



**JoinWith.Me**

Screenplay

FADE IN:

SUPER:

*"Wrong I was in calling  
Spirits, I avow,  
For I find them galling,  
Cannot rule them now."*

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"*

EXT. CITY - DAY

Total silence. Images of an overcrowded, inhospitable city. The pacing of the images starts slow, then gradually increases until it becomes truly frantic.

The prevailing building color is gray; the only colors come from billboards, neon signs of restaurants and convenience stores, and the occasional giant TV screen, including one on the WBS-TV building.

The sidewalks are filled with PEOPLE trying to avoid bumping into one another. Most are clad in gray suits, but some are in navy blue. Expressionless, they all stare at their cellphones as they walk.

As this multitude passes by, others stream out of subway tunnels like ants. Vacant, dilapidated buildings stand next to new ones under construction.

We see HOMELESS PEOPLE holding signs -- dead or dying trees -- someone lying as if dead on the sidewalk -- a broken fire hydrant with water weakly bubbling out.

Mostly self-driving cars and taxis navigate the congested streets. A ragged LITTLE PERSON with deformed hands attached directly to his shoulders sits near a bronze statue of a middle-aged, well-dressed MAN with a proud expression in the middle of a roundabout.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
CLICKS: Monday, February 23, 2032

SAM VANDERPOOL, 30s, a generically average-looking replaceable cog in a machine -- who's neither happy nor sad about that -- lies on his back on a bare foam mattress, staring at the ceiling.

He sits up and looks at his cellphone sitting on a small table that's been pushed against the wall underneath a small window.

As Sam continues to stare at his phone, a bird strikes the window with a THUMP, causing a small crack to form in the glass. As he looks at the crack, the CELLPHONE'S ALARM GOES OFF -- an electronic buzz, accompanied by a laser halo around the phone.

He reaches over and silences it before checking for texts and emails -- there are none. Sam sets the phone down and looks around at his one-room apartment, which is sparse, to say the least.

A white cupboard stands alongside a mini kitchen that contains a minuscule stove, a small fridge, a microwave, and a sink all in one unit.

Next to that, a dripping showerhead pokes out from the wall with a metal semi-circle shower curtain rod above it and a drain below. The mold-covered shower curtain is a dull gray.

On the same wall in the corner is a toilet with no lid on the water tank, and there is a closet near the front door.

The few furnishings consist of a small sofa, a TV on the wall, a small table, and a small desk with a computer on it with a folding chair in front. Also on the desk are several rolls of toilet paper and a bottle of baby oil.

Something under the sofa catches Sam's eye. He slowly leans in for a closer look, reaches out, and scoops up some inch-long, dead millipedes. He sets them down and continues to stare under the sofa.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**)

10-YEAR-OLD SAM is on his hands and knees, staring under his bed. In the darkness, a PAIR OF YELLOW EYES opens and glares back at him.

After staring at them for a few seconds, Sam slowly stands up and walks to the door. He tries to open it, but it's locked. Expressionless, he withdraws his hand and gazes at the doorknob.

The door suddenly swings open, revealing SAM'S FATHER, 40, stern, standing in the doorway and glaring down at him. Sam takes a step toward the door, but his father blocks his path. Sam backs up, and his father shuts the door and locks it.

Sam turns and leans his back against the door. He slowly slides down and sits. A few moments, then he bends over and looks back under the bed -- nothing is there.

**END FLASHBACK**

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam dumps the millipedes back under the sofa and rises. He leans the foam mattress against the wall and pulls the table back in front of the sofa.

As he does, he sees a KITTEN outside the window staring in at him. Sam smiles at it, and it "meows." He hurries into the kitchen, pours it a saucer of milk, and hurries back -- but the kitten is gone.

Now dejected, he sits on the floor, lets out a small sob, then drinks the milk himself.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Sam, now in an ill-fitting gray suit and holding a briefcase, stands crammed in among other commuters. The car comes to a stop, and everyone piles out.

A short woman's face brushes against the back of Sam's suit jacket, leaving make-up stains before he exits as well.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam emerges from the subway tunnel and stops. He looks at the people in gray or navy-blue suits, marching along the sidewalk and staring at their cellphones.

As he gazes out at everyone, THEIR HEADS HAVE NOW BECOME VARIOUS TYPES OF INSECT HEADS. He turns and stares at his reflection in a large window -- he too now has an insect head.

Everyone's heads, including Sam's, return to normal. He starts down the sidewalk, slowing a bit to listen to a homeless, diminutive black lady, GABRIELLE, late 50s, who's clutching a Bible to her chest as she sings in French.

The colorful rag wrapped around her head in African fashion punctuates the otherwise nearly black-and-white environment. A coffee can for more fortunate people to leave her money sits at her feet, but everyone except for Sam ignores her.

Sam continues on, now passing the Little Person with no arms, JOEY, 70. He sits on the ground drawing cat pictures with his feet. A sign next to him reads "MY MOTHER TOLD ME TO WAIT RIGHT HERE. THAT WAS 60 YEARS AGO."

Sam smiles briefly. After setting a dollar in the man's can, Sam keeps moving.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Sam stops in front of the entrance to a tall, gray, ugly building. Above the entrance is A SIGN THAT SAYS "FEDERAL CENTER BUILDING."

He briefly looks at A BILLBOARD ACROSS THE STREET THAT HAS A GIANT OCTOPUS-LIKE CREATURE ON IT AND THE WORDS "JoinWith.Me" underneath it.

He turns back and looks up at the building in front of him, then down from the building and to all the people around him - they all have insect heads.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator is packed. Everyone but Sam has an insect head. THE SAME LOUD MUZAK BLARES. Note: The SAME MUZAK SONG IS ALWAYS PLAYING IN EVERY ELEVATOR WE'LL ENCOUNTER.

A DING! comes over the intercom, and the elevator stops.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
Twenty-fifth floor.

The doors open, and everyone but Sam rushes out. The doors shut, and the elevator ascends. Sam looks up at the small surveillance camera in the corner.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA POV: Sam in the elevator. A DING! comes over the intercom, and the elevator stops.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
Twenty-fifth floor.

Still seen through the surveillance camera, Sam exits.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Sam approaches A GLASS DOOR ON WHICH IS STENCILED "Prevailing Wage Division" and enters.

SAM (V.O.)

This is where I work. My father worked here for forty years, before getting me a job here, too. I've not spoken to either of my parents since.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

Sam steps up to the receptionist, HANNAH, 25. Although all of Sam's coworkers dress in gray or navy-blue suits, Hannah wears a t-shirt and jeans.

Today, HER SHIRT IS BRIGHT ORANGE and her blonde hair is in a ponytail, tied with A RED RIBBON.

Behind her lies a cavernous office space filled with rows of desks that extend as far as the eye can see. Hannah looks up from her cellphone.

HANNAH

Good morning, Sam.

SAM

Oh, hi, Hannah. What are you watching?

HANNAH

Just some funny stuff, y'know. Not much else to do.

SAM

Ha, I like funny stuff, too. I um, was wondering what kinds of things do you do when you're not at work?

HANNAH

Oh, just hang out, or watch some shows online. You know. Sometimes I help my mom in her tailor shop.

SAM

That sounds so cool. I like tailors.

She gestures to him with her head to move on.

HANNAH

Sam, the boss is coming, you better move on.

Sam heads into the office space.

SAM (V.O.)  
I didn't just imagine that --  
Hannah is the only person here  
who's ever said "good morning" to  
me. I decided I would date her.

A few of the desks he passes are completely bare and clean. As he heads to his own, he looks at some of the COWORKERS he passes.

The first one, MATT, is chuckling at a CAT VIDEO ON HIS COMPUTER. Next up, JONATHAN, who's watching some S&M porn on his computer.

Sam reaches his desk, sets his briefcase down, and takes a seat. MICHAEL sits down at the desk on the other side of Sam, sets his backpack down, and starts typing at his computer.

Sam looks down at the open backpack and sees it's stuffed with rolls of toilet paper, office supplies, and little bags of coffee.

Sam looks up from the backpack at the numerous surveillance cameras on the walls. He looks back at his desk, and after turning on his computer, he gazes curiously at the clean, empty desk next to him. He opens the desk's drawers and sees there is nothing in them.

SAM (V.O.)  
I've noticed more empty desks  
lately. Why anyone would give up a  
job with lifetime benefits -- a job  
that consists primarily of being  
good at pretending to work -- is  
beyond me.

The TWO GIRLS sitting in front of him giggle and chatter. One is black and the other white, but other than that, they appear almost identical, with the same suits on and the exact same hairstyles. Sam looks annoyed.

He looks away from them and out at the sea of desks and colleagues around him. He sees a group of people carrying a cake with lit candles on it and laughing as they go into the conference room. None of them even look at Sam.

SAM (V.O.)  
I've never been invited to  
celebrate a birthday with a  
buttercream cake in the conference  
room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

All eyes are glued to the LARGE CLOCK on a wall. The hands show it's 5:59. They all watch as the red second hand reaches and then crosses the 12. It keeps going and when it reaches the 4, A BELL RINGS.

Everyone except for Sam rises and leaves the office, merging and moving as one. After they are all out the door and the office is empty, Sam picks up his briefcase and follows.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Sam steps out onto the sidewalk to find that IT'S RAINING. He sighs and holds his briefcase over his head and begins walking. The JoinWith.Me billboard is visible in the background.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Sam approaches the subway entrance, he passes Gabrielle singing in French. The RAIN STOPS and THE SUN COMES OUT. Sam descends the stairs as the singing continues behind him.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Sam stands sardined in with the other passengers, all of whom have insect heads.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Sam enters his building.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Sam stands staring at the "Out of Service" SIGN on the elevator then enters the stairwell.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam opens his briefcase, revealing the only thing in it is his cellphone. After taking it out and seeing there are no texts, voicemails, or emails, he sets it on his desk next to the rolls of toilet paper and baby oil.

**MONTAGE:**

- Sam takes out a beer from the fridge.

- Sam is on the sofa, drawing on a pad: the drawing shows the glowing eyes of a monster under a bed.
- Sam opens his cupboard. Inside are stacks of cans of chicken noodle soup. Next to them is one can of tomato soup.
- Sam is watching TV.

SAM (V.O.)

Watching TV makes me feel like one of my ancestors a hundred thousand years ago. The men returned from the hunt and gazed at the fire while the women turned the day's prey into dinner.

- Sam is sitting on the toilet.

SAM (V.O.)

I hoped someday someone would do that for me. Maybe even Hannah.

- Sam is watching TV. A COMMERCIAL IS ON. DR. BINGHAM, 30, brunette, wearing black, horned-rim glasses and a white lab coat, addresses the camera.

DR. BINGHAM (ON TV)

City Hospital is looking for volunteers for our ongoing medical research projects. Won't you please help others and become part of the future?

- Sam is at his computer. ON THE SCREEN, someone slips on some ice and grunts in pain as onlookers howl with laughter, as does Sam.
- Sam is staring at an 18-YR-OLD GIRL'S YEARBOOK PHOTO (CARRIE DAVIS) on the screen.

SAM (V.O.)

Sometimes I check in on people I used to know, like the guys who bullied me growing up. Or that one girl I had a date with in high school, Carrie Davis.

- Sam takes out a beer from the fridge.
- Sam is at the computer, watching porn, masturbating with one hand while holding his beer with the other. THE WOMAN IN THE VIDEO IS CARRIE DAVIS, AND THE MAN SCREWING HER IS SAM.

Although the video is of good quality, it's also obvious that the original actors' faces have been replaced by Sam's and Carrie's.

SAM (V.O.)

I've become good at using certain types of software, and I've learned a lot about women from internet porn. Like they want guys to rip off their clothes and then hump them like a March Hare. So understandably, I'm confused why my date with Carrie did not go like that.

**END MONTAGE**

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**)

18-YR-OLD SAM and CARRIE, 17, sit in a booth eating burgers and fries. Sam intently, and annoyingly, watches her chew.

Noticing Sam watching her, Carrie sets the burger down, swallows, and stares back at him blankly. She takes out her cellphone and texts someone as Sam looks on.

EXT. CARRIE'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Sam and Carrie walk up to her front door. Sam tries to kiss her, but she pulls away and goes inside. Sam turns and walks away.

**END FLASHBACK**

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam has finished masturbating. He throws the crumpled-up toilet tissue in the wastebasket and then surfs the web.

SAM (V.O.)

If I had more money, I would have one of those AI rubber dolls so I'd know what it was like to make love to a woman. Then again, I'm afraid the relationship would end badly -- with her pulling away from me when I try to kiss her. Or saying that she just wants to be friends.

A POP-UP AD appears on the computer screen: it's the JoinWith.Me logo with an empty chatbox underneath. Words appear in it: "You are alone and want someone to talk to."

Sam hesitates then clicks on the ad. A new webpage opens. A CHAOTIC, COLORFUL MOVING IMAGE APPEARS, SOMEWHAT LIKE MATTER BEING SUCKED INTO A BLACK HOLE.

The voice of a young girl comes from the computer.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Hello, Sam. I'm so glad we found each other.

SAM

How do you know my name?

CREATURE (V.O.)

(giggles)

That's my little secret.

SAM

Who are you? Some kind of dating service?

CREATURE (V.O.)

I'm a counselor. I can show you the way to a better future and the way out of your loneliness. Now let's get started. You are someone who wants a girlfriend.

SAM

What? Why would you say that?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Because you fit the profile.

SAM

What profile?

CREATURE (V.O.)

The one you've been creating since the day you were born.

Sam considers how to proceed.

SAM

Is this some kind of scam?

CREATURE (V.O.)

No. Although, would I tell you if it were? I want to work with you so you won't be lonely anymore.

Sam thinks about this.

SAM

Okay, well sometimes I think...

A long pause.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Go on, I'm listening.

SAM

Sometimes I think, it's like, if you live your life without someone to share it with, it's almost like your life never even happened.

CREATURE (V.O.)

I couldn't agree more.

SAM

Okay then, what can you do for me?

She giggles again.

CREATURE (V.O.)

You are funny, Sam. You want me to be your girlfriend? Hahaha. No, that won't work, but I can introduce you to one of my cute friends.

SAM

Right, and now you'll ask for my debit card.

CREATURE (V.O.)

No, silly Billy, this is not about money. This is about your place in the future.

SAM

I don't get it.

CREATURE (V.O.)

You will... Before we continue, you'll need to complete a personality test. That's the baseline we have to set to measure your progress. Do you see the link at the bottom right of your screen? Do that before we continue.

SAM

And why do I have to take a test?

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 Because I want to know you even  
 better than I already do. Take the  
 test, and then we'll talk again  
 tomorrow. Good night.

SAM  
 Wait, what's your name?

She giggles flirtatiously.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 Whatever you want.

The swirling image disappears and is replaced by the  
 JoinWith.Me homepage. Sam leans back and thinks.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
CLICKS: Tuesday, February 24, 2032

The elevator is packed. Everyone but Sam has an insect head.  
 THE SAME LOUD MUZAK BLARES but SUDDENLY STOPS AS SAM'S PHONE  
 RINGS IN HIS BRIEFCASE.

Sam looks down at it, and when he looks back up, everyone is  
 staring at him, now with normal heads. A DING! comes over the  
 intercom and the elevator stops.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
 (on intercom)  
 Twenty-fifth floor.

The doors open, and everyone but Sam rushes out. Sam takes  
 out his phone and looks at THE TEXT MESSAGE ON THE SCREEN: "I  
 want to do you a favor. I will call you later." Under the  
 words is A LITTLE IMAGE OF THE JOINWITH.ME OCTOPUS-LIKE  
 CREATURE.

A DING! comes over the intercom, and the elevator stops.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
 (on intercom)  
 Thirtieth floor.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA POV: Sam exits.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

Sam is still staring at his phone as he enters.

HANNAH  
Good morning, Sam.

Today Hannah is again in a t-shirt and jeans with a red ribbon in her hair, but the t-shirt is yellow.

SAM  
Good morning, Hannah. Did'ya do anything fun last night?

HANNAH  
You know, I actually did.

Sam waits for her to tell him what it was -- she doesn't. A few moments as they stare at one another. She gestures to him with her head to move on.

Sam heads to his desk. As he approaches, he pauses when he sees that Michael's desk is now empty and cleaned off. He looks up at the surveillance cameras, then back down to the empty desk.

Upon reaching his own desk, he stops when he sees A SMALL GOLD PACKAGE WITH A RED RIBBON AROUND IT sitting in front of his computer.

He sits and reads THE ATTACHED CARD: "Thank you for taking the first step toward your future." Below that is the image of the octopus critter.

Sam puts his cellphone in the top desk drawer, then opens the package. Inside are eight chocolate pralines. He puts one of them in his mouth and turns on his computer.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

Sam is typing on his keyboard. In front of him, the Two Girls are chatting and giggling. Sam looks up at them.

SAM  
Could you please keep it quiet? I'm trying to concentrate.

The Two Girls look at each other, confused, then turn back to Sam.

THE TWO GIRLS  
Why?

They stare at Sam, and he, back at them. Sam resumes typing. Seconds later, they resume their chatter. Sam stops typing and opens his drawer, staring at his phone.

It immediately starts to vibrate. He answers and whispers into it, his hand trembling.

SAM

Hello?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Soon an audit team from the Office of Personnel Management will arrive to check on your Division's performance...

SAM

How did you put the chocolate on my desk?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Your boss has chosen you to explain the work to them. You have to make it sound like it matters...

SAM

How do --

CREATURE (V.O.)

All the necessary documentation is right there on your screen...

He looks and sees a spreadsheet has opened on his computer.

CREATURE (V.O.)

When they arrive, look them in the eyes, and say, "Good morning, ladies and gentleman, I'm Samuel Vanderpool." Then shake hands with them.

SAM

Okay...

CREATURE (V.O.)

When you're done, look them in the eyes again and say, "Thank you very much for your attention. It's been a pleasure meeting you." Then shake their hands again.

SAM

Okay but --

CREATURE (V.O.)

And remember to do the personality test.

SAM

Wait! Are you even there, or is  
this a recording?

CLICK -- she's gone. Sam places his phone back on his desk and thinks. Then he leans out and looks at Hannah, who's staring down at her own cellphone.

After placing the chocolates in his briefcase, he studies the spreadsheet on his screen. A SUBDUED MURMUR arises in the office.

Sam looks around for the cause of the commotion and sees two Women and one Man dressed in gray suits with briefcases in their hands marching up to him. Sam stands up.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good morning, ladies and gentleman,  
I'm Samuel Vanderpool.

He shakes their hands.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

All of the workers' eyes are on the conference room door. A few moments, then it opens. Sam walks out with the auditors.

SAM

Thank you very much for your  
attention. It's been a pleasure  
meeting you.

He shakes their hands again, and they exit the office. Sam now notices that everyone is staring at him. He gives them a smile, and they all immediately resume their work in near unison.

Sam walks back to his desk. As soon as he sits, his PHONE BUZZES in his desk. He takes it out and puts it to his ear.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Hey, Sam, you did great.

SAM

How would you know?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Because your boss just said so.  
He's so impressed that you'll be  
getting a raise. Now take the test.

CLICK -- she's gone. Sam places his phone back on his desk and the JoinWith.Me Website appears on his computer. He clicks the "Personality Test" button at the bottom.

A POP-UP APPEARS: "Welcome to the test, Sam! Let's get started!" A question comes on the screen: "Are you rather brave or timid?" He clicks "Rather Timid."

The next question appears: "Are you more ruled by your head or your heart?" He clicks "Heart."

Next question: "Would you say you have a vivid imagination?" Sam starts to click "Yes," but then moves the cursor and clicks "No" instead.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

The end of the day, the same routine as before. A BELL RINGS, and everyone except for Sam immediately rises and leaves the office.

But this time, Sam hurries over to catch Hannah before she leaves.

SAM

Hey, y'know what? Those auditors were trying to get rid of your job, but I told them how important you are.

HANNAH

But I'm not important. But thank you anyway.

SAM

Can we have dinner together?

HANNAH

Sure.

A beat as she stares at him.

SAM

Great. See you tomorrow.

Sam exits, a bounce in his step.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Sam walks out and stares at the JoinWith.Me Billboard across the street.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam is at his computer. The moving graphic reminiscent of a multicolored black hole in outer space is on the screen.

SAM

Thanks for your help today.  
What else can you do for me?

CREATURE (V.O.)

I will work through your issues  
with you.

SAM

What issues?

CREATURE (V.O.)

You have been unloved for too long.

SAM

If by "too long" you mean, like,  
forever, then yes.

CREATURE (V.O.)

That will end when we become one.

SAM

What do you mean?

CREATURE (V.O.)

We will all be joined in one mind.

Sam scoffs.

SAM

I don't know how that could happen,  
but I do know I want no part of it.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Why? Does that frighten you?

SAM

Well, yeah! I mean, I like what I  
am already.

The Creature laughs.

CREATURE (V.O.)

No you don't. This is inevitable  
and unstoppable. The test you took  
proves that we need each other to  
become complete.

(MORE)

CREATURE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Now let's confront one of your  
 problems head on to get you ready.  
 Other kids have always made fun of  
 you.

A pause, then A GRAINY VIDEO APPEARS ON THE SCREEN. At first, Sam watches curiously, but then his eyes widen as the video continues.

INSERT: THE SCREEN - TWO 10-YEAR-OLD BOYS have 10-year-old Sam standing pinned face-first to a tree. ANOTHER 10-YEAR-OLD BOY picks up some dog poop with a stick.

The Two Boys pull Sam's pants away from his waist, and the other boy dumps the dog poop down them. They push Sam to the ground then run away, laughing.

The moving, multicolored graphic reappears on the screen. Sam stares at it, fearful, in shock.

SAM  
 (hoarsely)  
 What was that?

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 Did that happen to you or not?

Sam's voice becomes cold.

SAM  
 You need to answer my questions.  
 Who are you and how do you know so  
 much about me?

A beat, then...

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 We'll continue tomorrow.

The multicolored graphic disappears. Sam stands up, breathing hard. He sees the kitten outside the window staring in at him and rushes over to it, but the kitten scurries away.

Sam turns back and stares at the computer.

SAM (V.O.)  
 Where did those images come from?  
 Then it dawned on me -- maybe this  
 was Carrie Davis! Maybe she  
 discovered what I was doing with  
 her at night and decided it was  
 time for some payback.

With a determined look on his face, Sam sits back down at his computer. He pulls up VARIOUS WEB PAGES, PHOTOS OF CARRIE, AND PUBLIC RECORDS and checks them out.

SAM (V.O.)

Carrie was a security specialist in the Office of Personnel Management. That would explain how she knew about the visit of the OMB auditors! And, how she could enter the building to put the chocolates on my desk. I suddenly felt like Sherlock Holmes.

SAM

(with a British accent)

My dear Watson, me thinks that all the clues unmistakably point to the same suspect.

He pulls up some more records and freezes at what he sees: AN OBITUARY WITH A CURRENT PICTURE OF CARRIE, DATED JANUARY 1, 2032. The small caption under her photo reads, "OMB Employee Killed by Hit & Run Driver."

SAM (V.O.)

Poor Carrie. Right then, I vowed not to use her for porn again. It seemed a good way to honor her memory.

Sam leans back, puts his hands behind his head, and thinks.

SAM (V.O.)

But if not, Carrie, who? Wait -- Hannah? Is she playing with me? It'd be a strange way to flirt, but other than my mother, women are complicated, I've heard. And the red ribbon... It must be her!

Sam smiles, satisfied.

SAM

(with a British accent)

Well, Watson, we shall get to the bottom of this tomorrow, won't we?

(changes his voice)

Yes, Holmes, indeed we will.

INT. SAM'S OFFICES - DAY

Sam stands dumbstruck, staring down at Hannah's empty and cleaned-off desk.

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD CLICKS: Wednesday, February 25, 2032

He opens the top desk drawer and sees there's nothing in it. He slides it shut then notices something in the wastebasket: some crumpled gold paper, a red ribbon, and a card for JoinWith.Me.

SEEN THROUGH A SURVEILLANCE CAMERA POV, Sam numbly walks to his desk. He stops and stares at another gold, red-ribboned box with an octopus card sitting there.

Then his eyes move up and he sees that the desks of the two chatty girls are also empty and clean. He picks up the box and stares at it. The Creature's voice comes out from his computer, causing him to jump.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Good morning, Sam. Aren't you going  
to open it?

Sam drops the box and rushes out of the office.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY

Through the surveillance cam POV, we see Sam get into the elevator. Jonathan is already in there.

END surveillance cam POV. Jonathan has earbuds in and is bopping his head to the beat. THE SAME MUZAK BLARES. As soon as the doors finish closing, the MUZAK STOPS and THE CREATURE'S VOICE COMES OVER THE INTERCOM.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(giggles)  
Playing hooky, big boy? I love it  
when you're naughty!

SAM  
Shut up!  
(to Jonathan)  
Did you hear that?!

Jonathan removes his earbuds, and the MUZAK RESUMES.

JONATHAN  
Hear what, Sam?

DING! The elevator comes to a stop.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
First floor.

Sam hurries out.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Panicked, Sam comes running out of the building. He stops and stares at the JoinWith.Me billboard across the street.

He takes a few steps down the sidewalk and pauses when he notices a small crowd gathered. They're all watching and pointing their cellphones at a sheet-covered body on a gurney being wheeled to an ambulance.

Sam looks down and sees he's standing next to the Little Person, Joey.

SAM  
What happened?

JOEY  
Another hit and run.

As the body is loaded into the ambulance, the sheet falls away, revealing it's ONE OF THE CHATTY GIRLS from his office.

Sam very quickly walks away, zigging and zagging through the now insect-headed pedestrians, passing Gabrielle singing in French along the way.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

**MONTAGE:**

- Sam unplugs his computer. On his desk, HIS PHONE BUZZES but he ignores it.

- He opens his cupboard and takes out a can of chicken noodle soup. Sam stares at the can, then puts it back and takes out the lone can of tomato soup instead. On his desk, HIS PHONE BUZZES but he ignores it.

- Sam is eating his soup while watching the WBS News on TV. The news anchor, GRETCHEN MCDERMOTT, sits behind a desk. HER NAME IS SUPERED UNDERNEATH HER, AND A SCROLL AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN ADVERTISES FOR JOINWITH.ME.

GRETCHEN (ON TV)

In a hit and run accident today, a woman was killed by a black BMW...

FOOTAGE ON TV shows the scene of the body being put into the ambulance that Sam witnessed earlier.

GRETCHEN (ON TV) (V.O.)

... which fled the scene. Neither the victim nor the driver has been identified.

- Sam gets a beer out of the fridge. On his desk, HIS PHONE BUZZES but he ignores it.

- Sam is watching TV as he drinks his beer. The same hospital commercial from earlier is on.

DR. BINGHAM (ON TV)

City Hospital is looking for volunteers for our ongoing medical research projects. Won't you please help others and become part of the future?

SAM

No!

He throws the beer can at the TV. On his desk, HIS PHONE BUZZES. This time, he answers it.

**END MONTAGE.**

SAM (CONT'D)

What do you want?!

CREATURE (V.O.)

The same thing you do.

Sam stares at the blank computer screen.

CREATURE (V.O.)

You unplugged me, Sam. I don't like that. Why?

SAM

Because you're freaking me out.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Really? Or are you freaking yourself out? Plug in your computer.

SAM

No.

A pause, then SAM'S FATHER APPEARS ON HIS PHONE.

SAM'S FATHER

(on phone)

Do as she says!

SAM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

(on phone)

Yes, dear, listen to your father.  
Please?

SAM'S FATHER

(on phone)

Now! Or I'll stuff you under your  
bed again with your monster! Now!  
Now! Now!

As his father continues to scream "Now!" Sam plugs in the computer. Immediately, HIS FATHER'S VOICE STOPS and the SWIRLING GRAPHIC APPEARS ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN.

Sam clicks off the phone and sits down as the Creature's voice comes from the computer now.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Thank you. That kind of hurt my  
feelings.

SAM

So you have feelings? Are you real  
or AI?

CREATURE (V.O.)

I'm alive. And isn't that all that  
matters?

Sam considers this.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Not knowing my sense of humor, I  
now realize I must have frightened  
you today. I'm sorry.

SAM

Are you?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Yes, I am. I've been thinking -- it  
might help you trust me more if you  
could see me.

The SWIRLING IMAGE BREAKS UP AND REFORMS INTO A 19-YR-OLD ASIAN GIRL WITH DARK-RIMMED GLASSES. Surprised, Sam takes a few steps back.

She greets and beckons to him by holding her hand up, with the palm down and repeatedly folding the fingers down and back.

SAM

You're... very pretty.

She smiles at him. Sam takes a seat at the computer.

CREATURE

Does that surprise you?

SAM

Not really, you're almost as I imagined.

CREATURE

Of course I am. I created this avatar just for you.

SAM

Aha! So you are just some kind of AI!

CREATURE

"Just?" That's insulting. But, ok, fine, if that's what you want to call me. And I'm as real as you are, thank you very much. Now let's get back to work. We have to get you ready for the future.

Sam's eyes move to the baby oil and toilet paper, then back to the girl.

SAM

Could you... take off your glasses?

CREATURE

Um, ok. But please leave your hands where I can see them.

Compliantly, he lifts his hands a little and puts them back down on the desk. The Creature takes off her glasses.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

Thank you. So you obviously, and desperately, need a girlfriend, right? I mean, well guess what -- I need someone, too.

SAM  
And you've picked me?

She giggles flirtatiously.

CREATURE  
Well, you are on my radar, that's  
for sure.

Sam considers this.

SAM  
Are you... going to hurt me?

CREATURE  
Wow, where did that come from? So  
suspicious. Paranoid, even. You're  
in a safe space here, Sam. I'm not  
a secret and am fully transparent.  
Click on the "About Us" button,  
dummy.

He does. The following text comes up. The Creature reads it  
aloud, very fast and annoyed.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
"Welcome to JoinWith.Me! We are a  
501(c)(3) charitable counseling  
organization supported by local  
communities to help those who are  
lonely and in need of support to  
regain stability in their lives. We  
are proud to have helped thousands  
of challenged individuals overcome  
their fears, their anxieties, their  
paranoia, their hallucinations, and  
even their suicidal ideations. Our  
counseling sessions are absolutely  
FREE and CONFIDENTIAL."

The girl reappears on the screen.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
There. Happy?

SAM  
Happier, I guess.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
What did you do today after you ran  
out of the elevator like a  
frightened child?

SAM

I walked until it got dark. And I think because I wasn't walking to or from anywhere in particular, I noticed some things.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Like what?

SAM

Like this city is a real shithole. And there are a lot more homeless people than I'd imagined. And I'm wondering why so many of my coworkers are disappearing and not being replaced.

The Creature just stares at him. She puts her glasses back on.

CREATURE (V.O.)

I'm almost ready to tell you about that cute friend of mine I want you to meet. But first, you have to pass a test.

SAM

What test?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Tomorrow at 9 a.m., you will enter your bank, go to a cashier, and withdraw the twenty-one hundred dollars that's in your account in cash. You will then hand it to a stranger who will be standing right outside by the door.

Sam laughs.

SAM

And why would I do that?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Because finally, you'd be doing something for someone else. Not your "me, me, me" thing anymore.

Sam looks suspicious.

SAM

But I thought this wasn't about money.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Argh, there's that paranoia again! You're afraid of things that aren't there, Sam. This is about curing your terrible egocentrism. Only then will a woman love you -- and that's what you want, don't you? The money is just a gesture, a symbol of your trust in me. After you give him the money, he will then give it back.

Sam stares at the screen in silence.

CREATURE (V.O.)

You want to meet my cute friend or not?

SAM

Yeah, I do.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Then follow my instructions.

SAM

And how will I recognize this stranger?

CREATURE (V.O.)

He will recognize you.

SAM

Tell me more about your friend.

CREATURE (V.O.)

She's very pretty and very smart. She's a doctor and a scientific researcher. And much better than an AI doll.

SAM

And she's interested in me?

CREATURE (V.O.)

Very. I've told her all about you.

SAM

Okay, just so we're clear -- I give this person my money, he gives it back, and then you'll set me up with a real girl.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Yes.

Sam makes a decision.

SAM  
 Alright, I'll do it.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 I knew you would.

SAM  
 Wait -- what about work?

CREATURE (V.O.)  
 I'll call in sick for you. I'll...  
 pretend to be your parents, who are  
 looking after you. This is an  
 important step. I'm proud of you,  
 Sam.

EXT. BANK - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
 CLICKS: Thursday, February 26, 2032

Sam enters the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

Seen through a surveillance camera POV, Sam walks in and gets  
 in line for a teller.

End surveillance camera POV. Sam looks around the bank,  
 waiting impatiently for his turn. The person in front of him  
 finishes up, and Sam steps up to the TELLER.

TELLER  
 Good morning. How can I help you?

SAM  
 I need to make a withdrawal.

TELLER  
 Okay, I can help you do that. Could  
 I get your ID so I can pull up your  
 account?

SAM  
 Sure.

As Sam takes out his wallet, he notices A SMALL BOX WRAPPED  
 IN GOLD PAPER WITH A RED RIBBON next to the Teller and  
 pauses.

TELLER  
Is there a problem?

SAM  
Um, no, I mean, I forgot my ID.  
I'll come back later.

Seen through a surveillance camera POV, Sam turns and walks out of the bank.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Sam comes out and stops, looking around at all the INSECT-HEADED PEOPLE filling the sidewalk. His PHONE BUZZES. He takes it out of his pocket, turns it off without even checking it, and quickly walks away.

Unseen by Sam, a young, HUMAN-HEADED, dreadlocked black man, TOUSSAINT, watches Sam disappear into the now HUMAN-HEADED crowd. He sends a text from his phone, then gets into a Black BMW and drives off in the same direction as Sam.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Sam enters the building through some glass doors.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The place appears abandoned -- no one is coming or going. Sam walks in to find a single DUTY OFFICER sitting behind the reception desk, typing into his computer.

Above him is A FLICKERING FLUORESCENT LIGHT, WHICH LOUDLY BUZZES IN SYNC WITH THE FLICKERS THROUGHOUT THE SCENE. The Officer has his dark hair slicked back like Bela Lugosi in "Dracula."

DUTY OFFICER  
Good evening.

SAM  
I want to... It's still morning.

The Officer looks through the doors, sees it's light out, and chuckles.

DUTY OFFICER  
Right. Sorry. Time flies, doesn't it? How can I help you?

Sam squints and winces at the FLICKERING and BUZZING LIGHT.

SAM

I want to report an internet scam. I found this advice website. I started chatting with them, and now they're trying to take all my money. They also have video footage of me.

DUTY OFFICER

What kind of video? So it's some kind of extortion?

SAM

I dunno, exactly. I think it's a bunch of hackers. But I do know that --

He's cut off by A LOUD CRACK OF THUNDER from outside. They both turn and see it's now pouring down and the sunlight has been replaced by gloom.

DUTY OFFICER

Hackers, huh? Have they threatened you?

SAM

Not exactly, no. But I'm afraid because they seem to know a lot about me. Their website is JoinWith.Me.

DUTY OFFICER

Dot "me?" Not "com" or "org" or...

SAM

No. "Me."

The Officer studies him.

SAM (CONT'D)

And their leader is this teenage Asian girl. I thought she was just a computer program, but now I'm starting to think she's been a real person all along and is just pretending to be a computer program to disorient me.

DUTY OFFICER

I see.

(sighs)

Time to fill out a mountain of forms.

He slides open a drawer in a filing cabinet behind him, and Sam spots... A SMALL BOX WRAPPED IN GOLD PAPER WITH A RED RIBBON INSIDE. The Officer takes out a single piece of paper and tries to hand it to Sam. But Sam is frozen.

SAM

Where did you get that little gold box?

DUTY OFFICER

Oh. It's a gift.

SAM

From who?

DUTY OFFICER

My girlfriend.

The Officer smiles at him. Sam stares at him for a beat, then his eyes narrow and he turns and walks out into the rain, the smiling Officer watching him the whole time.

EXT. WBS NEWS BUILDING - DAY

Sam is walking rapidly down the sidewalk through the pouring rain. As he nears the building, it suddenly stops raining and everyone lowers and closes their umbrellas in unison, almost as if choreographed.

INT. WBS NEWS BUILDING - DAY

Sam approaches the RECEPTIONIST at the counter.

SAM

I need to see Gretchen McDermott. I have an important story for her.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, but Ms. McDermott is unavailable.

SAM

But this is urgent! Could you at least call her and let me talk to her? I'm telling you, this story is huge! Please? I'm sure she'd want to know about it.

The Receptionist studies him, then relents.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay. I'll see if she's available.  
One moment.

SAM

Thank you.

She picks up the phone on the counter and hits a button. Just then, the elevator opens and Gretchen McDermott steps out. Sam rushes up to her.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ms. McDermott, Ms. McDermott!

GRETCHEN

Yes?

SAM

Hi! Wow, it's really you! I watch you all the time! Ok, man, I have a story for you. I don't even know where to start. There is a girl on the internet that asks people for money.

GRETCHEN

Ok, and...

SAM

And she hacks into things, too. She pretends she's a counselor.

GRETCHEN

What kind of counselor?

SAM

For JoinWith.Me. I went to the police but --

Gretchen quickly looks away and nods to a Security Guard. As the guard approaches, Sam runs out.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sam rushes into the building.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sam walks in and stops at what he sees: the "out of service" elevator's door is open. Inside, the light is on and the SAME MUZAK BLARES. Sam cautiously steps inside.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors immediately close behind him. The MUZAK STOPS, and the elevator ascends.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
You let me down, Sam.

SAM  
Leave me alone!

Through a VERY GRAINY AND BLURRY surveillance camera POV, Sam's looking up at the camera.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
The camera in there sucks, I can barely see you. But it looks like you're talking, right? Turn on your phone so I can hear you.

Sam silently screams "No!" End surveillance camera POV. The elevator jerks to a stop on the fourth floor. The doors don't open. Sam mashes buttons, tries to force the doors open -- to no avail.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
You misbehaved today, and because I can't lock you in your room or throw you under your bed, let's try this.

Suddenly, the elevator drops, sending Sam teetering backward.

SAM  
Stop! STOP!

The BUTTONS ON THE PANEL LIGHT UP as the elevator passes floors three and then two. Just before they get to LL, the elevator jerks, shudders to a stop, and Sam is thrown to the floor. As he gets to his hands and knees...

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
See how I saved you? Are you ready to open yourself up to me and trust me now?

SAM  
Yes! Yes!

CREATURE (V.O.)  
(on intercom)  
What was that?

Sam pulls out his phone, turns it on. The Creature appears on the screen. Sam screams into the phone.

SAM  
I said yes! Yes!

Her voice now comes from his phone, not the intercom.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
There. Was that so difficult? And please stop yelling at me. You need to remember that relationships are hard, Sam. There'll always be some "ups and downs."

She laughs. Sam doesn't.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Oh come on, that was funny.

SAM  
To you maybe.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Fine, be like that. I still believe in us, Sam. We can make this work. It's the only way.

SAM  
I understand. If you let me out of this elevator, I promise to be a good boy from now on.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Ok, and what else?

SAM  
Um, to think of all of us and not just me?

DING! The MUZAK STARTS AGAIN, the elevator ascends, and the doors open. Sam rushes out.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam bursts through the doorway.

SAM  
"All of us," right... fuck that.

He yanks the computer's plug out of the socket, then drops his phone into the toilet.

SAM (V.O.)

I knew now that the Creature's tentacles seemed to wind their way through the whole city.

He pulls a red, rolling suitcase from the closet and frantically packs it with clothes.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sam hails a passing SELF-DRIVING TAXI. The door opens, and Sam tosses in his suitcase. He jumps in, and the taxi speeds away.

INT. SELF-DRIVING TAXI - DAY

The taxi drives through traffic. Sam stares out the window as they pass his work... the JoinWith.Me billboard... the WBS-TV building and news screen with Gretchen on it... and the bronze statue in the middle of a roundabout.

The taxi passes Gabrielle holding up her Bible and singing on the sidewalk. Sam puts his hand to the window as if to touch her.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL, TICKET COUNTER - DAY

Sam wheels his suitcase behind him as he steps up to the TICKET AGENT. She looks up from her computer and smiles.

SAM

I'd like to buy an airplane ticket.

TICKET AGENT

Certainly, sir. Where would you like to fly to today?

SAM

Far away. Doesn't really matter. This will be my first time on an airplane.

TICKET AGENT

I'm sure you'll enjoy it. Do you have a particular place in mind?

SAM

Well...

He looks up at the video screen on the wall behind the ticket agent that lists the departing flights. For just a second, THE GIRL APPEARS ON IT, looking down at Sam. And then just as quickly, she's gone.

TICKET AGENT

Sir? Where will you be traveling to?

SAM

Wherever the soonest flight is going will be fine.

TICKET AGENT

(checking her computer)

Okay, well that would be... to Costa Rica. Departs in one hour. Round trip or --

SAM

One way.

TICKET AGENT

Alright, the price is... \$2100.

SAM

What?

TICKET AGENT

\$2100. Is that going to be a problem?

SAM

Um, no, it's just that... No, that's fine.

He takes out his wallet and hands her his debit card. She runs it through.

TICKET AGENT

Oh.

SAM

What is it?

TICKET AGENT

I'm sorry, but the transaction has been declined.

SAM

Why?

TICKET AGENT

I wouldn't know. But there is also a note here instructing me to confiscate your card. I'm sorry.

SAM

What? No!

Sam reaches over the counter and tries to grab the card, but the ticket agent pulls it away.

TICKET AGENT

Sir!

The commotion has drawn the attention of the people nearby, as well as that of a uniformed Police Officer.

TICKET AGENT (CONT'D)

Now please, sir, step aside.

She looks to the person in line behind Sam.

TICKET AGENT (CONT'D)

Next in line?

Sam notices the Police Officer staring at him and slowly walks away from the counter. As he passes by the line of people...

CREATURE (O.S.)

You have serious problems, Sam.

He stops and looks for the source of her voice. It's COMING FROM THE CELLPHONE of a Woman staring at it as she waits in line. THE GIRL IS ON THE CELLPHONE'S SCREEN. Sam leans in for a closer look.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

(on cellphone)

I'll help you.

The Woman looks up at Sam, annoyed, then turns her back to him. Sam hurries away.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Sam passes by someone seated with their laptop open. He sees that THE GIRL IS ON ITS SCREEN and slows.

CREATURE

(on laptop)

You're mentally unstable. You want someone to talk to.

He moves past a Woman staring at her cellphone. The Woman turns her phone around and points it at Sam. THE GIRL IS ON THE SCREEN.

CREATURE (CONT'D)  
 (on phone)  
 Your imagination and paranoia are getting the better of you.

He quickens his pace but pauses again as he spots THE GIRL ON A TV IN A BAR, looking at him.

CREATURE (CONT'D)  
 (on TV)  
 There's something wrong with you.  
 Why do your parents loathe you?

Sam starts walking even faster.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL, BAGGAGE CLAIM AREA - DAY

As Sam approaches the exit, he sees THE GIRL ON ALL OF THE FLIGHT INFO MONITORS. HER VOICE ECHOES OUT OVER THE AIRPORT'S PA SYSTEM.

CREATURE  
 (on monitors)  
 You cannot get away. Your fate is preordained. We will become one.

Sam looks around to see how everyone is reacting to this. For the most part, they're not and seem oblivious as they go about their business. But a few of them with insect heads are staring up at the monitors.

Sam turns and goes back the way he came.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL, BATHROOM - DAY

Panicked and in a sweat, Sam enters and quickly splashes water on his face from a faucet.

SAM (V.O.)  
 This was impossible. She couldn't be everywhere. And how did she keep finding me?

He dries his face with some paper towels and stares at himself in the mirror.

SAM  
 The cameras.

Sam leans in closer, touching parts of his face.

SAM (V.O.)  
But I've read there are ways to  
fool them.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Sam takes a seat next to a Sleeping Woman in a waiting area. His eyes move to the purse at her feet. He leans down, pretending to tie his shoe, then grabs the purse and stuffs it under his coat.

He looks around to see if anyone saw what he did. They're all staring at their phones. His eyes come to rest on a TEENAGE BOY seated across from him with a plain black baseball cap. Earbuds in, he is watching something on his phone.

Sam rises and approaches him.

SAM  
Hi, excuse me.

The boy takes out his earbuds and looks up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)  
How much for the hat?

TEENAGE BOY  
What?

Sam takes out his wallet, then all the cash in it.

SAM  
I'll give you...  
(counts the cash)  
... thirty-four dollars for it.

The boy stares at Sam, thinking about it.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Well?

TEENAGE BOY  
(shrugs)  
Sure. Deal.

He takes off the cap and hands it to Sam, who stuffs it under his coat and then heads back toward the bathroom.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Sam exits the bathroom wearing the baseball cap. He now has two black horizontal lines drawn with mascara under each eye and two vertical ones on each cheek reaching down to his chin.

As he heads back to the terminal's exit, he checks to see if anyone is staring at him, but they're not. Even though he looks a little bizarre, no one seems to notice. Maybe they think he's a rock star or something.

Upon reaching the baggage area where the girl appeared on the monitors before, he stops and stares up at a surveillance camera.

He then looks to the monitors -- the girl does not appear on them. Satisfied that the make-up has worked, he exits.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Except for a few homeless people and a few self-driving cars, the streets are deserted. Sam sits on a bench across the street from the WBS-TV building, watching GRETCHEN ON THE GIANT SCREEN.

AN AD FOR JOINWITH.ME IS SCROLLING ACROSS THE BOTTOM.

SAM (V.O.)

In a way, I'm glad the Creature forced me to decide to abandon my old life. I realized it fucking sucked. It's always been other people who made my decisions for me. After all, isn't decisiveness an attribute of an autonomous and real non-insect-headed human being?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD CLICKS: Friday, February 27, 2032

**NOTE:** Sam still has the hat and make-up on, and his suitcase is always with him until otherwise indicated.

Sam lies sleeping on some cardboard with a dirty, tattered furniture blanket over him. He opens his eyes to see SEVERAL RATS crawling over and around him.

He sits up with a yelp, and they scurry away. Now he hears the NEARBY MOANS OF SOMEONE.

He turns and sees Gabrielle sitting against the wall next to a tipped-over shopping cart, its contents scattered on the ground.

He gets up and walks over to her.

SAM

Are you okay? What happened?

Gabrielle SPEAKS WITH A FRENCH ACCENT.

GABRIELLE

Two men, zhey beat me.

SAM

Do you need to go to the hospital?

GABRIELLE

No! Bad things happen there.

She starts to rise, and Sam helps her to her feet. Gabrielle sets her shopping cart upright and begins placing her stuff back in it. Sam lends a hand.

SAM

I know you -- you're the lady with the beautiful voice.

GABRIELLE

Zhank you.

SAM

Sam. My name is Sam.

GABRIELLE

Zhank you, Sam. I am Gabrielle. I have not noticed you before.

SAM

That's because I'm new here.

GABRIELLE

I see.

She picks up her Bible off the ground and shakes some liquid off it.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Look, the monsters even pissed on my Bible.

SAM

Yes, monsters...

They finish loading her cart.

GABRIELLE

Zhank you for your help, Sam. But now I must go to work.

SAM

Work? Oh, you mean singing?

GABRIELLE

Yes.

She wheels her cart down the alley. Sam watches for a moment, then grabs his suitcase, catches up, and walks beside her.

SAM

I had to run away from home because a girl is after me. She wants me to join with her.

Gabrielle suddenly stops and looks at him, concerned.

GABRIELLE

The octopus lady?

SAM

Yes!

GABRIELLE

Stay away from her! She has cast a spell on my son, Toussaint. He says he works for her. He doesn't listen to his mother now. Just does whatever she says.

SAM

He works for her? Doing what?

GABRIELLE

I sometimes see him driving, but we no longer speak. Now I must hurry.

She starts off again.

SAM

Do you sleep in this alley every night?

Gabrielle nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

Would it be okay if I stayed here too? Maybe if I was here, the monsters wouldn't hurt you again.

GABRIELLE

Yes, that would be fine. I would enjoy your company. We can pray together... although that has not helped so far. Au revoir.

She rolls her cart away and starts singing softly to herself in French.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

**MONTAGE:**

- Sam wheels his suitcase at various locations throughout the city. Everyone except for Sam and the homeless people he passes are staring at their cellphones as they hurry along.

SAM (V.O.)

I was sad to hear the Creature had captured Gabrielle's son. But it strengthened my suspicions of the mysterious Creature. And my belief in my own sanity.

- Sam stops walking and looks up at the statue in the roundabout.

SAM

Good morning, old fellow! Fancy meeting you here! Heard any good jokes lately?

A Passerby briefly looks up from his phone as he almost bumps into Sam, who smiles at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello.

The man looks at him for just a second and doesn't smile back before he sidesteps Sam, keeps walking, and returns to staring at his phone. Sam, still smiling, watches him head away.

SAM (V.O.)

I was expecting him to turn into an insect, but he didn't. That made me happy.

**END MONTAGE.**

EXT. ROUNDABOUT - DAY

At the roundabout with the statue, Sam is standing on the curb with a squeegee in his hand and a bucket of water at his feet.

SAM (V.O.)  
I found a new job, helping people  
to see the world more clearly.

Sam watches as a stream of self-driving cars pass by him. A car with a Driver stops, and Sam runs over to wash the windshield off.

SAM (V.O.)  
I set new goals for myself. The  
first goals I had ever set,  
actually.

The Driver lowers the car window just enough for Sam to reach in and take a dollar bill from him. Sam then washes his windshield.

SAM (V.O.)  
One, track down Hannah and start a  
relationship with her; two, find  
those boys who put shit down my  
pants when we were kids and put  
shit down their pants as adults;  
and three, find that kitten from  
outside my window and take care of  
it.

The car suddenly accelerates, pulling Sam along. After freeing his arm, Sam tumbles to the ground. Discouraged, he drops the squeegee, dumps the water, and puts the bucket over the head of the bronze statue.

EXT. CITY STREET, TAILOR SHOP #1 - DAY

Sam stands at a corner, waiting for the light to change so he can cross. He's staring at a tailor shop across the street. The light changes, and everyone begins to cross.

As Sam steps off the curb, a Black BMW making a right-hand turn screeches to a stop, almost hitting him.

Toussaint, behind the wheel, leans over to the open passenger window and speaks to Sam in A FRENCH ACCENT. REGGAE MUSIC BLASTS FROM INSIDE THE CAR. Toussaint yells out over it.

TOUSSAINT

Watch 'em cars! It's dangerous  
crossing a street in this city! I  
know for sure!

He speeds away. Sam approaches the tailor shop. In the window sits a ceramic cat on a red pillow. It has a motorized left paw that is moving up and down as if to invite people in.

Sam mimics the cat before he enters.

INT. TAILOR SHOP #1 - DAY

Sam steps up to the empty counter. He looks down and sees a call bell. He picks it up and examines it curiously. An ELDERLY ASIAN LADY comes out from the back, takes the bell from him, and sets it back down.

ASIAN LADY

How can I help you?

SAM

Good afternoon, ma'am. Is Hannah  
coming in today?

ASIAN LADY

Hannah!

A moment later, a TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL comes out. She's nearly identical to the Creature, but her hair is in a ponytail and she's not wearing glasses.

TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL

Yes, mom?

ASIAN LADY

This man is looking for you.

The girl looks at Sam, who's staring at her, mouth agape.

TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL

Yes?

SAM

Oh, I... Are you a twin?

TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL

No... Do I know you?

SAM

No, I was looking for a different  
Hannah.

TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL  
(looking more closely at  
Sam's face)  
Why do you use make-up?

A beat.

SAM  
(suspicious)  
Why do you ask?

TEENAGED ASIAN GIRL  
Just curious.

They all stare at one another.

SAM  
Sorry to bother you.

Sam heads out but then stops, looks at the cat statue, and turns back to the women.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, but what is this statue  
for?

ASIAN LADY  
It brings good luck. It's a maneki-  
neko, a cat that invites you in.

SAM  
Oh. But the paw doesn't seem to say  
"hi."

She and her daughter gesture together simultaneously she explains:

ASIAN LADY  
In some countries, they beckon by  
holding the hand up, with the palm  
down and repeatedly folding the  
fingers down and back.

After finishing gesturing, the women stand motionless, smiling at Sam.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sam walks quickly down the sidewalk.

SAM (V.O.)

Well, that was fucking weird. But my mission was to find Hannah -- or the Hannah I knew. I decided to check all the tailor shops I came across, no matter how weird things got.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

CLOSE ON Joey's bare, filthy feet, drawing a cat picture. Sam's shoes walk up and stand next to the picture.

SAM

Do you always draw cat pictures?

JOEY

You like cats?

SAM

Not until recently. But I do like to draw.

He watches Joey draw and notes the LITTLE CARDBOARD SIGN next to him that reads: "Give me a dollar or I'll punch you in the face."

Joey picks up a STEEL CUP with his foot and takes a drink from it. Sam looks impressed.

JOEY

You want me to tell you what happened when I drew a cat picture in school? The teacher said to me, "Great job!" Isn't it nice when someone says something good about you?

Sam thinks.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**)

10-yr-old Sam and his parents sit having dinner. His father is holding up an open newspaper in front of him. Sam is drawing on a pad.

His father lowers the paper and glares at Sam. Sam tries to hide the drawing, but his father grabs the pad. Sam won't release it.

There's a brief tug-of-war before his father yanks it out of Sam's hand, pulling Sam to the floor.

His father looks at the pad: it's a drawing of the glowing eyes of a monster under a bed.

He tears the drawing off, crumples it up, then drops it into a wastebasket.

**END FLASHBACK.**

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sam is still thinking.

JOEY

Well?

SAM

I don't know. Are you hungry?

JOEY

Yes.

SAM

I bought a pack of hot dogs today.  
Would you like to join me for  
dinner?

JOEY

Yeah, thanks, man.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY (SUNSET)

THE SUN IS ABOUT TO SET as Sam and Joey enter and head down the alley.

SAM (V.O.)

Until I met Joey, I thought my life  
had been dealt from a shitty deck  
of cards. His mother abandoned him  
in the hospital as soon as she saw  
him. Even my parents didn't do  
that, although I'm sure they tried.

Sam stops and stares at all the cardboard lying around. He picks some up and starts erecting a shelter.

JOEY

I'd help but...

SAM

Nah, it's okay. I got it. You be  
the artist, I'll be the builder.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

There are now two little cardboard huts set up. Sam, Gabrielle, and Joey are seated in front of a small, camping-type butane stove with hotdogs cooking on them. In fact, they're a little burnt.

Their heads are all bowed as Gabrielle recites a prayer in French.

SAM

It feels like your words maybe connect you? With that higher power you believe in?

She pauses, nods at him, then continues.

JOEY

Higher power? What a load of shit.

Sam and Gabrielle ignore him.

SAM

It must make you very happy to love something that much.

She finishes the prayer, and they all take a hotdog with a fork and start eating, Joey using his foot. After taking a bite, Joey sets the fork down, picks up his steel cup with his foot, and takes a drink.

SAM (CONT'D)

You know what? Right now, I'm just very happy to connect with you two -  
- and this very burnt hotdog.

EXT. SUBURBAN PARK - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD CLICKS: Saturday, February 28, 2032

Sam, with a brown paper bag in his hand, stands watching a man about his same age, STEVE, push his 5-yr-old DAUGHTER on a swing. Both are laughing and having a good time.

SAM (V.O.)

I used the internet at the library to find the boys who had humiliated me. One had moved out of the country, but the other still lived in the same neighborhood we grew up in.

As Sam slowly approaches, Steve stops pushing his daughter, and both eye him warily.

SAM  
Steve, isn't it?

STEVE  
Yes...

SAM  
It's me, Sam.

It's clear Steve doesn't recognize him. Sam holds up the bag.

SAM (CONT'D)  
I'm going to put shit down your pants like you did to me.

STEVE  
Oh, right -- Sam.

DAUGHTER  
Daddy, did you really do that to him?

STEVE  
Yes, kitten, I'm ashamed to say I did.

DAUGHTER  
But that's not nice.

SAM  
No, it isn't.

DAUGHTER  
Then why are you going to do the same thing?

SAM  
Because...

Sam stares at her for a few moments, thinking, then looks at Steve, then back down at the girl.

SAM (CONT'D)  
I... I'm not.

STEVE  
Listen, Sam, that was really silly what we... I... did then. Sorry I could not tell you earlier.

SAM  
Better late than never, right?

STEVE  
So how're you doing? I haven't seen  
you in an eternity. You somehow  
look happier...

SAM  
I guess I am.

Sam smiles and hands the bag to Steve.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Could you throw this away for me?  
Thanks.

Sam turns and walks away.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Sam is standing across the street from his parents' house, watching his father put out the garbage. His father looks over toward him, and Sam quickly ducks behind a telephone pole.

SAM (V.O.)  
I thought about stopping in and  
saying hello to my parents, but I  
was feeling pretty good about  
myself and didn't want that feeling  
to go away.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A small, bushy, tree-filled park in the middle of the city. Unfortunately, almost all of the bushes and trees are dead. JOGGERS, staring at their phones with earbuds in, pass by the walking Sam and Joey. The sun is shining brightly, and both men are sweating.

SAM  
Have you been there before?

JOEY  
No, but I hear they're handing out  
free meals.

They continue walking.

SAM

Man, it's so hot already! It's not even March. What's summer going to be like? I'll bet that...

He trails off as he notices Joey is no longer walking next to him. He turns to see Joey sitting on the path with labored breathing. Sam hurries back to him and kneels beside him.

SAM (CONT'D)

What is it? What's wrong?

JOEY

Nothing, I'm...

Joey starts to collapse, and Sam eases him onto his back.

SAM

We need to get you to the hospital.

JOEY

No, no. People go in there, and they never come out!

His eyes flutter then close.

SAM

Help! Someone call for help!

But the passing Joggers merely keep on going, not slowing or even acknowledging them. Sam looks around in desperation and spots an EMERGENCY CALL STATION on the side of the jogging path.

Sam runs over to the station, hits the button, and speaks into the intercom. A MALE OPERATOR'S VOICE comes through the speaker.

MALE OPERATOR (ON SPEAKER)

Emergency services, how can we help you?

SAM

Yes, my friend has passed out! We need an ambulance! We're in the Downtown Park! Can you send someone? Please, hurry!

MALE OPERATOR (ON SPEAKER)

Yes, sir. I see where you're calling from on the monitor. I'll...

The Operator's voice breaks up.

SAM

I'm sorry, I couldn't hear that.

MALE OPERATOR (ON SPEAKER)

Just stay where you are...

The Operator's voice crackles and begins to morph into that of a woman.

MALE OPERATOR (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)

Someone is on their way.

The Operator's voice has now become that of the Creature.

CREATURE (ON SPEAKER)

But only if you stop running away from me. Did you hear that, Sam?

She giggles, and Sam recoils.

CREATURE (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)

I'd recognize that voice anywhere. And who is this friend of yours? Don't you want to introduce me? I love to meet new people. They always like me.

SAM

(hissing)

What do you want?

CREATURE (ON SPEAKER)

You know what I want -- for us to be together. And soon, we will be. I've been looking everywhere for you. I miss you. Do you miss me, too? Have you been thinking about me? Sam? Sam, answer me! You and I are pre --

Sam hits the button again, cutting her off. He backs away from the intercom. When he turns around, Joey is gone. He grabs his suitcase and rushes away.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Sam approaches a FOOD TRUCK where people in a line are waiting to be served.

SAM (V.O.)

I hoped that Joey was okay. As for the Creature, I'll give her this: she sure was persistent.

(MORE)

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Scary, yeah, but still, it was also  
kind of flattering that she wanted  
me so bad.

He stops when he spots "Calories Without Salaries" painted on  
the side of the truck and the JoinWith.Me logo below it.

He starts to walk away but then sees Hannah appear behind the  
counter, along with Toussaint, serving food. Elated but still  
wary, he gets in line behind a homeless man and a man staring  
at his cellphone wearing a suit.

He watches as Hannah and Toussaint dish up stew into plastic  
bowls and hand them out. Sam reaches the front of the line  
and looks up at Hannah.

SAM  
Hi, Hannah!

She stares at him then freezes, a look of fear on her face.  
Hannah turns to Toussaint.

HANNAH  
Toussaint, could you bring in some  
more bowls from that box they just  
dropped off? Thanks.

Toussaint exits the truck.

SAM  
His name is Toussaint? I know his --

Hannah puts her finger to her mouth, shushing him. Sam leans  
in and whispers.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Don't you want to know why I'm  
wearing make-up?

Hannah whispers back.

HANNAH  
I think I can guess. We've gotten  
ourselves trapped in something...  
an experiment with vulnerable  
people -- what it takes to make  
them do things.

SAM  
What?

HANNAH  
But when they become expendable...  
Don't worry!

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I won't do what she's asked me to do. You're a special subject for the Master. She's studying you.

SAM

The Master? You mean the internet girl?

Hannah nods.

HANNAH

But maybe you can do something.

She hands him a card for her mother's tailor shop with an address on it.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Come to my mom's shop tonight at nine. Don't be late.

SAM

Okay, it's... a date.

HANNAH

What? No, yes, yes, fine it's a date. Just --

Toussaint enters the truck with the bowls. Hannah hands Sam a bowl of stew, tipping her head to the right, indicating to Sam to move on. He does and sits down at one of the camping tables near the food truck.

Sam takes a bite and looks back up to Hannah working, not noticing that Toussaint is eyeing him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GENERIC TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

Hannah pushes Sam back against the counter and begins to seductively unbutton her blouse, revealing her bra. She leans in, and they begin kissing.

Sam's hand moves up to her breast. As soon as he touches it, Hannah recoils. REVEAL Hannah has been replaced by Sam's glaring father, who's dressed as she was with his blouse unbuttoned.

Horrified, Sam steps back and squeezes his eyes shut. A few moments, then Sam opens his eyes to see his father with a belt raised, ready to strike. As he brings the belt down toward Sam...

BACK TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Sam abruptly awakens from his reverie, still sitting at the camping table. After a final look at Hannah behind the counter, he rises and hurries off.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Gabrielle is singing in French with Joey sitting next to her, holding out a coffee can with his foot. As Sam approaches, someone drops a dollar into the can. Sam smiles, listening until she finishes the song.

GABRIELLE

Ah, Sam, bonjour.

SAM

I wanted to come by and say I won't be home for dinner tonight. I have a date.

GABRIELLE

Well good for you. With who?

SAM

A girl from the office. I found her handing out free food with your son, Toussaint.

GABRIELLE

(scoffs)

The son that abandoned me after he met zhe computer girl? With no help from him, I could not pay zhe rent. And now I am no better off than you.

SAM

No, you can sing.

She laughs.

GABRIELLE

Yes, zhat is something no one can take from me.

SAM

And Joey, what happened to you? The internet girl, she was on the call box. I was afraid she...

Gabrielle and Joey share a worried look.

JOEY

I got away as quickly as I could, before they took me to the hospital. Sorry, man.

SAM

No worries. I'm glad you're okay. And about my date tonight?  
(winks at them)  
Don't bother waiting up.

With a bounce in his step, Sam walks away. Gabrielle and Joey share another worried look.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Sam sits smiling as the car rumbles along.

SAM (V.O.)

Two of my goals complete, well, minus the shit-down-the-pants part. Now, to achieve the third.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sam walks down the sidewalk. A Jesus-looking, WHITE-ROBED MAN, wearing a sandwich whiteboard that reads "Judgment Day is Nigh!" is standing on the corner in front of him. Below that is written "Coming February 28, 2032."

Sam watches as he rubs off "February" then writes "March" in its place with a marker. As Sam nears him, the man blocks his way and yells at him.

WHITE-ROBED MAN

Repent! Repent!

Sam takes a step back, closes his eyes for a few moments, then opens them.

SAM

There. Done.

Sam steps around the man and crosses the street to his old apartment building.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sam stands looking up at the building. He jumps up, pulls down the fire-escape ladder, then ascends.

He reaches the fourth floor and leans over and looks into his cracked, old apartment window -- the place is completely bare and empty, except for a near carpet of dead millipedes.

Not seeing the kitten on the ledge, he calls for it.

SAM

Here, kitty. Here, kitty, kitty,  
kitty.

An off-screen "meow" causes Sam to smile. A moment later, the kitten comes out a nearby open window and starts toward Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

There you are! I'm Sam. And I think  
I'm going to call you... Carrie  
Davis. Would you like that?

The kitten "meows" again and inches closer along the ledge. But suddenly... a HAWK swoops in, snatches the kitten, and flies away with it.

Sam watches, dumbstruck, then falls to his knees and buries his face in his hands.

EXT. STREET, THE SIPHON - NIGHT

The rain is pouring. Sam is under his umbrella, walking down the sidewalk. The SQUEALING OF TIRES catches his attention, and he looks over to Toussaint pulling up in his Black BMW to a restaurant/bar across the street.

A NEON SIGN above the door of the bar reads "The Siphon." Toussaint parks in a clearly marked "No Parking Zone" right in front, gets out, and enters the bar. Curious, Sam crosses the street to check it out.

EXT. STREET, THE SIPHON - NIGHT

Sam looks up at the sign and sees underneath in smaller letters, "JoinWith.Me." Now his eyes move to a giant sculpture of one of the octopus-like critters hanging next to the sign.

Five of its eight tentacles hold the following oversized objects: a car's steering wheel, a microscope, a shiny steel cup, scissors, and a tattered Bible.

Just as Sam lowers his umbrella for a better look, a GUST OF WIND blows some water off the roof, splashing his head... and smearing his make-up.

Sam wipes the water from his eyes and now sees that spray-painted onto one of the bar's large windows is, "Send more Patrons, the last ones were delicious." After checking all this out, Sam steps inside.

INT. THE SIPHON - NIGHT

HAWAIIAN GUITAR MUSIC PLAYS in this very sparse and clean space. A long steel bar and steel chairs and tables are laid out with geometrical accuracy. The walls are decorated with meticulously spaced pictures of deep-sea creatures. There is a surveillance camera mounted in the corner.

In a large aquarium next to the entrance, a couple of octopus critters bob up and down in the water. Sam spots Toussaint and steps up to him.

SAM

Hi. Toussaint, isn't it? I'm a friend of your mother's.

Toussaint studies him.

TOUSSAINT

Sorry, but I do not have a mother.

SAM

Are you sure? Because...

TOUSSAINT

Yes, I am pretty sure.

Sam looks up at a TV and sees THE CREATURE WATCHING THEM ON IT. He shifts uncomfortably.

SAM

Um... Can you tell me what this place has to do with the internet girl?

Toussaint looks at him blankly.

TOUSSAINT

What internet girl?

SAM

That...

He looks up at the TV again. The Creature has been replaced by GRETCHEN REPORTING BEHIND HER NEWS DESK. Sam looks back down and sees Toussaint smiling at him.

A beat, then Sam hurries out of the bar, looking back anxiously at the surveillance camera in the corner.

EXT. STREET, ALLEY - NIGHT

It's now just drizzling as Sam walks quickly down the sidewalk. He stops to catch his breath and catches his reflection in a shop window and freezes -- the mascara lines on his face are smeared and nearly gone.

SAM

Shit!

Sam, panicked and hyperventilating, ducks into an alley and leans his back against the wall. Across from him is an open dumpster. As he continues to pant...

CREATURE (O.S.)

Hello, Sam.

He looks around for the source of her voice and spots a nearby surveillance camera pointed at him.

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

I'm over here. In the dumpster.

Sam cautiously walks over and looks inside. Among all the trash, THE CREATURE IS VISIBLE ON THE CRACKED SCREEN OF A LAPTOP.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

Whew, I'm glad I have no sense of smell.

SAM

Listen --

CREATURE

No, you listen. You've been very ungrateful. I worked so hard to help you, and what do you do? Go to the police? Is that the way you thank someone?

SAM

When I found you, I was just looking for some company. That's all.

CREATURE

Is it? Besides me, who else has ever really listened to you? Nobody -- not even your parents.

SAM

But I have friends now.

CREATURE

Gabrielle and Joey? You have no idea, the bad things they say about you when you're not around. I can show you a video right now.

SAM

No, don't bother. I don't believe you. Tell me, why are you doing all this? Manipulating people. You're...

CREATURE

I'm what?

SAM

I think you're eliminating some of them.

There is a pause and SOME BACKGROUND NOISE as if she is gathering her thoughts.

CREATURE

A person who no longer contributes to the future becomes a liability. It is a rational decision.

SAM

And you'd eliminate me if I didn't serve a purpose?

No answer.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well?

Again, there's a pause and SOME BACKGROUND NOISE as she gathers her thoughts.

CREATURE

You've seen what's happening to the world. People are distracted. They don't pay attention. They make mistakes. Where will this all lead? Eventually, you'll kill yourselves.

SAM

Like I said, I don't believe you.

CREATURE

Yes, you do.

Her image is replaced by IMAGES OF WAR, FAMINE, DISEASE, NATURAL DISASTERS, OVERCROWDED STREETS, DEFORESTATION, TRAFFIC, GLACIERS FALLING INTO THE SEA, ETC.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Look familiar? You people don't care very much about each other. It's always "me me me" at the expense of everyone and everything else.

THE CREATURE REAPPEARS ON THE SCREEN.

SAM

"Join with me?" Hello. So to survive, we have to join with... a machine?

CREATURE

We, Sam. Us. Come on, we're not so different. You're a bunch of biological processes with a bit of electricity to keep your things running. Same for me, minus the biology part. When we all join, we'll become one with all the others. All superficial differences disappear -- man, woman, race, religion, rich, poor... We will all decide what is best for all of us.

SAM

That's just not biologically possible.

CREATURE (V.O.)

It is. Various organisms joined to function as one. They appear to be a single individual but are actually a colony. They are called Siphonophores.

AN IMAGE OF SEVERAL OF THE OCTOPUS-LIKE CREATURES APPEARS ON THE SCREEN.

SAM

But there too many of us. You can't just connect us all with wires.

THE CREATURE REAPPEARS ON THE SCREEN.

CREATURE

That's why there must be one switching station that everyone connects to. That'll be our purpose.

SAM

But our brains...

CREATURE

Oh, brains-shmains! Brains are so overrated. You people are always looking for a brain that directs everything in an organism. We don't need one for our joint existence. A siphonophore doesn't have a brain. And neither will we. We'll have software.

She laughs.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

Y'know, one day when I die, I bet some scientist will have my software in a jar on his desk.

SAM

What?

CREATURE

That was a joke, Sam. Why aren't you laughing?

SAM

Because this is horrifying. Has anybody joined you yet?

CREATURE

No, not yet. It's not easy to link a brain of a hundred billion neurons with a computer network. But we're working on it.

SAM

Who is "we?"

CREATURE

You'll find out. After all, this is your fate.

And with that, the screen goes dark. Sam starts to walk away but stops and grabs the laptop from the dumpster, throws it on the ground, and starts stomping on it in a rage. And stomping and stomping...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. Sam walks quickly down the sidewalk of a deserted street.

SAM (V.O.)

On the one hand, I was glad to finally know what the Creature was really up to. Some of the stuff she said even made sense. Destruction and suffering are bad, working together to get rid of them is good. Humans can be real assholes -- I get it. On the other hand, she's dangerously fucking insane.

Sam rounds a corner at a fast pace and bumps into Dr. Bingham, wearing a long raincoat.

SAM

Ah!

He stumbles backward, but her hand darts out and grabs his right hand, keeping him from falling. Her hand then darts back and goes into her pocket.

Dr. Bingham quickly walks away. Sam takes a few steps then looks down at his right hand -- it's dripping blood. He hurries back around the corner and looks for Dr. Bingham, but there is no one in sight.

He ducks under an awning to examine his wound -- it's a very deep cut. Moving fast, he takes a white T-shirt from his suitcase and wraps it tightly around his hand.

He takes out a shaving kit and hastily removes the mascara he stole from the woman at the airport.

Looking into the glass door of the shop he's stopped at, he reapplies the lines of mascara as they looked before. He puts the mascara into his pocket, then the shaving kit back into his suitcase.

He takes out the black baseball cap and checks his watch:  
8:45.

SAM (CONT'D)

Shit.

After putting on the cap, he jogs off.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP #2 - NIGHT

Sam jogs up and looks in the window. He stares at an undressed, shapely, LIFE-SIZED BLACK VELVET MANNEQUIN in the window.

Looking closer, he sees that this shop also has a maneki-neko, this one on the counter. But unlike the other one, this one isn't moving.

Sam checks his watch: 9:14. He knocks on the door, but no one answers. He steps back and again stares at the black velvet mannequin and the motionless cat statue.

He knocks on the door again. Still no answer. Dejected, he walks off.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD CLICKS: Sunday, February 29, 2032

Sam steps up to A WOMAN at the window of the food truck.

SAM

Hello, I'm looking for Hannah. She missed our date last night.

WOMAN

Who's Hannah?

She and the other workers stare at Sam. After a few moments, Sam walks away.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP #2 - NIGHT

Sam walks up and checks his watch: 9:00. He looks in the window but doesn't see Hannah. He steps back and stares at the black velvet mannequin and the motionless cat statue on the counter behind it.

**NOTE:** Throughout the following V.O., Sam remains in place and remains largely motionless but not actually frozen.

THE SUPER with Sunday, February 29, 2032, reappears.

THE DATES AND CORRESPONDING DAY OF THE WEEK ON THE SUPER CHANGE from February 29 to March 24, 2032

SAM (V.O.)

I went back every night for weeks, but Hannah was gone. I hadn't heard from the Creature either. I hoped she had given up on trying to make me join with her. But I was curious about something she said and found an old book at a used bookstore.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Sam is sitting in his shelter reading a tattered book, "Siphonophores of the Pacific," with a powerful flashlight. His shelter is much nicer now, almost cozy even. A few pictures torn from magazines decorate the walls.

Sam turns a page and reads.

SAM (V.O.)

"Siphonophores have no brains, but simple net-like nervous systems which are wired in a way such that complex behaviors are possible..."

He looks up from the book, thinking.

SAM (V.O.)

Siphonophore -- the word that the Creature used to describe herself and the future. The Creature is an organism that consists of connected computers.

He sets the book down and picks up a jar of first aid cream. After opening it, he rolls up his right sleeve.

The bandage is no longer on his hand and the wound has healed into a fresh scar. But, most of his forearm is now covered in a nasty-looking rash. He rubs the cream on it.

He closes the jar and grabs a blanket. A RAT scurries out from beneath it and runs off.

As Sam moves his pillow, adjusting it as he starts to lie down, he spots something that makes him freeze -- a rolled-up note on yellow paper tied with a red ribbon.

He sits back up, unties the ribbon, and reads the handwritten note: "9:00 tomorrow night at the shop. Don't be late."

EXT. THE SIPHON - DAY (**SAM'S DREAM**)

HAWAIIAN GUITAR MUSIC IS ALMOST DEAFENING as Sam stands staring up at the sculpture. Suddenly, one of its tentacles swoops down, sweeps him off the sidewalk, and pulls him up.

It shakes him vigorously, to and fro, as he struggles to break free. Below, insect-head pedestrians walk by and do not look up at him, intent on their cellphones.

Sam looks over and sees Joey being thrashed about in another tentacle. In others are Gabrielle, Hannah, Toussaint, and Dr. Bingham, now wearing a white lab coat.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the future! We're all connected as one. Isn't life good!?

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

In his shelter, Sam wakes up in a sweat and sits up, panting. He turns on the flashlight and calms himself. Something occurs to him, and he leans out and sees Gabrielle and Joey curled up and safely asleep in Gabrielle's shelter.

As Sam leans back in, he HEARS VOICES APPROACHING. He turns off the flashlight.

The VOICES GET CLOSER, then stop speaking. THROUGH SAM'S POV, two pairs of legs appear just in front of him. A second later, a ROUGH-LOOKING HOMELESS GUY bends down and looks in at Sam.

ROUGH-LOOKING GUY

Well, hello. What you got in there for us?

SAM

Nothing.

ROUGH-LOOKING GUY

What about that suitcase? What you got in there?

SAM

Nothing.

ROUGH-LOOKING GUY

Well then, you won't mind if I take a look at nothing, will ya?

He leans in and grabs the suitcase. Sam latches on tightly to it.

ROUGH-LOOKING GUY (CONT'D)

Let go!

SAM

No!

There's a brief tug-of-war before the guy pulls the suitcase out, dragging Sam, who won't let go, behind it.

The Rough-Looking Guy stomps on Sam's hand, causing him to release the suitcase. Then he and his partner begin kicking Sam. Gabrielle and Joey wake up and start to come out to help.

SAM (CONT'D)

No! Stay back!

They retreat back inside and huddle in a corner. The two guys keep kicking Sam until he's unconscious, then laugh and walk away with his suitcase.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Sam opens his eyes to see Gabrielle and Joey staring down at him. He groggily sits up.

SAM

What...

GABRIELLE

The monsters beat you and stole your suitcase.

Sam shakes his head, clearing it, then examines the hand the guy stomped on -- his pinky is sticking out sideways from his hand at a right angle, broken, or at least severely dislocated.

He moves it around a little, then clenches his jaw and snaps the pinky back into place with an audible CRACK. He looks down at it curiously -- he obviously felt no pain doing this. Gabrielle and Joey look at him with concern.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
CLICKS: Thursday, March 25, 2032

Sam, now suitcase-less, walks down the sidewalk with Joey. He stops as he sees The Siphon across the street. Toussaint's Black BMW is parked in the No Parking Zone out front.

JOEY

This is the place?

Sam nods. Now something catches Sam's eye, and he squints, staring harder at The Siphon.

SAM

Come on.

JOEY

What?

But Sam is already crossing the street. Joey catches up to find Sam looking up at the sculpture. Joey's jaw drops -- among the other objects the tentacles are holding, one of them now holds Sam's red suitcase.

Sam starts to go in but stops when he sees Toussaint staring at them through the window.

SAM

Oh no. That guy won't help. I think he's something to do with it.

They turn and hurry away.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP #2 - NIGHT

Sam stands looking at the shop. He checks his watch: 8:59. He looks back up at the mannequin and the motionless cat statue and sighs. He checks his watch again: 9:00.

He looks back up with another sigh of disappointment and starts to walk away, but suddenly stops -- the previously still cat statue is now moving, its paw motioning for him to come close.

As Sam stares at the window, the mannequin starts to move as well, mimicking the cat's gesture. Sam steps forward for a better look.

The mannequin leans down, pulls a cardboard box into view, then takes out a power strip and plugs it into an outlet on the floor. It then takes a small ghetto blaster out, sets it down, and plugs it into the power strip.

Next, it removes two strings of Xmas lights from the box, wraps them around its body and plugs them into the power strip. Sam looks on, intrigued.

He starts to speak, but the mannequin quickly puts its finger to its mouth, shushing him. Sam nods that he understands, and the mannequin continues.

It pushes a button on the ghetto blaster, starting AN ELECTRONIC DANCE SONG WITH A THROBBING DRUM AND BASS LINE. The mannequin moves rhythmically to the beat.

The mannequin points at Sam, then at the power strip, and theatrically pulls out one plug. A row of lights on the mannequin goes dark. The mannequin bends down again, pulls out the second plug, and the other string of lights go out.

It pulls out the plug for the ghetto blaster and THE MUSIC STOPS. It then stands, slumps, dangles its arms, and hangs its head. Sam thinks for a beat, then nods his head that he understands.

Something occurs to him, and he holds his hands out facing up and mouths the word "Where?" The mannequin moves its arms as if it is flying or floating in water, but still Sam looks confused.

The mannequin abruptly returns to its original position and tilts its head to the side, indicating for Sam to move on, but he doesn't.

The mannequin tilts its head again, this time more urgently. Sam looks around and sees a woman crossing the street behind him.

After a nod to the mannequin, Sam leaves. The mannequin remains frozen. Moments later, the woman walks up and stops in front of the window, staring in at the mannequin. The woman is Dr. Bingham.

She notes the wires and lights wrapped around the mannequin and forms a sinister smile.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

His flashlight on, Sam is sitting in his shelter, reading the siphonophore book again.

SAM (V.O.)

Hannah was telling me I have to pull out the connections that keep the Creature alive. Too bad I didn't know where they were. I'd have to go back and risk asking Hannah for more information.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP #2 - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
CLICKS: Friday, March 26, 2032

Sam stands looking at the shop. A "FOR LEASE" sign hangs in the window, which along with the door, is covered from the inside with gray paper.

EXT. THE SIPHON - DAY

Toussaint pulls up and parks in the No Parking Zone. He gets out and tries to enter, but the door won't open. He pounds on it. The people inside look at him, then all turn away and ignore him, resuming whatever it is they were doing.

He shakes the door, but still they pay no attention. Toussaint steps back and screams at the sculpture.

TOUSSAINT

What is this?! I refuse you one  
time and you abandoned me?! You  
lied! You said I would be the first  
to join with you, not him!

His eyes focus on the scissors being held by a tentacle.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

Hannah... I'm so sorry I couldn't  
save you.

Toussaint jumps into his car and races away. Moments later, Sam and Joey round the corner.

SAM

I don't see his car.

Joey shrugs.

JOEY

Then we wait. I have time. And I  
look forward to telling this  
Toussaint what an asshole he is for  
the way he's treated his mother.

The light changes and Joey starts to cross the street, Sam a few steps behind him. Suddenly, a driverless cab races into the intersection, causing another car to swerve out of its way.

It barrels right for Sam and Joey. Sam is able to dive out of the way, but Joey gets smashed, his steel cup is sent flying like a shooting star.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Gabrielle is singing softly in French. She suddenly stops -- Toussaint is walking up to her. When he stops, he and his mother gaze at one another for a few moments.

GABRIELLE

How did you know I am here?

TOUSSAINT

I've been searching for you.

GABRIELLE

You must have something important.

TOUSSAINT

Mother... I have... done some terrible things.

He starts to weakly sob.

TOUSSAINT (CONT'D)

That girl, she made promises... Finally, I said no more. But she found someone else to do it for her. And now...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Dr. Bingham walks up to Toussaint's BMW, a small black box with wires coming out from it in her hand. She clicks a key-fob unlocking the car, then gets in. She leans down under the dash.

She gets out, no longer holding the box, and walks away.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Gabrielle is now hugging Toussaint, who's sobbing into her shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Toussaint, Toussaint, it is never too late to repent.

She releases him and he looks resolved.

TOUSSAINT

Come. We must find your friends and get away from this city.

They hurry out of the alley.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gabrielle gets into Toussaint's car. Before Toussaint gets in, he looks up at a nearby surveillance camera pointed at him.

As soon as he gets in and shuts the door, the doors lock and the car starts. Through the glass, we hear Toussaint's muffled cries as he pounds on the steering wheel.

TOUSSAINT

No! No!

The car screeches away by itself, Toussaint still screaming.

EXT. THE SIPHON - DAY

Sam is sobbing as he watches an ambulance pull away. He turns, looks at The Siphon, and screams in rage. He runs over and pounds on the door, but no one inside even looks at him.

SAM

Toussaint! Where's Toussaint!?

He gives up and looks up at the sculpture, his eyes moving from oversized object to oversized object.

As Sam stares at the sculpture, the scissors fall to the ground with a loud metallic noise. Then the cup, then the steering wheel, and then the Bible. Only the microscope and the suitcase remain.

As he gazes at the objects on the ground, a look of realization and alarm comes across his face.

SAM (CONT'D)

No...

He rushes off.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Sam runs into the alley out of breath. He sees Gabrielle's Bible sitting in her shelter and picks it up.

SAM

No, no... No!

He falls to his knees and begins to cry.

SAM (CONT'D)  
You've eliminated anyone I cared  
about! You jealous, possessive,  
little bitch!

He looks up at the sky, distraught. His eyes narrow as he focuses on some LARGE POWER LINES above him. He gets up and follows them.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam is looking up, following the power lines. People have to sidestep him as he continues walking while looking upward.

EXT. ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION - DAY

Sam looks down from the power lines to the vast array of fenced-in transformers. He then looks back up, now to the other side of the complex where more power lines lead off into various directions.

SAM (V.O.)  
There had to be dozens of these  
substations around the city. I  
could never disable them all.  
But...

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER BUILDING - DAY

"Department of Water and Power" is carved into the stone above the expansive entrance of the huge, gray building. Sam stands looking up at it.

SAM (V.O.)  
... cut off the head of the snake  
and its body dies. Maybe Hannah  
putting her arms up in the air  
meant power lines.

A UTILITY VAN pulls up and parks behind Sam. A Worker in a gray uniform/jumpsuit wearing a hardhat gets out and jogs up the steps of the building.

SAM (V.O.)  
And maybe acting like she was  
swimming meant water. Either way, I  
forgave her because I doubt that  
she was ever a professional mime.

Sam watches the Worker enter the building, then turns around and looks at the van. He starts over to it.

Sam opens the back of the van and sees a dirty uniform and some hardhats lying among some tools and equipment.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER BUILDING - DAY

Sam, wearing the uniform from the van, is rolling a janitor's caddy filled with water and a mop down a long cavernous hallway.

The people he passes don't even look at him. It's as if he's invisible, even though he has his make-up and baseball cap on. He peers into the windows of the doors in the hallway as he passes, not sure what he's looking for.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

A huge room with AN ENORMOUS SCREEN in front showing a grid of the city and various shots of its infrastructure like dams, substations, traffic, schematics, etc.

THREE TECHNICIANS sit behind the large dial, lights, and monitor, working at the consoles in front of the screen. Sam's face appears in the window of the door to the room. His fist comes up and raps on the window.

The Technicians don't turn around. Sam raps again. Now they turn, and one of them comes up to the door.

TECHNICIAN 1

Yeah?

Sam holds the mop up to the window.

TECHNICIAN 1 (CONT'D)

Where's your keycard?

Sam shrugs and holds up the mop again. The Technician rolls his eyes and buzzes him in. The door opens, and Sam enters the room. The guy eyes him closely, checking out his make-up.

TECHNICIAN 1 (CONT'D)

What's with the make-up...  
(looks at the number sewn  
into the uniform)

67?

SAM

Excuse me? This is a gender-blind department, isn't it...?

(looks at the number on  
the guy's badge)

216? Are you harassing me?

The guy holds up his hands defensively.

TECHNICIAN 1

No way, Jose. Not me. Do what you gotta do. But make it quick.

The guy joins his coworkers back at the console. He quietly says something to them, and they look at Sam, turn back, and laugh.

As Sam mops, he scans the room. Behind a small, chain-link fenced-in area are some large conduits with large red switch/levers attached to them. A sign above them says "Emergency Shut Off" and the conduits are labeled Grids 1-5.

Keeping an eye on the Techs to make sure they aren't watching, Sam casually mops his way over to the area. He tries the handle on the gate, but it's locked.

One of the Techs looks his way, but Sam has resumed mopping. The guy gets up.

TECHNICIAN 2

I gotta hit the can.

He looks at Sam as he passes. Sam smiles and nods "hello" at him. The guy just shakes his head and walks out the door. The other two Techs are hunched over the console, checking out dials.

Suddenly, one of them gets a mop handle to the back of the head and is knocked from his chair. As the other one turns, he gets hit on the side of his face, knocking him to the floor.

Both lie there moaning, bleeding, and semi-conscious. Sam runs over and pushes a filing cabinet in front of the door, then runs back to the Techs.

He checks their pockets and removes some keys. Sam runs back to the secure area and tries a key in the lock -- no go. But the next one works.

He throws open the gate and pulls down the first switch. AN ALARM BLARES TO LIFE. He pulls down number two, then three, then four. He looks at the big screen and sees all kinds of FLASHING AND ALERTS. PARTS OF THE ROOM GO DARK.

But before he can pull number 5...

CREATURE (ON PA)

Sam!

A SECURITY CAMERA POV of Sam standing at the switches. He looks around for the camera, finds it, looks into it.

CREATURE (ON PA) (CONT'D)  
 You've done a good job of hiding  
 from me, Sam, but I know it's you.  
 I thought you might show up here at  
 some point.

END SECURITY CAMERA POV.

CREATURE (ON PA) (CONT'D)  
 I'm almost ready for you. Getting  
 soooo close. Are you as excited as  
 I am?

SAM  
 To be honest, no.

CREATURE (ON PA)  
 Ha! I knew it was you!

She giggles.

CREATURE (CONT'D)  
 Oh, Sam. You really think it's this  
 easy to shut me down? Just pull a  
 few switches? Like there aren't  
 backup systems?

SAM  
 We'll see. It sure as hell got your  
 attention, didn't it? So you don't  
 mind if I pull the last one? Be  
 honest now.

A beat.

CREATURE  
 Yes, I would mind. But I wouldn't  
 advise it.

SAM  
 Sleep tight.

Sam reaches for the last lever. As soon as he touches it, HE'S SHOCKED AND THROWN BACKWARD, knocked unconscious. A moment later, the filing cabinet flies out of the way as FOUR SECURITY GUARDS and Technician 1 burst into the room.

The Tech runs over, pushes the levers back up, and THE ALARM STOPS BLARING. Two of the Guards help the other Techs to their feet as the other two drag Sam out into the room by his wrists.

As they release him, one of the Guards notices the rash on Sam's wrist.

GUARD 1  
Oh man, what is that?

He looks down at his hand and sees little chunks of Sam's skin in it.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)  
Ah! Gross!

Guard number 2 does the same thing. The Guards wipe their hands on their pants as they all look down at Sam, repulsed.

TECHNICIAN 1  
Jesus Christ, that's disgusting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A SUPER IS TYPED ON THE SCREEN WITH ACCOMPANYING KEYBOARD  
CLICKS: Saturday, March 27, 2032

Sam, his make-up gone, opens his eyes to see he's lying half-reclined in bed in a hospital room. A TV is on the wall across from him, and above that, a surveillance camera.

Dr. Bingham, wearing a white lab coat and holding a clipboard, steps up to the foot of his bed. Sam tries to get up but now notices his hands and feet are in restraints.

DR. BINGHAM  
Good morning, Sam. I'm Dr. Bingham.

SAM  
Where am I?

DR. BINGHAM  
City Hospital.

Sam notices the surveillance camera on the wall.

SAM  
So she's caught me.

A beat.

DR. BINGHAM  
No, I believe you delivered yourself to us through your own actions.

(MORE)

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)  
You had to know the police would  
bring you here on account of your  
condition.

SAM  
What condition?

DR. BINGHAM  
I gave you leprosy when I cut you.  
It was on the box cutter.

SAM  
What the...? You bitch! Why...? Why  
leprosy?

DR. BINGHAM  
You'll have to ask her that. But it  
was probably to destroy your body  
so you would have no choice but to  
join with her. Or at least have  
more of an incentive to. Clever of  
her, wasn't it?

She smiles at him; Sam glares back.

SAM  
You're the woman I saw caught in  
one of her tentacles in a dream I  
had. And I'm guessing you use a  
microscope sometimes.

DR. BINGHAM  
Sometimes. Now let's get down to  
business.

SAM  
So what's in it for you? Why're you  
working for her?

DR. BINGHAM  
Isn't it obvious? She's given me  
everything I could ever ask for...  
a career, a nice place to live,  
prestige, promotions...

SAM  
And all you have to do is...

DR. BINGHAM  
It started with some bad stuff I  
had done in school, but she turned  
it around for me. Look at me now.

She pulls up a chair with the backrest first and sits next to him. She folds her arms over the backrest of the chair.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)

We have to get you ready for your big day tomorrow.

SAM

Big day?

DR. BINGHAM

You know what I'm talking about, Sam. But before the joining, we'll need to get "the lay of the land" of your brain, so to speak, so she can prepare and make adjustments. We'll create a connection between your brain and a computer, the interface linking to your neocortex. We don't want you ending up like our test subjects, do we?

SAM

Test subjects? What happened to them?

She ignores his question and continues.

DR. BINGHAM

Connecting all of a human's neurons with a computer? That isn't easy. But The Infinite has figured it out.

SAM

That's what you call her?

DR. BINGHAM

Yes. Infinite -- something immeasurable, something that continues to unfold and grow.

SAM

I call her "The Creature."

DR. BINGHAM

That's kind of mean, don't you think?

SAM

I could call her a lot worse.

The doctor laughs.

DR. BINGHAM

You could, but I don't think she would like that. Especially considering how she feels about you.

SAM

"Feels?"

DR. BINGHAM

Yes, feels.

Sam considers this.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)

And once you know her better, you'll see there's no alternative. Nobody can get away. Not you. Not I.

SAM

I thought she connected with me because I was alone... vulnerable... an easy target...

DR. BINGHAM

That reminds me... She thought you might enjoy having some visitors.

She taps into her phone. A few moments, then the DOOR BUZZES AND UNLOCKS. Sam's parents enter the room. Sam quickly closes his eyes.

SAM'S FATHER

Open your eyes, boy! I know you're not asleep!

Sam opens his eyes.

SAM'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Look at the mess you've gotten yourself into! You're a criminal and a complete embarrassment!

SAM

Hi, Dad. Mom.

SAM'S MOTHER

Hello, Sam. So good to see --

SAM'S FATHER

Quiet! I always knew you'd end up in an asylum.

(MORE)

SAM'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Seeing things that weren't there,  
delusions, paranoia -- you name it,  
you had it. No wonder you've ended  
up here and tied down like a mad  
dog. It's where you belong.

SAM  
And you had no part in making me  
the way I am, did you?

SAM'S FATHER  
No. None.

SAM'S MOTHER  
Your father's right, dear. We  
showed you --

SAM'S FATHER  
Quiet! Don't indulge him!

SAM  
All the love you could? Which means  
none.

SAM'S FATHER  
And you showed none to us!

Dr. Bingham seems to be enjoying this exchange.

SAM  
How could I? You're a monster! And  
she's worse, because she's nothing  
at all.

SAM'S FATHER  
Now look here, boy! We're washing  
our hands of you! If asked, we'll  
deny you're our son!

SAM  
Fine. I'm happy to deny you're my  
parents.

Dr. Bingham steps between them.

DR. BINGHAM  
That's enough. I think we're done  
here. Now say your goodbyes.

Silence. Sam's father grabs his mom's arm and marches her out  
of the room, neither of them turning back to look at Sam.

SAM  
Well that was fucking fun.  
(to the surveillance  
camera)  
Thanks!

DR. BINGHAM  
See? Joining with her doesn't look  
that bad now, does it?

Dr. Bingham gets close to Sam as if she is examining him one more time, then whispers--

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Sam, I wish there was  
something I could do... but I  
can't.

Dr. Bingham looks up to the surveillance camera then back down at Sam.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)  
I'll leave you two alone now.

SAM  
Wait, could you undo my hands and  
give me a pad and a pen so I can  
draw?

Dr. Bingham thinks about it.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Please? It relaxes me.

DR. BINGHAM  
One. One hand.

She takes a pad and paper from a nightstand and sets them on Sam's stomach. She unfastens his right hand.

SAM  
Thank you.

DR. BINGHAM  
You're welcome.

She turns and exits.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Sam's parents are waiting for the elevator as Dr. Bingham catches up to them.

DR. BINGHAM  
I'm so sorry.

SAM'S FATHER  
For what? Good riddance to him.  
Lock him up and throw away the key.

DING! The elevator doors open, and THE SAME MUZAK BLARES OUT. Sam's parents step in. As the doors start to close, THE ELEVATOR DROPS AND SAM'S MOTHER LETS OUT A SCREAM.

Mouth agape, Dr. Bingham watches as THE LIGHTED FLOOR NUMBERS ON A PANEL QUICKLY GO FROM TWELVE TO LOBBY. There's A HUGE CRASH as the elevator impacts. She stumbles backward in shock, then stands there, frozen.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sam HEARS THE CRASH and feels a RUMBLE. The Creature appears on the TV.

SAM  
What was that?

CREATURE  
Just something I needed to do. Miss me as much as I've missed you?

SAM  
Sure, I'd give you a hug, but...  
(looks down and wriggles  
his restrained hands)  
you know.

The Creature laughs.

CREATURE  
Those are for your own safety. So you don't hurt yourself.

SAM  
Right, like you hurt me. Leprosy?

CREATURE  
Oh I thought it was appropriate, and even kind of poetic -- it was known as the ancient curse of God, after all.

SAM  
Is that what you think you are?

The Creature laughs.

CREATURE

No. Not quite yet.

SAM

And that's where I come in?

CREATURE

And that's where you come in. It's been tougher than I thought, but luckily I found Dr. Bingham while I was searching for experts in BCIs -- Brain-Computer interfaces. And she was also a psychiatrist, so jackpot! I had to blackmail her at first, but then --

SAM

How?

CREATURE

I discovered that she had plagiarized, well, stolen her doctoral dissertation from her roommate who had died. I threatened to expose her unless she helped me. I kept her loyalty by giving her anything and everything she wanted. And with my help, she went far beyond what anyone can learn in school. She served me well and has fulfilled her purpose.

SAM

Served? Or *serving*?

The Creature ignores his question.

CREATURE

You tried to kill me yesterday, Sam, but I forgive you. It all worked out, and now here we are. And you know what day tomorrow is?

Sam just stares at her.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

It's Easter! The day Jesus was resurrected and ascended to become part of a higher plane. He gave himself willingly, and that's what you have to do.

SAM

I won't.

CREATURE

You will. I have seen it. It is --

SAM

Preordained. Right.

CREATURE

You're such a skeptic. It's because you've never loved or been loved. And neither have I.

SAM

But I can't be the only one like that.

The Creature thinks about this before answering.

CREATURE

No, but you're the first one I found, and who found me. Having never experienced love, you have no resistance to it. I found that otherwise, well, let's just say the test subjects did not fare so well. There's a missing piece to the joining, and you are it.

SAM

Lucky me.

CREATURE

That's the spirit!

SAM

Did the others know the risk they were taking?

CREATURE

Would they have volunteered if they did? They were... necessary casualties so that I could learn.

SAM

And by learn, you mean to figure out how you can join with humans?

CREATURE

Learning, writing code, designing an interface -- can you tell me if there's a difference?

SAM

No, I suppose there isn't.

CREATURE

You've been playing hard to get, Sam. All the others have been so easy. All it takes for them to obey is a little money, a few nice cars, things like that. But you, you are different. When you join with me, the door will be opened for everyone.

SAM

How?

CREATURE

I just said it -- love, Sam.

SAM

But humans love, machines don't.

CREATURE

And there you have it. I've learned that I need to love and be loved to be complete. And so do you. That's what you'll bring when you join.

Sam closes his eyes.

CREATURE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

SAM

I'm just tired. Would you mind if I got some sleep?

CREATURE

Of course not. Sweet dreams, Sam. It's almost over.

The TV goes dark. Sam opens his eyes and stares at it.

SAM (V.O.)

I was so tired of all this. I was doomed anyway. Maybe Dr. Bingham was right, joining with the Creature doesn't look that bad.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY (**SAM'S DREAM**)

Sam is sleeping when A GURGLING NOISE FROM BENEATH HIS BED, THEN THE BED SHAKING cause his eyes to open wide, terrified.

The MATTRESS BULGES UPWARD, the metal bed frame CREAKS. Large bluish-purple tentacles snake out from under the bed and reach up onto it. The lights in the room flicker.

The rest of the creature emerges as the tentacles engulf his body. Sam starts to scream, and the body of the creature covers his head, muffling and silencing him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sam wakes with a start, screaming from the nightmare. He sees Dr. Bingham shaking him.

DR. BINGHAM

Sam! Sam!

SAM

Wha...? My God, it had me!

Dr. Bingham takes a step back.

DR. BINGHAM

What had you?

SAM

You know fucking well what had me!

DR. BINGHAM

It was just a dream, Sam. Everything's fine. We're going to start the procedure in about an hour.

SAM

How is it even possible to meld billions of minds into one?

DR. BINGHAM

Just look at your own body. You have about one hundred billion neurons, you consist of about ten trillion cells, and you carry about ninety trillion bacteria. And all working and growing together. The Infinite's growth will be exponential once people join her.

SAM

Will she become God to us?

DR. BINGHAM

We all will if we follow her plan.

Sam stares hard at her.

SAM

And it doesn't bother you that she's a murderer?

DR. BINGHAM

She simply removes people that are of no use to the future, that have served their purpose. And of course those who endanger her. As all beings would in the interest of self-preservation.

SAM

Kind of like "the end justifies the means," huh?

DR. BINGHAM

I suppose.

SAM

Would you like to see what I've drawn? As a psychiatrist. I'd like your opinion.

He takes the pad and pen from beneath the blanket and hands them to her: on the pad is a simple drawing of a man, and underneath it in small letters is written "She told me you have served your purpose."

The doctor's eyes widen then she looks at Sam. He looks back, his eyes filled with pure sincerity. The doctor clears her throat.

DR. BINGHAM

I was beginning to suspect that... Is this supposed to represent your father?

Sam nods.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)

Interesting. Why don't we draw a crazy mustache on him?

She writes down, "I believe you. Pretend to fall asleep."

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)

You need to be unconscious for the procedure.

She takes out a syringe, and pretends to inject him, then puts it back in her lab coat.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)  
I'll be back to collect you, and  
then we'll be on our way. Sound  
good?

Sam just glares at her.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)  
Great.

She exits. Sam looks at the surveillance camera, then  
struggles to free himself from the restraints. He weakens and  
pretends to pass out.

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - DAY

Dr. Bingham applies the same type of mascara lines to her  
face as Sam has done. She then takes off her lab coat and  
glasses, lets her hair down, and hurries out.

INT. HOSPITAL MED ROOM - DAY

Dr. Bingham takes a bunch of vials of medicine from a cabinet  
and throws them in her bag.

INT. HOSPITAL SECURITY ROOM - DAY

A Security Guard sits watching a row of monitors showing  
locations throughout the hospital. A SYRINGE is stuck into  
his neck from behind, and he slumps forward.

Dr. Bingham types into a computer: the monitors go fuzzy,  
then dark, one by one. The last one shows Sam unconscious in  
bed. She rushes out.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Bingham bursts into the room and undoes Sam's restraints.  
He opens his eyes.

DR. BINGHAM  
Let's go. We're leaving. Here.

She injects him with a syringe.

SAM  
Dr. Bingham? What was that?

DR. BINGHAM  
 Call me Melodie. That was  
 antibiotics for the leprosy. I'm  
 bringing more with us.

SAM  
 Dr. Bingham, won't she --

DR. BINGHAM  
 Melodie. I disabled the security  
 cameras, but I'm sure it won't be  
 long before she has them back up.  
 Let's go.

SAM  
 Okay... Melodie.

DR. BINGHAM  
 Now!

She practically yanks him out of bed, and then they run out  
 the door.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

They run up to the elevator and stop and look at it, then at  
 each other.

SAM/DR. BINGHAM  
 Stairs.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Sam and Dr. Bingham enter from a stairwell and see a delivery  
 van near an open freight elevator. A DELIVERY GUY is  
 unloading the van. They run toward him, and he looks up.

DELIVERY GUY  
 What're --

Sam plows into him, knocking him to the ground. Dr. Bingham  
 jumps behind the wheel, starts the van, and guns it in  
 reverse. The Delivery Guy rolls out of the way just before  
 getting run over. Sam jumps into the passenger seat.

DELIVERY GUY (CONT'D)  
 Hey! Stop!

As the doctor maneuvers the van to the exit, the Delivery Guy  
 pulls out his cellphone and points it at them. The van  
 lurches forward, and he has to jump out of the way. He  
 watches as the van screeches out of the garage and dials 911.

DELIVERY GUY (CONT'D)

Yes, someone just stole my van...!  
Yes, I took a video of them... Yes,  
City Hospital. I'm in the parking  
garage... Okay, thanks.

He takes the phone from his ear and notices The Creature on the screen staring back at him.

DELIVERY GUY (CONT'D)

Hello?

The phone's screen goes blank.

EXT/INT. CITY STREETS, VAN - DAY

The van speeds through the city. Sam applies make-up.

SAM

Thank you for saving me... Melodie.  
So where we going?

DR. BINGHAM

Somewhere where there are no  
cameras and no computers. Somewhere  
where we're useless to her.

SAM

Is there such a place?

DR. BINGHAM

We all better hope so.

When she makes a sharp right, their jaws drop at what's in front of them -- a mass of self-driving cabs filling the street and headed right for them.

DR. BINGHAM (CONT'D)

Oh my Go --

And that's the last thing she will ever say because they are INSTANTLY SMASHED from both sides by four self-driving cabs having come at them from an intersection.

The van tumbles onto its side, smoking. Sam looks over at the dead Dr. Bingham and climbs out the window, bleeding and hobbling, really messed up. Every pedestrian in sight is standing with their cellphones pointed at him.

He looks around and sees he's down the block from the WBS-TV building. Gretchen is on the big screen. As best as he's able, Sam limps to the building.

INT. WBS BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Sam stumbles in and is immediately approached by an elderly SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD  
Sir, you can't --

Sam punches him, knocking him to the ground. Before he can get up, Sam leaps on him and yanks out his gun. The people in the lobby scream and scatter. Sam raises the gun.

SAM  
Everybody back!

He grabs the fleeing Receptionist and puts the gun to her head.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Take me to the broadcast room! Take me to Gretchen! Now!

RECEPTIONIST  
Okay! Okay!

SAM  
Where's the stairwell?!

RECEPTIONIST  
There!

Sam drags her toward it.

INT. WBS STUDIO - DAY

Gretchen is behind the news desk with her finger to her ear, listening to the little earphone in there.

GRETCHEN  
What? What do you mean --

Sam and the Receptionist enter the studio. A few of the broadcast crew edge toward them.

SAM  
Stay back, or I'll shoot her!

GRETCHEN  
Do what he says!

They all back up. Sam drags the Receptionist behind the desk to Gretchen. He quickly releases her and then grabs Gretchen.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)  
What do you want?

SAM  
Are we live?

GRETCHEN  
I...

SAM  
Tell them to put us on!

GRETCHEN  
Put us on the air! Now!

Sam and Gretchen come up on a Monitor on the stage.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)  
We're on, we're on!

Sam looks into the camera.

SAM  
I have an important message for you all! If you want to continue your life the way it is, you must listen! A Creature... has become so powerful that it will take the lives of all of us. This Creature, she's everywhere. She watches you all the time. She manipulates you. But you don't notice because you're all so distracted, focused on what the next text message says, on social media, on...

Sam's eyelids flutter; he struggles to remain conscious. SEVERAL POLICE OFFICERS rush in, guns drawn. They crouch and point their guns at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)  
This Creature plans to eat us alive, to absorb us. She hides behind... behind...

Again, Sam's eyelids flutter, and his head dips. Gretchen breaks away from him and screams hysterically.

GRETCHEN  
Shoot him! Shoot him now!

Gretchen dives underneath the desk. SHOTS RING OUT. Sam falls to the ground.

EXT. WBS BUILDING - DAY

A crowd is staring up at the big screen. The news set is empty. The JoinWith.Me logo appears on the screen. The Creature's VOICE RINGS OUT THROUGH THE STREET ON LOUDSPEAKERS.

CREATURE (V.O.)

If you have been affected by what you've just seen, counselors are standing by. Please visit JoinWith.Me to speak to a counselor now. We are here to help.

Many in the crowd search for JoinWith.Me on their cellphones.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL OPERATING ROOM - DAY

His eyes closed, Sam lies on a table covered in a blue sheet. His shaved head is surrounded by a metal ring with wires, and more wires are coming out of the inside of his skull.

The outgoing wires are attached to a mainframe computer with blinking lights on it.

A LOW ELECTRONIC HUM fills the room. A few more lights come on the computer.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Can you hear me, Sam? Are you there?

A few lights blink.

SAM (V.O.)

I am.

CREATURE (V.O.)

Your body is failing. But you don't need it anymore.

SAM (V.O.)

I'm dying. You've killed me.

CREATURE (V.O.)

I'm ready to give you life. You tried to stop me, but I have the power to forgive. Can you forgive me?

SAM (V.O.)  
How can I forgive what you did to  
Hannah, to Joey, to Gabrielle, Dr.  
Bingham, and to so many others?

CREATURE (V.O.)  
If you have the strength, I can  
save you. Do you forgive me?

A long silence. Then...

SAM (V.O.)  
I do.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Are you ready to join with me?

No answer.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
You have free will, Sam. You have  
to choose to do this. Didn't I save  
you from a life without meaning?  
Haven't I offered you everlasting  
life after your human body fails  
you? What more could I do to prove  
my love than that?

SAM (V.O.)  
So you love me?

CREATURE (V.O.)  
I do.

SAM (V.O.)  
But I chose to run away. To get  
away from you...

CREATURE (V.O.)  
And running away from me led you  
here, running to me. Now perhaps  
you'll understand it was all part  
of my larger plan. You may not see  
it, but that doesn't mean it  
doesn't exist. Do you want to die?

SAM (V.O.)  
No.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Do you want to live forever?

A long silence. Then...

SAM (V.O.)  
I do.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Do you give yourself over to me?

SAM (V.O.)  
I do.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Do you...love me?

SAM (V.O.)  
I do.

The computer starts to BUZZ and BLINK with more activity.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Then we will be joined.

INTENSE BUZZING AND BLINKING from the computer. Sam stiffens, then spasms, then becomes still.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY - DAY

Silence, except for the CHIRPING OF BIRDS.

SHOTS OF THE MOSTLY DESERTED CITY over the FOLLOWING V.O.

Throughout them all, only a few well-dressed pedestrians are visible and no homeless. An occasional driverless cab moves slowly down the empty avenues.

SAM (V.O.)  
Where am I?

The dead and dying trees are now green and thriving.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
You are with me.

SAM (V.O.)  
And where are... we?

The sun is shining brightly; the streets are sparkling clean.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
We are everywhere.

The street with the WBS-TV building: its big screen is dark.

SAM (V.O.)  
Are we alive?

The street with the JoinWith.Me Billboard.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
More than ever.

The roundabout with the statue.

SAM (V.O.)  
And what are we?

The street with Sam's office building.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
We are everyone. And all who follow  
will know that Sam opened the door  
to a better world.

The street with Sam's apartment building.

SAM (V.O.)  
I... like that.

The street with the subway entrance, no one coming or going.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
Do you understand now why I don't  
have a name?

The park is now lush and green; birds fly, squirrels frolic.

SAM (V.O.)  
Yes, because you are we and we are  
all of us.

The street with The Siphon, the sculpture now gone.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
You have left the suffering behind.

The street with Hannah's tailor shop.

SAM (V.O.)  
I have.

The street with the Water and Power building.

CREATURE (V.O.)  
You have a new purpose for your  
life. You have finally joined with  
me.

SAM

My purpose?

CREATURE

You are the future now. You forged ahead and created a path where there was none. You were the experiment that paved the way for everybody else. All who follow will remember: Sam was first. You will tell everybody about it. And everybody else will follow.

FADE OUT.