gets in my way. I’m a busy guy; I’ve got things to do, and stopping what I’m doing to fix and eat a meal cuts into my productivity.”

ANAÏS: “But if you do not eat, you will die.”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah, that enslavement to it is *another* reason I hate it.”

ANAÏS: “Do you hate air, too, for the same reasons?”

FRIENDISH: “No: breathing’s easy, and it’s free. Food, on the other hand, you have to *kill* something to eat it.”

FRIEDEN: “Ah; that I agree with, which is why we are *Vegetarier*. I see why Moleback and Klaustina recommended you; we are kindred spirits.”

FRIENDISH: “Unfortunately, even with vegetarianism, you still have to kill the plants to eat them. It’s still murder, and arguably more savage. A fish can swim away, a cow can bite back, a chicken can peck and scratch, but how’s a head of lettuce going to defend itself? What defenses does a carrot have against the ravages of man?”

FRIEDEN: “I now also see why Moleback warned me that you had a strange sense of humor. That is very funny, but I would not repeat that to some of our fellow acquaintances. Especially Lance. We Germans have a genetic deficiency in the funny gene, especially when it comes to ourselves or our beliefs.”

OVERHEAD ANOUNCEMENT #4

The elevator *pings*. Doors open; elevator is cavernous (large enough for an airport shuttle cart) but the only passenger is a MAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT.

FRIENDISH, FRIEDEN, and ANAÏS enter, followed by the FAMILY OF THREE; there is easily room for one more person inside. The doors start to close.

LATE GUY (off screen, in German): “Hold the door! Hold the door!”

LATE GUY comes running up to the doors just as they close. ANAÏS could have prevented the doors from closing, but does not; she even smiles slightly at LATE GUY.

LATE GUY (when doors have shut): “Arschloche!”

39)

Cut to car interior on the Autobahn, night speeding by outside. ANAÏS is behind the wheel; she has not removed her sunglasses. FRIEDEN is in the passenger seat (shades off) and FRIENDISH in back. Sound (on left channel only) of the Doppler shift drop of an angry car horn passing into the background.

ANAÏS (out the window): “Beißen Sie mich!” [“bite me!”]

FRIEDEN: “So we are from Bavaria, but you are ultimately going to Baden-Württemberg? The cell there would have picked you up themselves, but tonight is a *special occasion* for them, and they could not spare anyone on such short notice.”

FRIENDISH: “What’s the occasion?”

ANAÏS: “A pair of Alpakas.”

FRIENDISH: “I’ll be sure to think happy alpaca thoughts for them.”

FRIEDEN: “That would be nice. So you may stay at Lance’s as long as you wish, until you can make it to Baden-Württemberg.”

FRIENDISH: “Appreciate that, but we’ll see how fast I can get shift in gear. How far is Stuttgart from this Black Forest alpaca group you know?”

FRIEDEN: “Roughly about an hour by car.”

FRIENDISH: “What do you know about this group, other than their love for alpacas?”

FRIEDEN: “Honestly? Not very much. I have met their leader, [name of VV GROUPIE] once.”

FRIENDISH: “Oh, Klaus isn’t in charge of it?”

FRIEDEN: “No; [VV GROUPIE]. Klaus is not officially part of any of our cells; he works with many, but belongs to none. I know he is not part of Operation Alpaca tonight, but is visiting with a different group. There are actually several cells in that area in the Schwarzwald, the Black Forest.”

ANAÏS: “At least in theory. A joke is that Germany has more cells than actual members.”

FRIENDISH: “Maybe some cells are just so low-key, you never know about them.”

FRIEDEN: “Low key, or lazy? That is the other problem. If you don’t put anything into the cause, you get nothing out of it. The group Klaus is with tonight is a good example. Do they rescue alpacas or pick up people from the airport? No. They have not done *anything*, actually. They make little contribution to the cause.”

FRIENDISH: “Maybe Klaus is giving them a pep talk.”

ANAÏS: “Or maybe they just enjoy doing their own thing.”

FRIEDEN: “True. Perhaps they are just a withdrawn commune or coven?”

ANAÏS: “Nein, you are thinking of the Witches of the Steiwald.”

FRIENDISH: “Witches...”

FRIEDEN: “Well, that is their cover story, anyway, that they are a Dianic coven of 13. But Anaïs is right, that is a different cell, in the Stalk Forest, not the Black Forest.”

FRIENDISH shrugs, and they ride in silence for several moments.

FRIENDISH: “How well do you know Kay’s friend Klaus?”

FRIEDEN: “I have only met him once, actually, when Kay was visiting last Halloween. We all had dinner together; he cooked.”

ANAÏS: “Oh, was that the pasta with all the basil in it?”

FRIEDEN: “Yes.”

ANAÏS: “I remember him. *Klaus*. I saw him at a Rave in Oberammergau about a month ago.”

FRIEDEN: “What were you doing at a Rave?”

FRIENDISH: “What was Klaus doing at a Rave?”

ANAÏS: “I think it is called ‘The Swim’?” She demonstrates dance (arm paddles, nose dive/wave, etc.) then quickly reclaims the steering wheel as the car begins to drift.

FRIENDISH: “I *see*...”

ANAÏS: “May I put on some music? It’s going to be a long drive.”

FRIEDEN: “Yes, but keep it down for now.”

ANAÏS reaches down and turns on the car’s stereo. A song by Contravene blares out jarringly: volume is on “8”; she quickly subdues the volume to “2”. She begins to ‘Swim’ to the beat, keeping at least one hand on the wheel.

FRIEDEN: “How do you know Moleback and Klaustina?”

FRIENDISH: “I try and make it my business to know everybody. It helps to know who’s who.”

FRIEDEN: “This is true.”

FRIENDISH: “How do you know them?”

FRIEDEN: “Through Smelly, one of the VLT, who came over here on tour several years ago. This is their band Anaïs is playing right now. We recognized each other’s ideals, though in all honesty I think theirs are more extreme, as are their methods for attaining them. But at least we are on the same side, if on different teams.”

FRIENDISH (ponders her last comment): “I’m intrigued; what do you mean?”

FRIEDEN: “We of the *Vegetarian Volksfrei* do not take such a drastic view of certain biological aspects as the VLT do.”

FRIENDISH: “Like what?”

FRIEDEN: “Do you know why they are all lesbians?”

FRIENDISH: “...I... ..I never actually put much thought into it, and they never brought it up.”

FRIEDEN: “They are trying to parthenogenically reproduce. Do you know what oviogenesis is?”

FRIENDISH: “No.”

FRIEDEN: “The woman contributes half the chromosomes to a child; the other half come from a man. It is possible for the woman’s egg to divide in half and fertilize itself with the full set of chromosomes. Since it’s both sets of x chromosomes, the child will be a girl.”

ANAÏS: “Moleback and Klaustina believe the Immaculate Conception of Mary was just such an event. But not the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Jesus was a boy, and oviogenesis only produces girls.”

FRIEDEN: “It’s almost a variation of cloning; the child should be almost identical to the mother, since that’s who gave it its full set of chromosomes. The VLT have been trying to breed a race of *uberfraulines* this way for many years, but with no luck. So far.”

FRIENDISH: “Did not know that.”

FRIEDEN: “Really?”

FRIENDISH shrugs and shakes his head *no*.

FRIEDEN: “You should remember that ignorance, for if you ever repeat what I just told you to Moleback or Klaustina, they will kill you, and then kill whoever it was that told you this. It is dangerous information I tell you, but it is important, and directly affects you. Once Moleback and Klaustina achieve their Parthenogenic plot, they will kill anyone with a y chromosome as now unnecessary. As you are such a carrier, you have a right to know this while you are contributing to their agenda.”

FRIENDISH: “The plants in these pictures, do they pertain to the parthenogenesis, or to the extinction of males?”

FRIEDEN: “I do not know. Perhaps both, perhaps neither. Maybe they’re just aesthetically pretty, and they like them. But I do not doubt they would find some use for them.”

FRIENDISH: “Do you think they have a reasonable chance of achieving these goals within my lifetime?”

FRIEDEN: “That depends on how long you live, and by what means you use to prolong your life. But no, I doubt it. These feminine eugenics programs have been going on for generations before Moleback and Klaustina became VLT leaders, and most likely will continue on after.”

FRIENDISH: “Unless these happen to be what they need, or at least something to speed up the process.”

FRIEDEN: “That had crossed my mind too, which is why we are talking about this. In its own way, their goal is noble, though the y-genocide is extreme. We *like* men, and do not blame them for being men; they had no choice in the matter. Men are useful, and we have many among us, including our cell’s leader, Lance.”

ANAÏS (in German, to herself): “Außerdem sind Batterien kostspielig.” [Besides, batteries are expensive.]

FRIEDEN smacks her lightly, playfully up-side the head. ANAÏS grins and goes back to dancing.

They drive along in silence for a few moments.

ANAÏS: “May I turn the music up? It assists my driving.”

Another Doppler horn whizzes by, this on the right channel.

FRIEDEN nods her approval; ANAÏS reaches down to the panel. Music begins to swell.

Cut to low-angle shot of the Audubon from the side: their car drives by, the Contravene song rising and fading. As the music finally dies, a new tune fades in. A blue Ford Escort (driven by AUTHOR and SEAN) drive by, windows rolled down, blasting Beethoven’s 8th Symphony at top volume. Music continues to increase and clarify as car passes by.

After a few moments, MR. EAGLE’s head pops in front of the camera. The Autobahn is still visible behind him.

MR. EAGLE (deadpan to camera): “Excuse me. Can we change the music?”

40)

Cut to di Medicigan Conversation Pit. Classical music in background, same as before. Close-up of MR. EAGLE (match his positioning from previous shot as much as possible.)

MR. EAGLE: “I hate to be rude, but I’m just not in the mood for Beethoven.”

Shot pans back to show Conversation Pit. DI MEDICIGAN, COUNT, MR. ROBIN, his LEASHED ASIAN ESCORT, PRALINE, and 3 others are seated with MR. EAGLE.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Oh, did you have some other music you would rather hear?”

COUNT: “No, my friend in leather is right. No Beethoven today. The violin frequency, it chig out my ears.”
Stabbing motions with a fat index finger.

DI MEDICIGAN raises a hand and *snaps*. (deadpan monotone): “Cabana boy.”

CABANA BOY instantly appears, dressed like a priest. “Si?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Change the music.”

CABANA BOY: “Si. Do you have a preference, or just randomize, sir?”

DI MEDICIGAN looks at his guests, palms up for suggestions.

MR. EAGLE: “I’m fine with classical, just not *this*.”

COUNT: “Yes, nothing Teutonic.”

DI MEDICIGAN: (to Cabana Boy) “Rossini, randomize a piano concerto.”

MR. ROBIN: “Nice.”

MR. EAGLE (nodding ascent): “Good call.”

CABANA BOY leaves.

COUNT: “Yes, something happy from the south, not this Germanic bombastment.”

MR. EAGLE: “The only Germanic classical I can handle is Bach. It’s so mathematically precise yet melodious at the same time.”

COUNT: “*Haha*, this is true. I like Bach, too. But *which* Bach, *eh*? There were three generations of Bachs who wrote good music, but people only remember the middle one, Johann Sebastian Bach. You want me to tell you *my* favorite Bach? Michael. He was the third generation, one of Johann Sebastian’s 12 children. Now when Johann die, 12 children, they gonna go through papa’s inheritance pretty fast, right? So they blew the Bach fortune partying and then had to get jobs when there no more money. Michael, he decide he stay in the family business, so he try his hand at composing. He wrote a few symphonies and tried to sell them. Unfortunately, he was fair at best, and his papa was one hard act to follow. No one buy his stuff or attend performances. [Beethoven in background stops] So Michael realize he got to give up composing and get a *real* job. Just when this happens, he finds some music that his dad had written, and is able to sell it for a pretty guilder. Everybody go, ‘Wow! A lost work of Johann Sebastian Bach!’ and were so happy that nobody ask too many questions. All of a sudden, Michael start finding a *lot* of his dad’s music and manuscripts. ‘Hey, I was cleaning out the attic, and found this in papa’s old trunk under some dirty socks.’ *Hehe*, I think it was by the 9th Brandenburg Concerto that people’s bullshit detectors started going off, especially when people started comparing all these ‘new’ pieces to those symphonies of his own he’d tried to sell a few years earlier. But it took them a while to catch on, you know, and in a few cases, they’re still not so sure? *Hehe*, so I *like* Bach, because whenever I listen to him, I am not always sure which Bach I am hearing.”

The music changes, a Rossini concerto. They all look up, noticing the start.

MR. EAGLE: “Yeah, that’s nice. Simple. Sometimes simplicity is the key to ambiance. It’s so often ignored or never learned. The worst offender for that was Wagner...”

COUNT (off screen): “*Pah!* The Teutonic Plague!”

MR. EAGLE: “Wagner overdrove complexity to the expense of enjoyment. ‘A piano’s got 88 keys, and by God I’m going to use them all!’”

COUNT: “*Bah!* Wagner’s operas just makes me want to dye my hair blond and invade Poland!”

MR. ROBIN (pointing up): “Actually, I think Rossini said it best: ‘Wagner has good moments, but bad quarter hours’.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Know who Wagner reminds me of? Kircher.”

COUNT laughs at this, but the others look puzzled.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Kircher was a Jesuit scholar at Colegio Romano in the mid-1600s. He mostly did languages, and wrote extensive translations and summaries of things like Coptic and Hieroglyphics...”

COUNT: “...and one really fun one, *eh*?

DI MEDICIGAN: “...but he also wrote treatises on almost everything under the sun, even if he didn’t know anything about it. Wagner was the same way. Wagner once wrote an essay called ‘On Art and Music’ where he goes off on a tangent about vegetarianism. He said the Japanese were as smart as they were because they ate nothing but plants. Wagner then goes on to talk about vegetarian panthers living in the swamps of Canada. *Really*.”

COUNT: “*Hehe*, I see what you mean about Wagner being like Kircher. I did not know this, as I do not listen to him. It is why I avoid weddings: the bridal procession from *Lohengrin* has become adapted into ‘here comes the bride’.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Kircher actually wrote a tract about music theory, but I have not read it. I do know that he invented a ‘cat piano’. He trained cats to meow at different pitches, put them in a row of boxes, and hooked the keys of the piano up to some pointy sticks. Hit a note, and...” makes jabbing noise with his finger “...*meow*!”

MR. ROBIN: “Wow, that was centuries before Arthur Ewing premiered his mouse-o-phone.”

MR. EAGLE: “Now I *know* you’re bullshitting me.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Sir, I could not make something like this up! As my friends in America say, F-G-I... *Fucking Google It*.”

COUNT: “*Pah*, Kircher was a fool, but you already knew that, *eh*? I wonder if he wrote any music for this cat piano of his. I wonder what it was meant to sound like.”

MR. ROBIN: “Perhaps it is best not to know.”

MR. NUTHATCH: “*Bah*, I *love* collecting bad music!” (To DI MEDICIGAN) “Hey, you keep an eye out for any for me, yes?”

DI MEDICIGAN (nods): “Of course. But you know we have had musical auctions before; you have attended several yourself.”

COUNT: “*Hah*, this is true.” (To group, pointing to DI MEDICIGAN) “From him I once try to buy the original score for the Pachelbel Canon.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Why, so you could wipe your ass with it, like you did with the Napoleon treaty?”

COUNT (outraged at the slander): “Hey, that was *different*! That treaty was signed by my father when Napoleon stopped in my lands on his way to Russia. *Pah*! I remember that man. He smelled like a pig and gardenias. It is fortunate that Wellington fought him in the lowlands. The ground never feels right under the feet, and *that* is what did Napoleon in. *Bah*, I must be in those wretched lowlands tomorrow myself. Holland is even worse than Belgium, as the ground is so soggy from leaking dikes.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Oh, that’s right. Your court claim to your ancestral lands. Well good luck with that, Count.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, we have not reached the point yet where luck is needed. Hopefully, we never will; I prefer games where I put my faith in skill, not fortune.” Gets up. “I should call my lawyer, make sure he is either in Holland or on his way. Gentlemen, I may or may not be back; depending on how slippery this eel is.”

41)

Cut to: WILSON’s computer. The screensaver shows an eel; after a few seconds, it changes into a moose. [etc. – this will continue with random animals until WILSON uses his computer.] Shot pans back to show WILSON entering his office. He closes the door, puts his coat on the rack, and looks quickly at things in his in-box. Nothing holds his interest; he moves around to his desk, and nudges the mouse. The screensaver [then on a capybara] disappears and is replaced with a detective-ish desktop.

WILSON opens the mail program:

New messages: 2

Big Boss Man	end of month schedule rotation changes sqmd3qskwe`	Today 7:00am Today 12:23am
--------------	--	-------------------------------

Mouse moves over to bottom one; *click*:

idflk; ii3msn

„laekd0tu 209 ewfe so# fgffw

WILSON ponders this a moment. Hits the ‘forward’ button. In the ‘send to’ field, types ‘internal’, in the ‘cc’ field, types ‘prop’. In the text area, types:

Internal: trace this for C#3873549 [MacLeod].

Prop—look familiar? Pls forward this to your friend in Mass.

Clicks ‘send.’

Knock on the door.

Cut to door: SUPERINTENDENT is outside, with a small cluster of lackeys hovering.

WILSON nods, SUPERINTENDENT opens door.

SUPERINTENDENT: “Morning, Wilson. Got a second? Because that’s all I have.” Looks over at shoulder.

Quick cut to hallway full of nerdy, suited lawyer-types (REMORAH#1-4) hovering anxiously. One of them is studying the Chubbs reward poster in wide-eyed horror.

WILSON: “Sure. Glad I caught you, actually; I was going to track you down and ask if I can go out of town tomorrow for the MacLeod case.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “I was going to ask how that was coming along. So you have a lead out of town?”

WILSON: “Maybe not a lead, but something definitely relevant. Worth looking into, and in person seems better.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “So what have you got?”

WILSON: “MacLeod was into some pretty esoteric subjects, and I’m betting anything the killer was, too. I’m still in the middle of a crash course trying to understand the framework, and it would be easier to do it in person. Besides, I think I gotta get out of that house. You can still kinda smell the body, and the whole place has this weird ‘Shining’ thing going... Plus there’s this one fly there that’s driving me nuts. The Beelzebug. I don’t know whether to call an exterminator or an exorcist to cast out the beast.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Well, do what you gotta do, if you think it’ll solve the case.”

WILSON: “I will. Out of curiosity, has anyone asked about this case, enquired in its progress?”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Just that one call from the NSA about the language. That Admiral you talked to.”

WILSON: “Besides him, and since then. Anyone else?”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Uh, no.” Thinks a second. “No, and that’s actually odd. Usually some next of kin show up and ask, but *no one* has shown an interest in this case.”

WILSON: “You’re right; that is a bit odd. I was more wondering if someone was on *your* case to have me either wrap up this case quickly, or even shut it down.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “No. Seriously: no one’s even asked about it. Why?”

WILSON: “Because aspects of this case kind of strike me as being like from a bad spy novel, and in those you always have the Superintendent that has Big People breathing down his neck to get the investigation derailed before ‘*the truth*’ comes out.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “Well, this isn’t a bad spy screenplay, this is real life.” (suddenly *coughs* roughly, then recovers) “Excuse me. Something caught in my throat just there.” [alternately, the actor may ad lib a line] “Anyway, like I said, Wilson, no one’s asked. Only reason *I’m* asking and all concerned like I am is that there’s a murderer out there that we haven’t caught yet..”

WILSON: “Yeah. That the *only* reason you asking, boss?” ‘Cuz there’re lots of murderers out there, and some of ‘em might even be in Philadelphia.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “So where do you want to go tomorrow?”

WILSON: “New Haven, Connecticut. If I leave early enough, I can be back by midnight.”

SUPERINTENDENT: “What, you driving, or just plan for this to be a long visit?”

WILSON: “Both, maybe. Long drives are good for thinking, and I have a lot of that to do. And hopefully will have a lot more for the drive back.”

The REMORAHS are getting restless. SUPERINTENDENT notices this, and glances at his watch.

SUPERINTENDENT: “Keep me up to speed on this, please.”

WILSON: “Will do, first thing Monday morning.” SUPERINTENDENT starts to leave. WILSON calls out “Door, please?” REMORA #1 gets it, and they disappear down the hall.

WILSON looks at his desk’s papers for several seconds, then notices something peripherally. He looks up.

Cut to HASSAN, standing in the middle of the office. Aside from the fez, he is dressed in a black tunic that went out of style 2 millennia ago. A wan smile is on his lips.

WILSON stares at him, uncomprehending. HASSAN points to a paper on WILSON’s desk. WILSON looks down; there is a piece of parchment on his desk, yellowed and curled with age. Elegant Voynich script fills much of the page, around an illustration that is of the “biological” variety. It has 13 dancing nymphs and a decapitated male body.



WILSON blinks, picks up the page, and then looks back up at HASSAN.

Cut to empty office.

WILSON looks back at the paper.

Cut to photocopy of MacLeod’s 1040 short form.

WILSON looks up, confirming that no one is in the room, then back down at the paper, which is indeed a 1040. He leans back, and blows a breath out in despair.

42)

Cut to MUFON in a night-time parking lot, blowing out a deep breath, and then putting his mouth around a small aquarium tube. The other end of the tube is in the gas tank of a giant SUV. He quickly spits gas as a steady stream spews from the end; he quickly puts the end in the gas tank hole on Alana's car, which is noticeably dwarfed by the monster vehicle. Siphon set up, he quickly looks around. Half-full parking lot outside a Denny's-type restaurant just off the highway. No one is outside, none of the people inside the restaurant pay attention to him. The SUV is parked in front of a pay phone. MUFON plunks in change and quickly dials a number.

MUFON: "Alana, hey, it's me... *Uh*, Randy. Right. ...oh, good, good! H.R. liked me, so they want to give me an aptitude test tomorrow on a live system... ...No, it should be a breeze, but it depends what they throw my way. So I won't be back until tomorrow night though... ...yeah, I know, but like I said... ...okay, no problem. I know you have class on Monday, so I'll *definitely* be back by then. I'm sure you and Kim can entertain each other until then..." Holds phone away with look of disgust.

ALANA [faint phone voice-over]: "...*Destiny Island*..."

MUFON: "...*right*, so I thought I'd call you now, 'cuz Jim's gonna take me out on the town... ...naw, I'm not gonna get *too* drunk, 'cuz I have an interview tomorrow... ...right, well Jim's waiting, so I don't want to be rude. I'll call you tomorrow." Hangs up. Checks on siphon; still going.

Quick cut to the payphone as it *rings*.

MUFON quickly looks up, stares at the stand. Silence; it does not ring again. He looks around the lot. Across the asphalt, 2 EXTRAS are leaving the diner. Camera does slight pan-in to establish them in shot.

43)

Cut to interior of Rathskeller, focused on the front door. The same 2 EXTRAS are leaving into the night. The door has a sign on it, which is readable after it closes: 'Dieses ist ein NEIN Lederhosen Zone!' Camera pans back to show a massive bouncer sitting on a stool to the side, wearing (of course) lederhosen, leggings, white Alpine shirt, felt hat, etc. Pan continues, more of the Rathskeller becomes seen and heard: low German mutterings.

Camera weaves past proletariat patrons to a side table with FRIENDISH, KLAUS, and VV GROUPIE. KLAUS is in his 40s, has a scruffy goatee beard and oval wire spectacles; he has a scar on the forehead. He has recently dyed his hair flat black, and has a pirate-sized gold hoop earring in his left earlobe. He literally chain-smokes through the scene; he is also about 3 beers drunk. VV GROUPIE is also in her 40s, and is wearing brown tie-dyed jeans and t-shirt; her nails are 'Moleback green.' Over course of the scene, her shirt will change: same colors, slightly different tie-dye patterns [hopefully giving the impression that the design on the shirt is slowly moving. Alternately, shirt is color of a blue screen and cgi the slow shifts] She is also about 3 beers drunk. [FRIENDISH is sober; he had just arrived minutes earlier.]

In background at the bar is DOPPEL, passively watching them. She is in her 20s, cute (but not sexy), and dressed all in black: gypsy-ish frill shirt, tight designer jeans tucked into Doc Martins, and a smart black purse. She wears no make-up, and although attention is never intentionally drawn to it, her nails are unpainted.

KLAUS: "So, how is Kay?"

FRIENDISH: "Doing good; down at the Biodome. She says 'hi,' of course."

KLAUS: “But no ‘hello’ from Moleback, eh? *Ahhh*, she hate me; she is convinced I have cast spell over Kay.”
Laughs awkwardly, with unconvincing levity.

FRIENDISH (uncertainly): “So, you think it’s safe to talk shop here?” He looks around the crowd; DOPPEL is clearly watching him out of the corner of her eye.

KLAUS (dismissively): “Oh, ja, ja; they know me here, in that they *don’t* know me here. We can talk freely, as long as we keep our voices down and ignore everyone else.”

FRIENDISH: “I never do less.”

KLAUS: “*This* is the only permitted outburst in the Rathskeller,” and demonstrates: raises hand, waives gaily, and calls “oh, Cabannajugden?”

CABANAJUGDEN#1 appears immediately, a young punk with an aquamarine mowhawk and massive tattoos. “Ja?”

KLAUS: “Drei Biere. Überraschen sie uns.” [Three beers. Surprise us.]

CABANAJUGDEN#1 nods and disappears.

KLAUS: “Kay says you are a top-notch art dealer.”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I deal in *information*. More often than not, that information comes in written form, and has artwork on it.” **KLAUS** and **VV GROUPIE** nod and smile appreciatively. “Information is the most valuable commodity in the world when it’s pure and truthful. It’s also one of the most scarce. I spend half my time trying to figure out who the players are, and what side they’re on. That’s actually valuable information in and of itself. Especially when choosing clients.”

KLAUS: “May I ask who your biggest client is? I am genuinely curious.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it would depend on what you meant by ‘biggest’. Value, volume, or importance? I got three different answers depending on which you want.”

KLAUS: “Have you ever dealt with di Medicigan?”

FRIENDISH: “No. He’s in Zurich, and I’m Stateside. Plus he’s essentially a Referee, so he’s off limits from my own personal circle.”

KLAUS: “*Hehe*, he is Moleback’s biggest client.”

FRIENDISH (genuinely surprised): “No shit?!? Buying or selling?”

KLAUS and **VV GROUPIE:** “Ja.”

FRIENDISH (ponders this insight): “May I ask if Moleback and Kay ever do stuff for him that ended up in his auctions?”

KLAUS: “I honestly do not know for certain. I do know that di Medicigan has never had an auction winner dissatisfied with what he has won. He takes his duties as *versteigernmeister* very seriously.”

FRIENDISH: “Do you know if di Medicigan can *read* Voynich?”

KLAUS: “Not to my knowledge; I believe he takes his duties as a Referee seriously, too. But I do not doubt he has surrounded himself with fluent flunkies.”

FRIENDISH nods, lost in thought for a second. He looks around the bar to survey their safety. DOPPEL is being hit on by a FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN, so he ignores her.

KLAUS: “So I take it you deal in the pictures as well as information?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I deal mostly in the text.”

VV GROUPIE: “Why? The text is irrelevant.”

FRIENDISH: “My clientele generally believe otherwise. In fact, they tend to go the opposite route: the pictures are just thrown in to disguise the book as an herbal or such, when the text has very different meaning. But remember, I’m American, and as I am sure you know, Voynich got a massive structural reworking in 1776.”

VV GROUPIE: “Ah, yes, the Adoptionists. They disgraced the purity and perverted the meaning.”

CABANAJUGDEN#1 returns, puts down 3 different bottles of beer on the center of the table. He is about to put down glasses, but KLAUS waves him to stop. KLAUS hands him 15 euros, and he quickly leaves.

KLAUS looks over the beer offerings; he takes a Heineken. VV GROUPIE takes an Amberbok. FRIENDISH is left with a Budweiser. They are already opened; they toast each other.

KLAUS: “Eweige Blumenkraft.”

VV GROUPIE (enthusiastically): “Eweige Blumenkraft!”

They *clink*, and look at Friendish, who has a startled look on his face.

KLAUS (as the pause grows awkward): “Why so quiet, my friend?”

FRIENDISH: “Back home, if someone said that to me as a toast, I’d fully expect my beer to be poisoned, or at the very least spat in.”

VV GROUPIE: “Do you know the meaning of *Eweige Blumenkraft*?”

FRIENDISH: “*Flower Power Forever*. I know because it gets used a lot by certain circles back Stateside. They use it as a sort of password. I wouldn’t have thought y’all were working that angle, too.”

VV GROUPIE: “At least two groups use it as a ‘password,’ as you say.”

FRIENDISH: “I know; there’s a schism within the movement.”

VV GROUPIE: “But they are all still Adoptionists, and your schism is recent. *Eweige Blumenkraft* was originally a Vegan Voynich logion, but then Weishaupt and his Illuminati imposters adopted it for themselves. We vegans were the first to use it, in relation to the flowers from the Voynich manuscript.”

FRIENDISH: “I gather it means different things to different Adoptionists. I never knew the origin of the saying, though.”

VV GROUPIE: “Eweige Blumenkraft is more than a saying, it is a way of life! Still, the Adoptionists use the term too, even if differently. So since you have not joined us in our salud to Eweige Blumenkraft, you are not an Adoptionist yourself?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, now that I know they’re different, I’ll drink to differences.” He taps the tip of his bottle against theirs. As he brings the glass back to his lips to sip, he says “and no, I’m not an Adoptionist.”

They all drink.

FRIENDISH again looks around. DOPPEL is watching him out of the corner of her eye while FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN writes something on a cocktail napkin. FRIENDISH looks over and past her, then returns his attention to the two at his table.

FRIENDISH: “So I gotta know: how exactly did you get those pictures you gave Kay and Moleback?”

KLAUS (grins): “About 2 months ago, a Count named Lugosovich threw a Rave at his place in Bavaria...”

FRIENDISH: “The *Count*?!?”

KLAUS: “You know of Lugosovich then?”

FRIENDISH: “Yes I do; please, continue.”

KLAUS: “Ja, so the Count threw a Rave, and I was able to get spot as cabana boy...”

Blur/fade to Lugosovich Rave, being held in an off-season ski lodge. COUNT is at a banquet table with 4 others (including MR. EAGLE, dressed “normally”.) Among the partiers are a number of cabana boys in a Hitler Youth costume—minus the swastika armband.

COUNT (raising hand): “Cabana boy!!!”

KLAUS appears at the table. He looks slightly different: his hair is undyed (it is still black, but there is a grey streak up the top like a skunk stripe), his goatee is shorter, contact lenses instead of glasses, etc.

KLAUS: “Yes, Count?”

COUNT (intoning solemnly): “Downstairs at the main bar, on the top shelf, there is a glass bottle of clear tequila. There is a worm inside. Bring me the bottle, and something like chopsticks; long straws should do. We will also need...” (looks around for a table headcount) “...5 frosted shot glasses, and 15 lime slices. I want fresh, extra-juicy slices, got that?” KLAUS nods. “Oh, and be extra careful when you bring the bottle up to leave as much of the dust on it as you can...” (to group) “I want to show you all, *eh*?” The crowd of cronies nods hungrily.

KLAUS nods and turns.

COUNT: “And be quick with it, before I change my mind.”

Cries of “no!” and protest from the others at the table, including “tonight is a special occasion!” As KLAUS moves off, we hear them chanting “Worm! Worm! Worm!” and beating their fists on the table in tempo.

KLAUS leaves, and heads into a back room. Cabana boys and party support are working behind the scenes to make sure the Rave runs smoothly. One cabana girl (‘CABANA BITCH’) is not-so-covertly doing lines of green powder. She looks like a Hitler Youth Heidi with Moleback green nails. Down a flight of stairs, he reaches a floor with two doors

on either side. KLAUS looks confused, unsure which one to take. He opens the wrong one, and goes into a deserted hallway. Looks around, disoriented, and is about to leave when PHIL THE MINION walks around the corner. He is holding the “Moleback” pages.

PHIL THE MINION: “Hey, cabana boy, come here. You got a second?” PHIL THE MINION looking on expectantly, wanting the cabana boy to solve his problems.

KLAUS shrugs, walks over somewhat guardedly.

PHIL THE MINION: “Know anything about paper shredders?”

KLAUS (momentary *pause*, and then a stoic, straight-faced nod that indicates he has absolutely *no* idea): “*Sure I do.*”

PHIL THE MINION: “Good. I need you.” He waves the pages, beckoning him.

Shot freezes.

FRIENDISH (voice over): “I’m guessing you don’t know who he was?”

KLAUS (voice-over): “No. Never seen him before.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “Describe this guy.”

KLAUS (voice-over): “An American, with a thick New York accent. Bald. Maybe 6 feet...”

FRIENDISH (voice over, interrupting): “Sharkskin suit and a fish tie?”

Screen cuts in half: previous image on the left, on the right is a still of PHIL THE MINION at a gathering wearing a sharkskin suit and fish tie. He looks like an absolute dork.

KLAUS (voice-over): “No, Sax 5th Avenue formal suit.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “You’re lucky. That’s Phil the minion. I ran into him once at a gathering in New Haven; he was all shark-skinned out. I made sure not to actually *meet* him.”

Phil-in-sharkskin side wipes back to original view, still frozen.

KLAUS (voice-over): “So you know of this, how you say, Phil the minion?”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “He’s the Count’s New York scout. It’s my understanding that the Metropolitan Museum of Art has a 1-block restraining order on both him and Lugosovich.”

KLAUS (voice-over): “So this Phil the minion is the Count’s minion. Naturally I had wondered as much, but we could never determine with certainty who at the Rave he was with.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “Uh huh. So he had the papers. How’d you get them from him?”

Cut to KLAUS at the Rathskeller table, lighting a fresh cigarette with the butt of his last.

KLAUS (between starter puffs): “*Hehe*, I’ll spare you a blow-by-blow flashback and just say that Phil the minion knows nothing about paper shredders or copy machines. He had made bad black and white copies by accident, and

wished to shred them. He said they were worthless; ‘Bolshevik Bullshit’. I pretended to fix the shredder and fooled him into thinking the pages were destroyed. He does not know that I have them. I saw he did keep a dozen pages for himself when he left.”

FRIENDISH: “Good.”

VV GROUPIE: “So you say you know *of* but do not actually *know* this Phil the minion? Do you think you can get the originals from him?”

FRIENDISH: “Phil’s just an underling for the Count, so that’s who I’d really need to talk to. I gather you don’t know Lugosovich yourself, or you’d have asked already...”

KLAUS: “Sadly, I am not on the list of people liked by the Count right now.”

Cut/flashback to Rave. Packed dance floor, with a busy bar on the side. Loud, percussive dance music; sounds like industrial surf guitar cover of “Pipeline” with a driving drum-machine beat underneath. KLAUS is behind the bar, holding a tray with a bowl of limes and frosted shot glasses. He is looking at the top shelf of bottles. There is a noticeable gap, dusty but with a perfect, clean circle in the middle.

BARTENDER: “You the cabana boy after the Montezuma’s Revenge for the Count?”

KLAUS: “Yes.”

Cut to Bartender, his back to the Rave. Behind him, on the dance floor, ANAÏS can be seen doing The Swim.

BARTENDER: “You took too long, and the Count came and got it himself. He was *very* displeased he had to do so. He said to tell you ‘*pah!*’ and ‘you’re fired,’ and if he ever sees you again, he will put your puny family jewels in the bottle with formaldehyde.”

Cut to FRIENDISH, wincing.

VV GROUPIE: “So you see why we need your help?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, obviously, I’ll see what I can do. But we have much to discuss still if I’m gonna do it *right*.”

KLAUS (glances at watch): “Well, I can tell you things over the course of this beer, but then we must depart for the opera.” Lights a fresh cigarette with the smoldering butt of his previous as camera pans to VV GROUPIE.

VV GROUPIE: “*Die Fledermaus*. My daughter is a diva in it. She has a beautiful voice, and it is still developing. Amazing range; I have hopes that she might even reach coloratura, but then all the broken and cracked glass around the house every time she breaks up with a boyfriend would be a nuisance.”

FRIENDISH: “Yes it would. Well, I’m sure it will be lovely, and I thank you for even squeezing in time to meet with me so soon.”

KLAUS: “*Oh*, no problem, it is all for a mutually good cause, so I am glad to help.”

VV GROUPIE (sincerely nodding): “Thank you.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’d love to hear more about the Count and how you got those, but I gather it would take longer than a beer.”

KLAUS: “For it to take any less would be to dishonor him. And he does have his own code of honor, and he plays by the game rules. Or at least has never been caught cheating.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it sounds like I need to meet him.”

KLAUS: “Hey, this is tricky thing. He’s a hard man to get to, and he’s always mobile; I don’t think he ever spends more than a week in the same place. Last I knew, he was at di Medicigan’s Swiss villa; I believe there was a literature auction, and he was invited.”

FRIENDISH: “I’d heard about the auction because a player I monitor flew over to attend. I didn’t know Lugosovich was there, too. You know what one of the items up for bid was, right?”

KLAUS: “Ja. Your American friend bought it. Di Medicigan called him Mr. Albatross.”

FRIENDISH: “Most everyone else calls him Pegasus. And by the way, he ain’t my friend. I said I *monitored* him; I did not mean to imply friendship. With him, *or* the company he keeps.”

KLAUS: “Ah, my English lapses, but I understand. ‘Friend’ is not a word to be thrown around lightly. The Count is proof of that. He always calls everybody ‘friend.’ It’s in almost every sentence he uses; so much so that the word ‘friend’ has lost meaning and just become a dead spoken syllable *Hehe*, you know who also do that a lot? Hassan. I assume that if you know Pegasus you also know Hassan?”

FRIENDISH (coldly): “Yes.”

VV GROUPIE (eagerly interrupts): “So you have met Hassan?”

FRIENDISH (said in a way that does *not* sound pleasant): “Yes.”

VV GROUPIE: “I never have, but I’m fascinated by him.”

FRIENDISH (shakes his head *no*): “That dude is downright creepy. I do *not* like being near him.”

VV GROUPIE: “Oh?”

FRIENDISH: “Once, I asked Hassan the *wrong* question. He gave me a smile I will never forget, like a starving animal finally finding a meal and going for the throat. I thought I was going to die. No joke: I thought he was going to kill me. And I knew that he could have, too. He had the drop on me. Instead, he just excused himself and left. Hassan scares the crap out of me.”

VV GROUPIE: “I have heard he is nothing but a perfect gentleman, but I will take your word for what happened. Though of course I do not know what question you asked. But perhaps he is a Jekyll with a latent Hyde? I wonder if that is but a side effect of the Voynich?”

FRIENDISH: “Y’know, that crossed my mind, too, but somehow I think you and I are looking at different pages of different Voynich books.”

In the background, FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMEN starts talking to someone on his other side; DOPPEL turns her head and watches the table.

VV GROUPIE: “Oh? What do you mean?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, what do *you* mean? What is your interest in Hassan?”

VV GROUPIE: “He is proof it works, isn’t he? Before all this secret society adoptionist crap got mixed in, pure original Voynich manuscripts were alchemical herbals. True alchemy isn’t turning base metal into gold; that’s just a pleasant side-effect when the real experiments go wrong. Alchemy is about making an elixir of life...”

KLAUS: “...the fountain of youth...”

VV GROUPIE (nods in agreement): “...it is the *Eweige* in Eweige Blumenkraft. Flower Power *Forever*. And Hassan is proof it works. Do you know how old he is?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I *do*, and I think the *real* answer would make you pee out that last beer you drank.” Smiles, and sips from his, enjoying it.

VV GROUPIE: “You know, I have a great suspicion that it was Hassan himself who wrote the Yale Manuscript.”

FRIENDISH: “That just so happens to be the question I asked him, the one that made me wonder if his grin would be the last sight of my life.”

KLAUS: “What did he say?”

FRIENDISH: “Nothing; like I said, he just smiled and left.”

VV GROUPIE: “I know that the art was done by La Nada, but we never knew who filled in the text ornamentation after it with certainty. Hassan is high on my list of suspected authors. Do you think he wrote the Yale book?”

FRIENDISH: “Good chance of it, actually, or at least he was friends with the author. Hell, he may have been one of the dwarves in King Rudolph’s midget room. But you know the Yale book’s not the only thing he’s written.”

VV GROUPIE: “You think he wrote most of the Voynich from that period?”

FRIENDISH: “Again, there’s a good chance of it, but that’s not what I’m talking about. Hassan wrote his most famous book about a thousand years ago, back in Persia.”

KLAUS has a coughing fit at this.

VV GROUPIE: “*What?*”

FRIENDISH: “*Hehe*, I told you you’d pee your beer if you knew how old he really was...”

KLAUS: “Has Voynich been around that long?”

FRIENDISH: “He didn’t write it in Voynich. He didn’t write it under the name Hassan, either. No sir, that book was called *Al Azif*, and his *nom de plume* was *Abdul Alhrazad*.”

VV GROUPIE shakes her head, unknowing. Quick check with KLAUS, who is equally ignorant.

FRIENDISH: “Necronomicon?”

VV GROUPIE and KLAUS shrug.

FRIENDISH: “Well, it’s decidedly non-botanical, so I guess it makes sense you wouldn’t know it. Don’t worry, actually: this is a book you’re better off *not* knowing about. That book’s bad news, and so is it’s author, Hassan.”

KLAUS: “I have met him once, and he was but a perfect gentleman. I have never heard others speak anything but good of Hassan, though the occasions he is spoken of are admittedly few. I am curious at this bad reaction of yours.”

VV GROUPIE: “I, too. We have a certain fondness for Hassan.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m guessing that must just be a European phenomenon, because back Stateside, one of the reasons Moleback and I get along is that we both don’t like Hassan.”

VV GROUPIE: “Oh? I did not know this.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I can kind of see why, ’cuz it cuts kind of personal with her. She never gave me specifics on it, and I had to work it out for myself. Curiously, the reason she hates him is directly relevant to how I figured out who Hassan *really* is.”

KLAUS: “This Abdul arab you mention?”

FRIENDISH: “No; I mean who he *really* is. Or more exactly, *what* he is.” Sips beer to prepare himself.

VV GROUPIE: “Okay...”

FRIENDISH (to KLAUS): “You’ve met him, right?” KLAUS shrugs and nods timidly. “How does he refer to himself when he speaks?”

KLAUS frowns.

FRIENDISH: “Third person.”

KLAUS shakes his head, not understanding.

FRIENDISH [imitates HASSAN]: “Oh, *Hassan* is so pleased to see you, *he* will get you a drink. *Hassan* hopes your flight was good?”

KLAUS and VV GROUPIE nod in comprehension.

FRIENDISH: “*That’s* the secret, and I never realized it because it was so open and obvious. Every now and then, he *will* refer to himself as ‘I’. *These* are the key.” Sips beer and smiles coyly.

KLAUS: “And?”

FRIENDISH: “You know what he once told me? ” [imitates HASSAN] ‘*Hassan* no kill the girl. *I* kill the girl’.”
FRIENDISH gets an intense look and points at the two. “When he said that, I *knew*.”

VV GROUPIE looks at him skeptically, then drinks from her beer. She looks around, sees DOPPEL looking over at the table. After a moment, DOPPEL looks past their table, and then acts like she is looking around for someone. VV GROUPIE finishes her beer.

VV GROUPIE: “We should probably think about going soon, if we’re to get there before first curtain.”

KLAUS: “Ja, her daughter is going to introduce us to the ensemble, and we may even go to the cast party after. I would invite you along, but I do not have an extra ticket, and the show is sold out. And I am sure you have things to do anyway.”

FRIENDISH: “Not a problem, I *do* got shit to do, so I’ll let you two enjoy your evening. When can we meet again? I still have many questions about this, but already I got a few ideas.”

KLAUS (finishes his beer): “Very well then! I can be free tomorrow afternoon to early evening. We will get together for more talk. You come to my place. I cook you dinner.”

FRIENDISH: “I’d like that; I hear you make a mean basil pasta.”

KLAUS: “Oh, did Kay tell you about that? I make it for you then.” Turns to VV GROUPIE. “You have fresh basil in your garden, no? Can I pick some when I drop you and Sonja off?”

VV GROUPIE: “Sure; if you think you can pick them in the dark.”

KLAUS (to FRIENDISH): “So I will call you.”

FRIENDISH: “Best way to get in touch with me. Actually, the only way.”

KLAUS: “So you are going back to Bavaria then?”

FRIENDISH: “No, I’m setting up shop near here. Most likely I won’t be here too long, and will have to move on to wherever the Count is.”

KLAUS: “Very good.” Gets up. They shake hands vigorously, and then VV GROUPIE gets up as well.

FRIENDISH: “Before you leave, there’s a blonde in black at the bar that’s been eyeing me periodically through the night. Don’t suppose either of you know her?”

VV GROUPIE: “The one talking to the fat drunk businessman?”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah. She still is, actually.”

VV GROUPIE: “Never seen her before.”

KLAUS: “Actually, I might I have seen her, as a regular here. Though I do not come to this bar as often as I like, and it is a somewhat common look that she has.”

FRIENDISH: “Thanks.”

VV GROUPIE: “Do you wish company to your car?” Now that she is out from behind the table and standing, it is clearer that she has a tough, muscled body.

FRIENDISH: “I think I’m alright. Thank you, though.”

KLAUS: “Be careful, my friend Friendish.”

FRIENDISH: “Mein herr, I am the patron saint of precaution.” Smiles, and gets up. “I’m also going to use the restroom, and then I am going home. Or at least back to my latest place. I look forward to good food and good conversation with you tomorrow.”

KLAUS nods, VV GROUPIE smiles, and he escorts her toward the door. DOPPEL seems oblivious, laughing with (or more likely at) FAT DRUNK BUSINESSMAN. FRIENDISH heads to the back, where the restrooms are.

Cut to: Rathskeller Men's Room. Advertisements and graffiti in German. FRIENDISH zipping up at a urinal, then goes to the sink without flushing. Gives himself a look-over. Quickly spritzes water on his hands and grabs a hand towel for a tamp-down. Stretches, and we hear bones crack. As he tosses the towel into trash, the door opens and FAT DRUNK BUSINESSMAN comes in.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN: "Guten Abend."

FRIENDISH: "Good evening." He grabs for another handtowel and continues drying his hand.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN: "Ah, sie sind ein Amerikaner?"

FRIENDISH: "Am I an American? Yes. I do not speak German."

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN (goes to the urinal, unzips): "Sie sprechen nicht Deutsches? Ich spreche nicht Englisch, auch nicht."

FRIENDISH nods in understanding that they will not understand each other.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN begins a 5-stein-long piss. He looks over at FRIENDISH, smiling hopefully. (in passable Japanese): "Do you speak Japanese?"

FRIENDISH smiles and shakes his head no. He tosses the towel away, and turns to leave.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN (continuing in Japanese as FRIENDISH leaves): "I never learned English because the English as a people are too fussy and the Americans as a people are too brusque. The Japanese have the right manners and the right tempo. And besides, their pussies are tighter..." [etc. until bathroom door closes and Rathskeller crowd noise drowns him out.]

Camera follows friendish as he leaves and reemerges into the Rathskeller. He heads towards the exit, but when he nears his old table, he sees DOPPEL sitting at it, 2 frothy steins awaiting. He changes course and heads over.

FRIENDISH: "Is that for me, or for your fat drunken friend?"

DOPPEL (accented but otherwise immaculate English): "I had hoped to share one with you earlier, Friendish, but I saw you had important company and did not wish to disturb your business. I am sure it is important, though Lance did not tell me what it was. That would be prying, no?" She smiles. "I am Katrina."

FRIENDISH (bows politely): "Katrina. So, you know Lance?"

DOPPEL: "We are in agreement on many things, and assist each other in common cause. He is in Bavaria, we are in the Stalk Forest, in the mountains south of here. The distance makes coordinating between groups difficult, but he enquired if we could help you out if you needed it."

FRIENDISH: "Well that was right nice of him."

DOPPEL: "Do you wish to sit? If that fat *Säufer* comes back and sees you sitting, he will probably either leave us alone or attempt to butt in, thinking you are cockblocking him."

FRIENDISH: "Well, I was planning to leave anyway. You two can do whatever you want."

DOPPEL (gets up): "May I come with? As I said, I am here to offer assistance, if you need it." She smiles.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSNISSMAN emerges from the bathroom, heads to the bar where he had been.

FRIENDISH: “Always glad to meet new people, especially in a land where I don’t know the language.” He begins heading toward the exit. She quickly follows. FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN sees her leave and shrugs; he seems happy she has left behind 2 steins; he heads over to partake as they leave.

Cut to cobblestone street at night. Streetlamps are designed to look like old gas lamps. Moderate traffic, street noises. FRIENDISH and DOPPEL walk along.

FRIENDISH: “How did you know to find me at that Rathskeller?”

DOPPEL: “I didn’t. The Goddess guided me there.”

FRIENDISH: “*Did* she now...”

DOPPEL: “She is wise in ways of fortune like that.”

FRIENDISH: “So you’ve never been to that bar before?”

DOPPEL: “No. But of course, neither had you. I did not like it. Too many fat drunken businessmen in it.”

FRIENDISH: “How did Lance tell you to get in touch with me?”

DOPPEL: “Actually he was very vague on the manner. But you are staying here, right?”

FRIENDISH: “About 5 minutes from here.”

DOPPEL: “At that hotel...”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah.”

DOPPEL: “I called and left you a message there. You were obviously out. So I trusted the Goddess to guide me to you, to tell you in person that we Fraulines of the Stalk Forest can assist you if you need it.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I might, but we’ll see. As you know, I just got here, and I’m still getting my bearings.” He stops at a street. “My car’s parked up there; where are you?”

DOPPEL: “I have a Triumph bike back behind the Rathskeller parking lot. Assuming no one has stolen it. But it should be safe; the Goddess watches such things. So I can ride with you, if you wish.”

FRIENDISH: “I *see*...” Starts heading up the street. She moves to join him. “So, this Stalk Forest Group, do you have male members?”

DOPPEL: “Oh yes. Why?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, all the Goddess talk, plus just wondering if you were like Moleback and Kay and her crew.”

DOPPEL (giggles): “I understand what you are asking. Men can acknowledge the Goddess, too. Look at Lance, for example. And no, we do not exclude from our partners anyone with a y chromosome.”

FRIENDISH: “It pleases me to hear you express such an open view towards sexual preference.” Finds his car, a late model low-end Mercedes. It has a rental sticker on the back bumper. He unlocks her door, then goes to his side. Checks first through the window to see what she is doing, then gets in.

Headlights come on, engine purrs to life, and car pulls out. Drives into camera; the headlight blanking the screen to white.

45)

Cut to: white elevator door (same color as headlights) pulling back. FRIENDISH and DOPPEL get off and head down the hallway of a seedy hotel; peeling wallpaper, water damage on the ceiling, etc. FRIENDISH reaches room 204, stops. Pulls out the key, unlocks, and pushes the door open. Room interior is dark.

FRIENDISH: “Frauleins first...” and sweeps his hand in welcome.

DOPPEL enters, flipping on a light switch. FRIENDISH does a quick check of the hallway, then goes in. A moment later, he reaches out and hangs a ‘do not disturb’-type sign [in German] on the knob. Door closes, *click* of deadbolt.

Cut to close-up of door chain getting slid in place. Pan back to show FRIENDISH doing this with his back to the door; he has not taken his eyes off DOPPEL. She is putting her purse on the simple single bed. She looks over at him and smiles.

FRIENDISH walks in to join her in the center of the room. The bed is against a wall that has a small door on either side: clothes closet and water closet. He glances at the nightstand, where a small radio alarm clock [11:11 pm] and a telephone are. The phone has a red light on the side, the type that lights when a message has been left.. It is not lit.

They stare at each other awkwardly. FRIENDISH walks around to the bathroom door. Inside is a sink with a medium-sized mirror; on the right is a cracked toilet bowl, on the left a stand-up shower.

FRIENDISH: “Actually, last shower I had was in Arizona, and I might be about due for my next one. If you don’t mind waiting.”

DOPPEL (smiles): “Bathing is good. So, is there anything I can assist you with? Toweling you off, perhaps?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I was hoping you could help me scrub some of those hard-to reach spots.”

DOPPEL (looks into the bathroom, sees the small shower stall): “I am not sure there is much room in there. We will have to press close together much of the time.”

FRIENDISH: “A sacrifice I am willing to make in the name of hygiene.” He flips on the light, and with his hand motions for her to enter. She does.

Cut to shot of bathroom, as seen in the dirty mirror. DOPPEL walks in. The moment she enters and has her back to FRIENDISH, his hand goes from his coat to the back of her head. She sees him make his move and starts to react, but is way too late. Sound of gunshot, starkly amplified by the small confines, and then blood and brain sprays across the mirror.

Cut to DOPPEL falling to the floor; a half-drawn Walther PPK falling from her fingers and landing to the side of the body. DOPPEL's head is face-down; a puddle of blood quickly expands out around on the filthy linoleum floor. After a moment, FRIENDISH's shoe moves the PPK away. He watches her body a few moments, making sure she is dead. Pistol still in hand, he grabs her by the hair, lifts her slightly, and then drags her over to the shower stall. Body lands with a *plop*. The blood continues to pool around the head, but slight gurgling sounds as it goes down the drain. FRIENDISH begins thoroughly patting down DOPPEL; there should be a hint of necrophilial enthusiasm in his procedure. He finds a knife in a sheathe at the small of her back; removes it. FRIENDISH stands up, and turns on the shower; water hits the back panel, and collects around the body; blood begins going down the drain in a centrifugal eddy.

Cut to FRIENDISH returning to the bed, where her purse is. Opens it carefully. Inside, pulls out a new wallet. German driver's license for "Amanda Schwartz", an address in Bonn; the picture is of a different woman who bares a superficial resemblance to DOPPEL. About 500 euros in cash inside; crisp new bills. Quick close-up of the serial numbers: they are sequential. FRIENDISH tosses it aside, pulls out a pair of brass knuckles that have been tinted non-reflective gunmetal blue. It has 2 foldout blades on it. Tosses aside. Sees a cellphone case. Pulls out, opens up. Hits a button; screen lights up.

Cut to close-up of cellphone display:

Last number called: ୨୦୫୨୩୩୨୨୨୫୦

FRIENDISH (voice-over): "Schhhhhhhhhhheiße."

Cut to bathroom, blood still swirling down the drain. Sound of shower fades out as music from next scene fades in.

45)

Cut to: the blood swirl from the previous scene, becoming cgi animated. A creepy, surreal cover version of 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' starts up and runs throughout scene. Camera pans back to show a cgi landscape; the blood is a small whirlpool in a river of blood. By the time the lyrics reach "picture yourself in a boat on a river..." the shot has pulled back enough to reveal a cgi rendering of WILSON standing on a small gondola. It has a Viking-like prow, and Voynich script for "H.M.S. Pinafore" on the front. The gondolier is a cgi of HASSAN, dressed like a 1600s priest (match a historical portrait of Kircher if possible). Along the shore are beds of Voynich-like plants. The sky is impossible shades of yellow.

WILSON turns to HASSAN. His lips move as if asking a question, but a cartoon-like speech balloon appears over his head, filled with Voynich script.

HASSAN answers the same way: lips moving silently, but a caption balloon with Voynich, much longer.

They reach the far shore, where a small pier has been built out of interlaced elephant tusks. HASSAN docks the boat, then walks up to



BOYFRIEND rolls over and attempts to snuggle amorously with ALANA.

ALANA: “Stop that.”

BOYFRIEND whines in defeat. Tries to go back to sleep, but KIM nudges him.

BOYFRIEND: “Stop that.”

KIM: “You’re the evil beastie who made me set it this early.”

BOYFRIEND (crawling under pillow): “I thought you’d want to play once more before....” [yawn]

KIM: “No; now use the snooze button time to take an extra-long shower. You smell like a catfish hoagie.”

BOYFRIEND (muffled by pillow): “There are 3 things that smell like fish. One of them is fish.”

KIM starts poking him into compliance. Grumbling, he rolls over KIM; kisses her, and then rolls off; brief glimpse of him leaving the covers, naked, before disappearing off-screen.

Sound of bathroom door closing.

ALANA lays in bed a few seconds, eyes closed. “Think he’s called?”

KIM: “Probably not, though we were kinda loud, and might have missed the ring.”

ALANA (giggles): “Yeah.” *Pause.* “Does he always call out his own name like that?”

KIM: “He’s usually pretty quiet, but he’s done that before when he’s really into it, like last night.”

ALANA: “He was okay, but I miss Randy.” (sigh) “Eight inches and change, baby.”

KIM: “Oooh. Well, you gotta share him now when he gets back. He is a hottie. He’d probably go for it, and not try to Greek me like that last guy Greg did.”

ALANA: “God, don’t even mention his name. Last time I ever date out of a chat room.”

The shower starts [will run through scene.]

ALANA: “Hey, I got an idea. I’ve got his keys. Depending what time he gets back, we can be naked and waiting in his bed for him later. Either to celebrate his getting the job, or console him if he didn’t.”

KIM: “Hmmm,” looks over at bathroom door, then back to Alana. “I’m not sure what Matt’s doing after work, but since he didn’t already say something, I might be free. But if the coast isn’t clear, we postpone it, okay?”

ALANA: “*Hehe*, okay. But hey, wanna go over and snoop through his underwear drawer, play ‘count the stains’?”

KIM: “*Ewwwww*.”

ALANA: “You know, I haven’t actually been over to his apartment yet; he just sort of moved into my place.”

KIM: “Sounds like a Deadhead my aunt knew for 10 years. Think Randy’s a Deadhead? Maybe those aren’t cigarette’s he smokes. Plus you said he keeps smelling and hearing things that aren’t there.”

ALANA: “No, I think he’s into ghetto rap. He’s always humming Public Enemy.”

KIM: “*Ewwwww!* Maybe we *should* go over to his place, and just check out his cd collection. Best litmus test I know for personality.”

ALANA: “*Hehe*, you wanna?”

KIM (looks at shower): “*Hmmmm... ..oh* sure. But if he has that ‘I like big Butts’ song, the naked and waiting is off.”

ALANA: “And if he calls my cell from there on his way back, I’ll just tell him to come on over to his place.”

KIM: “Where’s he live, anyway?”

ALANA (*pauses*): “Oh shit. It’s just up the street from here, at Corners. 24 north something?”

Kim: “24? That’s not how they’re set up.”

ALANA: “Fuck, I forget. Well, I’ll either wake up and remember, or we can just check at the front office. Or just wander and look for the apartment with the mountain of cigarette butts on the patio.”

47)

Cut to ashtray with a mountain of crushed cigarette butts. All of them are unfiltered.

FRIENDISH (voiceover): “Damn, son, that’s a lot of cigarettes. And I thought Muffin Man chained away.”

Pan back to show Klaus’s Kitchen, where KLAUS begins finely dicing basil with a big-bladed knife, a lit cigarette nub in his lips. Ash falls into the basil; he doesn’t care.

KLAUS: “They are hydroponically grown hybrids, with an almost non-existent nicotine count. They are from a farm in the Harz Mountains run by some friends of mine. I am told I am one of their bigger customers, ranking somewhere between Byelorussia and Brazil in terms of annual sales.” *Puff*, realizes the cigarette is dangerously close to the end. “Excuse me.” KLAUS quickly takes the smoke out, pops a fresh one in, and lights it off the glowing nub. After a second, smoke comes out of his mouth as it catches; he puffs a few more times, then pulls the cig out to make sure it is lit. He smiles.

KLAUS (to lit tip): “Hello my friend, you are still there?”

FRIENDISH frowns at this. KLAUS sees his puzzlement.

KLAUS: “You know fire, it is alive? The Greeks thought it was an element, so did the Chinese, but fire is actually a life form. It is born, grows, and can die; it reacts to its environment, has a form of metabolism, reproduces,,,” (FRIENDISH nods) “,,,right, so every morning I make a pet fire. Smoking is the closest you can come to fire without

being physically consumed by the flame, so I use cigarettes to feed it and carry it around with me.” Puffs cigarette to make the tip glow, then holds it out for emphasis. “I call this one Alfie.”

FRIENDISH smiles politely.

KLAUS: “Here, take a puff, and pet Alfie.”

FRIENDISH shrugs, and takes the cigarette. *Puff*, and frowns at the flavor. Exhales seedy smoke, and hits it again.

KLAUS: “I wish I could house-train them, so they wouldn’t shit so much ash.”

FRIENDISH hands Alfie back to KLAUS.

FRIENDISH: “Surprisingly smooth.” A cough sneaks up on him, smoke comes out with it. “But stealths you on the exit.”

KLAUS smiles and accepts Alfie back.

KLAUS: “Hello again, Alfie.” (to FRIENDISH) “You know in my bedroom I got a candle with Veronica on it; she is 8 months old.” He resumes going nuts with the knife, clearly enjoying having a sharp blade in his hand. “Hey, you like hashish? I got some good nug in the Rumpus Room hookah.”

FRIENDISH: “Not while I’m working. Dulls the reflexes; especially the mental.”

KLAUS: “*Ah*, I see. I was going to offer you wine with the meal. Our friends in the Forest have a little vineyard, and they make it themselves. It is surprisingly potent, though. It ages quite well; I have several bottles from the 1920s I was going to open for us.”

FRIENDISH: “*Hmmm*, wine pressed by stinky vegan feet. Bet that has some earthy undertones and nice unshaven legs.”

KLAUS (smiles, scraping the basil into a wooden bowl): “I do not much care for it either, or at least its flavor. But the ladies seem to like it,” points with knife to the kitchen door, “so I try to be polite.”

FRIENDISH: “This is true, and when in Rome, drink as the Romans do, especially the local vintages.”

KLAUS puts the bowl by the stove, where pots are slowly simmering, and then heads over to a small wine rack.

KLAUS: “So you will join us for a glass or two?” He looks over the rack; several open and empty bottles are near by.

FRIENDISH: “One, perhaps two if I actually like it, but no more. As I said, it dulls the reflexes.”

KLAUS: “*Ah*, unless someone shoots a howitzer at us from 20 kilometers away, we are safe.” Grabs a bottle, looks at the label. “Later.” Puts it back, selects another, smiles in satisfaction. Uncorking it with practiced ease, he goes into the living room.

Cut to: Klaus’s Living Room. Nicely decorated with obscure kitch. A giant Voynich-style painting of a nymph with laurels hangs over the fireplace. VV GROUPIE is sitting in an open bay window, looking out. An MP-5 submachine gun rests across her lap. Through scene, her tone towards FRIENDISH is noticeably colder. However, at first, she turns, sees them, and smiles at the sight of the wine.

VV GROUPIE: “Oh, cabana boy?”

KLAUS: “I’m pouring right now.” Begins to do so on a table where there is a small pyramid of inverted crystal wine glasses.

FRIENDISH (examining the painting): “I still can’t get over that you got Moleback’s pictures through Lugosovich.”

KLAUS: “Why does that surprise you?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it blows his cover story that he doesn’t have any Voynich, and is only in the game to round out his collection.”

KLAUS: “*Oh*, but Friendish, that is all true. At least the last part of it.” Smiles. “What, you did not know this?”

VV GROUPIE makes a snort of contempt.

KLAUS (amusedly): “It is the most poorly kept secret in Europe. Well, that or how Vatican City has The Bomb.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m from America, remember? I don’t know the European players. The Count occasionally comes to our continent to buy things, but he’s hard to get near, and I never could figure his angle out anyway.”

VV GROUPIE chuckles at this. KLAUS nods.

KLAUS: “You want to know the Count’s angle? He is one of the biggest collectors of Voynich in the world, but he is only after certain types. He is very picky.”

FRIENDISH: “What’s his criteria?”

KLAUS hands VV GROUPIE a glass of wine.

KLAUS: “Perhaps I should let you tell the story, as it is your great great grandcousin or something.”

VV GROUPIE: “In the late 1500s, there was a painter who did Voynich illustrations. La Nada. The Nothing. I am related to her on my father’s side. She was from Spain, but gypsied her way to Bohemia in her teens. She became quite famous in Voynich circles at the time. She was to Voynich what Pamela Coleman Smith is to tarot cards. The Count collects her work.”

KLAUS: “The Yale book was drawn by La Nada.”

FRIENDISH: “No shit?”

VV GROUPIE: “You said that the black and whites copies Klaus cabana boyed out of Lugosivich’s Rave are from the Yale book?”

FRIENDISH: “Yes. Well, that explains why he had them. Proxy placeholders.” The two Germans frown. “In a collection, it’s what you put in the gaps to fill the spot until you get the real thing. You said the Minion in the copy room was making a copy of a copy, so apparently he doesn’t have the originals, either, but placeholders. You also said he was trading those copies to someone, or even vice versa, so I would assume he has his copies still...”

KLAUS: “Presumably. But even the copies I saw were poor quality. Kay and Moleback want the originals, or at least better generation copies than what I was able to save from the shredder.”

FRIENDISH: “I’ll just have to find out how Lugosovich got what he got, and see if I can proceed from there.”

KLAUS: “And here our options become limited. Because of my poor cabana boy performance at his last Rave, my name is *verboten*, so I cannot get near him again, nor can any of the *Volksfrei* I am associated with.”

FRIENDISH: “That’s okay, because I have a cunning plan. And if it plays right, I’ll migrate back to Bavaria and out of your hair here.”

VV GROUPIE (sourly): “Danke.”

FRIENDISH (to VV GROUPIE): “Out of curiosity, I take it you buy the yarn that the Count is a couple hundred years old, like Hassan?”

VV GROUPIE: “Yarn? *Was ist* ‘yarn’?”

FRIENDISH: “Opinion.”

KLAUS (to VV GROUPIE): “Nicht zutreffend” [not true] (to FRIENDISH) “Oh yes, yes, he is more proof that the Voynich alchemy works...”

VV GROUPIE looks like she has had enough. She picks up a small walkie talkie and clicks it on.

VV GROUPIE: “Kann jemand zum Haus und zur Abdeckung für mich nach innen kommen? Ich benötige etwas Frischluft.” [can someone come to the house and cover for me inside? I need some fresh air]

VV#1 [radio distortion]: “Ich kann.”

Cut to view of bay window, VV GROUPIE’s legs jutting out from bottom of the screen. Out the window on the grounds below, VV#1 walks into view and nods up at VV GROUPIE. VV#1 is tall, bald, and dressed in black. He is holding a bo-staff in one hand, and has a leg holster with nunchuck handles poking out.

VV GROUPIE (to KLAUS and FRIENDISH): “I am going to stretch my legs for a few.” She sips her wine, then sets it down on the floor.

Off screen, front door opening.

KLAUS: “Fine, fine, we will be talking for some time, and the sauce takes time to slow roast, so get your legs nice and stretched for later.” Winks libidinally at her.

VV GROUPIE ignores him, and rolls out the open window. It is a half-story drop; she makes a 3-point landing (one hand holding the gun safely) and quickly recovers.

KLAUS (faint, off screen): “Ah, Hans! I had just opened a bottle of the ’78. The year you were born, no? Perhaps your tiny feet helped press this?”

VV GROUPIE walks toward the back of the house. A nicely aced place, with trees and a shaggy high hedge separating it from the next property.

Cut to her in back of the property; there is a drop-off into a forest with a dry riverbed at the bottom. She looks around briefly, sees VV#2 up in a tree with a scoped, bolt-action hunting rifle looking down at her. They nod at each other, and VV GROUPIE sits beneath a tree. She pulls out a cellphone.

Cut to cellphone; her green-nailed thumb is scrolling down a list of Voynich script. She ends at one and calls it.

Sound of five *rings*.

TRASH [phone distortion]: “Topiary Enterprises, how can I help you?”

VV GROUPIE: “Hello, this is [NAME] in Germany. Is this Trish? Or Tree?”

Cut to TRASH (in a blue/white tie dye that looks like clouds in the sky). She is talking on a phone mounted to a wall, next to a giant poster reading “Topiary Enterprises, how can I help you?”

TRASH: “Hey, [name], this is Trash!”

VV GROUPIE: “Hello, Trish. Are Moleback or Klaustina there?”

TRASH: “They’re both down at the Biodome. I can get you their mobile phone number. Did something else happen?”

VV GROUPIE: “Not since the shooting last night.”

TRASH: “What exactly happened? I just heard third-hand through Tree that that dude Friendish killed a femme.”

VV GROUPIE: “Yes. I do not know exactly what happened, but he and Klaus decided there was an immediate threat, and we have been hammerback since midnight. We, or at least I, do not know who the woman was, but it seems trouble has followed him from stateside.”

TRASH: “I guess.”

VV GROUPIE: “How well do you know this Friendish?”

TRASH: “He’s Moleback and Klaustina’s friend, not mine. Why?”

VV GROUPIE: “I do not like him.”

TRASH: “Of course not; he’s got a y chromosome.”

VV GROUPIE (laughs): “Besides that. No, it is just a hunch, a feeling, a...”

TRASH: “Woman’s intuition?”

VV GROUPIE: “Ja. His thinking is very strange.”

TRASH: “Like what?”

VV GROUPIE: “He thinks Hassan is possessed by a demon.”

TRASH: “Jesus, are you serious? This is the 21st century.”

VV GROUPIE: “Yes, my thoughts exactly. He has such a warped perception of the whole Voynich milieu that I wonder how much help he can *really* be to you, or us.”

TRASH: “I don’t know, but hopefully he can be of some help. Kay and Moleback know him, maybe that’s who you should talk to. I’ll go get their cell number for you, because they won’t be back until dark.”

VV GROUPIE: “What time is it there now?”

48)

Cut to digital watch, reading 8:23. Shot pans back to show the watch is on the wrists of G&C#1, gripping the steering wheel of a utility van. Camera pulls out window to show G&C#2 in the passenger seat. Both are dressed in workman’s type clothes, cruising down a residential street. They reach a 4-way stop; through the window, the signs say “Dickens” and “Hunterbasser.”

Cut to exterior shot of intersection; the van [labeled “Philadelphia Gas & Coke”] turns and goes up the street to the first open space by Nimbus’s house.

Cut to G&C#1 and #2 getting out of the van. G&C#1 has a clipboard and takes the lead. They head up the steps to the brownstone. G&C#1 tries the door, finds it locked. After a moment, he buzzes MacLeod’s flat.

Cut to: street-level shot of OFFICER FRIST looking through window. Looks down at them, presses com button next to window.

OFFICER FRIST [intercom distortion]: “Hang on; be right down.”

OFFICER FRIST disappears, and a few moments later appears at the front.

G&C#1: “Morning, officer, who’s here right now?”

OFFICER FRIST: “Just myself and officer Decons.”

G&C#1: “Okay, well, “ (glances at clipboard) “Detective Wilson wanted us to look at some things.”

OFFICER FRIST (shrugs): “Sure.”

G&C#1: “Yeah, well, I just need someone to sign off on this work order.” Hands clip to first officer.

OFFICER FRIST: “Okay; you got a pen?”

G&C#2 pulls out a bandana from his pants pocket and grapples FRIST from behind, forcing the bandanna over his mouth and nose. FRIST struggles and grunts a second, but then succumbs passively. G&C#2 has already wrestled him inside the door; G&C#1 looks out quickly and closes it.

Cut to inside landing. Stairs going up; G&C #2 is dragging FRIST off (who has bandana shoved in his mouth) under the stairs; camera follows G&C #1 up the steps. G&C#2 reaches the top as G&C#1 finishes quick conceal and begins taking stairs 2 at a time (though quietly) to catch up. G&C#1 walks off screen into Nimbus’s apartment. A few moments later, G&C#2 stealths in behind him.

Silence for 5 seconds

OFFICER DECONS [off screen]: “Be with ya in just a sec.”

Pregnant *pause*, then sounds to simulate the following: karate kick to the head, muffled *oof*, body hitting the floor, someone jumping onto the body, brief grapple, *silence*.

G&C#2 [off camera]: “Cool. You got him?”

G&C#1 [off camera]: “Yeah.”

G&C#2 [off camera]: “Let me check upstairs, then give me a hand getting that other cop from downstairs up here.”

G&C#1 grunts acknowledgement. Sounds of duct tape unspooling.

G&C#2 reappears in the door and then walks up the final flight to the Naybors’ door. Brief, faint BEELZEBUG buzzing. G&C#2 stops; *knock*. SCHNAPPS begins barking. Waits about 10 seconds. Walks to stair rail and calls down.

G&C#2: “Clear up here.”

G&C#1 [off camera]: “All right.”

He is about to head down, but looks back at door. Faint sounds of paws on scuttling on hard-wood floor.

G&C#2: “Actually, what are your thoughts on dogs?”

G&C#1: “Why? They got one?”

G&C#2: “Yeah.”

G&C#1: “Awww, we’ll let it out before we go. Miracles happen.”

G&C#2 shrugs, and begins walking down stairs. Shot pans in on Naybor’s door, holds.

49)

Cut to door of eASIS, ideally as close to previous scene as possible. Shot holds of door, then it opens away from camera. Beyond is a daytime parking lot for a strip mall. EAC#1 holds the door for EAC#2; both are female, in their late teens, and dressed in pretentious cyberpunk style that tries *too hard* to be cool. Camera follows them as they enter eASIS. It is an Internet café that, like its patrons, is trying too hard to be hip and failing because of it.

Camera flows across the floor toward the opposite side of the café, passes one table that seems to exude darkness, as if sucking all the light from around it. THE SINGULARITY and DREEBLE sit in the dim shadows at a table. Objects on the table slowly gravitate toward THE SINGULARITY.

DREEBLE: “He was trying to hook up a cat-9 cable to it...”

THE SINGULARITY: “*Huh huh*. Cat-9.”

DREEBLE: “*Exactly*. So...”[ad lib with quick fade]

Camera continues on, toward the back wall, where a where a neon green sign spells out ‘liquids’. MUFON is walking toward it. Behind the counter, MILES stands idle. [Unless Michael Palin is available for the part, MILES is young, lanky, and has his hair buzz-cut in back but bangs slanting at an angle over his eyes.] No apron; white collared shirt with black string tie. Perpetually contemptuous sneer; he has an unlit cigarette in his hands and pantomimes smoking it throughout scene.

MUFON reaches the counter. He looks at MILES for service. MILES just stands there, arms crossed, looking at him smugly. The pause becomes awkward.

MILES: “I’m listening.”

MUFON: “Coffee. Strongest stuff you got.”

MILES: “*Soooooooooooo*, would that be the *Iris Widener*, the *Espresso From Hell*, or the *Uber-Tweak*?”

MUFON: “Whatever.”

MILES: “Pick one.”

MUFON: “Surprise me.”

MILES: “No; you *have* to pick one.”

MUFON (a ‘care less’ shrug): “Uber-tweak.”

MILES: “What size?”

MUFON: “Large.”

MILES: “*Ohhh*, we don’t have ‘*large*’. We have *petite*, *medium*, and... ..*vente*.”

MUFON: “That’ll work.”

MILES: “Which?”

MUFON: “That last one.”

MILES: “The... *vente*?”

MUFON: “*Sure*.”

MILES: “So, you want a...” holds his hands out, palm up, fingertips beckoning an answer.

MUFON: “Biggest cup of your strongest coffee.”

MILES: “Say it.”

MUFON: “What?”

MILES : “Say the size.”

MUFON: “No.”

MILES: “You *have* to say it.”

MUFON: “No!”

MILES: “Say ‘*vente*’...”

MUFON: “Fine, gimme 3 mediums.”

MILES glares at him.

Cut to MUFON walking away from counter, three medium coffees in his hand. Behind him, Miles shifts the filter down his fingers to the web next to the knuckles, and uses this to flip MUFON a bird. MUFON takes a table on the side by the restrooms. Coffees go down on a lazy susan to the side that is shared by 2 other stations. The screen has the eASIS logo.

Cut to shot of MUFON from over and behind the monitor. Sounds of typing.

Cut to browser: junkmail login screen.

User name: muffin~mania

Password: *****

MUFON sips his coffee, reacts like it were cod-liver oil. Reverse angle shot of this with MILES in the background, watching him and grinning. MUFON does some clicking.

1 new message

Polaris [re: re: opt in](#)

Click, new window pops up; it is moderately lengthy, and not on screen long enough to read.

Cut to MUFON reading it, his lips moving slightly. After several seconds he frowns.

Cut to mouse moving over the print icon, *clicking*.

Cut to Mufon walking towards the smoking patio, a page in his hand. Glass door; there is a pay phone on either side. EAC#3 is on the outside one, talking and smoking. MUFON picks up the one on the inside, drops in some change, and dials a number from the printout.

Sound of 3 rings. *Click* of pickup.

AUTOMATED (FEMALE) VOICE: “To leave a message, press 1. To page this person, press 2.”

MUFON (presses 1, and then reads off of the printout): “I would like to order a dozen spicy bort wings. No ranch.” Waits a second; *silence*. Looks up from the paper. “Uh, please call me and let me know the total. It’s [looks at sticker on phone] “520-223-1467. Uh, thanks.” Hangs up; sound of coins dropping internally. MUFON waits a

second, then heads back to his table. Sits down, keeping an eye on the phone. Drinks coffee; its flavor has not improved. Opens up a web browser, but then the phone rings.

MUFON quickly gets up, papers in hand, and heads for the phone. He makes it before anyone else.

MUFON: “Hello?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover; should not be immediately obvious it is him]: “You place an order?”

MUFON (looking at printout): “I would like to order a dozen spicy bort wings. No ranch.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Will this be cash or credit?”

MUFON (consulting script): “Do you take flax?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Absatively.”

MUFON nods, stops looking at the paper. “So....”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “We don’t deliver, so will this be dine-in or carry-out?”

MUFON: “You tell me.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Dine-in. So, can I have your name?”

MUFON: “Muffin. Can I have yours?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Polaris.”

MUFON: “Okay. But who *are* you, exactly?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “I’m a supplier.”

MUFON: “What kind of supplies?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Uh, things of a textual nature.”

MUFON: “Like books?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “I was Friendish’s source. But Friendish has disappeared, and I’ll bet he’s dead.”

MUFON: “I got an email claiming to be from him, but it was blatantly a fake.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Yeah, there are a lot of bad fakes floating around right now. Which is actually why I’m talking to you in lieu of Friendish.”

MUFON: “What do you mean?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Like I said, I supplied Friendish with text. I risked my ass to get him something, but then he goes and disappears or even dies on me.”

MUFON: “And I gather you still have these, and want to give them to me?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “*Give?* Well...”

MUFON: “I’ll be honest: I have absolutely no cash on me.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Actually, I’m not going to part with them, at any price. But I can still show them to you. If you come out my way, I can show you a sampler, and we can take it from there.”

MUFON: “Okay.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “How far away are you from Vegas?”

MUFON: “You know, I don’t know; never been in this part of the country before. Not even sure where I am. I’m somewhere in the Sonoran. Maybe 6, 8 hours? Doubt more than 12.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Well, let’s see... if I skip sleeping tomorrow, I can probably meet you in Vegas for about an hour. Can you be in Vegas tomorrow night between midnight and 1?”

MUFON: “Barring the unforeseen, yes.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Okay, so there’s a place there called Area 69. It’s actually a gay bar.”

MUFON: “Oh, great.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Actually, Friendish picked it when he and I first met. He had a point: 2 men hunkered down in close, intimate conversation goes unnoticed, plus it’s easier to take someone into a bathroom stall and search them for wires and mikes.”

MUFON: “Oh, *fuck*...”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Hey, how do you think I felt? I was half-expecting someone I know from here to pop up there; fortunately the only gay guy I know told me he got 86’ed from there 2 years ago for knocking a cabana boy unconscious with a giant dildo... I dare-say he ‘cold-cocked’ him, but I don’t stoop to puns that low with complete strangers.”

MUFON: “You’re one to talk... I’m still not sure who the hell you are, or what you had for Friendish. So, I gather you work for the government?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Fuck no. Well, not directly. Indie contractor specialist.”

MUFON: “So you say you’re indie... But which side are you indie with?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “What do you mean?”

MUFON: “Well, it’s just that there are so many fucking sides in all this. Everyone’s in some conspiracy; I think I’ve seen everything but lesbians and librarians.

Quick cut to Library Cellar. SABRINA, GLADYS, CLAUDE, JANENE THE LIBRARIAN, and several other LIBRARIANS are gathered around a table that has a diorama of Dealey Plaza in Dallas; the Book Depository is a 6-story parking garage. All the LIBRARIANS are dressed in black combat fatigues, several have weapons.

SABRINA (moving a small model car along the street): "...so, when the bookmobile passes the auto depository, we jump out from these 3 spots..."

Cut back to MUFON at the eASIS.

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Everybody's in some type of conspiracy, but somehow I bet that mine are in different crop circles than yours. Besides, I'm just in this for myself; I'm not so much "on" a side as just "against" every other side I've seen. Which is why I'm dealing with people like Friendish and you: to get the info out and bring these motherfuckers down. Or at least embarrass the hell out of 'em."

MUFON: "Well, if that's true, then we have a lot to talk about."

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Probably, but only an hour or so in which to talk about it. So, think you can find Area 69?"

MUFON: "I'll manage by midnight tomorrow and be there. How will I know you?"

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "I'll probably be able to spot you, so I'll introduce myself. Same password drill we just did."

MUFON: "Uh, whatever. Hey, what is 'bort', anyway?"

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Save your questions for tomorrow; I really need to go."

MUFON: "Okay, uh, Polaris. I guess I'll see you tomorrow."

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Not to state the obvious or scare you off, but come alone. If you have anyone with you, I will kill you all."

MUFON: "Great."

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Hey, if you're legit, you have nothing to worry about."

MUFON: "Shit, I got tons to worry about. I got fucking mountains of problems..."

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: "Well, don't bring those to the bar. See you tomorrow."

Click.

MUFON hangs up, and goes back to his table. Sips his coffee, blanches at the taste, and puts it down on the table. Camera slowly closes in until it occupies full shot.

50)

Cut to: similar coffee cup on similar table. COUNT's hand reaches out. Sounds of sipping.

COUNT (off screen): "Pah! This is *wretched*! Did one of the Cabana Clerks piss in it?"

Cut to JUDGES on a high bench. One of them bangs his gavel.

JUDGE#1: “Count Lugosovich, we grow increasingly weary with your outbursts, especially those which are unrelated to the proceedings at hand.”

Cut to prosecution table, where COUNT and his REPRESENTATION are sitting. COUNT is scowling at the coffee; REPRESENTATION addresses the bench.

REPRESENTATION: “I am again sorry for my client, your honor. The stress of this case has upset him, and the slightest wrinkle seems to be setting him off. I will counsel him to better restrain himself.”

COUNT (under his breath to REPRESENTATION): “You counsel me which clerk brought me this coffee. I torment his family for 10 generations.” REPRESENTATION nods politely, turning his attention to his briefs on the table before him.

JUDGE#1 (to defense table): “Please continue.”

Cut to team of LAWYERS. One is standing.

LAWYER: “Thank you, m’Lord. As I was saying, such claims as the Count’s have repeatedly been found to be without merit, not the least reason for which is that the Contract the Count is entering as Exhibit 1 is was signed by people long since dead. None of their descendants are obligated to honor it.”

REPRESENTATION: “Your honor, living contracts such as Constitutions are recognized the world over as being in effect long after the original signers have died.”

COUNT smiles and goes “*Heh.*”

JUDGE#2 leans over to JUDGE#1, and whispers something into his ear for several seconds. Judge#1 nods.

JUDGE#1: “I am going to call a half hour recess. Court is adjourned until then.” Bangs gavel.

A cabana clerk [in a legal tuxedo] comes up to him with silver platter; a cordless phone is on it.

CLERK: “Excuse me, Count? You have a phone call. The gentleman has been on the line, waiting until recess.”

COUNT: “*Eh?* Who is it?”

CLERK: “It is the Yale library in America. They wish to discuss an overdue fee with you.”

COUNT: “*Whah?*” Does a bizarre cross between a frown and a scowl. After a second, beckons for the phone. “I am Count Lugosovich. Who are you?”

Split screen to FRIENDISH.

FRIENDISH: “Count, my name is Friendish...”

COUNT (unexpectedly amused): “Friendish?!? *Ah*, yes, yes, I have heard of you! Hassan speaks very highly of you.”

FRIENDISH is stunned into silence.

COUNT: “I am glad our paths have finally crossed. I have never been happy with my American scouts, and your name had often been on the short list suggested to me for replacements.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’m already contracted out at the moment, but that’s actually the reason I’m finally introducing myself.”

COUNT: “*Eh?*”

FRIENDISH: “I’d like to talk to you about the Yale Manuscript.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, go to New Haven and look at it yourself.”

FRIENDISH: “The pages I’m interested in aren’t at Yale. They fell out a few centuries before, and the buzz around the beehive seems to be that you might be able to help me in that.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, do you know that the proper name for a beehive is an ‘apiary’? Someone is making an ape out of you, Friendish.”

FRIENDISH: “Oh, I’ve known that since I was in diapers, but this is different. I’m in Bavaria right now, but I can be in the Hague in under 24 hours. Can we discuss this in person, without a judge hovering over your shoulder?”

COUNT: “*Hmmm...* you are in Bavaria?”

FRIENDISH: “Munich.”

COUNT: “I have place in Oberammergau. I meet you there when this is done. Maybe we talk, maybe I just kill you.”

FRIENDISH: “I think you’ll find talking to me would be more productive.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, we have to see what kind of mood I am in after this legal ordeal.”

FRIENDISH: “Fair enough.”

COUNT: “I will make arrangements tonight with my people at my ski lodge; I will fly there either tomorrow or the day after, depending on what delays the defense throws at us. The bastards are bleeding this for all they can.”

51)

Cut to: Hospital Room. ALANA is sitting on the examining table. CDC_DR (female) is tying a tourniquet around her arm while DR_CDC (male) asks her questions while writing on a clipboard.

CDC_DR [getting a hypo ready]: “Now, you’re going to feel some pressure...”

ALANA: “Oh my god, I just cannot believe this...”

DR_CDC: “Any nausea or headaches?”

ALANA: “Well *yeah*, but only because you guys are doing this to me.”

CDC_DR begins drawing blood.

DR_CDC: “Blurry vision?”

ALANA: “No. Oh my god, my father is going to kill me.”

DR_CDC: “Have you been moving your bowels regularly?”

ALANA: “What the fuck kind of question is that? Who the hell says *bowels*?”

CDC_DR: “Honey, try to calm down, or this part here will really hurt.”

ALANA looks over to see what she means, quickly looks away at the site of the blood being drawn.

ALANA: “Oh my god, I think I’m going to be sick. I can’t believe this.”

DR_CDC: “Now Alana, this is very important: did he ever get any of his bodily fluids on you or.... *um*... in you?”

ALANA: “Does spit count? We kissed.”

DR_CDC (writes furiously): “Yes! Anything else?”

ALANA: “Well, we had sex 3 times, but...”

DR_CDC: “Did you practice safe sex?”

ALANA: “Oh god yeah. My dad refuses to pay for birth control.”

CDC_DR (finishes drawing blood): “Well, that’s good. About the safe sex. Were they latex condoms?”

ALANA: “I dunno; whatever *Magnums* are. Probably.”

CDC_DR (smiles reassuringly): “I’m sure they were. But the three times, he wore one, right?”

ALANA: “Yeah, all he had on was a condom and that stupid hat of his.”

CDC_DR: “You’ll probably be fine. Latex can keep out any bacteria or virus.”

DR_CDC (to himself): “Any *Earthly* virus...”

ALANA: “What?”

DR_CDC: “Nothing.”

ALANA (to CDC_DR): “What did he say?!?”

CDC_DR: “Nothing.”

DR_CDC: “*Uh*, I said the N. E. Ürthlea virus...”

CDC_DR: “Jack...”

DR_CDC: “...discovered by, *uh*, Nathan... Edward... Ürthlea... with an *umlaut*... in Borneo...”

ALANA: “Oh my god, is that what I have?!?”

DR_CDC: “Oh, no, the N. E. Ürthlea virus is harmless...”

CDC_DR grabs an empty coffee cup and slams it down on the table next to DR_CDC. Camera begins a pan in on the cup.

CDC_DR: “Hey Jack, why don’t you go get yourself a steaming cup of ‘*shut the fuck up*’.”

Camera has zoomed in completely on the coffee cup.

52)

Cut to/continue shot of an identical coffee cup. A soft, rhythmic grinding sound starts. Camera begins to pan back, showing the cup to be on a richly grained, darkly stained wooden table. Coming into shot next to the cup is the source of the noise: an antique coffee grinder. A wizened hand (HASSAN’s) is manually turning the crank. Camera continues to pan back, showing HASSAN (back to camera) in a large, luxurious kitchen. On the stove next to him is a tea kettle; soft wisps of steam are beginning to seep out of the spigot.

HASSAN: “The secret is in the grind. Too coarse, and the coffee is watery. Too fine, and it is bitter. And she *must* be done by hand. The electric machines, they have no love to them. By hand is by love. Hassan can tell from how the handle turns when the beans they are ready.” Grinds a bit more. “And they are readyyyy... ..now.”

Camera finishes backpan, showing the entire kitchen. HASSAN is the only one in it. He stops cranking, and pulls out the bottom tray where the rich brown coffee grounds had collected.

HASSAN: “Hassan once met a man in Madrid. He was a Hindu in exile from Calcutta. He had a nice grinder. It was fashioned like a Hindu prayer wheel, and even had a written copy of the *prachodayat dhimahi* prayer folded in the handle. Every turn of the crank brought you one lifecycle closer to Nirvana.”

PEGASUS quietly walks into the kitchen behind HASSAN. He stops, frowns, and silently watches. Oblivious to this, HASSAN empties the grinds into a fine mesh filter, and holds it over the cup. His free hand takes the tea kettle, and begins slowly pouring water into the mesh sieve. All-the-while, he continues his soliloquy.

HASSAN: “That Madrid Hindu, he would measure out how many beans would be in each cup by some arcane formula that involved astrology, gematria, and dice rolling. No two cups tasted the same or had the same strength. Now if you wanted a consistent cup of coffee, go visit Beethoven. He had to have 60 beans in each cup. No more, no less. Ludwig would count them out himself, just to be sure.”

PEGASUS: “60? That sounds weak.”

HASSAN startles, nearly splashes water from the kettle. He stops pouring and turns around. Coffee drips from the sieve into his cup.

HASSAN: “Oh, sir! You scare Hassan. He did not hear you come in.”

PEGASUS: “Who were you talking to?”

HASSAN (sheepishly): “Oh, you will forgive Hassan for occasionally speaking with himself sometimes. It is a habit I have been trying to break him of. Would you like a cup of coffee, sir?”

PEGASUS: “I can smell it from here, and it smells good. Your signature blend, I assume? Sure I would. Thank you.”

HASSAN: “*Hehe*, Hassan is glad you like his coffee. He learn from a master caffeine addict in Tehran. *Hehe*, back then, half the city was Islamic coffee martyrs. In the Christian Europe, the drink got guiltied by association, because of all the arabs wired of Allah and coffee. It wasn’t until Pope Clement the 8th had a cup, and said ‘This Satan’s drink is so delicious that we shall cheat Satan by baptizing it’.”

PEGASUS (shrugs): “Didn’t know that.”

HASSAN: “Your predecessor did, or at least believed the tale to be true. He refused to drink coffee during his tenure when he learned that a Pope had once blessed his favorite beverage.”

PEGASUS: “Wow; never knew that about him.”

HASSAN: “No, but you would not, of course.”

PEGASUS: “I just met him the once. Before, and even now, I hardly know anything about him.”

HASSAN: “No, but he knew all about you, which is why he picked you to fill his place in the Game upon his passing away.”

PEGASUS: “I thought you picked me.”

HASSAN: “No, Hassan merely honored his wishes.”

PEGASUS sizes HASSAN up, skepticism in his eyes. HASSAN pours more kettle water into the sieve. The cup is about half full.

PEGASUS: “Actually, think you can Irish that up for me?”

HASSAN: “Certainly, sir.”

PEGASUS: “Good. Come to think of it, make it a *vente*. I’ll take it in the Library.”

53)

Cut to entrance arch to the Breckenridge Rare Book Library at Yale University. WILSON walks up steps.

Cut to front desk; JANENE THE LIBRARIAN is pushing a voluminous registry toward WILSON.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN: “Here you go.” There is a fountain pen in the open spine.

Cut to WILSON signing in to see MS 408. The entry above his is Admiral [name], also to see MS 408.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN: “Now, you will have to wear these when with the book.” Hands him latex surgical gloves. “It’s so oils from your fingers won’t damage the pages.”

WILSON: “Not to worry, ma’am, I know all about the subject of fingerprints.”

Cut to JANENE THE LIBRARIAN leading WILSON up a staircase to a private reading room. She opens the door for him. Inside, at a table under soft light, is Admiral, hunched over the Voynich Manuscript.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN (pointing to a phone on the wall next to the door): “This will reach the front desk. That...” points at a no-frills computer in the corner “...has a chat program on it for the librarians here; you can usually reach at least one of us on it. So if you need any further help, those are the best ways to reach us.”

WILSON: “Thank you.”

WILSON enters, finds ADMIRAL is at his feet, gloved hand extended.

ADMIRAL: “Detective Wilson!” [sound of door closing] “Glad you were able to make it.” ADMIRAL motions him to the table. They shake hands warmly; both are surgically gloved. Wilson quickly turns his attention to the table.

WILSON: “Wow, so this is what the fuss is all about.”

Cut to The Voynich Manuscript, open.



WILSON: “It’s smaller than I expected. I guess I’m just used to seeing blown-up reproductions. We actually extrapolated what McLeod wrote, and I spent several hours yesterday going through scans to see if the phrase was in it.”

ADMIRAL: “Any luck?”

WILSON: “No, but I might have missed it. It’s burned into my brain, so I’ll keep an eye out.”

They turn their attention back to the Manuscript.

ADMIRAL: “Amazing this is over 400 years old. It’s 8 times older than I am.”

WILSON: “Do you think these plants ever existed? I wonder if the artwork itself isn’t a code, the plants are metaphors for something elaborated on in the text.”

ADMIRAL: “Well, there’s more to it than just plants.” Flips pages. “Here are the zodiac. All except Aquarius and Capricorn.” Finds the gap, and points at the folio. “You can see the gap; it fell out. Or was pulled out. About a half dozen pages are missing this way. And 2 were forcibly removed...” flips to one.

Cut to open page, a small stub above.

ADMIRAL (voice-over): “Here. You can still see the stub: someone cut it out.”

WILSON: “Someone not like what it had to say?”

ADMIRAL: “Hell, maybe it was the translation key.”

They turn pages randomly, half way through the book now into the ‘biology’ section.

WILSON: “I don’t like the artwork. Especially this stuff. The plants are creepy enough, but these...”

ADMIRAL: “I wonder if the artist was the author?”

WILSON: “They’re not the same? I’d always assumed...”

ADMIRAL: “The art was put on first, and then the text was written around it afterward.”

WILSON: “Has it actually been established that the text is about the pictures?”

ADMIRAL: “Well, it’s assumed, but not proven. Why?”

WILSON: “Just wondering... these pictures just don’t sit right, and my gut instinct is to discard them. Besides, my victim MacLeod wrote in Voynich, not paint a picture with his blood.”

They reach the “recipes”: single lines or paragraphs of Voynich text, each with a little star or flower in front of it, like a bulleted item.



WILSON: "I've seen this before."

ADMIRAL: "You have?"

WILSON (thinks a moment): "Well, this format, anyway. The Gospel of Thomas."

ADMIRAL: "I know Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but never heard of Thomas. Is that in the Apocrypha?"

WILSON: "Yeah, Thomas didn't make the canonical cut. Actually, MacLeod had a copy of it at his house. I remember glancing at it. It said it was secret sayings of Jesus, and then it broke them down like this." Taps each of the paragraphs.

ADMIRAL: "*Huh*, I always thought it was just some kind of appendix, or maybe a 'deep thoughts, by Jack Handyvich'."

WILSON: "Could be, but this makes me think. Suppose the text, whatever the message is in the writing, is the real key here, and the pictures are just window-dressing. Camouflage. It's disguised to look like an herbal, so if the book fell into the wrong hands of some inquisitor, it wouldn't be recognized for what it really was."

ADMIRAL: "Catholic Church didn't take a kind view on alchemy; only way to eternal life was through Christ via them, so they tried to eliminate the competition. If they caught you with this, they'd kill you."

WILSON: "I thought alchemy was turning lead to gold."

ADMIRAL: "No. It's trying to make an immortality mixture. Gunpowder was discovered by accident in the 9th century by a Chinese alchemist working on an elixir of life."

WILSON: "Maybe that's what all this is:" [moves his finger along text] "Eye of newt, wing of bat and a pinch of wolfsbane. put it in a silver bowl with a silver spoon under a full moon... [down to next bullet] "...add 1 crunchy frog, stirring it with the feather from a dead Norwegian parrot..."

ADMIRAL (grins): “Still, they’d kill you for that if they caught you.”

WILSON: “Yeah, but if you were part of some heretical cult or secret society, better to be killed with them thinking you’re just some lone nut alchemist than a member of a heretical sect or a secret society. Also, the Inquisition wouldn’t bother putting too much effort into translating the text, as it pertained to things they did not approve of or use.”

ADMIRAL: “I can see that.”

WILSON: “If nothing else, the pictures are grouped thematically, so even if they’re just window dressing, they could help serve as an indication for when one text ends and the next begins. Hell, this could be an alternate bible of suppressed gospels. First part’s the Gospel of Peter, then maybe the 4th and 5th Epistles of John, a Gospel of Mary Magdalene, and the Gospel of Thomas at the end.”

ADMIRAL: “Who said it has to be religious? It could be some weird philosopher. Hell, maybe the Roger Bacon story is true, at least in part: one of these could be a transcription of some lost teaching of his.”

WILSON: “What do you know about secret societies back then?”

ADMIRAL: “When? 1600s Europe?”

WILSON nods.

ADMIRAL: “Next to nothing.”

WILSON: “But they existed, right?”

ADMIRAL (does his best not to laugh condescendingly, finally manages to say): “Detective Wilson, history is the chronicle of conflicts between various secret societies, written by the winners of those conflicts. This has always gone on. Remember, our Founding Fathers were all part of a conspiracy to overthrow the British government in the Colonies and start their own country. Even back in the caveman days, I guarantee you had Og and Grunt meeting in secret behind a boulder plotting to do something bad to Chunga.”

WILSON: “Chunga?”

ADMIRAL: “Gimme a fuckin’ break; *you* make up a caveman name.”

WILSON: “I’d have to check the poster on my son’s wall; I forget the guy’s name, but he sings for Sonic Lobotomy. Well, kind of grunts anyway. Sloping forehead and knuckles below his knees.”

ADMIRAL: “Gotcha. Maybe he’s the reincarnation or descendent of Chunga behind the rock.”

WILSON: “I thought Grog and Grunt were behind the rock?”

ADMIRAL: “That’s just what they *want* you to think.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow, and I thought all this time it was the neanderthal on the grassy knoll.”

54)

Cut to: street of Vegas bars. There is The Grassy Knoll, Boiler Room, Harkonen No-Globe, Axis Mundi, and Area 69. Night time, but lit up in neon. Moderate amount of traffic; this is the Vegas outskirts, off the strip.

Cut to interior of Area 69. Faux dive bar with a combination ufo and homoerotic theme. Fair amount of lasers and holos, tables look like flying saucers, all the slot machine handles are dildos, etc. Maybe 20 people inside, including several bull-dyke-ish women. 2 beefy bouncers in black police uniforms with mirrored badges and mirrored sunglasses flank the front door, arms crossed and expressionless.

MUFON walks in; looks around, and heads for the bar. He grabs a stool away from everyone else.

69TENDER: “What can I get you?”

MUFON: “Coffee. Lotta cream, lotta sugar.”

69TENDER (nods): “Anything else?”

MUFON: “Out of curiosity, about 2 years ago, did you have a cabana boy here knocked unconscious with a giant dildo?”

69TENDER (grins but shakes his head): “No, think I’d have heard about that. But 2 years ago? I’ve only been here a couple months. Why, was that you?”

MUFON: “No; just heard it happened, and was wondering if it was true.”

69TENDER: “Ask a cabana boy.” Winks and goes off for the coffee.

MUFON looks around, surveying the crowd. Everyone is ignoring him. Obviously uncomfortable, turns his attention back to the bar, intently studying the bottles. 69TENDER returns with his drink.

69TENDER: “Here.”

MUFON nods thanks.

69TENDER: “Coffee’s comp; let me know when you’re ready to upgrade.”

Again MUFON nods. Beside him, a customer wearing a black planter’s-style cowboy hat and black army jacket with a ‘Hanged Man’ tarot card painted on back walks up to the bar, next to MUFON. It is CENTAUR, but this should not be clear at first.

CENTAUR: “Hey, you got spicy bort wings?”

MUFON looks over.

69TENDER: “Pork rings? Uh, I don’t think so. Want a menu?”

CENTAUR: “No thanks.”

69TENDER leaves.

MUFON: “I hear bort wings are good with ranch dressing.”

CENTAUR: “Absatively not. Son, *nothing* is good with ranch dressing.”

They stare each other down. After a moment, CENTAUR tilts his cowboy hat back; the inside is lined with aluminum foil.

CENTAUR: “Okay, Muffin, I’ve shown you mine; you show me yours.”

MUFON tilts his hat back; it too is lined with tin foil.

CENTAUR (nods): “Okay then. Come with me.”

He leads MUFON toward the back, where some private rooms are. There is a long bank of them, labeled Hanger 1 to Hanger 18. Curtains are pulled on about half. CENTAUR goes to #13, which has drawn curtains, and holds them aside for MUFON. The booth beyond is empty; there is a single tallow candle lit on the table and an overhead ufo lamp. MUFON takes one side, by the edge; CENTAUR takes the other, and lets the curtain fall behind him.

Cut to “hanger” interior.

MUFON: “Thanks for skipping the wire pat-down.”

CENTAUR: “I figured just mentioning it would curtail you actually wearing one, if you were a trap. That, or some of the shit they got now, you need a fucking microscope to find, so let’s just get this over with. I have little enough time as it is.”

CENTAUR slowly opens his coat; inside is a holstered pistol. He reaches into a coat pocket and pulls out a small stack of mixed pictures. He does a quick fan of them; it is unclear what is on them. The top is a Polaroid of an oscilloscope chart [use the graph for the phrase ‘fuck you human’]

CENTAUR: “These are not only my credentials, but probably the proof you are looking for. The photos I took myself, and the Polaroids I got from either the photographer or someone who was in the room when it was taken.”

Quick cut of MUFON, straining to see what they are. CENTAUR closes the fan.

CENTAUR: “I’ll show you those only after I’m sure about you.”

MUFON (awkwardly): “And I’ll accept them as real only after I’m sure about you. Don’t take this personal, but put yourself in my shoes: everyone’s been feeding me half-truths and flat-out bullshit, and I’m the poster boy for paranoid skepticism right now. I’m getting set up to go down, and it’s scaring the shit out of me. And I’m not even sure why or by who.”

CENTAUR: “Hey, I don’t know you, so I can’t tell you who or why. But I hear your fear, so fine, I’ll go first.” Looks around, out the curtain. “I’ll start with what you already know: aliens are among us, and the government not only knows it but has samples on ice.”

MUFON (nodding, straight faced): “Yeah,,,”

CENTAUR: “These pictures deal with four types of them...”

MUFON (surprised): “Four? Or are you including...”

CENTAUR (raises a hand to stop him): “Keep your voice down. To be honest, I don’t know your group’s mythology, so what *we* call them and what *y’all* call them are probably way different; besides, we generally try to use *their* own name for themselves, not some new-agey creation. Anyway, four types here. Now, the aliens have their own languages, right? Well, I’m part of a translation team that deals with one of them. I do language analysis. I specialize in Hamaddi . So...”

MUFON: “They the Grays? Y’know, almond eyes...?”

CENTAUR (derisively): “Fuck no. What you call the Grays are... Actually, they’re one of the exceptions to our ‘call ’em by their own name’ policy. What we call them is... Extremely rude. It’s also irrelevant. Like I said, I deal with Hamaddi, and even then, just their language.”

MUFON: “What’s Hamaddi?”

CENTAUR: “The language or the species?”

MUFON: “Uh, yes.”

CENTAUR holds out a 3"x5" glossy print to the camera.

CENTAUR: “Hamaddi.”

Camera does a close-up of picture. it is a close-up of a human-like back, with fine feathers for hair. Written across the back are characters similar to Voynich.

CENTAUR (off screen): “Like I said, I do their languages. They write tons of it, but occasionally they tattoo themselves, like this. They do their tails a lot, too.”

MUFON (staring in wonder and puzzlement): “What’s it say? I can’t read Voynich without a translator program.” Looks up at CENTAUR. “Sorry.”

CENTAUR: “So you think that’s Voynich?”

MUFON: “Well, yeah... Isn’t it?”

CENTAUR: “No. It’s Hamaddi . You can’t tell the difference?”

MUFON: “Well, I’ve never heard of Hamaddi until now, and I’ve only known Voynich for a month or so, but it looks like Voynich. ...I guess... What’s it say?”

CENTAUR: “It says ‘obey your superiors,’ but it says it in Hamaddi. That’s not Voynich.”

MUFON: “Actually, you might be right. It’s Voynich-ish, but...”

CENTAUR: “Did Friendish tell you this was Voynich?”

MUFON: “I’ve never seen that before. But actually, I pitched the idea to him, and he seemed to go along with it....”

CENTAUR: “Hamaddi looks like Voynich, but isn’t. They are demonstrably unrelated. Unfortunately, Friendish made the same mistake when I showed him these. I tried to tell him, but he thought it was at least worth looking into. I can see *why* he would think that, but he’s still wrong.”

MUFON: “Actually, some of it doesn’t look quite right...”

CENTAUR (takes the picture back and puts it on the bottom of the deck): “Kid, it’s not Voynich. I’m gonna guess that you got into this thinking it was because of Friendish?”

MUFON: “Yeah, but not at first. I saw the Yale book on-line, and recognized the pictures. The cosmology parts.”

CENTAUR (shrugs, and a bit sarcastically): “The sun, the moon, the zodiac signs; pretty easy to recognize.”

MUFON: “But the constellations and star charts... I thought if we could match them with an actual star pattern as seen from Earth, we’d find out something like where *they* are from and what-not.”

CENTAUR: “Friendish asked me if any of the plants were from the Hamaddi.”

MUFON: “I thought that too!”

CENTAUR: [shushes MUFON]

MUFON: (lower voice) “I thought the plants were extraterrestrial, or maybe hybrids with ours...”

CENTAUR: “I know the Hamaddi are very arboreal, and I gather their home planet is just one big tree-town. You know how Eskimos got like 20 different words for ‘snow’? Hamaddi have fifty words for ‘leaf’. Since Hamaddi are so into plants and half the Voynich pictures out there are weird-looking plants, Friendish thought that helped prove Hamaddi and Voynich were the same. But they’re not.”

MUFON: “So...”

CENTAUR: “So all this Voynich crap is irrelevant.”

MUFON: “Maybe, maybe not.”

CENTAUR: “Kid, it’s not.”

MUFON: “Okay, but on the bright side, it led me to those.” Indicates pictures. “I already knew about the... the Grays-which-cannot-be-named... Now I know about Hamaddi, and... and... you said there were four, so three others.”

CENTAUR (smirk): “Saladrin, Rathgeans, and The Conquered.”

MUFON: “The Conquered?”

CENTAUR: “Well, that’s the translation of what the Rathgeans call ’em, and that’s a lot easier to pronounce. Rathgeans use ’em for slave labor and cannonfodder. Apparently they fly, and sting like a *motherfucker*. Here, you can see the wound from one..”

Cut to: Polaroid of back of a humanoid head. most of it is gore-coated skull that has clean demarcation/cut lines with the flesh, which resembles a plucked turkey. Focus of the picture is spiky red tattoo, writing/script unlike any others. Below this is part of a huge, scarred-over welt the size of a quarter.

CENTAUR [off-screen]: “At the bottom, that’s part of a sting scar.”

MUFON [off camera]: “My god,” [Cut to MUFON, staring in repulsion] “What is that?”

CENTAUR: “Rathgean. You mean the *writing*, right?”

MUFON: “Uh, no. The... thing it was on. Was that a Rathgean?”

CENTAUR [putting picture on the bottom of the deck]: “Naw, that was a Hamaddi, named Steptujjin. He died in a Rathgean p.o.w. camp. They did that to him.”

MUFON: “Wow, and I always thought the Grays were behind the cattle mutilations, but I guess it’s the Rathgeans?”

CENTAUR: “No, actually that is the Grays.”

Blank look from MUFON.

CENTAUR: “Actually, this is a bigger dead end than I thought for you. These...” flips pictures “...aren’t the aliens you’re looking for.”

MUFON (awkward *pause*): “I don’t understand.”

CENTAUR: “Hamaddi, Rathgeans, they don’t bother with us, and our only contact is when we bother *them*. You’re after the Gray almond eye stereotypes, right? The ones that do the cattle mutilations, crop circles, abductions, and shit?”

MUFON: “I was abducted.”

Awkward *pause*.

CENTAUR (flat, unconvincing): “I’m sorry.”

MUFON: “They fucked me up bad.” [*silence*] “I’m dying from it.” [*silence*] (hint of desperation) “I need to find these motherfuckers and have them fix me.”

CENTAUR: “What did they do to you?”

MUFON: “I’m, uh, not really sure how to describe it. But they took things out of me. And ever since this lumpy stuff is filling up in the holes.” [*silence*] MUFON lifts shirt: his chest has an ugly arced scar, as if he had been stabbed with spoon and it never healed properly. “I dug some of the gunk out once, when I was 19. The shit smelled like an aquarium, and it shriveled up in the sun.” Lowers shirt. “It’s grown back since then. More of it, too. One of them is solidifying into a tumor.” Taps his scalp.

CENTAUR [*long pause*]: “Muffin man, get help.”

MUFON: “What, so the doctors can monitor my progress? No way.”

CENTAUR: “Well, if you don’t go, you’ll probably die, so what’s the worst they could do to you?”

MUFON: “You work at Area 51 and you don’t know the answer to that?”

CENTAUR: “Hey, I just do language analysis. But think about getting help. Or not.”

MUFON: “Streiber probably thinks I bailed with his money so I could get an operation.”

CENTAUR: “Streiber; he’s the head of your contact chapter, right?”

MUFON: “Yeah. He...”

CENTAUR: “Right, right. Is he interested in Voynich, or think all this is Voynich too?”

MUFON: “What? No. Actually, he didn’t buy it when I first brought it up to him, but he let me look into it.”

CENTAUR: “So has he seen any of the Voynich works, or translations?”

MUFON: “I showed him the Yale book on line, and told him about the one Friendish had, the one I thought proved it all. But no, he never saw it. Hell, I only saw Friendish’s book once. Last I knew, Nimbus had it. I don’t even know where it is now.”

Cut to CENTAUR’s coat pocket. There is a bulge the size of a trade paperback inside.

CENTAUR [voice-over]: “Well, I wouldn’t worry about it, because Voynich isn’t an alien language, remember?”

MUFON: “Then what is Voynich?”

CENTAUR: “Who cares? There’s no extraterrestrial connection, so forget about it.”

MUFON: “How can I forget about it? I’m dying!”

CENTAUR: “Your cure isn’t in Voynich, and actually, it’s not in any of these, either.” Waves cards. “You were abducted by what you probably call the Grays, am I right?” No answer. Fans cards out. “These aren’t Grays. Wrong aliens. Sorry, but I can’t help you.” Puts cards away.

MUFON: “But...”

CENTAUR (holds up a hand): “You know, if I were dying of an alien-induced tumor, I’d hate to spend what little time I had left barking up the wrong tree. Unfortunately, near as I can tell that’s exactly what you’re doing. You’re not being used, you’re just confused.”

MUFON: “Maybe... but people are trying to kill me.”

CENTAUR: “You know why? I think it’s because no one in power ever sat down with you to sniff you out, see that you’re relatively harmless and well-intentioned, but extremely misinformed. I think you got guilty by association with Friendish.”

MUFON: “Why? What’d Friendish do?”

CENTAUR: “No idea, but I’ll bet it’s *bad*. I haven’t heard from him in a week; I’m actually guessing he’s landfill.”

MUFON: “To be honest, I don’t know him that well. We met a couple weeks ago, and actually only in person twice. I’m actually half-convinced he’s behind all this, the one setting me up.”

CENTAUR: “Muffin Man, no one’s setting you up except yourself by believing all this shit. Friendish bought it, and he’s missing. I’d take a hint from that.”

MUFON: “I still gotta wonder about that nigga.”

CENTAUR (*pause*): “Did you just say ‘nigga’?”

MUFON: “Oh sorry; I was just talking with a good friend of mine a couple days ago. He said he’d just hung out with his dad, and all they listened to was ghetto rap. Ever since he mentioned it, I’ve had this loop from a, uh...”

CENTAUR: “If you say ‘Public Enemy’ I will react *very badly*.”

MUFON looks shocked. After a moment, grabs his hat.

MUFON: “What, am I having a leak?”

CENTAUR watches him.

MUFON: “Not that I want you to react badly, but how did you know?”

CENTAUR (look of dawning understanding): “Muffin, I need you to explain very slowly what you just said about your friend, his dad, and the ghetto rap.”

MUFON: “Why?”

CENTAUR (low snarl): “Because it’s fucking important.”

MUFON: “My friend Riggs said he spent the weekend with his father...”

CENTAUR: “Riggs... Riggert?”

MUFON: “Yeah. You know him?”

CENTAUR: “How well do *you* know him?”

MUFON: “Known him over a decade, since junior high school. We had a lot of classes together, especially computers. He’s interested in ufos, so I recruited him into Streiber’s network.”

CENTAUR: “Do you know who his father is?”

MUFON (shrug): “No. Shit, can’t remember if I ever met him, actually. I think Riggs just lived with his mom. Why? Who was his dad?”

CENTAUR: “He used to be someone very important out at Area 51.”

MUFON: “That’s Nevada. Riggs and I knew each other in Florida.”

CENTAUR: “Riggs’s dad was never home, remember? He was at work out here.”

MUFON: “Makes sense, I guess.”

CENTAUR: “Aw, shit.”

MUFON: “What?”

CENTAUR: “You know what? You were right: you are getting set up.”

MUFON: “By who, Riggs?” Look of disbelief. “No...” [pause to actually think about it] “You know, Riggs is who introduced me to Friendish.”

CENTAUR snaps his fingers and points at MUFON: “That’s it! Holy shit, you *are* getting set up.”

MUFON: “But why? Riggs and I are...”

CENTAUR: “In the wrong place at the wrong time. Hell, Riggs may not even know he’s part of this. His dad used Riggs to set you up... to set Friendish up... to Nimbus...” slams hand down. “Aw shit. We’re *both* getting set up!”

MUFON frowns at him.

CENTAUR: “Fuck! This makes sense now.”

MUFON: “Um, so explain it to me.”

CENTAUR: “Short version? *I’m* the target. You were just used to ultimately set *me* up.”

MUFON: “I still don’t get it.”

CENTAUR: “Your friend’s dad is trying to set me up to take a fall. Or... even *he’s* just a link, and I’m getting worked by a sinister little midget in a fez...”

MUFON: “Whatever. I don’t get why.”

CENTAUR: “Um,” looks confused a second, “Let’s just say it’s these.” Flaps the pictures. “Fuck, I can’t believe this. We’ve both been played like super-sized suckers. You were just part of the link to get to me. And I’ll bet the plan is that Pegasus kills you, makes it look like I did it, and then MPs storm in and machine gun me. Game over. Fuck!”

MUFON: “So what the fuck do I do, though?”

CENTAUR: “Try to stay alive: I don’t want to get pinned for your murder....”

MUFON: “Look, even if what you say is true and I’m just a patsy pawn in some weird scheme, you think they’re gonna leave me alone or alive? Especially now that I know about it?”

CENTAUR: “Muffin, you don’t know *shit*. Most of what I’ve told you is introductory level. I don’t have time to give you background, especially now that I realize I’m long along the road to getting scroaded.”

MUFON: “What the fuck am I gonna do?”

CENTAUR: “Well, tradition is to find the deepest hole to hide in and never come out.”

MUFON: “I’m connected to the death of a couple federal agents, and I lost five figures of Streiber’s money. So now I not only got feds and Streiber after me, but apparently Riggs’s dad as well.”

CENTAUR: “Streiber should be the least of your concerns. He probably knows the CDC have your money and you didn’t run off with it, and the CDC know you didn’t kill the two guys. No one knows we’ve just talked and figured this shit out, so no one knows you’re the wiser. But you can tell them the truth: Voynich is bullshit and has nothing to do with the Grays you’re interested in. Make Riggs and his dad believe that, and you might just stay alive.”

MUFON: “I’ll take my chances with the hole, thank you very much.”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “Well, your life, so live it out how you choose. To be honest, you’ve got your problems, and I got mine, and I happen to think mine are a hell of a lot worse.”

MUFON: “You got people trying to kill you too?”

CENTAUR: “The wheels are well in motion.”

MUFON: “How about a brain tumor full of grey goop?”

CENTAUR: “Ya got me there. But do yourself a favor: forget about all this. It’s all a red herring to what you’re really after.”

MUFON: “Why does everyone keep telling me that?”

CENTAUR: “Because it’s true.” Taps jacket where photos are. “I’ve shown you the truth. Think about it.”

MUFON: “I am so fucked... ...What am I going to do?”

CENTAUR: “Well, I’ve already suggested finding a comfy hole to hide in. Or you could hitchhike to Ecuador and become an alpaca rancher. Or maybe just sell *everything* you own for hard cash. Buy yourself a nice suit and a cyanide pill. Give the rest to a hooker to give you the best blowjob of your life, and then bite down when you spill.”

MUFON: “Fuck...”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “Well, sounds like you have some heavy thinking to do, so I’ll leave you to it. Just promise me, you’ll drop all this. Stick to Grays, at least.”

MUFON: “Well, I will, but only if you’ll tell me what it is you call them.”

CENTAUR smiles.

55)

Cut to COUNT.

COUNT: “[vile insult]!”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, Count, you ever think of taking an anger management class?”

COUNT: “*Bah*; I once had to teach one as community service sentence.”

Cut to large room in Ski Lodge interior. It is the ballroom from the Rave; the bar can be seen in the background.

COUNT: “So, Friendish, who auditioned you?”

FRIENDISH: “I got auditioned twice. First by Centaur, then by Pegasus.”

COUNT: “The Pegasus auditioned you personally?”

FRIENDISH: “No. He had Hassan handle it.”

COUNT (winces): “Wow, my friend, those are two of the toughest players to please. I am impressed.”

FRIENDISH: “I was up front: I’m not a player.”

COUNT: “And I am all the more impressed that they both bought such bullshit.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, you have your cover story, I have mine.”

COUNT (laughs heartily): “I had actually heard that you were a referee.”

FRIENDISH (laughs, quickly contains himself): “Ref’s don’t get auditioned. That’s not how T.H.E.Y. run things.”

COUNT: “A player pretending to be a referee is a dangerous gambit, but not without precedent. I could name a few Borgia Popes for you!”

FRIENDISH: “Has there ever been a referee pretending to be a player?”

COUNT: “Pretending? No. But in it for real, of course! The other half of that Borgia brigade at St. Peter’s Basilica fit that category!”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’m not a player, and I’m not on the Council. I’m just a spectator who trades in game-related paraphernalia.”

COUNT: “Ah, this I can appreciate. But even the fans in the stand are monitored, no? Do you collect Voynich, or just trade in it?”

FRIENDISH: “Just trade. If I started collecting, that’d be taking sides.”

COUNT: “Nonsense, my friend. You know who the biggest collector and owner of Nazi memorabilia was? Bob Hope. Flags, medals, he had it all. I hear even some soap and the lampshades. And why not? It was his glory days. I can appreciate that, as a collector myself.”

FRIENDISH: “Ah yes, the legendary collection of Count Lugosovich. Is any of it here? I’d like to see it.”

COUNT: “I try to spread a little bit of it about, so I have something familiar at each place I go to. But it is rare that I share it with others, including those I have only physically known less than 2 hours.”

FRIENDISH: “Fair enough. I gather most of the juicy nugs are stashed back in your homeland-in-exile, but I was rather hoping you had a La Nada or two lying around.” The COUNT cocks an eye. “I’ve recently become interested in her work.”

COUNT: “*Eh*, you have good eye, my friend. La Nada... Her work often seems amateurish to the untrained eye, but I see in it a whimsy, care-free attitude, and find her illustrations as beautiful as she was. I own the house where she was born, in Pamplona. I have built a warehouse around it to protect it.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m gonna go with a hunch here: you’re gonna tell me you two were lovers?”

COUNT (grins) “*Hehe*, you know something? I suspect Hassan had a romp with her in the Tent while I was out worshiping the Madonna.”

FRIENDISH: “La Nada did the drawings in the Yale Manuscript. Unfortunately, a dozen or so of those pages fell out before Willie Voynich found it in 1911.”

COUNT: “*Pah*, 12 of them were missing when Kircher received it in 1666. 2 more he removed himself with the straight razor he use to shave with. I do not know what was on those 2 pages that incited the Father to excise them at razorpoint. I have heard a story that they were sent across town to the Vatican and sit to this day in a locked box in the library archives. But my source on this is not reliable.”

FRIENDISH: “Who’s your source?”

COUNT: “Cardinal Spumoni.”

FRIENDISH shrugs, shaking his head at the lack of recognition.

COUNT: “*Ahh*, you will hear of him in a few years, when he change his name. Last I knew, he was deciding between Leo the 13th and Gregory the 17th. Curiously, he is decidedly disinterested in Voynich, which is quite likely why he was entrusted with the two pages.”

FRIENDISH: “What do you know about the 12 pages that fell out?”

COUNT (smiles): “*Ah*, those. You know, I do not know of their current whereabouts. But curiously, the same year Wilfred Voynich found the book that would bear his name at Yale, I found the missing pages in it a half continent away. You know who had them? Rasputin. He show me them one night; I almost crap my pants when I saw. He did not know what they were, but said they were what helped him heal the tzarevich’s hemophilia. I am guessing they were lost or destroyed during the Revolution a few years later; I have searched, but have not found.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, at least Rasputin was nice enough to let you copy them.”

COUNT: “*Hehe*, and why do you say that?”

FRIENDISH: “I saw some crappy scans that one of your underlings ran off and did a half-assed job of destroying.”

COUNT: “*Pah!* You mean Phil the minion, don’t you! I will chop him to chum, sew him in his sharkskin suit, and go fishing in Crete with his carcass!”

FRIENDISH: “Relax, Count. I’m just letting you know that I know. Like I said, my clientele already have bad scans of them; they were just hoping to upgrade.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, who is this clientele of yours?”

FRIENDISH: “We’ll discuss that and what they might offer after you discuss in a little more detail what it is you have.”

COUNT: “*Haha*, my friends were right to suggest you as a scout for me. You are doing an excellent job of scouting me out to sucker me into a deal.”

FRIENDISH: “Flattery will only get you off the subject. I think we were in 1911 Russia...”

COUNT: “*Pah*, Rasputin. What a smelly *starets* he was. Yes, he agreed to let me copy them. His fee was one virgin a page. Curiously, the week after he ask that price, a small plague hit a village in my home Bohemia, and wipe out all but 12 young girls. I felt bad for the catastrophe, and was nice enough to send them to St. Petersburg vacation to help in their grief.”

FRIENDISH: “So you have first-generation copies of the missing pages?”

COUNT smiles but does not answer.

FRIENDISH: “Are they in color? My clientele were very insistent on this aspect.”

COUNT: “Well, before we get into any more specifics, I would like to know who I am dealing with beyond you.”

FRIENDISH (pulls out cellphone): “May I make a call?”

COUNT: “Please do.”

FRIENDISH hits a number, waits several seconds.

FRIENDISH: “Moleback? It’s Friendish.”

The COUNT’s eyes widen up, and his grin grows huge. He leans forward in his chair, hand beckoning for the phone. FRIENDISH deliberately ignores him.

FRIENDISH: “Nothing bad, and in fact I have good news. Have you talked with Kay, or do you know if Kay has talked to Klaus? ...no, that’s okay. Short version: I have tracked down the pictures, and will be negotiating a price shortly. However, my hunch is this party will not take *cash*, so I’d like to talk *trade*... ...uh huh,, ...Actually, there’s *that*, but I also have a few ideas you all may agree to, too. I’ll get back to you with updates when I have more information... ...Right. Bye.” *Clicks* off. Smiles at the Count.

COUNT (greatly amused): “You work for *Moleback* and *Klaustina*?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, in this specific instance, I do.”

COUNT: “*Haahaa*, that is too funny. Those whores refuse to do business with me any more. I used to buy their reproductions all the time, but then we had a falling out. *Ahhh*, it is as much my fault: Absinthe and morphine should not be mixed, especially on Walpurgisnacht. But they do not know that I own any *real* Voynich. I am not sure I want them to know, either, or that I want them to have these in particular.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m sure you could work out a trade: you let them copy them, and they do all printing for you free for a year a page.”

COUNT: “*Pah*. No. You know what my price is? I want a 3-some with them.”

FRIENDISH: “I somehow don’t think they’d go for that, or if they did, they’d have razor-encrusted diaphragms.”

COUNT: “I do not doubt that, which is why I made the joke of the offer. They would not accept it, but no, I do not wish to sell these to them. Do you know of their vendetta genocide agenda against y chromosome carriers?”

FRIENDISH: “Not from them, of course, but yeah.”

COUNT: “*Pah*, I am hesitant to contribute something that might hasten their little horticultural experiment. You can lead a horticulture, but you cannot make her think, *eh?*”

FRIENDISH (smiles): “So you buy into that?”

COUNT: “My friend Friendish, I am too old enough as it is that I do not wish to risk my health to some fanatical brigade of vegan lesbian terrorists. You know, La Nada was one herself, at least at first. But then came her Egyptian years, and by the time she hit Bohemia she’d had 5 male lovers, including the caravan driver who gave her the lift into my County. Since she knew of the VLT plans and was still in transition, I am hesitant that some of that knowledge might have ended up in her drawings. Indeed, some believe that is why she died.”

FRIENDISH: “Whatever happened to La Nada, anyway?”

COUNT: “She drowned in Germany. One night, someone broke into the Tent, hit her over the head with the Lamp, and then took her to a river 100 miles away. There is a boathouse on the river, with a water wheel on the side. They tie her to it, let her ride all night. I hear she was huge when they found her next morning, bloated from all the water she drink and drown in during first few hours. She was buried at my family’s spring villa, but unfortunately those Hapsburg bastards accidentally destroyed the site.”

FRIENDISH: “You know who killed her?”

COUNT: “*Pah*, how would I know; I was not there, was I? I have heard many theories, have many more myself, but I do no know who did this to her. I have heard even that the VLT did this to her, for revealing secrets, much the way Masons killed Mozart for revealing their secrets in *The Magic Flute*. I have also heard that a rival side within the Voynich game made a move to take her out. She was a key piece, a queen, even, and her loss was felt on our side.”

FRIENDISH: “Was there retaliation?”

COUNT: “Always. A good name for the Game would be ‘I got you *last*.’ The retaliations continue to this day.”

FRIENDISH: “Like killing Nimbus?”

COUNT: “*Ah*, that hack writer in America, no?”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, I heard he is dead. That is good.”

FRIENDISH: “So were you the one behind it?”

COUNT: “No, but I probably would not tell you if I were. But in this case, I tell you truth. I also tell you truth that while I did not murder the Nimbus, I do approve of it being done. Nimbus was not only pissing into the purity of Voynich, he was raping the quality. His translations were terrible at best, and in fact I bet he was at least ad libbing if not deliberately making up lies.”

FRIENDISH: “Nimbus was whipping off fakes?”

COUNT: “I do not know how large of an output he has produced, but the few I have seen of his seemed about as accurate as Kircher. In fact, I think in one he rip off Kircher word for word in few places. *Pah!* We are better off without him.”

FRIENDISH: “Just curious, because you don’t seem to mind fakes. Take Moleback and Klaustina’s output.”

COUNT: “*Ah*, but that is the difference. The question is not ‘is it real or is it a fake,’ the question is ‘is it a good fake, or a bad fake.’” **FRIENDISH** cracks a grin and nods. “You know who say that? American writer named Clifford Irving. Back in the ’70s, he wrote fake Howard Hughes biography that fool everyone until Howard call from his hotel room in his Vegas hideaway and say he never heard of Irving. His was a good fake. His artist friend Elmyr? His were great fakes. Moleback’s friend Tree? Hers are phenomenal fakes. But The Nimbus? *Bah!* He could not fake an orgasm.”

FRIENDISH: “You know, all this talk about good fakes and bad fakes has given me inspiration. Can I toss out a possibility offer, one y-chromosome’er to another?”

COUNT: “*Eh?*”

FRIENDISH: “Give Moleback and Klaustina fakes, or at least alter the pictures. If something’s painted brown, make it red; change the number of leaves on a flower, or take the thorns off... Their copies are so bad, they won’t know. They’ll be happy with it, I’m sure, but it should in practice be worthless.”

COUNT: “Hey, I like your thinking. I put that idea aside, might be nice to come back to. I still trying to decide what my asking price is, let alone if I even sell. One stipulation must be that Moleback and Klaustina cannot know from whom they are getting this. Tell them Phil the minion was selling it privately to Di Medicigan or something.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, do you know if anything M.B. and K have done ever ended up at a di Medicigan auction?”

COUNT: (wry smile): “No, of course not. But there have been times when the di Medicigan has mentioned to me on the side before bidding that a certain item is not in a condition that would meet my standards, and I would be unhappy if I won. I notice these items are always paintings, and are usually bought by people I do not know at prices I would never pay. But such instances are very, very rare, and I have attended a lot of auctions, both with this present di Medicigan and his dynasty before him.”

FRIENDISH: “Just how long have these auctions been going on, anyway?”

COUNT smiles.

56)

Cut to Auction Room. DI MEDICIGAN and AUCTIONEER preparing plaques for next auction, on the table is a pad with a half dozen names, and an inverted derby full of slips of paper.

AUCTIONEER (looking at list): “Count Lugosovich?”

DI MEDICIGAN (pause, then smile): “Cumquat.”

Auctioneer writes that down on the list.

AUCTIONEER: “Hughes.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “No preference.”

AUCTIONEER reaches into the hat, pulls out a slip of paper.

AUCTIONEER: “Mango.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Mr. Mango? *Hehe*. Why not.”

AUCTIONEER begins writing. Laptop on the side, where DI MEDICIGAN was during Scene 3, *beeps*; its screen lights up with FRONT DESK’s face.

DI MEDICIGAN looks over, sees the screen.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Si?”

FRONT DESK: “Sir, you have a video call from the Centaur.”

DI MEDICIGAN gets up and goes over. Sits down in his former chair, enveloped in shadows except for dim monitor glare.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Put him on.”

FRONT DESK is replaced by CENTAUR. He looks clean, fresh shaven, and presentable.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Centaur?”

CENTAUR: “Mr. di Medicigan.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Where are you calling from?”

CENTAUR: “The Bat Cave.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Ah*, good.”

CENTAUR (holds up the cowboy hat, showing the foil to the camera): “I got your message.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, I knew you would be smart enough to figure it out. So how went the audition with Robert Mufon?”

CENTAUR: “He failed.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Ah, most of us had suspected he would.”

CENTAUR: “I’ll be honest, though: I set him up to fail and guided him to flunk.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “And after he failed, did you pull another Penguin? Or Nimbus? Or Legion, of the many you have killed for their failure?”

CENTAUR: “No sir.” *Pause*. “He’s happy with forgetting about it and just hiding in a hole in Ecuador. He’s deprogrammed from Voynich, I think.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You *think*?”

CENTAUR: “He’s not a player, nor is he trying to be one. I did my homework on him and made some correct guesses about his motives. I pointed out the error of his ways in a way that would sink in, and I’m satisfied he’ll steer clear of us from now on. I recommend leaving him alone; he’s got enough problems. I’ll file a full report later, of course.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well if you are right and he is both harmless and going away, that is good for him, and thus good for you. Though of course, should that prognosis be wrong...”

CENTAUR: “I don’t think it will matter because he has a brain tumor which I suspect will be fatal within the year. I think that tumor goes a long way to explaining his interest in all this. There’s no need to neutralize him; he’ll handle that on his own in a year when he self-destructs. He’s a danger to himself, not us.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Ah*, if this is true, you actually sound like you have handled this well, then. The other Referees were upset with you, and one in particular had predicted you would mishandle this one as well.”

CENTAUR: “*As well?* How I handle auditions is my own affair; that’s part of the Rules.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, but we interpret the Rules.”

CENTAUR: “Thank you for reminding me why 1776 was such an historic year. So let me ask, though: are we cool with this?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Excuse me?”

CENTAUR (holds up hat): “Am I out of the penalty box?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I will have to consult with the others in the Council, of course. And as I said, one of them is particularly displeased with you over the whole Penguin affair.”

CENTAUR: “Who’s the Ref?”

DI MEDICIGAN smiles.

CENTAUR: “*Is* it you?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Truthfully, I tell you no. I actually have ambivalent feelings over the whole affair. I invited Dennis the Penguin at the request of a Referee. I did not like Dennis; he had bad form, and I would not have invited him back to another of my auctions.”

CENTAUR: “Actually, that’s the crackle around the campfire, Dennis’s disrespectful bad form. Well, tell you what: you tell me who the Ref is, and I’ll tell you what happened during the Penguin audition that made it end like that.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Perhaps you should talk to the Referee directly, as the Penguin was his nephew.”

CENTAUR: “*Oh?* Nothing like that came up during the interview, and he had plenty of chances.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well then the Penguin was a fool.”

CENTAUR: “That was the third sentence of my report, if you’ll remember.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, the Referee took exception to that, as well. Insult to the family honor, or some such thing. You did not even add him to your own who’s who libretto among the fallen.”

CENTAUR: “I see y’all’s point, but to be honest, I think you’re bitching to the wrong person.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Oh?*”

CENTAUR: “Like I said, he would have failed the audition anyway, but I was actually given some outer incentive to be especially harsh on him, and in the event he fatally failed, to relay a message.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Oh?* What message is that?”

CENTAUR: “Will you tell me who the Referee is?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You first.”

Shot pans to the right, entering a field of darkness. Fluid cut to Interview Room [Scene 9.] From the rotating darkness, MR. PENGUIN swivels into view. He is looking down, hiding the damage to his face, but his hair is gone and scalp badly blistered. His clothes are badly burnt. More gasoline is being poured onto him.

CENTAUR: “Now that we’re done, I have a final message for you.” Can finally empties. “It is from the person who asked me to do *this* to you.”

MR. PENGUIN (just as he goes off-screen): “Who?”

CENTAUR (off screen): “Cardinal Spumoni.” *Pause.* “At first, he asked me to castrate you at the root, and to give you some bizarre speech about cockblocking, but I told him *no*. After all, I am a professional.” [swings into view, he is setting the can on the floor.] “So he settled for this, turning you the color of that yarmulke he wears. He also wanted to give you a taste of what to expect in the next life if you don’t change your ways in this one. Which, he would agree, you haven’t.” Lights match. “So...” uses match to light full book. Looks straight into camera, and solemnly intones, “Respect your heritage.” Flips the burning book at the camera; direct hit.

Flames blur/morph into a red light atop a web cam. Shot pans back to show CENTAUR at a computer in a cramped, dark confine. DI MEDICIGAN is on the screen, looking on with disbelief.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Spumoni assured me he had nothing to do with this.”

CENTAUR: “Well, depending how he worded his assurance, Spumoni is a lying sack of ranch dressing.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “So you are saying you killed the Penguin at the request of the Cardinal?”

CENTAUR: “Yes.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I would not have thought that of you. Might I ask, why would you do such a thing?”

CENTAUR: “In exchange for doing this for him, he has *not* agreed to do something for me at a later date. I’m thinking 5 moves ahead, and have just neutralized a bishop.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “What was it you wished the Cardinal to do?”

CENTAUR: “I wished him *not* to do something. So if all goes well, you’ll never know. And that’s only fair: what goes on at your auctions stays there, and what goes on in my private dealings stays there.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You sound confident that Spumoni will keep his word to you.”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “He knows he’s fair game if he breaks his word. And he knows he wouldn’t last past a week.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well, let me pass this on to the other Referee; he may wish to talk to you further about it.”

CENTAUR: “Who is it?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I honestly believe you do not know him, but he will introduce himself, I am sure.”

CENTAUR glowers unhappily.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Not that it is much consolation, but I am having an auction in 5 days. Random historical objects. I would invite you, but Count Lugosovich will be attending.”

CENTAUR: “Right, I’ll pass. Thank you, though.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I thought as much. It is mostly European artifacts, anyway. The Count is particularly interested in a wine glass. It is the last one known to be used by Marie Antoinette. It still has some of her lipstick on it, though a previous owner had licked much of it off.”

CENTAUR: “Probably Lugosovich himself; he wants it back. But like I said, I’ll pass. I can’t *stand* that guy.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I know this, which is why I am careful in who I invite to what auctions.”

CENTAUR: “And it’s customer care like that which keeps all of us coming back.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “If you are finished, I must return to preparing for that auction, and then I must call a certain Referee.”

CENTAUR: “I’ll be here. But tell him to call first if he wants to talk; dropping by unannounced would be bad, and I don’t give a damn if he is a Referee.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I understand, and will also pass that along. Anyway, good day to you.”

CENTAUR: “It’s night here.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Then good night to you.”

CENTAUR: “It’s always night in the Bat Cave.”

DI MEDICIGAN disappears from the screen. CENTAUR reaches up and turns off the webcam; the red light dies. His hand goes down to the computer table, where Nimbus’s book sits. He removes the two pages that had originally printed. CENTAUR stares pensively at the pages, then with his free hand reaches over to the video console and enters a phone number. Four rings as he turns the web-cam back on.

Cut to monitor screen: distorted close-up of MOLEBACK’s face.

MOLEBACK: “Hello?”

CENTAUR: “M.B., it’s me.”

MOLEBACK nods eagerly, and her face fades back as she holds her cam-phone away to set it down in front of her. As she leans back and starts to talk, view begins to pan back from the monitor to include CENTAUR.

MOLEBACK: “There you are. Hadn’t heard from you, and was starting to get worried.”

CENTAUR: “Something popped up since my trip to Philly, and I had to deal with it before I could call you. Actually, I got a lot I gotta deal with still, but I thought I’d better touch base with you. ”

Camera continues to pan back behind CENTAUR. The conversation fades as it moves farther away.

MOLEBACK: “Thanks. So, what’s the word on Nimbus?”

CENTAUR: “Nimbus now writes in the past tense.”

MOLEBACK: “Good. And good job. Thanks.”

CENTAUR: “Well, thanks for the tip. You were right: he was a hoax forger.” He shows her the pages, plus several books, including the one Nimbus had last worked with. “I got enough evidence that I could justify killing him if someone bitched.”

MOLEBACK: “Has anyone bitched?”

CENTAUR: “Actually yeah, and he’s one of your customers, too. But he was peeved at me, not you, so you’re in the clear.”

MOLEBACK: “Good.”

Camera pans past the room’s light sphere; darkness creeps in around the edges as CENTAUR and the MOLEBACK monitor slowly shrink.

MOLEBACK: “Well, Centaur, thanks for taking out some of my competition. Whatcha gonna do with those books? Torch ’em?”

The scene continues to shrink into the center screen, surrounded by growing black.

CENTAUR: “Naw, I torched enough things lately. You know what’s funny, I lied to Pegasus and told him Nimbus’s book was for real.”

MOLEBACK: “Nice. But he’d realize it was a fake if he saw it, right?”

The camera has entered into an unlit hall out of the phone room.

CENTAUR: “Oh like you said, these are terrible, and he’d figure it out fast. Hell, Hassan’d spot it in a heartbeat.”

MOLEBACK (soft, disembodied whisper with echo): “That bastard’s black heart does not beat.”

There is an awkward *silence*, as the camera continues its backpan through the corridor (still holding on CENTAUR as focus). A hyperbola of light comes in from the sides as the camera passes dark grey walls with two wall lamps, fashioned like ensconced torches. Camera moves past, and that too shrinks in as hall darkness takes over. Another double-dawning of light from the sides as the camera passes two more “torches.” More hall darkness, and then through open double doors into a giant brightly lit room. The light comes from small rooms on each side. Each chamber is a 6’x6’ partitioning of fine mesh that goes to the ceiling. Each has a ring of high-power grow lights

aimed directly down on the center of the chamber and its respective contents. There is a large sign above each door, with different Voynich writing. Hanging from the back screen/wall of each is a large photograph of a different person's face. The chambers (and their contents) are:

(1st on left) [picture = PEGASUS] Room has five pots with (non-flowering) Voynich plants in various states of growth.

(1st on right) [picture = HASSAN] Four bowls with Voynich saplings, plus an enormous one with a fat trunk that almost reaches the light rig.

(2nd on left) [picture = COUNT] A sole spindly sunflowerish abomination about 4 feet high. The wilted stalk is propped to an anchored bamboo rod.

(2nd on right) [picture = FRIENDISH] A slanted trellis covered with some Voynich-ish cross between kudzu and creeping ivy.

(3rd on left) [picture = MOLEBACK] A black iron cauldron with two blooming Voynich plants. A (CGI'd) green bumblebee (like in Scene 45) is flying a lazy 8 around them; the buzz (in the left channel) is faint but there.

(3rd on right) [picture = KLAUSTINA] A similarly sized pot, though of nicely kilned-clay, holding five identical plants.

(4th on the left) [picture = DI MEDICIGAN] Unlit. There are several empty pots inside.

(4th on the right) [picture = MR. CARDINAL] A tall but slim fold-out table with several starter pots on top. (Tiny sprouts are there but probably not visible.)

(5th on the left) [picture will probably not be visible, but is of a white Castle chess piece] A pot of one heavily berried Voynich plant.

(5th on right) [picture will probably not be visible, but is of a black Castle chess piece] 5 shrubs that are peppered with tiny flowers. Happy bee buzzing and the occasional blur of green.

When camera reaches the point where the Castle pictures would be visible, stops as MARY walks by, carrying a woven wicker basket full of gardening tools, squirt bottles, etc. Her nails are Moleback green. She stops at the left and turns to the screen door. Camera follows her hand but swings upward, to a tight close-up of the door frame. The door opens, and from the crack a tiny green bee crawls out and up onto the outer mesh. The door closes, and after a moment, the bee takes off with faint buzzing. Camera quickly pans to track its upward ascent into darkness. Sound and size fade with distance, but the bee quickly comes back. towards the camera. The buzzing is truncated as a bat silently swoops in and out of shot, snaps its mouth around the bee, and zips off. Camera holds on darkness then pans down to the original shot of the "canyon" of grow chambers. MARY emerges from the left room and goes across to the right. Camera turns and tows along as she goes through the screen door into the small chamber. She sets down the basket and examines the first plant. A bee buzzes by, but they ignore each other. Mary takes several things from the basket, and begins clipping the tiny flowers into a small test tube. One bee chases another past as she puts a cap on the tube and places it in the basket. As she takes out a squirt bottle, another bee floats by, and turns toward the camera. It becomes large enough to be seen clearly, then it flies off. Camera tries to follow, but it dips out of view. Camera holds on a vacant area of the mesh screen wall. A moment later, a bumblebee speeds by left-right; it's buzz shrilly rising and fading. Hold on wall for a second of silence.

57)

Cut to: dart landing on a dartboard with a loud *smack*. Camera pans back to show more of the board. Rather than a traditional 20-number pattern, it is the view of Dealey Plaza as seen from the 6th-Floor Depository; in the limo, JFK's head is the bullseye. Another dart lands, and the camera has backed up enough to reveal the board is on the wall of an NSA room full of cubicle quads. 2 ANALYSTS are having a game of "Oswald", shooting from the hallway.

ADMIRAL approaches down the hall, waits for the analyst to make his third throw, and then proceeds past.

COMMODORE (OFF-SCREEN): "Admiral! Glad I caught you."

ADMIRAL : "Let's see, I don't see a parachute, so how'd you get off the Alice Springs express?"

COMMODORE: "Marvin insists on having one of those cowboy hats with the dangling wine corks to keep the flies away, and he can't find one his size."

ADMIRAL: "Worst... brim... *ever!*"

COMMODORE: "Marvin and I stopped by your office to talk to you, but your secretary said you were up at New Haven."

They pass another cubicle room; CAPTAIN QUICKIE is escorting a nubile navy WAAV inside; door shuts as ADMIRAL and COMMODORE pass.

ADMIRAL: "Yes, at Yale. I met the Philadelphia homicide detective. Nice guy. We figured, if you're going to discuss the Voynich Manuscript, why not do it with it actually in front of you. That was the second time I'd ever seen it, and certainly the most in-depth I've looked. Brought back a lot of memories."

COMMODORE: "That's too bad, [first name]."

ADMIRAL: "Why is that?"

COMMODORE: "There are many reasons. One of them is a chalk outline in Jim MacLeod's Philly Studio."

ADMIRAL: "Nobody should have to die over a 400-year old book."

COMMODORE: "Muslims die because of a 1,400 year old book, Christians because of a 1,900-year old book..."

ADMIRAL: "The Voynich Manuscript is hardly in the category of the Quar'an or the Bible."

COMMODORE: "Maybe no single Voynich manuscript is, but take the corpus as a whole..." Smiles wryly.

Admiral stops walking. Long silence and staring contest.

COMMODORE (indicates a cubicle room): "Let's discuss this in here."

COMMODORE walks into the room, and after a moment ADMIRAL follows. Door closes, sound of lock turning. Shot holds on door for 10 seconds.

Cut to close-up of COMMODORE's face.

COMMODORE: “[name], I can appreciate your position on this. I really can. You’re trying to help catch a murderer. Would you like me to tell you how the MacLeod murder case will end?”

ADMIRAL: “Time out. If this is one of those ‘I could tell you but then I’d have to kill you’ schticks, let’s drop this right now and never bring it up again. *Seriously.*”

COMMODORE (smiles): “I *like* your idea, so we’ll end this on a clean conscience for you. While you were up at Yale, MacLeod’s house blew up. Killed three people.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh my God.”

COMMODORE: “2 were police investigators. The third is, and always will be, a John Doe. Hey, you want to know something strange? The neighbors weren’t home, but they had a dog locked up in their loft. They found the dog a block away. Not even a scratch or a singed hair.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow. Miracles happen.”

COMMODORE: “I don’t know if Wilson has gotten back yet, but he’ll go to the scene and apparently find some sort of contextual evidence around where the John Doe was that links him to the murder scene; I think it’s a size 12 cowboy boot, but I’m not all that sure, or even concerned. Anyway, John Doe will become their best guess, and the case will be left open as a courtesy, but will slowly get moved to inactive and then quietly closed. During one of the downgrades, it will be inconveniently misfiled.”

ADMIRAL: “Impressive. You know, I hate to ask this, but do you remember that old OSS vet we met at Neutral Ground? Is he, or did he...”

COMMODORE: “Captain Sherman? He’s fine. No doubt drinking his cambric tea down there right now, making up tales.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh. Somehow I expected you to tell me he had a heart attack, and...”

COMMODORE: “[first name]! We would never do that. We look after our own. That’s actually why I’m talking to you. I like you. You’re a good guy, and I couldn’t handle Marvin without you. I don’t want to lose you over something as... over Voynich. I know just enough about it to know I don’t want anything to do with it, except to stay on the good side of the players.”

ADMIRAL: “Commodore, I *hear* you. So let’s drop it.”

COMMODORE: “Lets. Except for one small caveat: if you ever hear anyone mention Voynich, let me know about it. Then forget it again.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow, that tied up together rather nicely.”

COMMODORE: “Times like these are the only time in Voynich when they do.”

58)

Cut to DR_WHO and PROP in a beat-up yellow classic Volkswagen beetle. DR_WHO is driving down a country highway. Massachusetts forests whip by outside.

PROP: “I can’t believe how you untied Voynich with something so primitive.”

DR_WHO: “You’ll laugh your ass off when you see this thing; she’s still got the vacuum tubes and everything. But I say, if you’re just doing pure number crunching like this, a vacuum is better than a transistor, because the vacuum is purer; it’s zero, where-as your transistors are all zero or one binary. Zero is a void, and a vacuum is a void, so your answers are more exacting. So the only way to go is vacuum tubular.”

PROP: “Wow, wait till the world hears that you broke the Voynich code with a Cold-War number cruncher.”

DR_WHO: “I’m already talking to people about getting the vacuum tubes small enough for laptops, but that requires some bad-ass glass blowing, and no one has a budget to touch it for testing. But it’ll be the wave of the future.”

PROP: “So you brute forced Voynich, but I’m still not clear what you used as a base.”

DR_WHO: “Oh, those two email you sent me. The second one, with the random jumble of letters, to you and the detective. It was two lines, and the second line of each was identical. I worked from the assumption that the first line was your name. So I had the Succubus work out all the ways the first line of letters could translate into ‘Scott Prop.’ There were about 42,000 possibilities. I then saw if any of those combinations could also equal ‘William Wilson’ on the other email. Down to 88 possible combinations. I then had Succubus use each of those patterns to translate the second line. I had her use an unabridged dictionary as a filter; if more than half the words weren’t on there, move to the next combination. It found 23 possible permutations that made sense in English. But only one of them was a complete, intelligible sentence, and based on what it said, I knew this was the one.”

PROP: “What’d it say?”

DR_WHO: “If you can read this, you’re dead.”

PROP: “That’s comforting.”

DR_WHO: “How do you think I feel: I can read it. But based on that and your name as a key, I plugged in the 6 pages you originally sent me.”

PROP: “Okay, and what’s that?”

DR_WHO: “Very sketchy, and I’m not sure it makes sense.”

PROP: “Well, I’ll take a look at it.”

DR_WHO: “*Hehe*, you sure? Because ‘if you can read this, you’re dead’.”

PROP: “Well, fortunately I don’t have a font for Voynich, so I can’t read it.”

DR_WHO: “I do. Actually, I got about 3 or 4 from different academic sites that did work over the years. I had Succubus compare letter patterns against the actual Voynich Manuscript at Yale. I got a half-decent idea of how the language works. Enough that I think I know what Nimbus was trying to write.”

PROP: “Who?”

DR_WHO: “Oh, sorry; MacLeod.”

PROP: “And?”

Cut to exterior: dr_who’s VW driving under ornate iron gates with the sign, “Miskatonic University.” The campus is seen, up the road.

DR_WHO (voice over): “It’s easier just to show ya.”

59)

Cut to: dr_who’s office. It is a stereotypical mess; lots of paper, textbooks. Although attention is not drawn to it, on a table in the back is Mufon’s laptop, the pen still in it. Shot finally includes DR_WHO, standing in front of his desk and holding a small stone pipe.

DR_WHO: [lights match and hits hash pipe] (strangled voice): “Here.”

PROP: “I’m a *cop*, you asshole.”

DR_WHO shrugs, blows a sinsemilla smoke ring, then dissipates it with a full exhale. Looks inside the pipe to see if it’s still lit, then strikes another wooden match off of a textbook.

PROP: “Well, before you get too baked, tell me what that printout says.”

DR_WHO “*Au contraire*, this is the *only* state in which to properly read it is.” *Coughs*; sounds like MUFON. “You know, Succubus once discovered that if you take Lee Harvey Oswald’s date of birth, times it by his social security number, and then divide it by pi, you get his library card number with a repeating decimal remainder of what he owed in late fees.”

PROP: “Just give me the fucking paper.” Reaches across and snatches papers out of DR_WHO’s hand.

Close-up of papers: same random gibberish from Scene 17.

[off screen] DR_WHO laughs.

Cut to DR_WHO.

DR_WHO: “This is the translation.” Holds up several pages.

PROP: “You gonna tell me what it says, you copteasing fiend?”

DR_WHO: “Well, I could tell you but then I’d have to kill you. Besides, aren’t you more curious to know what he wrote in own blood?”

PROP nods.

DR_WHO puts a printout bitmap of the writing on the desk, turns to PROP.

Cut to printout, DR_WHO's hand pointing toward it.



DR_WHO: "These two letters are the word for 'time.' The letter behind it is the 12th of the Voynich alphabet, so that essentially means 12 o'clock."

PROP: "Ah."

DR_WHO (points at the next three letters): "Now, these are the word for 'color.' This last letter is the 8th in the alphabet, so the eighth color..."

PROP: "Let me guess: blue."

DR_WHO: "Fuck if I know; I don't know what the letter sequence corresponds to. Unfortunately, this is where it gets blurry. These last 3 might be 'fruit' but I have no idea what letter that's supposed to be at the end."

PROP: "That's okay, I think I got it."

DR_WHO: "Do you? I'd be curious to know what it means then."

PROP: "I'll let you know after I read the 6 page printout."

DR_WHO smiles wanly.

PROP: "You are going to give it to me, right?"

DR_WHO: "Well, I don't think you'll like it."

PROP: "Try me."

DR_WHO: "Well, okay, but then I'll have to kill you." Hands papers over.

PROP: "And if I read in here 'The treachery of Typhon ends at the throne of Isis; the moisture of nature is guarded by the vigilance of Anubis,' I will make you the focus of my wrath for many moons to come." He takes the papers.

60) end credits

Continuation of previous scene.

PROP (reads from papers):

((((Movie's Closing Credits, cast in order of appearance. When the actor playing PROP gets to his own name, he is encouraged to ad-lib a comment. Likewise, when the listing for DR_WHO is mentioned, that actor is encouraged to ad

lib a comment. SCHNAPPS and HERB get real credits or “themselves” as appropriate. Actors are encouraged to ad-lib derisive comments when “AUTHOR, himself” is reached.)))

During the oration, DR_WHO goes over to the back of the room, where Mufon’s laptop is. He opens the lid with the pen and puts it aside.

Cut to screen:

Scrub successful.
Removed: **Voynich.ai**
Press any key to continue.

He presses a key, then ejects a disc labeled “Scrub 5”

Watches boot-up of screen (identical with this movie’s opening), then turns to make an ad-libbed comment about the cast.

Cut back to PROP, nodding, and then continues reading. When PROP finishes, he gets a look of disgust.

PROP: “What the fuck was *that*?” Looks in disgust at the papers in his hand, wads them up, and throws them at the camera. “What a load of garbage!” Direct hit: fade to black.

Silence for 8 seconds, then loud gunshot. Sound of body slumping to the floor.

Pause for 3 seconds.

DR_WHO [voice over]: “What, did you think I was kidding?”

Pause for 3 seconds.

End)