Wesleyan University The Honors College

Miasma

A Screenplay

by

Susannah Porter Lake
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INTRODUCTION

One might ask: "Why write a screenplay as a senior thesis?" A quick response might be: "Why not write a screenplay?" However, a more substantive answer is that screenplays today arguably serve the same purposes, literary and otherwise, as plays did in the age of Shakespeare.

Putting aside that William Shakespeare has been called the greatest writer in the English language, one might have asked him: "Why plays?" William Shakespeare wrote in the artistic medium most accessible to his public, to the masses. He wrote plays because that was a form of entertainment that transcended class in the heavily classed English society. He wrote plays for young, old, rich, and poor, available to and inclusive of everyone. With time, however, the literary medium most accepted by and available to the general public has switched from the stage to film. Everyone goes to the movies, or at least rents them or sees them on television. Film is the new medium of entertainment for the masses. But, as is true of Shakespeare's plays, films are not always just blind, fun tools of entertainment to appease people for approximately two hours. Films -- and particularly their screenplays -- can also be, and often are, a medium that makes art available to everyone for the price of a movie ticket.

My desire to write a screenplay for a senior thesis was influenced by my first two years at Wesleyan and my junior year abroad at Oxford University. Having been interested in creative writing since I was very little, I took writing courses during my freshman and sophomore years at Wesleyan that helped me develop as a writer tremendously. Wanting to continue the work I started at Wesleyan, I decided to

concentrate my time at Oxford on writing. It was at Oxford that I had the privilege of working with the head of the graduate program in creative writing. Initially, I wanted to study playwriting; however, under my advisor's suggestion I moved to screenwriting, which allowed me to explore literary interpretations more visually.

After completing one screenplay at Oxford, I began to develop the idea for my current screenplay and senior thesis. I wanted to write another screenplay because screenwriting is a medium that is not only contemporary, but also so artistically challenging that I felt I had not explored it fully in one year. I also wanted to write about a particular idea, which on the surface is about an invisible girl, as a screenplay for the added challenge. The theme of invisibility has, of course, been treated in novels such as H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* I thought that it would be a stimulating process to address the theme of invisibility on the screen and to take on the technical challenges of trying to show visually an invisible person.

Another goal in writing this screenplay was to complete a film with southern gothic elements that would reflect my southern heritage. Too often in contemporary literature and news is the South portrayed incorrectly and sometimes even vilified. It was my goal to produce a script that relied on the South's new urban landscape and explored its preoccupation with the past. I wanted to create an eerie feeling without becoming stereotypical as some southern gothic films (such as *Deliverance*) have done by, for example, bringing up incest or any other backwoods abomination.

I feel that I achieved this goal in a roundabout way. After spending the better part of my year abroad submerged in southern gothic writing, I felt I needed a break from this type of writing. When I first formed my idea for my thesis, I decided to try a

different genre of screenplay. I wanted to try writing with a more European (specifically French) feel, thinking that the geographical separation between my subject and my self would be beneficial.

My main source of inspiration in the beginning was the work of director Jean-Pierre Jeunet with his collaborators Guillame Laurant and Marc Caro, who worked with Jeunet on the films *Amelie* and *Delicatessen* respectively. Their highly visual, smartly implied style with erratic, yet controlled camera work and dramatic imagery was something I thought would translate well to my surreal screenplay about an invisible girl in a realistic world. Some of Jeunet's ideas and style did translate well; however, the French/European style was not cohesive when combined with my style. As a result, the first draft of my thesis lacked focus and a "spark.'" I realized then that when writing it is always important to return to what you know. A writer must write about a topic he or she knows well and understands its eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. What I know may not be all that extensive when it comes to writing (because I am still learning), but what I do know well is the South, especially the modern South. Therefore, after my first draft, I decided that it would be best to return to what I know -- the modern South. While I decided to continue my work in the southern literary genre, I also still wanted the film to have a European feel. I soon realized that I could include both my knowledge of the South with my inspiration from French cinema, but I had to make sure my own style and vision were central. Through this relationship, I was able to find a balance between the newer French cinema and (to me) the more venerable southern literary style.

In order to achieve the correct balance, I reset the film from a more imaginary setting (a conglomeration of New York City and Paris) to a fantastical interpretation

of Atlanta, Georgia. In staying true to my original vision, I based the setting in reality, but added surreal images and elements not present (of course) in modern Atlanta. Because my story is partially fantasy, I also wanted my screenplay to have a magical realist setting in the South as a sort of tongue and cheek hint at what many non-southerners view the South to represent -- a romanticized, fictionalized world of delusion -- but also because this view is not completely inaccurate. The South is truly a slightly surreal place, which I realized even more after spending time in the northeast and abroad in England. The South, with its infamous landscape (whether real or imagined) of magnolia trees, Spanish moss, and thick humid air, lends itself to a romanticized view and surreal writing quite well. I felt by setting a magical realist screenplay in the South, it would allow me to poke fun at everyone's impression of the South while also verifying that view in a certain way.

In order to achieve this representation of the South, I felt it important to include some elements that are automatically associated with the South (although the southern allusions are hinted at more than told explicitly). Some of these elements were ideas I had explored in my first screenplay, such as the imagery of dirt, especially the red clay of Georgia. This iconography brings to mind the importance southerners place on the land and one's connection to the land. But I also wanted to explore other aspects of the South that I had not tackled in my first project, such as religious elements. For example, my thesis screenplay includes a fair amount of water imagery, specifically in relation to my main character, Mia, who becomes temporarily visible when water touches her. This use of water translates as a baptism, a biblical allusion to rebirth. Although I was a little tentative about making my screenplay too religious or making my main character a "Jesus" figure, I was intrigued by the

challenge of adding religious elements in a way that I felt comfortable and that showed a different side to the South that I had not explored before.

While abroad, I studied the Book of Genesis extensively for one term in a course entitled "The Bible as Literature." When I decided to incorporate religious imagery into my screenplay, I thought that Genesis would provide a good basis. So much of the religion of the South is saturated with televangelists and New Testament "Bible thumpers" that I felt the Old Testament would provide a good balance between what is expected (Bible thumpers) and not expected (Old Testament) of southern Christianity. Furthermore, I wanted to include the Old Testament and use religious imagery to further the real/surreal view of the South in my screenplay. However, I initially did not know exactly how to include the Bible so that it was present, but not overpowering.

The answer came as the result of addressing a technical issue in the draft. My first draft, as I stated above, lacked a clear goal and focus, and therefore the story took too long to develop. To remedy this problem, I needed a new structure that would force the story -- of Mia's development from an invisible person on the edge of society to a visible self incorporated into society -- to move along while at the same time subtly relate to a religious theme. I found the answer in Genesis 1:1-2.3, the story of creation, which provided my screenplay with a clear structure that has a specific beginning and end and which helped my screenplay stay on track and move the story along. Because Mia is learning about herself, finding a purpose in her life, and through this process is going from being invisible to visible, she is in a way creating a new life for herself throughout the screenplay. This self-transformation and self-creation are mirrored in the structure of the story of the world's creation in

Genesis. Nevertheless, I wanted to make sure that the biblical creation story did not consume the entirety of my screenplay. I therefore summarized the main activities that took place each day of Genesis and then incorporated these ideas in each of Mia's days through visual shots of specific verbal references, images, and dialogue.

Because I included the creation story in both obvious and non-obvious (visible and invisible) ways, I wanted one more obvious visual aspect to reiterate some of the main aspects of the film, which was done through the inclusion of the narrator. The use of a narrator is found throughout ancient and modern literature and film. For example, the Greek dramatists used choruses to comment on the action of the play, Shakespeare used a chorus at the beginning and end of *Romeo and Juliet,* Brecht used narration in his plays, and most recently a narrator was used in the 2008 Oscar winner for Best Picture, *No Country for Old Men.* I felt that using a narrator in my screenplay made sense for a variety of reasons. I thought that having an omniscient narrator would remind the audience of a God-like figure, which I counteracted by making the narrator Mia's deceased mother, Maria, so to keep the religious elements in check. Furthermore, I thought that the use of a narrator would tie in nicely with the surreal aspects of this story by relying on the audience's knowledge of fairy tales -- both in film and in literature -- in which a narrator is usually integral to that type of storytelling. I also thought that the use of a narrator would remind the viewer of the importance of oral storytelling in the South and in southern literature, thus creating a mythic feeling to the film. Lastly, I found that the use of the narrator helped with the clarity of the story and with keeping the story on track.

In preparation for writing my screenplay, I extensively revised my earlier screenplay I completed at Oxford, created detailed scene note cards, and drew

inspiration from various different sources, both literary and cinematic. To help supplement my outside research, I enrolled in the course, "Literature of the American South," with Professor Pemberton this semester. In addition to helping me understand many different southern writers, the class has also helped validate many of the southern aspects of my screenplay. For example, *All the King's Men*, which I first read in high school, has been a constant source of inspiration for me throughout my different projects. In relation to my thesis, I found that one quotation in particular has been enlightening. It states: "They say you are not you except in terms of relation to other people. If there weren't any other people there wouldn't be any you because what you do, which is what you are, only has meaning in relation to other people (184)." This sense of community, of interconnectedness, is found in all of the human condition, but is definitely a very important aspect in the South. Southerners emphasize one's tie to the land and the importance of the land and home itself. An important extension of this connection to the land and home is a connection to other people in the family and community.

In my screenplay, Mia has been uprooted and disjointed from her home and community by her parents' and brother's unnatural deaths. Mia's family members were murdered in a car accident, a death that changes Mia's life dramatically. Her family's tragedy twists Mia's life into an abnormal pattern -- she is derailed from her natural life. She is cut off from the land and home where she lived, her family, and her previous life. She is severed from her past not only by the deaths of her family members but also by her subsequent placement in an orphanage.

In my screenplay I wanted to show this terrible separation visually by making Mia an invisible human being. As humans, we use our physical appearances to show

our various emotions, e.g., whether we are happy, sad, or stressed. That is, we use our physical appearance to be human and connected. I thought, what if I took that idea to the extreme? What if something so heinous happened to a person that she became separated not only from her family, her home, and her community, but also from herself and her own humanity? What if someone had been ignored and separated from everything she once knew and held dear? Would it be possible for that person to submit to her feelings of loneliness and despair enough to make her outside physical appearance match her inner emotions of separateness and bitterness? Could she become, as a result, literally invisible?

The plight of homeless people is instructive for this idea. It has been stated more than once in various news stories and other sources that if homeless people are not crazy before they become homeless, once they are homeless for an extended period of time, they are likely to become mentally unsound, because of the constant neglect shown by society. I think it is very plausible that if every time you ask someone for the time or for some change and he or she ignores you that you may actually begin to believe you are invisible. You would have no other way to ground yourself -- you would have no one to talk to, to hear about what is happening in the world, or to validate your existence. You would have no one to share your life with, and as stated in *All the King's Men*, "…you are not you except in terms of relation to other people (184)."

The idea of invisibility/visibility can also be interpreted as a contrast between a dream world and reality, a theme that is also common in southern literature. For a person who is invisible, it is hard to tell what is real and what is not, because invisibility is so surreal. In addition, the confusion between the dreamlike state of

invisibility and reality would also seem to confuse conventional time. Therefore, I wanted to work against this idea, making it very clear what day in the Genesis creation cycle it was at the beginning of each day in the screenplay. By having a focus on time, notwithstanding the surrealism of invisibility, my screenplay shows how Mia is truly creating a new life for herself within conventional reality and time, trying to put her confusing world behind her.

With respect to Mia's lonely, dejected, and separated state of being, I was also helped in my project by Carson McCullers' short story collection, *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* which explores the human isolation in the South. For example, the isolated female characters in the short stories "The Ballad of the Sad Café" and "Domestic Disturbance" were exceptionally helpful in researching how different female characters manifest their loneliness, either through aggressive behavior or substance abuse, as in these two stories.

The Awakening by Kate Chopin also greatly influenced me in my project, particularly in its examination of female isolation and use of water imagery. In the novel, water serves as both a female energy and a way for Edna, the protagonist, to escape her everyday mundane life. In the end, water is her salvation and death in her suicide by drowning. My screenplay incorporates this idea in a slightly modified way through the bathtub scene at the beginning and through various other scenes containing water imagery.

Other than traditional southern literature, I was greatly influenced by non-fiction books about the South, particularly Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic,* which details the lives of Civil War reenactors and the presence of the Civil War in

modern southern life. The book shows how the past really does creep up in the experiences of southerners, not only in literature, but also in real life.

In writing my screenplay, I also found it important to study plays, particularly to help me with dialogue, dramatic structure, and the technical issues of making the internal visually present for the audience. I drew upon my experience studying plays at Oxford last year, specifically *Equus* and *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer, *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard, and *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill. In addition to plays, I also read numerous screenplays of the films I watched to see how a screenplay might be modified to translate to the screen, which was most interesting in the transformation of *Amadeus* from play, to screenplay, to screen.

I also read numerous books on screenwriting and the correct way to write a screenplay. Possibly the most helpful book in terms of learning the technical aspects of screenwriting was Cameron Crowe's *Conversations with Billy Wilder*. After reading the book, it was interesting to watch some of Billy Wilder's films and Cameron Crowe's films to see how Wilder influenced Crowe. I also read back issues of a magazine called "Creative Screenwriting," which has interviews and articles from and about screenwriters.

For my project, I also watched as many films as I could, both old and new, including (but not limited to) *On the Waterfront, Jezebel, Streetcar Named Desire, There Will Be Blood, Deliverance, Delicatessen (*as stated previously*), The Apostle, A Very Long Engagement, What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?, Ratatouille, Enchanted, Nightwatch, Daywatch, The Orphanage,* as well as countless Westerns. By watching films from different decades, directors, and with different actors, I was able to start to see the qualities that made a good film as well as the problems contributing to an

unsuccessful film. In addition to my private study of film, I enrolled in Richard Slotkin's Westerns class this semester, which has been invaluable in teaching me how overarching societal issues can be realized subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) in visual images.

In my first screenplay that I did last year, I tried to keep the number of characters and their dialogue to a minimum, because I was mainly interested in exploring the visual manifestations of their inner emotions through camera work and the colors used in each scene. I included a lot of camera angles (which is not typical of a true screenplay) so that the camera served as a character itself, a visual, but silent narrator. In contrast, when I was revamping an earlier draft of my thesis screenplay, I knew I needed to clarify the structure and condense Mia's back-story. As discussed above, I thought of adding a narrator to help do that, but I also wanted to explore the idea of having a true verbal narrator, as opposed to the more visual, silent narrator of the camera in my last screenplay.

For my main character, I knew from the beginning that I wanted her to be female. I felt that it would be more interesting having an invisible female character, as many of the most famous invisible characters in literature are male. Female characters are usually not invisible in the literal sense, but rather are confined to the domestic sphere in literature to describe how they feel invisible, such as in *The Awakening*. I wanted to twist that definition of female invisibility to a literal one, but not based solely on gender as the direct cause of the invisibility. I wanted my main character to be more representative of human nature, not specifically of any one gender.

I also wanted to include a female main character to ensure that she would not be thought of merely as a wooden Christ figure. Although my screenplay incorporates

and explores some religious elements, I did not want them to be totally overt; rather, I wanted them to remain silently in the background for most of the time. I felt that if I had a male main character, which could be confused more easily with a Christ figure, the religious elements might be more overt than necessary.

I first picked the name "Mia" for the main character after learning that it means "sea of bitterness." I was drawn to the water imagery that the name suggests and thought that it would relate well to the water imagery in the screenplay. I also liked the name because it suggests the acronym "M.I.A." (missing in action). For most of her life Mia has been "missing in action." She has been separated from society and humanity by her family tragedy and subsequently by being invisible. The name Mia also means in Italian "me" or "mine," which seems appropriate for a main character who has lost her family, possessions ("mine"), and identity ("me") and is trying to reclaim them all.

After deciding on her name, I needed to understand Mia as a character. I knew that she would have elements of Edna's character from *The Awakening,* such as her isolation. However, I also knew that I wanted to keep her as an individual character, unrecognizably linked to anyone. I thought about what I would do if I were invisible, which I had some experience with when I was abroad at Oxford. Although I was not (of course) literally invisible, I found it hard to adjust to the British way of life in certain ways, including how the English interact with strangers (or, more precisely, how they do not interact with strangers). The English, at least those at Oxford, feel no societal pressure to be cordial to strangers, to engage them in conversation, or to even glance at them. The bus scene in my screenplay, when Mia's foot gets closed in the door of the bus, actually happened to me. Therefore, there is much of myself in Mia.

When I was developing Mia as a character I knew I wanted her at first to be somewhat content with her situation; I wanted her to have adjusted to her invisibility slightly. However, I also knew that something was needed to push her over the edge so that her transition from the invisible to the visible could take place. I knew I wanted her to do something that would be considered anti-social, or rather against the society that had imprisoned her in this invisible condition. I thought about Mia's past -- how her family had been stolen from her, how their lives had been stolen from them, and how Mia's visible life had been stolen from her. It seemed a natural progression to have Mia steal out of bitterness as her anti-social act. First, it would be simple for her to steal because she is invisible, so logistically it would work well. Second, it would make sense for her as a character to steal because she is stealing her life back from those who stole it from her. As she slowly steals back her mother's belongings (which are rightfully hers), she is also stealing back the life and her past that are rightfully hers. As she steals back her things and finally recognizes and owns her past, she reclaims herself, understands herself completely, and becomes visible.

Through this reclamation of her past, Mia is able to create a new life for herself. However, simply understanding her past is not enough to complete her life. That is why I included James as a love interest. When I was first writing the screenplay, I thought I wanted their relationship to be the central idea of the film -- to be Mia's main source of reclaiming a life of her own. However, I realized very quickly that such an antiquated idea was not true to Mia's character. Rather, I wanted it more as a supplemental story to her own journey of finding herself as a means of enhancing her new life. Although I did not want it to be central, I did want some sort of magical realist element to it, which is why I included James' ability to be the only

one to see Mia. This is for a variety of reasons. James can see Mia because they are truly meant for each other and, in a less trite way, he can see Mia because he is a member of her past -- he lived near the orphanage and saw her once when she was still visible as she first arrived at the orphanage. As a member of her past life, he is part of her visible self to be reclaimed and therefore can see her.

On the other hand, Mia cannot see him when they first meet, because Mia has not yet fully developed as a person. To be in a healthy relationship, it is important to completely understand yourself as a person. Mia is an incomplete person when they meet, unsure of her past, which manifests itself in her invisibility. Therefore, her incapability of truly loving another person is manifested in James' invisibility to her. It is only when Mia truly understands and recognizes her past that she is a complete person and ready to be in a relationship. Only then does James become visible. The "love triangle" between Mia, Gloria, and James demonstrates this idea even more. Both James and Gloria fall in love with Mia in a certain way. When Gloria meets Mia, only Mia's arms are visible -- Gloria is only able to see part of Mia both physically and emotionally. Gloria and Mia are not completely in accord. James can see all of Mia when he first meets her, showing us that he completely understands her, and in a way is a modern day version of a "prince charming" character, relating back to the fairy tale elements of the film.

The rest of the characters came about naturally through the writing process. With respect to the character of Gloria, I knew I wanted Mia to have some sort of sidekick; however, I also knew that her sidekick could not be a normal person -- it had to be someone also considered invisible by society, even if she was not literally invisible. I started thinking about people in society who, for all intents and purposes,

are invisible. I immediately thought of homeless people; however, I did not want Gloria to be homeless because I thought that was too obvious an example. I then thought about having her also be on a road to recovery like Mia -- a road to redemption and to creating a new life for herself, but still considered an outcast by society. I then thought about her as a recovering drug addict. In this characterization, Gloria is invisible to society, not trusted with the simplest of tasks even though she is trying to turn her life around. Also because of her past drug addiction, she has residual hallucinations, which adds to the surreal aspect of the screenplay, but also allows Gloria to trust Mia more quickly than if Gloria was a completely healthy person. The name "Gloria" came to me immediately and seemed like a perfect fit, with its religious connotations, for a sidekick who helps Mia reclaim her life.

The villains of the story were quite easy to develop. As I learned from Professor Slotkin's lectures, there is always a villain in Westerns. Usually, the villain and the hero are set up as equals so when they meet and have a conflict, the action is more interesting. I thus needed to have a villain equal to Mia and did so in the character of Mr. Dumas. Mr. Dumas as a villain was a fun character to develop because he is a psychopath, which is where his strength comes from. Going hand in hand with his crazy behavior is his paranoia, which is at an all time high within the screenplay because he believes that Maria -- Mia's dead mother -- is haunting him.

Victor was also an interesting character to develop. I knew I wanted him to be Mr. Dumas' sidekick, but I also wanted him to realize what Mr. Dumas had done and to help Mia. I did this so that the story could progress, because otherwise it would have been very difficult for the story of Mr. Dumas and Victor and Mia and Gloria to develop separately. Victor is a binding force at the end of the screenplay between the

two groups of characters. By Victor's "turning good," their stories were able to overlap, and through his efforts (as well as Maria's) the various conflicts were resolved, which is why he is named Victor.

Because Victor joins Mr. Dumas and Mia together at the end, I wanted to parallel his situation to Mia's, which I did through various scenes where they are doing similar tasks in different places at the same time. I also thought of these sequences as a visual way to show a sort of brother/sister relationship that Mia could never develop because Mr. Dumas killed her brother. In a way, Mr. Dumas' evil nature provides Victor the opportunity for redemption by uniting Victor and Mia against him in a cohesive, supportive familial-like relationship. The scenes where Mia and Victor are working at similar tasks in different places also help the speed of the film and keep the action interesting. Especially at the end, these back-to-back scenes intensify both Victor and Mia's actions in a way that makes them doubly intense.

Choosing a title for a screenplay is always the hardest step for me. During this process, I immediately gravitated toward titles that explained Mia's invisibility literally in some way, like "She's Not There." However, I felt that such titles lacked a certain mystery and the surreal quality present in the screenplay itself. Therefore, I started playing with Mia's name, trying to find words that contained her name, but also might be applicable to the main themes of the screenplay. I was first drawn to the title "Miasma," because it contains the name "Mia." Miasma means "pollution" in Greek and at one time in history was the explanation for the spreading of diseases like cholera and the Black Death. People believed that a "miasma" was an infectious mist that caused disease by carrying poisonous particles in it. I was interested in this title because I saw this poisonous mist as analogous to Mia's situation. Mia is caught

in this negative, surreal world and her life is clouded (the poisonous mist). But Mia is able to rise out of this “miasma” and create a new life for herself.

Screenwriting is an art form that has allowed me to express myself in a creative way that encompasses so many of the things that I enjoy studying. I have always been a writer, creating stories when I was very little. However, not until I started writing screenplays did I find, finally, an artistic medium in which I could combine my visual, active imagination with my love of literature and writing. It is through screenwriting that I have been able to pull from all aspects of my life and my education to create something that is entertaining and perhaps even art.

Most writers will say that writing is a solitary activity, but I could not disagree more. Even though I may be physically alone wherever I am writing, the process of writing draws upon so many past social experiences that I am never truly alone, always accompanied by my memories of people, events, and influences. Much like Mia in this way, I am alone physically, but I am never far from my past -- from the people I have met, the places I have been to, and the things I have experienced. This is especially true for the southern writer. As William Faulkner said: "The past is not dead. In fact, it’s not even past.” My screenplay began almost a year ago, so it is very exciting and satisfying to have developed and finished it here at Wesleyan. I thank you for your time and consideration in reading my thesis, and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

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TABLE OF PERSONS

Mia Carmichael

Maria Carmichael

Joseph Carmichael

Nathan Carmichael

James Deleery

Gloria

Victor

Mr. Dumas

1. STORYBOOK OPENING

Medium-shot of a large book. As the book opens, we see that the two pages are covered in dots, trying to make a 3-D image; however, the image is unclear and we are unable to see anything but a page full of colorful dots. We hear a female voice. Juxtaposed against the seriousness of the female voice, we hear Sam Cooke's "Jesus Gave me Water" play quietly in the background and continue throughout the scene.

NARRATOR
In this life, we measure ourselves, our accomplishments, by other's reactions. For if we didn't, how would we know what effect our actions had on others and on our society? Who would be our witness?

At the end of the line, we see a quick flash of three scenes. The first is of a girl running down a staircase calling to her mother.

GIRL
I got in. They accepted me.

She thrusts an acceptance letter at her mother, who is beaming.

Quick cut to the second scene, which is of a young couple covered in dirt standing in their garden, admiring their freshly planted flowers.

The third scene is of a traditional AME Church choir singing. Cut to the audience. An elderly lady, her face radiant, points approvingly at one of the singers.

Cut back to the 3-D image. The female voice resumes.

NARRATOR
But for our heroine in this modern day tale, she had no one to rely on — no one to share her accomplishments, her sorrows — no one to be her witness. This was not because of any one person in particular. Many people contributed

to this sorrowful existence, which you will see throughout this tale. But that's getting ahead of ourselves. Let's go back to the beginning. You see, our heroine is invisible. And she has been invisible for most of her life.

At the end of the line, the 3-D image starts to become clear. We are able to see the intersection of two roads in a city in the American South. It is a surreal version of Atlanta. At the corner of the road, there is a sign that reads "The CHELSEA BUILDING," and in smaller letters under that it reads "and Church Parking Only." The 3-D image of the roads, buildings, and signs becomes clearer and clearer until it finally morphs into the real image.

Pause on the real image for a few moments. "Monday" appears across the bottom of the screen. It is raining quite a bit and strong gusts of wind make the trees bend almost in half.

Quick cut to inside the traditional AME church. We see the choir (from the previous scene) sing and dance to a song other than "Jesus Gave Me Water," which is still playing and has increased in volume. The camera pauses on this scene for a few beats before traveling up through the ceiling to an apartment that is very dark and poorly lit. "Jesus Gave Me Water" fades out as the muffled sounds of the choir below fade in.

The camera travels around the apartment, showing the high ceilings and the walls, which are covered with pictures of people -- some are photographs, while others are pictures from magazines and newspapers. There are also dress forms around the room with elaborately decorated outfits on them. One dress is incomplete and has a measuring tape on it. The camera travels to the back of the apartment through the bedroom and into a small, all-white bathroom. In contrast to the bedroom and the rest of the apartment, the white bathroom is lit very brightly, almost abnormally bright.

We see a young woman, about 24 years old, standing on the ledge of the bathtub filled with water. She holds a hair dryer that is plugged into an electrical outlet.

We see her take a deep breath, close her eyes, and motion with the hair dryer toward the pool of water. She does this hesitatingly a few times and then puts the hair dryer down and climbs down from the ledge of the bathtub. As she does, she trips and falls, landing with a large thud on the bathroom floor.

Cut to the choir practice below. The entire choir looks up in the direction of the sound. Close up on two women in particular. One leans over to the other and whispers in her ear as the other choir members resume singing.

WOMAN #1
Sometimes we hear sounds coming from the attic apartment. Nothing to worry about -- you'll get used to them.

WOMAN #2
Who lives up there?

WOMAN #1
Don't know. Never seen anyone up there before.

Pause on the choir. Cut back to MIA on the floor of the bathroom. Close-up on her face pressed against the bathroom floor. She is breathing heavily.

MIA
That was close.

MIA peels herself off of the floor and then puts away the hair dryer and drains the tub.

MIA
Guess I should go to work.

NARRATOR
It is no surprise that Mia could not finish the deed she had begun. Mia, our heroine, always had trouble finishing what she started. Like the dress form.

Cut to the unfinished dress form.

NARRATOR
She hasn't worked on that dress for years. Perhaps this inability to finish tasks added to her invisibility. Or perhaps it was because she was invisible that she had trouble finishing her tasks.

While we hear the narrator, we see MIA picking out an outfit for work. Cut to MIA fully dressed. Cut to MIA drinking coffee and eating breakfast. She does this without turning on extra lights in the apartment -- the only light is the natural gray light coming in through the large windows in the apartment, which show that it is still raining. She looks down at her watch.

MIA
Oh, I'm going to be late.

MIA leaves her dishes where they are, grabs her raincoat, and runs outside. Pause on the empty apartment. Fade out.

2. EXT. CITY

We hear the choir from the previous scene as we see MIA step onto the sidewalk. As she does, she becomes invisible, only the outline of her body visible. It is still very dark outside and the wind is blowing very quickly. We first see MIA walking to the bus station, then cut to MIA sitting alone on the bus, and finally cut to MIA walking to the end of a long line of people making their way into a large office building, each waiting their turn in a very orderly fashion. As this happens, we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
As Mia headed to work that morning, the morning when she had considered ending her life, something was stirring. Something had changed. If one is willing to end one's life, something drastic must change -- something must intervene. And even though she had no idea that her life would change, her life did change in the six days

following that rainy, dreary Monday at work.

Cut to close up of a puddle on the ground. Wind blows over the surface of the puddle making it ripple a bit. We see a footstep in the puddle, disturbing the ripple. Long shot. We see that MIA stepped in the puddle and is now entering the building through the main doorway. We hear a clock in the distance strike nine times. Quick cut to next scene.

3. INT. OFFICE BUILDING

Close-up of MIA sitting at her desk. We hear the first few beats of the dialogue below before jumping to an overhead shot to see the large room with hundreds of cubicles -- each is filled with a person, a computer, and a telephone. Close-up of MIA again, who is located in the center cubicle of the room.

WOMAN
You know you people are worse than cockroaches. Cockroaches have a high survival rate at least -- been around for centuries. Now you. You leave or die and you are instantly replaced -- expendable in fact.

MIA
Ma'am. I am just trying to do my job. Do you want the Super Saver Freezer/Refrigerator Preservation Sac or not?

WOMAN
What do you think?

The WOMAN hangs up. MIA sighs and crosses a name off her list. She gets up and goes through a doorway on the right side of the room, entering the copying room. She stands behind one of her coworkers and waits to use the copier. Just as she is about to use the copier, another coworker cuts in front of her. As he begins to use the copier, MIA -- annoyed -- smacks the side of his head. He turns around, looking shocked. COWORKER's POV -- there is no one in the room with him. Cut back to medium-shot. The coworker looks frightened, rubs his head, and leaves the

room. MIA smiles to herself and then proceeds to use the copier.

Cut to the break room. We see the door of the break room open by itself. There are a few coworkers in the room and they all glance at the door, looking scared. We see a donut levitate out of the box of donuts. The coworkers stare at the donut, not knowing what to do. We then see a bite taken out of the donut, the source of the bite completely invisible. At this point, the coworkers run out of the room.

Cut back to the break room. We see MIA eating the donut, laughing to herself. We see MIA finish the donut and walk back to her desk. She begins to call another name on the phone when a loud bell rings five times. Long shot of the room from above. Everyone gets up at the same time and forms two straight lines angled toward the two exits on either side of the room. Close-up of MIA. MIA clocks out and exits the frame.

4. EXT. CITY

We see MIA exit the building and walk onto a crowded city street. It is currently not raining; however, it is still very windy and dark. MIA joins the crowd of people walking down the street. She glances up at the eaves of the office building she just left. Cut to MIA's POV. We see a few pigeons perched on an eave. One pigeon flies to join them and then pecks at the other pigeons until they fly away, leaving the bully pigeon alone on the ledge. Long shot of MIA looking up at the pigeons. She is immediately swept up into the crowd of people. MIA's POV. All we can see is a mass of people. Someone walks into MIA and the scene goes black for a minute as her hat covers her eyes. We see MIA fix her hat.

MIA
(Yelling) Watch it!

Even though the MAN is standing next to MIA, it appears as if he cannot hear her. MAN's POV. MIA is no longer standing next to him. Long shot -- we see MIA in the crowd, still next to the MAN. MIA somehow breaks away from the mass of people on the main street and walks onto a nearly deserted side street. She steps into a store.

Cut to inside the store. As MIA opens the door, we see from the inside of the store that no one is there -- the door is opening by itself. The door closes and we hear footsteps walk around the small bookstore. We also hear change jingling in MIA's purse. The small bookstore is completely deserted. We see a slight outline of MIA as she moves around the store. There are piles of books everywhere and it is difficult to navigate. MIA accidentally knocks over a stack of books and immediately becomes visible, her body filling in the outline of her shape. Long shot. A store clerk runs over.

MIA
(Bends down to help pick up the books)
I am so sorry! I'm such a klutz. My Mom used to have to leave me outside stores like this because I would just make a mess! Somehow I always ended up knocking over the most expensive thing in the store!

The CLERK does not react. CLERK's POV -- we cannot see MIA.

CLERK
(Muttering to himself) How did this happen? (A cat appears and tangles itself in the CLERK's legs.) Paws, did you do this?

Long shot. The CLERK pets Paws as MIA moves away from the fallen stack of books. She is again invisible and we are only able to see the outline of her body. Long shot from above. We see her move to the back of the store. Close-up. We see her outline reach for a book entitled *Your Visible Self: How to Assert Yourself in an Impersonal World*

MIA
Ah ha. Here it is.

MIA grabs the book and is visible again. She opens it and then closes it. As she closes the book, she returns to her invisible self. Long shot. We see her move through the store; however, the only indication of her presence is the book in her hand that appears to be floating through the air. Medium-shot. We see her outline

at the counter; however, the CLERK has returned to the back room. She rings the bell on the counter a few times. MIA becomes visible for a few seconds with each ring. The CLERK comes running to the front of the store. CLERK's POV. No one is there.

CLERK
Strange. (Calling playfully) Paws, have you learned how to ring bells now too?

The CLERK retreats to the back room. MIA sighs and takes out her change purse, which contains a lot of change. As she places the exact change on the counter, her hand is visible; however, after she drops the money on the counter, her hand becomes invisible, matching the rest of MIA's body. MIA exits the store and crosses the street to enter an apothecary. As she enters the store, a bell rings above the door, alerting the CLERK. MIA becomes visible for a moment.

CLERK
Good evening, Miss.

MIA
(Surprised -- a little shaky) Oh, hello.

MIA moves to the side of the store to look at the women's products and the CLERK bends down to get something from behind the counter. CLERK's POV.

CLERK
Miss, we have a new peppermint eucalyptus lotion that is just divine. Here you must try . . .

As the CLERK stands up we see that MIA is no longer there.

CLERK
Miss? Miss?

MIA, now invisible, glances back at the CLERK, but does not say anything. The CLERK paces around the store and then runs to the back of the store, thinking that MIA is there. MIA picks up some lotions and face wash and places the money on the counter, making sure to reach behind the counter for a few free samples. MIA exits the

store and the bell rings again, allowing MIA to become visible for a few seconds as she goes out onto the street. Pause on store. The CLERK comes running from the back.

CLERK
Welcome to Apostrophe's Amazing Apothecary, would you like to try our new Peppermint . . .

The CLERK doesn't finish his sentence because as he reaches the front of the store he realizes that no one is there. He glances at the money on the counter and then sees a few lotions and face washes missing.

CLERK
Miss?

Pause on the scene. Fade to black.

5. EXT./INT. BUS STATION AND BUS

MIA's POV. She glances at her watch. It reads 5:55 p.m.

MIA
I'm going to miss the bus.

Long shot of MIA, her outline visible only. She is on the main street, which is now deserted. She runs down the street, her clothes and hair blowing wildly because of the storm. Long shot. We hear thunder in the background. We see a glittering sign at the end of the street that reads "Metropolitan Bus Station." MIA's POV. She reaches her bus and puts one foot on the first step. As she does, the bus driver closes her foot in the door and begins to rev the engine.

MIA
(Banging on the door) Hey! Hey! Open up!

MIA becomes visible. The bus driver opens the door and looks unfazed.

BUS DRIVER
(Insincerely) Sorry Miss. Didn't see you there. Where you headed?

MIA tries to compose herself as much as possible and steps onto the bus, jumping at the sound of the bus driver closing the door behind her.

MIA
Um. Clover Street. The co-op on Clover please.

BUS DRIVER
That'll be one fifty, Miss.

MIA hands him the money and then makes her way to the back of the almost completely empty bus, becoming more and more invisible with each step until she reaches the last seat and is completely invisible. Pause on MIA's outline in her seat.

NARRATOR
This was not the first time Mia had been ignored. But she had gotten to the point where she could accept her invisible life. However, this life was incredibly lonely -- a loneliness that Mia could not shake off and that sometimes was much too much to stand.

Fade to black.

6. EXT. CLOVER STREET/INT. MIA's APARTMENT

We see MIA (still invisible) exit the bus through the back door and into the rain. She runs down the street and slowly becomes visible in the rain as she nears her house. She reaches the door of an old building and opens it. She climbs five flights of stairs before reaching her door at the very top of the building. She places a key in the lock and opens the door. Cut to inside her apartment. As she opens the door and enters her apartment, she becomes fully visible again. She throws her coat on a chair in the dining room and tries to turn on the lights. She plays with the light switch; however, nothing happens. Her apartment remains in darkness.

MIA
Damn storm.

MIA gives up and crosses over to the kitchen. She opens the fridge, grabs some milk, and makes herself a bowl of cereal. She begins to eat the cereal, but spits it out -- the milk is bad. She grabs a bottle of wine instead and some crackers and cheese and settles down in a chair by the window. While she does this, we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
Perhaps it would be best at this point to explain Mia's invisibility. Mia was almost always invisible. The occasional bell or whistle could potentially make her visible for a moment, but the moment was brief. Water seemed to do the trick pretty well, so if it was raining, Mia would become visible. If Mia touched objects in public, she would sometimes become visible and sometimes would stay invisible -- she was never quite sure what would happen. One thing she was sure of was that she was also always visible in her apartment, where she felt comfortable.

MIA
Hmm. Good.

MIA pauses and stares straight ahead. She begins to cry quietly.

MIA
(Trying to comfort herself) Okay, okay, okay, okay. Home now. Safe now.

MIA looks slightly comforted as she says the last part of her line. The camera creeps closer to her. She looks worried, as if she didn't believe what she said. She glances around. The camera creeps closer and we see her rub her forehead. MIA closes her eyes.

FLASHBACK: We see a younger MIA being dropped off at an orphanage by an older man. He bends down.

OLDER MAN
Now, Mia. You be a good girl. This is only temporary, my dear. But for now, this is the best solution. You be good, you hear?

MIA
(Not making eye contact) Yes sir.

OLDER MAN walks away leaving MIA alone with a nurse.

NURSE RADGIAN
(Bending down to MIA's level) Mia, is it? I'm Nurse Radigan. Why don't you follow me and I'll show you your room.

MIA dutifully follows NURSE RADIGAN down the hallway and into one of the rooms.

NURSE RADIGAN
Now Mia. The rest of the girls who will be sharing your room are outside playing. We will introduce you all later. You have the bed near the far wall on the left side. Why don't you put your stuff down -- settle in -- and I will come and get you in a little bit to introduce you to the other girls. Does that sound good?

MIA
(Quietly) Yes Ma'am.

NURSE RADIGAN
Fine. That's just fine. Right, well I'll see you in a few minutes, Mia. Ok?

MIA
Yes Ma'am.

NURSE RADIGAN turns around and exits the room. Long shot of the room. We see that the room is filled with about twelve beds, six on each side. MIA slowly makes her way to the bed on the left side of the room and puts her things away, which only takes a few moments because she doesn't have very much. She sits on the bed for a minute, but as she hears footsteps come down the hallway toward

the room, she crawls under the bed and pulls the comforter down so that she is completely hidden.

Cut back to present day. MIA is still sitting in the easy chair, staring straight ahead.

NARRATOR
You see, this was when Mia began to become invisible. Many people contributed to her invisibility -- her uncle, the nurse, and yes even Mia. Had she been more social or in a different situation, perhaps she would not have hidden herself that day.

MIA
That's enough. I'm done.

MIA shoves the plate of cheese away from her, grabs a journal from the shelf and a pen, and then settles back down in the chair. MIA reads aloud as she writes.

MIA
March 18th. Today was as terrible as yesterday. And the day before that and the day before that. Nothing remarkable happened at all. Went to work, got a book, came home. The damn rain won't stop and it is starting to drive me crazy. The only interesting thing that happened today was that the day happened at all -- that I happened today. That I didn't end it this morning when I had the chance. Attempt number 15. Well, if you could call them true attempts. More like attempts at attempts. It was a good plan this time -- bathtub, hairdryer, very dramatic. It seems as if with each attempt, my life somehow gets more and more boring. I used to get a high at work from knowing that I had almost died that morning. While my coworkers were discussing the most recent reality television show, I was sitting in my cubicle, thinking that had I gone through with it, I wouldn't be there.

They wouldn’t see me not because I’m invisible, but because I actually wouldn’t be there. Or here. Or anywhere.

MIA pauses writing and looks up. She stares into space for a few moments while we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR

Wouldn’t actually be anywhere -- the thought was not a new one for Mia, for as she explained she had attempted to end her life many times before. But she was right -- something was different today. Perhaps it was the rain -- the unseasonably cold wind and storm that was swirling and stirring things up, changing things, making them upside down instead of right side up. Or perhaps this was one attempt too many -- one attempt that just didn’t feel right -- that propelled our heroine into action (pause) of a different sort. For at this moment, Mia had an extraordinary idea.

MIA comes out of her trance. Speaking, not writing.

MIA

Ending my life wouldn’t do anything but end everything -- everything for me. NO. I need to find something else. (Begins writing and speaking aloud) Right. So there is a new plan. A new plan that will (Pause) I hope (Pause) help me find meaning and a purpose. (Speaking, not writing) So what should that plan be?

MIA looks around her apartment.

MIA

I could make dresses again. Could try that. (Seems doubtful). That’s not enough, though. What do I like -- dresses, making dresses.

FLASHBACK: We see a younger MIA standing in the doorway of a dress shop. The sign says "MARIA CARMICHAEL'S ORIGINAL DESIGNS." We hear someone call from inside the shop.

MARIA
Mia, honey, please come inside. If you stay on the stoop, how will people get in the shop?

MIA slowly rises and moves to enter the shop; however, something catches her eye and she pauses. She looks across the street at a smaller dress shop. The sign says "DRESS TO IMPRESS."

MIA
Mom, can I get some candy at the five and dime?

MIA continues to wait on the front stoop. An older woman (MARIA) emerges from the store and hands MIA some money.

MARIA
Here. Be back in five minutes, okay?

MIA
Okay. Thanks.

MARIA returns to the shop and MIA, instead of heading down the street toward the sign that says "Five and Dime," crosses the street and stares at the window display of the dress shop. She focuses on a bright red dress that is exotically decorated with ribbons and feathers and sparkles. She glances back at her mother's larger dress display of more sophisticated dresses.

Cut back to present time.

MIA
That is what I'll do. I will steal one of those "Dress to Impress" dresses. Yes. No one would be able to miss me in that dress -- they would be forced to see me. Yes. Tomorrow. I will go to the store, sneak in, and take a bright red dress. Yes. This will work. It has to.

Fade out.

7. EXT. CITY

Next day. We see MIA walk down a side street, her features hidden in darkness, as we are only able to see her silhouette against the light at the end of the alleyway. "Tuesday" appears across the bottom of the screen. It is still very overcast and gray; however, it has stopped raining. Close up on a piece of trash traveling in a stream near the curb where MIA walks. We see MIA's feet cutting straight through the river, parting it into two smaller streams. Long shot. We see MIA start to walk into her office building and then veer away from the front door.

MIA
Nope. Not today. Think I'll try something else. Maybe a little breakfast to start out with.

MIA walks in the other direction back toward her apartment. Cut to inside a coffee shop near her house. We see MIA enter through the front door, becoming invisible as she steps into the store. We see MIA walk toward the front of the line of people inside. She doesn't notice, but we see her hand pulse in and out of the scene, slowly becoming visible and invisible. MIA tries to steal a cup of coffee that is sitting on the bar, but as she reaches for it she realizes that her hand is visible. She quickly retracts her hand, trying to hide it. No one notices except for GLORIA, a small, mid-twenties, temp barista.

GLORIA
Hey Rich, did you just see that? It looked like a hand was floating mid-air.

RICH pulls GLORIA aside.

RICH
Do we really have to talk about this again? You're here because James is out sick -- you are not here because you are a good worker or because I trust

you. (Pause) I know your past and I'll be watching you.

GLORIA
Come on, Rich. I've been clean for a year now.

RICH
Quiet. Customers. Just do your job and keep the talking to a minimum.

GLORIA goes back to making drinks, but continues to look up, trying to figure out where the hand came from. Cut to outside the coffee shop. MIA ducks into a nearby alley and takes from her bag a bottle of water and Danish she was able to successfully steal and begins to eat.

NARRATOR
Mia ate her stolen breakfast, pretending to enjoy the smushed Danish and bottle of water. What she had really wanted was a nice big cup of coffee. But as you saw, she became visible when she reached for the coffee. For a girl that has been invisible for most of her life, this was quite distressing. Especially since Mia was embarking on an adventure in which her invisibility was crucial. She needed to stay invisible to steal the dress. What was causing this? Mia could not think of a suitable answer. Perhaps it was this new life she was creating for herself. Hopefully, she thought, the coffee shop incident would not be repeated later at the dress shop.

At the end of the last line, MIA finishes eating and stands up to collect herself.

MIA
Right. (She looks around) Haven't been there in a while. Think it is ... (Pause) Yes, this way.

MIA turns around and walks down the center of the alley, her features again in shadow and silhouetted

against the light at the end of the alley. Pause. Fade out.

8. EXT. DRESS SHOP

Medium-shot. We see the outside of the "Dress to Impress" shop just as we had seen it in MIA's flashback. Long shot. We see MIA standing in the center of the street facing the shop with her eyes closed. MIA's POV. The screen goes from black to the image as MIA opens her eyes and we see the new "Dress to Impress" shop, which is much larger than it was before. MIA turns around to see that "Dress to Impress" has expanded into her mother's former shop with a discount store/warehouse.

MIA
Well, guess now is as good a time as ever.

MIA walks straight ahead and enters the dress shop. Cut to inside the dress shop. We see that it is a large shop that extends farther back than was obvious from the street. The shop is less a boutique now and more a dress department store with each dress mass-produced. MIA scans the dresses, avoiding other customers, and makes her way to the back.

NARRATOR
Mia was slightly discouraged. What good would it do to steal a dress that every woman in the city had? What had happened to the unique creations that had once graced the windows of "Dress to Impress?" Mia noticed a back room. Perhaps there would be something for her there.

MIA walks through a door labeled "Employees Only" at the back of the store. We are immediately plunged into darkness as the back room is poorly lit compared to the bright white, sterile light of the main store. MIA fumbles for a light switch, which she eventually finds and turns on. An eerie greenish fluorescent light comes on to reveal a fairly small storage room. There are boxes lining every wall. The room also contains the typical office articles -- a few tables, filing cabinets, etc. On

the center table is a large clean box filled with dresses. MIA spots it.

MIA
Interesting

MIA crosses over to the box. A label on it says "Vintage designs, circa 1988. FOR NEW YORK FASHION SHOW. DO NOT REMOVE."

MIA
Very interesting.

MIA opens the box and on top of the dresses is the red dress from her memory. MIA picks it up and holds it against herself.

NARRATOR
Mia had not realized she would be this lucky. To think she found the exact dress she had wanted all of these years. It was almost as if it was . . .

MIA
Meant to be.

MIA carefully folds the dress and places it in her bag.

MIA
There. Guess I'm done here.

MIA pauses in the room.

MIA begins to look through some of the boxes on the floor, finding other vintage dresses as well as scraps and designs. Under a pile of folders, MIA notices one folder that looks slightly familiar, even though it is aged.

FLASHBACK: Close-up of a similar folder on a desk. We hear someone in the background.

MARIA
Honey, can you grab my sketches please?

Cut back to present time. MIA pulls and tugs at the folder, but it doesn't budge because it is wedged under the huge stack of folders and papers. She tugs again and the folder and its contents go flying everywhere. As the papers sail down to the ground, the speed of the film slows a bit to show close-ups of the sketches on each of the pages. With one sketch, the camera zooms in on the signature under the sketch and we see that it says "Maria Carmichael." As the papers fall down around MIA in slow motion, we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
Mia's mother's sketches had never been found after the accident that took the lives of Mia's parents and older brother. Seeing the sketches again after all these years opened up the wounds that had scabbed over in Mia's soul. With each falling piece of paper, Mia felt a stab of pain.

Close-up on one sketch hitting the ground.

NARRATOR
Mia was unable to comprehend all of this. Why would this dress store have her mother's designs? How did they get here? Who had done this?

We see MIA standing in the middle of all of the sketches, which are now resting on the floor.

FLASHBACK: We see a younger MIA with her mother, MARIA, and her brother, JOSEPH, in a large townhouse somewhere in the city. They all come barreling out of the door and down the stairs, carrying boxes and presents. MIA is 7 years old and her brother is 11 years old. They are fighting and joking around.

MARIA
Stop fighting and bring those boxes down here.

JOSEPH throws one of the boxes at MIA, which just misses her and lands in a nearby shrub.

MARIA
Joseph stop that! Those aren't your presents! How would you feel if I threw your FIDO gaming system around and broke that three days before Christmas, hmm? You know we don't have time to replace anything before we see Grandma and Grandpa and Uncle Charles and Aunt Sophia and everyone else. Now stop fighting with your sister and help me carry these boxes down to the car. WITH CARE.

JOSEPH retrieves the package and shakes it.

JOSEPH
Think everything is still okay.

MIA and JOSEPH laugh as MARIA grabs the package away from them and shoves smaller, and presumably less delicate, packages their way to carry. We see MARIA, JOSEPH, and MIA carry the boxes down the stairs to a car waiting beside the curb. NATHAN, MIA's father, gets out of the car and opens the trunk.

NATHAN
Ahh. I see you all have handled the packages this year.

MARIA
Yeah, no thanks to you.

NATHAN
Oh Maria, take it easy. It's Christmas. Besides, I contributed -- I got the car ready.

They load the presents, extra bags, and packages into the trunk of the car and then they all get in the car.

MARIA
Do we have everything? I feel like we are missing something.

NATHAN
We have everything Maria. Don't worry. And even if we left something at home, someone at Pop's house will help us out.

MARIA
You're right (Pause) I just have this feeling that we are missing something.

NATHAN
We have everything. Just relax. (Pause) Mia, Joseph. Are you excited about going to the country?

MIA
No. I want to stay at our house. I don't want to leave.

NATHAN
Oh come on Mia. It will be a great Christmas. Am I the only one who is excited about this?

JOSEPH
I'm excited Dad. I like the family Christmases.

NATHAN
Thanks Joseph. At least I can depend on someone to have a good time. Let's get going!

NATHAN revs the engine and drives away. Quick cut to later that day. It is around dusk and it has started to rain a considerable amount. MIA and JOSEPH are sleeping in the back seat and so is MARIA in the front. NATHAN squints to see the road and seems to be having trouble driving -- he looks nervous. MARIA wakes up.

MARIA
Oh Jesus, Nathan. It's getting bad out there. Do you think we should pull over and stop somewhere for the night?

NATHAN
No -- we can make it. It's only another hour to Pop's house. We should be able to make it.

MARIA
(Looks at the kids) I'm just worried. I've had this bad feeling all day. I'm just wondering if maybe we should take it easy.

At the end of MARIA's line, we see the car begin to skid out of control, swaying from side to side.

MARIA
Nathan. Nathan watch the road.

NATHAN
I'm trying -- I can't control this car. It's sliding everywhere.

JOSEPH and MIA wake up.

JOSEPH
What's going on? Where are we? What's happening?

With that, the car spins off the road and flips a few times as it rolls down an embankment on the side of the highway. It comes to a rest at the bottom of a large hill. We hear nothing except for MIA's voice in a whisper.

MIA
I'll never leave my home. I'll never leave my home. I'll never leave my home.

The speed of the film returns to normal. Pause for a beat on MIA standing completely still, almost in a trance, in the middle of the sketches scattered over the floor. There is a large crashing sound from the other side of the door that brings MIA out of her trance. Cut to the store side of the door. We see VICTOR, the store manager, trying to pick up a large stack of boxes that he dropped on his way into the storeroom. Split screen. We see the store clerk gather the boxes as MIA tries to

gather the papers. Each finishes at the same time as the other and tries to get through the door at the same time. As MIA (only her outline visible) slips past the clerk, he looks around because he feels something brush past him. MIA runs out of the store and we see that her right hand is completely visible. Fade out.

9. EXT. CITY

Same day -- it is now around 8 p.m. The streets are deserted. MIA is slumped in the alleyway asleep. She wakes up and looks at her watch.

MIA
Eight. Should be safe now.

MIA gathers her things and creeps out of her hiding space. Once she emerges into the lighted main street we are able to see that her arms are almost completely visible while the rest of her body is still invisible, the outline the only visible part of her. She runs down the street, her bags being held by what looks like disembodied arms. Every now and then she ducks into an alleyway to take cover as someone passes. As she does this, we hear the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR
Mia could not understand why she was becoming visible. This had never happened before. Previously she could control it to a certain degree, sometimes willing herself to stay invisible when she touched certain objects. But now something had changed and she could no longer control it. She didn’t even know when or how long it would take to wear off. All Mia did know was that she had to get home -- quickly.

Cut to MIA’s street. We see MIA hiding in an alleyway at the end of it.

MIA
Almost there. Almost home.

MIA runs out of the alleyway and sprints to her front door. In her haste, she doesn't see GLORIA across the street closing up the coffee shop. GLORIA's POV. We see two large bags moving down the street being held by disembodied arms. GLORIA is by herself closing the shop.

GLORIA
Holy shit man.

GLORIA looks around.

GLORIA
Holy shit.

GLORIA locks the door and runs after MIA. MIA's POV. She sees GLORIA running after her.

MIA
Who is that?

MIA runs faster, looking backward at GLORIA. As MIA looks back at GLORIA, MIA trips and falls into a puddle. She gets completely soaked. As the water touches her skin she becomes visible. GLORIA comes to a dead stop behind her.

GLORIA
Whoa man. Whoa. How'd you do that? Are you some kind of magician or something?

MIA does not respond. She begins to gather her things, ignoring GLORIA.

GLORIA
Hey man, let me help you. Jesus. What the fuck was that? You know, I've seen some crazy shit before, but nothing like this. Nothing. Especially when I'm sober. I mean I've hallucinated before and seen some strange shit, but nothing like this. Nothing. Whoa man. Whoa. (Pause. MIA does not react) Here -- you dropped your lipstick . . .

GLORIA hands MIA the lipstick tube.

MIA
Thanks.

GLORIA
So you do speak. Great. Well that means that I'm not having some sort of residual hallucination. That's good. You know, ever since I gave up acid, I keep on seeing birds around. I mean, I guess we all see birds, but I see birds that aren't there. Like I'm still hallucinating man. Blue birds mainly, although once I saw a purple one. My cat died that day. Don't really want to see a purple one again. (Pause) So really man, are you in the circus or something? Like into illusionist shit? Cause I'm down with that like for serious. (Pause) Can you let me in on your trick? How'd you do that in the middle of the street and all?

MIA again does not reply. Instead, she finishes gathering her things and begins to walk away. She stays visible because she is soaking wet. GLORIA follows her.

GLORIA
You're pretty quiet, man. That's okay because I like to talk. (Pause -- looks at the bags) You really went shopping today. Bought a lot of stuff. Is this all for your act? I mean I would like to see your act like in the real circus and shit. Must be pretty good. You in Cirque du Soleil or something? I once saw them on acid. Man that was an interesting experience. Are you . . .

MIA
Am I what? A sideshow freak for your entertainment. Listen *man*. Leave me alone. Go back to whatever opium den you crawled out of and go bother someone else. I need to get this *shit* home and you need to leave.

GLORIA
Whoa whoa. Calm it down. And to tell you the truth, I really don't appreciate you mocking me. It hurts. (Pause) I wasn't trying to imply that you are a sideshow freak. Like I think you could be the main event. And come on, it's a trick. Why so touchy?

MIA
Because it isn't a trick. It's my life.

GLORIA
Oohh k. Wow. Listen man. I was just admiring your skill and then when you fell I wanted to help you, okay? Nothing more.

MIA
You know what would help a lot? (Long pause -- rethinking) If you helped me with these bags.

GLORIA
Sure thing, man. This is more like it. Harmony.

GLORIA and MIA walk to her door where MIA pauses.

GLORIA
Hey. You weren't by any chance in that coffee shop over there this morning, were you?

MIA looks at GLORIA.

MIA
No.

GLORIA
Well, the reason I ask is 'cause I saw this hand floating in mid-air and I kind of freaked out and told my boss, but he yelled at me for being a junkie and maybe it was just another residual hallucination, but I'm pretty sure I only see birds and if you had any

information on that floating hand it may calm my nerves. I don't really want to see imaginary birds and floating hands, so if I could limit my hallucinations, I would be eternally grateful.

MIA pauses and thinks.

MIA
Yeah. It was me.

GLORIA
Man, I knew it! You shouldn't do that in public, man, you'll scare people. (Pause -- thinking) Actually man, you should do that in public. Freak people out! It would be so funny! (Laughs) Oh man. That would be great.

MIA
Okay. Well, thanks for your help. I'll take what you said into consideration for my . . . uh . . . act.

GLORIA
Cool man. (Pause) Hey. Hey wait. Why did you try to steal that drink today. I mean, you could pay for it, couldn't you? You bought all this shit today. It's obvious that you're loaded.

MIA
Oh. I guess I forgot to pay?

GLORIA
Come on, how could you forget to pay.

MIA
I don't know. I just did.

GLORIA
Well, that's just not cool.

MIA
And why isn't it cool? I thought for you stealing would be the ultimate cool.

GLORIA
Well, I mean it's just that I was working and shit and you've got a ton of money so you can pay for a measly cup of coffee. It wouldn't kill you.

MIA
I didn't do it because I am "loaded." Some things are more important than money.

GLORIA
Then why did you do it?

MIA
I have to go.

MIA begins to walk in her apartment. MIA turns around.

MIA
You want to know why I did it? Why I stole the coffee? Because I could. Just because. Because until today for the past, I don't know, twenty years or so I've been invisible. Literally invisible. Playing by the rules of you visible people. So today, I decided to play by my own rules and then you see my hand. Great.

MIA walks away.

NARRATOR
That was the first time Mia had told anyone out loud about being invisible. She now felt ridiculous, walking away not feeling liberated, but as if another weight had been added to her shoulders. Just as her life was coming together, it was also falling apart.

GLORIA
(Calling after her) Stop. Hey stop! So you're saying that you're usually invisible?

MIA
Yeah.

GLORIA
(Long Pause) Well (Pause) I guess it isn't the weirdest thing I've ever heard -- or experienced. (Pause) Yo man, that's pretty cool.

MIA
You believe me?

GLORIA
Well, yeah. I guess I do.

MIA
You just believe, like that?

GLORIA
Yeah man. Like I said, I've seen weirder shit so (Pause) what do you do with this invisibility thing? Like for fun?

MIA
Well, not too much. Although I do play tricks on my coworkers…

Pause on GLORIA and MIA talking. Fade out.

10. INT. MIA's APARTMENT

We see MIA enter her apartment. She doesn't even try the lights, assuming that the power is still out because of the storm. She throws everything down on the floor and then collapses on her bed, lying flat staring at the ceiling. The camera is positioned above her on the ceiling. Pause for a few beats. The lights suddenly come on, flooding the apartment with bright, white light. MIA shields her eyes, not used to the light.

MIA
Whoa Whoa.

MIA goes around the apartment turning off some of the lights so just a dim light remains throughout the space. Now in this dim light, MIA collapses on her bed again.

NARRATOR
Now in this better light and her haven of a house, Mia could think. Think about what she had experienced that Tuesday, one day after trying to end her life.

MIA
(to herself) Today was meant to happen—had I gone through with it yesterday, I would have never found the red dress or the sketches or have met Gloria.

NARRATOR
Mia could not believe that these things were just a coincidence. No, she believed she was meant to understand why and how her mother's sketches had traveled across the street to a rival's store. How she had never received them after the accident. Yes, Mia was on a very important journey and couldn't help but think that her invisibility would be essential. But she needed to be able to control it and that was becoming more and more difficult to do. Never before in Mia's life was her invisibility this much of a necessity or a gift, or a conspiring entity apparently working against her.

With the last word, we see MIA drifting off to sleep and the scene goes black.

11. INT. MIA's APARTMENT

The camera is still positioned on the ceiling. MIA is sleeping in her bed. "Wednesday" appears across the bottom of the screen while we pause for a beat on MIA.

The alarm clock goes off, alerting MIA that it is 8:00 a.m. She jumps out of bed. She runs around her apartment in a rush, getting dressed very quickly, brushing her teeth, and collecting her things.

We see MIA leave her apartment, closing her door and locking it, leaving the camera in her apartment facing the closed door. Cut to exterior coffee shop. We see MIA enter the crowded coffee shop. She is visible as she opens the door; however, she becomes invisible once she steps inside the shop. The store is very disorderly with people yelling orders and no clear line visible. MIA shrinks toward the side of the store, near the counter where people pick up their drinks, her outline the only visible part of her. She stays there, thinking what to do next. There is a younger man, about 25 years old, behind the counter fixing drinks. His nametag says "James." JAMES' POV. We see MIA completely visible, standing against the wall.

NARRATOR
This young man James had the ability to see our Mia. Something most people hadn't been able to do in almost 20 years.

JAMES
(Directed at MIA) No need to look so upset. What can I get started for you?

MIA's POV. We cannot see James behind the counter. Cut back to JAMES' POV.

JAMES
(Chuckling) You -- right there. What can I get for you?

As he says this, he places two coffee drinks in a carrying case on the counter.

JAMES
Fine.

JAMES walks away to prepare other drinks. No one picks up the two drinks on the counter. Long shot. We see MIA look around and grab the entire carrying case with

the two drinks. We see her quickly leave the coffee shop, invisible to everyone but JAMES. Cut back to James' POV.

JAMES
Hey. Hey you! Those aren't yours. You didn't pay for them.

MIA runs out of the store. JAMES turns to his coworker, RICH.

JAMES
Did you just see that?

RICH
What?

JAMES
The woman who stole two coffees? She had brown hair. Was standing against the wall. Green coat.

RICH
I'm not focusing on much except making coffee. You should do that that too and let Lilly take care of the cash. Stick to your job.

JAMES
I'm taking my break now, Rich.

RICH
What? You can't. You have to get back here. I can't handle this crowd on my own. Wait -- where are you going?

JAMES doesn't listen. He runs out of the store to follow MIA. Fade out.

12. EXT. CITY/PARK

We see MIA leave the coffee shop with her stolen drinks and cross the street, heading toward a large city park with beautiful gardens. At the entrance of the gardens, we see two large oak trees. Close up on the Spanish moss and mistletoe blowing in the branches. Long shot. As MIA enters the garden, she walks through a patch of mud, leaving muddy footprints behind her. Long shot.

We can no longer see MIA. All we see are the muddy footprints appearing out of nowhere. With the camera positioned in front of her we see MIA approach the camera along a path lined with flowerbeds. As she passes the flowerbeds, the flowers spring from the earth and bloom in a matter of seconds. MIA does not seem to notice. As this happens, we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
With her successfully stolen breakfast, MIA made her way to the park to enjoy the first sunny day in a long time. The earth was just as ready as Mia for the sun. Mia decided to use this time to plan out her day. She needed to know why her mother's sketches were in that other dress shop. She had to do this before she met Gloria later, who was planning to help Mia with this mystery. Little did Mia know that she was being followed and that her plan would not remain a secret from this new person, James, for although James could see Mia, she could not see him. Love is the ultimate act of self-completion and our Mia, our heroine, was anything but complete. But she was on her way, a journey, toward knowledge and completion. But for now, she was still alone.

At the end of this line, we cut away from MIA to JAMES who is still heading toward the park. Quick cut to next scene.

13. EXT. PARK BENCH

MIA is sitting in the middle of the park on a bench enjoying her coffee. She eats a breakfast she had packed and feeds the birds some bread. MIA talks to the birds as she feeds them.

MIA
Hey guys. Want some breakfast?

JAMES comes running up to the bench. MIA cannot see or hear him.

JAMES
Give me the coffees. I know you didn't pay for them, so if you just give them back then we'll call it even and I won't call the cops. You know stealing is a crime, don't you? So just give me the coffees and I'll go back to work and you can sit here with your birds.

MIA
(To the birds) Skipping work today? Me too. Guess you really don't have much to do in the first place -- don't have an actual job.

JAMES
No, I'm not skipping work. If you didn't notice, I was at work and now I'm not at work because I had to chase after you on my break. My break. I'm not skipping anything. Now give me back the coffees and I'll go back to work.

MIA
(To the birds) Hey hey. Don't be greedy. Share.

JAMES
What? Don't be greedy? How am I the greedy one? You are the one who couldn't wait in the line like everyone else. No, you crept by the wall and took not only one drink, no not just one. You took two drinks, even though it is painfully obvious that you are only drinking one. Listen. I'll make you a deal because my break's almost over and Rich will kill me if I don't get back. I won't make you pay me for either drink. You can just give me the one drink that you have not touched. Give me that and we will call it even, okay?

MIA
(To the birds) Good -- you're sharing.

JAMES
Yeah sure. So we have a deal?

MIA places some bread in the palm of her hand.

MIA
Will you eat the bread out of my hand?

JAMES
You're not even listening. I'm taking the coffee.

As JAMES reaches for the coffee, we see a pigeon hop into MIA's hand and start to eat the breadcrumbs.

MIA
You did it!

JAMES
Wait. Wait. You haven't been talking to me, have you? Are you ignoring me?

MIA
I used to have a bird just like you when I was little. Well, not exactly like you. I didn't have a pigeon, but I did have a bird that would eat out of my hand.

JAMES
Are you blind? No you can't be blind. You've been looking at the birds this entire time. And you stole the coffee. (Pause -- enunciating every syllable) Can you see me? Can you hear me?

MIA doesn't react. The pigeon jumps out of her hand and the rest of the birds start to leave because she doesn't have any bread left.

MIA
(To herself) What a perfect spring day.

Both JAMES and MIA look disgusted as a heavyset man in biker shorts passes them slowly on his bike, breathing heavily. JAMES stares at MIA's expression and chuckles.

JAMES
Okay, that answers that. So you can see and hear everything . . . but me. (Pause) But that's impossible.

JAMES waves his hand in front of MIA's face and she does not react. He yells gibberish and she does not react.

JAMES
You can't see me?

JAMES touches MIA's hair. She jumps up afraid, looking around frantically.

MIA
Who touched me? Who touched me? What was that?

She brushes off her hair and shakes out her clothes, looking for a bug.

MIA
Ugh. Gross. I hate bugs.

JAMES
I'm invisible to you.

MIA sits back down cautiously and begins to write down her plan for the day. As she does this, we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
Although Mia was uneasy and secretly did not believe that it had been a bug that had touched her, she decided to go along with her plan for the day. James on the other hand, could not go back to work and pretend that nothing had happened. He met a girl who could not see him. He was perplexed and could not fathom this new revelation. He knew that he would have to stay with her today to figure it all out.

Pause on MIA for a beat, who is still writing. She looks up in JAMES' direction. JAMES stares back at her. Fade out.

14. EXT./INT. DRESS SHOP

We see GLORIA walk into the "Dress to Impress" shop with MIA walking directly behind her, only her outline visible. JAMES watches from across the street, trying to stay hidden behind a dumpster from GLORIA, his coworker. Once in the shop, MIA heads straight toward the back room while GLORIA veers right. Close-up on GLORIA. She knocks over a large rack of dresses. A few salespeople come over, including the manager VICTOR.

GLORIA
Oh, I am so sorry. I'm so clumsy.

VICTOR
No problem, ma'am. Can we help you find anything?

GLORIA
I was wondering if I would have the chance to talk to the owner. Is he here today?

VICTOR
Well, Mr. Dumas is a very busy man. He ... uh ... has been in and out all day today.

GLORIA
That's too bad. You see, I'm getting married and I come from a very large family so I will be having a large wedding party and I was planning on ordering about twenty custom made dresses. But I would like to meet with the owner before I do that. I guess I will have to go somewhere else . . .

VICTOR
Let me check in the office. He may be there.

GLORIA
Thank you so much. You are too kind.

VICTOR walks to the back of the store, leaving GLORIA in the front. He goes into the backroom where MIA is going through the boxes and files. We enter the room behind VICTOR and see MIA's outline visible. Even though she is completely invisible to VICTOR, she is frozen against the wall. VICTOR closes the door and pulls out his cell phone.

VICTOR
Yes, Mr. Dumas, sorry to bother you, but I think you should head back to the shop. A woman here is trying to place an order for twenty bridesmaids' dresses, but she refuses to go through with the order without meeting you. (Pause -- listening) Yes, I understand, but I certainly cannot explain that to her. I just feel (Pause). What am I supposed to tell her then? She refuses to buy the dresses. Fine. Five minutes. I'll inform her.

VICTOR hangs up the phone and begins to exit the room, but pauses. MIA holds her breath. He turns around and looks directly as MIA, pauses, shrugs, and then exits the room. MIA sighs and begins moving about the room again, searching through the files. Cut to the front room.

VICTOR
Thank you for your patience, ma'am. Mr. Dumas will be here in about five minutes. He is at one of our other locations in the city, but will come right over to meet you.

GLORIA
Oh that is too much. Thank you for calling him.

VICTOR
Would you like anything to drink while you wait?

GLORIA
Oh no, I'm fine. Don't want to be too much trouble. Could you point me in the direction of your restroom, please?

VICTOR
Certainly. It is just at the back. The door on the left. The one on the right is labeled "Employees Only."

GLORIA
Great. Door on the left. Thank you.

GLORIA walks to the back of the store. She pauses at the two doors, looks around, and then enters the door on the right. Inside the back room, MIA freezes again when she hears the door open, but then relaxes when she sees it is GLORIA. GLORIA looks around, trying to see MIA.

GLORIA
Mia? Mia? Are you still here?

MIA
Yeah, I'm over here. In the corner near the large filing cabinet.

GLORIA walks a little closer and faces the direction of MIA's voice.

GLORIA
He's coming in five minutes. Can you last that long in here?

MIA
I should be fine. Try to get as much information out of him as quickly as possible. I think that weasel of a salesman saw me. He looked right at me.

GLORIA
He couldn't have seen you. You are invisible. I can't even see you.

MIA
Well, he looked at me, so make it quick and thorough, got it?

GLORIA
Yeah, got it.

MIA
You should probably get out of here
before anyone sees you. . .

Just as MIA says the last line, VICTOR walks into the room.

GLORIA
Oh silly me, this isn't the bathroom.
(Laughs)

VICTOR
No ma'am. I'm sorry, but you cannot be
in here.

GLORIA
Oh yes, I know. I'm so sorry. I didn't
see the sign. Don't have good eyes. I
thought you said the door on the right,
but I see now that you meant the door
on the left.

VICTOR escorts GLORIA out onto the main floor and then through the other door.

VICTOR
Here, ma'am. This is the restroom.

GLORIA
Oh, thank you. Sorry for the trouble.

VICTOR returns to the back room, while MIA freezes against the wall as he enters. He sits down at the table in the center of the room and faces MIA, peering in her direction. Just as he is about to get up, MR. DUMAS enters through a back door into the room.

VICTOR
Mr. Dumas, thank you so much for coming
over. I know it was ...

MR. DUMAS
(Cutting him off) Okay, where is this high-maintenance bitch? I have to get back to work and can't spend all day catering to "holier than thou" customers.

VICTOR
She is right up front, if you want to see her now.

MR. DUMAS
Yeah. Let me just check something before we talk to this woman.

MR. DUMAS crosses over to a filing cabinet and searches quickly through the files.

MR. DUMAS
Not there either! Where are they?

VICTOR
Is there anything I can help you find, sir?

MR. DUMAS
(Mocking) Is there anything I can help you find? No. Her sketches are gone.

VICTOR
Maria's?

MR. DUMAS
Don't say her name! Are you an idiot or just deaf? How many times do I have to tell you to never EVER say her name.

VICTOR
I'm sorry, sir, I didn't mean anything by it.

MR. DUMAS
Yes, her sketches are gone. And so is the red dress. Her red dress.

VICTOR
Maybe we just misplaced it, sir.

MR. DUMAS
No. No. That would be too easy. Luckily I still have the rest of her sketches across the street, but the good ones -- my favorite ones, the money making ones -- those are gone. Vanished. As if they had legs and walked right out of the store. Impossible.

VICTOR
I'm sure we will find them.

At this moment, MIA loses her footing and knocks a pile of papers off of the desk next to her.

MR. DUMAS
Did you just see that? Did you just see that?

VICTOR
Yes

MR. DUMAS
(To himself) She's angry with me. She's come back.

VICTOR
(Overhearing) Sir, she is not angry with you. She would be happy for you -- you are continuing her business. She left you those sketches in her will. She wanted you to have them.

MR. DUMAS
(Preoccupied) Oh right. Right.

VICTOR
Let's go find that woman and get this over with.

MR. DUMAS
Yes, of course.

The two men exit and MIA breathes a sigh of relief. She stares into space. We hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
Mia had no idea that there was a connection between her mother and Mr. Dumas, but she needed to find out the entire truth. She had a nagging feeling, though, that her mother was trying to communicate with her. The feeling she had in the park -- that could have been Maria. And this man, Dumas, he seemed to believe that Maria was contacting him as well. Mia knew she needed to do more investigating. This was becoming more than a simple robbery. This was something much more, and Mia was uncertain as to whether she should be involved in it. But, she thought, it was too late now -- she was too involved.

MIA, still invisible, runs out of the room and onto the main floor. She sees GLORIA talking to MR.DUMAS and VICTOR and quietly approaches them.

GLORIA
Well, we are having a traditional southern wedding. I was thinking teal and bright pink for the bridesmaids with maybe some sparkly ribbon or something.

MR. DUMAS
(Apprehensive) We could do that.

As GLORIA opens her mouth to speak, she feels MIA lift her arm so that it looks like GLORIA is checking her wrist for the time.

GLORIA
Oh look at the time. I have to meet the . . . uh . . . the florist. Sorry, thanks for you help.

GLORIA and MIA run out of the store.

VICTOR
Strange woman. Demanding.

MR. DUMAS
Whatever. At least we don't have to make those hideous dresses now.

Cut to outside the store. MIA and GLORIA are huddled on the other side of the dumpster that JAMES is hiding by.

GLORIA
I couldn't get anything before you grabbed me.

MIA
Never mind that. I got the dress and I got some information. Dumas thinks he lost the sketches I stole. He said there are more across the street. We have to go there. You in?

GLORIA
Yeah, but not today. This has been a little much for me.

MIA
Right. Let's call it a day and tackle the rest tomorrow.

MIA and GLORIA get up, with only MIA's outline visible, and walk away. Close-up of JAMES.

JAMES
I shouldn't have heard that. I shouldn't have followed her.

15. INT. MIA's APARMENT

We open on MIA's apartment later that night. She is sitting in an easy chair by the window looking at pictures of her family.

NARRATOR
As Mia sat in her easy chair, she couldn't help but remember what Mr. Dumas had said about her mother.

Although it was hard not to think about it, Mia was secretly hoping that it was true -- that her mother was back and trying to contact Mia as well. Mia had felt a hand on her earlier. Perhaps that was Maria, trying to tell her something. Mia had only wanted to feel special by taking a dress, a dishonest act, but a simple one nonetheless. But that simple act had opened a Pandora's box. What if she hadn't seen that folder and it hadn't spilled everywhere? It seemed quite the coincidence that all of these pieces to the puzzle were surfacing now and arranging themselves in front of her, for Mia did not feel like an active participant in this whole situation. At least, not yet. Perhaps that would change with the events of the next day. But for now, Mia was confused and alone.

Fade out.

16. INT./EXT. MIA's APARTMENT

We see MIA in her apartment eating breakfast at the kitchen table. "Thursday" comes across the bottom of the screen. A single letter slips under her front door. MIA looks up, stunned.

MIA
What?

She jumps up anxiously and grabs the letter from the floor. She quickly opens it and reads it out loud.

MIA
Dear Mia, my name is James and I work at the coffee shop across the street from your apartment. A couple of days ago you came into the shop and took two coffees. You then went to the park where I followed you to reclaim the drinks. I tried talking to you, but for

some reason you could not see me. But I could see you. I can see you.

MIA puts down the letter.

MIA
What is this? Is this some kind of joke?

She runs and opens the door, looking for whoever dropped off the letter. She slowly returns inside and picks up the letter again.

MIA
(Reading the letter) I know this is strange and doesn't make sense to you, but I am telling you the truth. You know that feeling you had, as if someone was touching your hair? That was me. I'm sorry I scared you, but I want to meet with you and explain things. I know people can't see you normally. But I can. And for some reason you can't see me. So please meet me. There's a restaurant on Claremont called Jessup's. Meet me there tonight at 8 p.m. I will be sitting at the table by the window. Please. I'm serious. This isn't a joke. Please meet me tonight. Sincerely, James.

MIA drops the letter and stares off in thought.

NARRATOR
Mia did not know what to think. Mia had never felt more exposed. No one had been able to see her completely since she was little, before the accident. Mia also worried that her invisibility was wearing off and that she would never be able to understand the connection between Mr. Dumas and her mother. Mia did not know that her invisibility was slowly leaving her, but she thought that meeting James might provide some answers.

MIA
Well, at least it wouldn't hurt to meet him.

MIA picks the letter back up and reads it again, smiling this time. Fade out.

17.EXT./INT. DRESS TO IMPRESS WAREHOUSE

The scene opens with the camera focused on the sun. Pause. The camera pans down to reveal a puddle of water. The speed of the film increases to show the puddle drying up. The speed of the film returns to normal as the camera pans up the reveal MIA and GLORIA crouched behind a dumpster right outside the "Dress to Impress" warehouse across the street from the boutique.

MIA
I've haven't been in there since it was my Mom's store. The layout is probably completely different, so I'm afraid we are going to have to wing it.

GLORIA
That's okay, man. You saw my performance yesterday. I think I did pretty good.

MIA
(Ignoring GLORIA) So you go in ahead of me and I'll follow. We'll just do our best to communicate as much as possible, okay?

GLORIA
Got it man. Let's do this.

GLORIA leads the way, walking casually into the warehouse, while MIA follows her, only her outline visible. Cut to inside the warehouse. We are in a very large room that is split in half by a removable divider. The divider does not fully reach the ceiling. In front of the divider are a few dress racks filled with discounted dresses. The store is very quiet, poorly lit, and there doesn't seem to be anyone there. GLORIA looks around and

pretends to peruse the dress racks. MIA comes up behind her.

MIA
(Whispering in GLORIA's ear) I'm going to search the back.

GLORIA nods as MIA makes her way through the door to the other side of the partition, where there are rows and rows of filing cabinets, boxes, and papers. There are also large wardrobes filled with dresses. MIA goes through the boxes and racks of clothes.

Cut to a FLASHBACK of the store before. Lush brightly colored fabrics cover the walls and there are racks of dresses everywhere. The large row of windows that look out onto the street allow natural light in, as opposed to the warehouse where they are covered. As the narrator speaks, the flashback of the store decomposes according to what the narrator says.

NARRATOR
Where there once hung beautiful curtains on the windows (the curtains fly off) was now only industrial blinds (blinds appear on the windows). Where there were once racks upon racks upon racks of elegant dresses now were only two racks of discounted, dejected-looking clothes. Where there was light was now darkness (now the store is completely as it was at the beginning of the scene).

Cut back to present day and a close-up of MIA. She looks in one wardrobe filled with dresses. She hears a squeak behind her. Close-up of a rat running past her. MIA screams, loses her balance, and falls into the wardrobe, the door closing behind her. As she scrambles to her feet and opens the door, she notices a large trunk at the back of the wardrobe. She struggles to pull the trunk out of the closet.

NARRATOR
It seemed to Mia as if someone or something was guiding her to the clues

of her past. Perhaps the contents of this box would help her in her quest. She knew there was only one way to find out.

MIA struggles to pull the trunk to the center of the floor. She pauses for a minute and looks at it. The dust on the top is freshly disturbed. She rubs the rest of the dust off of the top. She opens the box. The camera is positioned behind the trunk so that we have a clear view of MIA's response to the contents of the box before we are able to see them ourselves. Cut to MIA's POV facing the open trunk. We see various dresses, papers, and little artifacts all belonging to MIA's late mother. MIA gently touches each of the items, removing them from the box and spreading them out over the floor.

NARRATOR
Mia could not believe her eyes. She hadn't seen this many of her mother's things since before the accident, and now they were in front of her. Items Mia had expected to inherit, like her mother's wedding dress, which her mother had designed, and her mother's engagement ring.

MIA holds up the items carefully.

NARRATOR
Mia didn't even think about how her mother's things had made their way to "Dress to Impress." She was too transfixed by each piece, each memory, each artifact of her mother's life -- the only tangible connection to her past. But what brought Mia out of the past and back into the present was seeing her mother's will.

MIA holds up the will. She holds it for a beat and then furiously opens it, searching for an explanation why Mr. Dumas had all her mother's things.

MIA
Everything was supposed to be left to me. All of this was left to me. Why does he have it?

MIA ruffles through the pages of the will frantically.

MIA
This is all mine. And I'm taking it back.

She throws everything back into the trunk and locks it. With all of her might, she begins pushing it toward the door in the partition leading to the front of the store. Cut to the front part of the store. We see GLORIA talking to a salesperson.

GLORIA
So all of these are fifty percent off and the ones over there are seventy percent off?

SALESPERSON
That's right

GLORIA
Whoa, Mr. Dumas must be going bankrupt with these great deals. Is he here?

SALESPERSON
No, he is not at this location today.

We see MIA push the end of the trunk through the doorway into the front part of the store. Luckily, the SALESPERSON has her back to the door; however, GLORIA is facing the door and sees this happen.

GLORIA
(Grabbing the salesperson) Oh oh. Here (She grabs a couple of dresses) Can I try these on? Can you show me to a dressing room?

SALESPERON
(Slightly taken aback) Of course ma'am. Right this way.

The SALESPERSON leads GLORIA in the opposite direction to the dressing room. In the meantime, MIA pushes the trunk across the room, through the door, and down the steps of the store. Just as she is about to hide it behind the dumpster, we cut to VICTOR's POV from inside the boutique across the street. We see the trunk moving by itself out of sight into the darkness of the alleyway and behind the dumpster. VICTOR cannot believe what he sees, thinks he has imagined it, and returns to work.

Cut to MIA in the alleyway. GLORIA runs up to her.

GLORIA
Can we work out a warning system of some sort because I almost had a heart attack. And that salesperson definitely almost saw you.

MIA
He has all of her stuff. Mr. Dumas has all of my Mom's stuff, including her will, which says that it was all left to me. To me.

GLORIA
Jesus, Mia. I don't even know what to say. That's weird.

MIA
It's more than weird, Gloria. It's criminal. We have to go to the police. He has stolen from me.

GLORIA
Well how are we going to do that?

MIA
(Pause -- thinking for a minute) You'll have to go. I obviously can't. I wouldn't be able to stay visible for that long.

GLORIA
Sorry to burst your bubble, but I don't have the cleanest record and I'm not

that keen on walking into a police station on my own volition, if you get my drift.

MIA
Well, I'm going to have to do something on my own then.

MIA and GLORIA begin to drag the trunk down the dark alleyway, MIA puling and GLORIA pushing. We see MIA go in and out of the visible spectrum. Focus on their silhouette in the dark alleyway. Fade out.

18. INT. RESTAURANT

Later that day. We see JAMES walk down the street and enter Jessup's restaurant.

WALTER, a waiter, comes running from the back of the restaurant.

WALTER
Good evening sir. Just one tonight?

JAMES
Uh. No, I'm meeting someone.

WALTER
So two then. Right. Please follow me.

WALTER leads JAMES to a table in the center of the restaurant.

JAMES
Is it okay if I take the table by the window?

WALTER
Of course.

WALTER and JAMES walk over to the table. JAMES sits down and looks at the menu. Cut to MIA pacing in the alleyway beside the restaurant.

MIA
Just go in, Mia. Just go inside and see what happens. It's a public place, so nothing bad will happen. And you can always leave. (Emphasizing each word) Just-go-in-the-restaurant.

As MIA says the last line, she tries to drag herself toward the door. But she turns around and retreats back into the alleyway.

MIA
Oh God, why is this so difficult? Come on. Deep breath. You can do this.

MIA slowly walks into the restaurant. The bell above the door rings, making MIA visible.

WALTER
Good evening, Miss. Just one?

MIA's POV. All of the tables in the restaurant are empty. Long shot. We see both MIA and JAMES clearly. JAMES looks up and calls to WALTER at the exact same time that MIA says her line.

JAMES
She's with me.

MIA
Oh, I'm meeting someone.

WALTER looks at both of them and then focuses on MIA.

WALTER
Got yourself a date, I see?

MIA
It's nothing.

WALTER
Mmmhmm.

As WALTER and MIA walk toward the table, JAMES pulls out a large pad of paper and two pens. MIA follows WALTER

to the empty seat across from JAMES. As she sits down, both she and JAMES speak at the same time.

MIA
Thank you.

JAMES
Thanks, we'll need a few minutes.

WALTER looks confused, but nods and walks away. JAMES and MIA are silent. JAMES stares at MIA as MIA stares in JAMES' direction, but is unsure where to look since she is unable to see him.

JAMES
You look beautiful tonight.

MIA does not react. She can't hear him.

MIA
(Whispering, unsure if this is a joke)
Is there someone here?

JAMES pulls out a pen and paper and begins writing something down on the paper. MIA's POV. We see the pen levitate and write on the piece of paper. Cut back to JAMES. He pushes the paper toward MIA.

MIA
(Reading aloud) My name is James. I grew up next door to St. Anne's Orphanage. I remember seeing you once before, when you first came to St. Anne's. But after that I never saw you again. (Pause -- not reading anymore) I remember your family. Your brothers were always over at the orphanage, playing with the orphans. (Pause) You can hear me right?

JAMES takes the pen and paper and writes again. He pushes the pad back to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) Yes I can hear you . . . and see you. When you stole the coffees, I followed you. I'm sorry, I know that's

an invasion, but I felt like I needed to stay with you (Pause -- stops reading) How can you see me all the time? No one else can.

As JAMES grabs the pen and paper, WALTER reappears.

WALTER
Will you be ordering for your date as well?

WALTER's POV. We only see JAMES at the table.

JAMES
Uh. Yeah. I guess we'll have the special.

WALTER
Of course. Right away.

WALTER walks away.

MIA
So do you know why you can see me?

JAMES writes something down on the pad of paper and passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) No. I have no idea. (Pause -- not reading) But it happened that day -- the day I came into the coffee shop right? You were able to see me right away?

JAMES scribbles something down on the pad of paper. He passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) You came into the coffee shop and I could see you just as I can see anyone else. I asked you a question and you didn't answer. You then stole the drinks, so I followed you. It was when I touched you in the park that I realized you couldn't see me and couldn't hear me. (Pause -- not

reading. In a whisper to herself) I thought it was something else.

JAMES writes something down on the pad of paper.

MIA
(Reading) I have to confess something. I saw you writing something. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to look, but I just did. I saw that you are planning something --something with that dress store on Monroe. And I wanted to make sure that you were okay, so I followed you for a little bit that day. I am so sorry. I know it was wrong, but I was trying to look out for you. (Not reading) How much did you see? How long did you follow me?

JAMES grabs the pad of paper and writes furiously as MIA starts to gain momentum.

MIA
How could you do that? Knowing I am alone and that no one can see me. Why did you do that? Why should I stay here? So you can follow me home and then do God knows what to me? This is just what I thought it would be -- a big joke, a trick.

MIA gets up to leave as JAMES quickly passes her the pad of paper.

MIA
Trying to explain yourself? (Reading) I wasn't trying to pry, but I couldn't help myself. I've never met a person who couldn't see me before. And please know, I wouldn't hurt you. I was really trying to look out for you.

JAMES begins to write again, but WALTER walks over to the table and gives them their food. As he does, MIA spills water on herself, her visibility spreading over her entire body. WALTER puts the food down on the table and then begins to walk away.

MIA
Excuse me. You see the man sitting across from me?

WALTER
(Laughing) Of course.

MIA
What does he look like? I mean, how would you describe him physically?

WALTER
This is kind of a strange question.

MIA
I know, sorry. But James and I have been having a discussion and we need another opinion.

WALTER
Well, he has dark hair, kind of shaggy. Greenish eyes I would say.

MIA
Does he look threatening?

WALTER
Well, no I wouldn't say that. This sure is a strange dinner date.

MIA
I guess I'm sort of unorthodox. So you would say he has a friendly demeanor.

WALTER
Definitely. Is that all?

MIA
Yes, thank you.

As WALTER walks away, we see MIA start to become invisible again; however, her right hand stays visible. She hides it under the table. JAMES writes on the pad of paper and hands it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) See. Walter thinks I'm okay. I promise you, I won't hurt you. But you have to admit there is something here. I mean, you are invisible to everyone but me. And I'm visible to everyone but you. I know you are trying to figure something out about your Mom, but I really didn't find out that much. And I promise to keep it all a secret (Not reading) Thanks. I appreciate that. I'm not even sure what is going on right now. This is a lot to take in.

JAMES writes something down on the pad of paper and passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) I know. So let's pretend that we can see each other. Let's pretend that this is completely normal and that we are just two people getting dinner together. How is your fish? (Not reading -- smiling) Very good. How is yours?

JAMES writes on the paper and passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) Good. This place is nice. So a typical date question -- I already know where you grew up. What did you do for fun at the orphanage? (Pause -- not reading) Well, I didn't play with other children very much. I read a lot. I also make dresses. My Mom was a dressmaker and she used to let me play in her shop. I guess I learned a lot from her so I used to draw dresses in a sketchbook when I was little. What about you?

JAMES writes on the paper and passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) I grew up in a big family, so I would play with my brothers. But I

also spent a lot of time by myself -- hard to get noticed in a large family. I was the fourth boy out of six, so I wasn't the oldest or the baby. Kind of lost in the middle. I liked to read as well and I would write stories a lot. (Pause -- not reading) Do you write anymore?

JAMES writes on the paper and passes it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) Not as much as I used to. Although I do have pretty flexible hours at the coffee shop, so I should start up again. What do you do? (Pause -- not reading) I'm a telemarketer. Not that interesting, but a good job for an invisible girl. When I was little, I dreamed of taking over my mother's dressmaking shop. But after my Mom died, we lost the shop. One day, though, I would like to reopen it with my own designs mixed with some of her designs.

Camera backs up as their conversation continues. Cut to later that night outside the restaurant. MIA and JAMES are standing outside the restaurant. MIA is looking in JAMES' direction while JAMES is looking directly at MIA.

MIA
Thanks so much. This was actually nice. Weird, but nice.

MIA is hiding her visible right hand in her pocket. JAMES writes something down on a pad of paper and hands it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) I had a nice time, too. Would you like to see a movie this Saturday night? Midnight Watchman is playing at the Cineplex on Beeker St. at 8. (Not reading) That would be nice. I'll meet you in front of the Cineplex at 7:30.

JAMES writes on the paper and hands it to MIA.

MIA
(Reading) Sounds good. Have a good night Mia. (Not reading) I'll see you Friday.

As MIA says the last part of her line, JAMES leans in to kiss her on her cheek, but she turns in preparation to leave and they kiss on the lips. They pause there and then pull away. MIA turns bright red and visible for a moment.

MIA
Umm. Well. Ok. I guess I'll see you Saturday.

MIA runs off in the direction of her apartment, leaving JAMES standing alone on the street.

JAMES
Bye Mia.

Cut to MIA walking home. She is smiling.

NARRATOR
Mia had not found out why James could see her, but she was happy that he could. Perhaps it was because she was finally pulling herself together, or perhaps her mother, even though she was not a ghost as Mr. Dumas would like to think, was pushing them together. Mia had no idea, but didn't feel the need to question this new relationship. She was starting to feel very excited about her future.

MIA reaches her front door and goes in. Fade out.

19. EXT. MIA's APARTMENT

Open on the front of MIA's apartment building. Cut to a group of birds huddled together on a telephone wire. Cut to inside MIA's apartment. "Friday" appears across the bottom of the screen. Pause for a beat. The camera travels through the apartment, as if it were a person

looking for MIA. MIA is in the bathtub, taking a bubble bath. Her eyes are closed.

Pause on MIA for a beat. Cut to the coffee shop where JAMES and GLORIA work. We enter the break room at the coffee shop. GLORIA and RICH are the only ones in the room. They are eating their lunches in silence.

RICH looks up.

RICH
Thanks for staying on a couple more days. We've got a lot of workers out this week.

GLORIA
Sure thing, Rich. Although I gotta say I won't be able to stick around for much longer -- got another gig going on.

RICH
Really? Wow. Well. Uh. That's great. Good for you. What are you doing?

GLORIA
Can't say. Top secret.

RICH
Ohhh. Okay Gloria.

GLORIA
No seriously, Rich. This is for real this time.

RICH
Of course it is, Gloria.

JAMES walks into the break room.

JAMES
Hey guys. Slow day out there, huh?

RICH
Yeah. (Pause) Hey James, Gloria's got a new gig and she can't help out here for much longer.

JAMES
(Feigning surprise) Really? Good for you, Gloria.

GLORIA
Thanks man. At least you're excited for me.

RICH
I'm excited for you too, Gloria.

JAMES
So what are you doing?

GLORIA
Already told Rich, can't say anything about it. Top secret. But I will tell you this -- I'm going to make a lot of money.

JAMES
Just be careful Gloria. You aren't doing anything illegal are you?

GLORIA
(Pause -- thinking) Well, not really.

JAMES
Seriously Gloria. You better watch it. It's not as if you have a clean slate.

GLORIA
I know, I know. Listen, I'm trying to make a better life for myself. You two should be happy. And Rich -- you don't even like me. You always remind me that you're the one doing me a favor. I thought you would be happy to get rid of me.

RICH
Sorry Gloria. But James is right. Don’t get yourself mixed up with the wrong people again.

GLORIA
I won’t.

RICH
Well, back to work. See you out there in a few.

RICH leaves the break room. JAMES is preparing himself some lunch. He is smiling.

GLORIA
Why so happy today, James? Win the lotto or something?

JAMES
You could say that. I went on a date last night.

GLORIA
Whoa -- it’s about time my man. Jeez. When was the last time you actually went on a date?

JAMES
Hey -- it hasn’t been that long. (Pause) Well, maybe it has.

GLORIA
So what’s she like, man? I’m assuming it is a she?

JAMES
Yes it is and she is wonderful.

GLORIA
Going to share any hot details?

JAMES
Don’t count on it. (Pause) So really, Gloria. What’s this new job you have?

GLORIA
Can’t say, James. (Pause -- JAMES stares at her) Well, okay. I’m working with one other person and we are doing a little experiment. You could say this other person is a magician -- an illusionist. Really good at making herself disappear. That’s all I’m saying.

JAMES
(Prying -- trying not to let on that he knows MIA) How’d you meet her?

GLORIA
Well, it was kind of fate I guess. I was closing the shop and I saw her run past here doing one of her tricks. So I followed her and we got to talking.

JAMES
Huh?

GLORIA
Yeah, so now I’m her assistant, you could say.

JAMES
You’ll have to tell me how the experiment turns out.

GLORIA
Oh, I definitely will.

JAMES
So you working the rest of the week?

GLORIA
Yeah, but only half days. Got to work on the other thing in the afternoon. That reminds me -- better be taking off.

JAMES
Well good luck. See you tomorrow.

GLORIA
Thanks man. And let me know what happens with the girl.

JAMES
Will do.

GLORIA exits, leaving JAMES alone in the room eating his lunch. Fade out.

20. INT. MIA's APARTMENT

We see MIA emerge from her bedroom looking relaxed. There is a knock at the door. MIA looks surprised, still not used to people coming to see her; however, she opens the door. GLORIA is standing there.

GLORIA
(Holding up a bag of donuts and coffee)
Investigation food. Thought we would need some motivation.

MIA
Good idea. Come in.

GLORIA
You seem less annoyed today. What's up?

MIA
(Pause -- thinking) Got a good night's rest. Let's get started.

GLORIA and MIA sit down in front of the trunk of MARIA's belongings. MIA begins to take out each item carefully, laying them on the floor as she did in the dress shop. She first brings out her mother's wedding dress.

MIA
She designed this herself. She really liked simple, classic designs. I was more into gaudy dresses when I was little. Well, guess I still am.

MIA pulls out her mother's will and hands it to GLORIA.

MIA
Here, look through this and make sure that it doesn't say anything about Mr. Dumas. I looked through it once, but it doesn't hurt to take another look.

GLORIA
Sure thing.

The camera slowly backs up and MIA and GLORIA's voices fade out.

Cut to inside of the back room at "Dress to Impress." The room is in disarray -- boxes, papers, and dresses are everywhere. VICTOR and MR. DUMAS are searching through everything.

VICTOR
Oh I think I found . . . (Pause) Never mind.

MR. DUMAS
Stop doing that. Unless you know for sure, don't say anything. The sketches, the dress, the trunk. They didn't just walk out of here.

MR. DUMAS goes back to sifting through the papers while VICTOR stares off into space.

FLASHBACK to VICTOR's POV when he saw the trunk move down the steps of the warehouse and into the alleyway.

Cut back to present day.

VICTOR
Sir, what if I were to tell you that perhaps the trunk did just walk out of here?

MR. DUMAS
What the hell are you talking about, Victor? Just spit it out if you have anything valuable to say.

VICTOR
Well, yesterday when it was slow in here, I was looking out the front window in the direction of the warehouse and I saw a trunk come out of the door, waddle down the steps, and move into the alleyway on the side of the building. I thought I had imagined it. I know it sounds impossible but what if . . .?

MR. DUMAS
I knew it. I knew it was only a matter of time before she would return. Of course it is her. Of course.

VICTOR
What do you mean, sir?

MR. DUMAS
(Mocking) I mean (Pause) Maria is back. She has come to take back her things.

VICTOR
But why? She wanted you to have them -- she gave them to you in her will.

MR. DUMAS
(Yelling) No she didn't! She didn't put them in her will! You understand? I took them. I took them from her disgusting little daughter who they shoved off somewhere in an orphanage. I took them because I deserved them. I've been a dressmaker my entire life. From my first sketches, I was drawing dresses. But no, Maria Carmichael was better. Everyone loved her dresses. No one appreciated my designs. No one liked me until she died and they were forced to take a second look at my designs. And now. Now who's the best, huh Maria? Who is winning now? Me, that's who. And as long as I have some of your designs, I will continue to succeed.

VICTOR
Wait, are you saying that you took her sketches and are now selling those designs? The designs of a dead woman?

MR. DUMAS
So what if I am, Victor? What are you going to do about it? You work for me, remember that. I made you who you are and I can tear you down. (Pause) Now tell me, you didn't see Maria did you?

VICTOR
No.

MR. DUMAS
This is going to be difficult. (Talking mainly to himself) Maria is back and has taken her things. I need those sketches back. Where would she take those sketches? Who would she give them to? (To Victor) Maria had a daughter who survived the crash. Have you heard anything about her?

VICTOR
No.

MR. DUMAS
Yeah, me neither. I wonder if she is still around. Try to find some information on her.

VICTOR
Do you know her name?

MR. DUMAS
No, not sure. Something like Maria, but not. I don't know -- figure it out.

VICTOR stands in place, unsure as to what has just happened.

MR.DUMAS
(Yelling) Now -- go now and figure out where her daughter is, what her name is, is she alive. Go.

VICTOR leaves the backroom and pauses against the door to the break room. He closes his eyes and pauses for a beat.

VICTOR takes a deep breath and walks past the camera. Pause. Quick cut to the next scene.

21. INT. VICTOR's OFFICE

We see VICTOR enter his office and sit at his desk. His office is very small -- about the size of a medium sized closet. There are papers stacked against the walls, which makes the office look even smaller, comically small. VICTOR maneuvers around the papers and trash in the office and collapses at his desk. He puts his head down on his hands.

VICTOR picks up his head and begins to search on the internet for information about MIA. Close up of the computer screen. We see VICTOR type in "Maria Carmichael children" into the search engine. We see a few articles pop up; however, most of them are about the accident. He scans over the articles until he comes to one article, an extended obituary, which includes pictures of MARIA with her family. We see a picture of MIA, MARIA, NATHAN, and JOSEPH. Pause on the picture. Cut to the actual photograph framed in MIA's apartment. Pan out to reveal MIA's entire living room covered in the contents of the trunk. MIA is sifting through everything, which includes photo albums, diaries, and other personal belongings. GLORIA sits on one of the easy chairs looking through the will.

GLORIA
It says right here, Mia "And in the event that there are no other family members alive, I leave everything to my surviving children, Joseph and Mia Carmichael."

Close-up of GLORIA pointing to the words on the will as she reads them. Cut to the computer screen back in VICTOR's office. He reads aloud as we see a close up of an article on the screen.

VICTOR
Everything was left to the only survivor of the crash, Mia Carmichael, Maria's daughter. Mia Carmichael is staying with relatives until a more permanent situation is established.

Medium shot. VICTOR stops reading. Pause. He then types "MIA CARMICHAEL" into the search engine. Only a few articles appear on the screen, which all detail how MIA was the only one to survive the crash and how she was brought to an orphanage. Quick cut of scenes showing the different articles, highlighting key words in each article. The last article that VICTOR looks at is slightly more specific. Close-up of VICTOR reading the article. He looks terrified.

VICTOR
The brakes were cut.

FLASHBACK: We see a younger MR. DUMAS and VICTOR sitting in the back room at the boutique. They are surrounded by dresses, each one sewing and finishing up the garments. There is only one lamp on in the room, which is in the center of the table on which they are working. The two men are silent. MR. DUMAS looks up at VICTOR and pauses.

MR. DUMAS
It's terrible what happened to Maria Carmichael. She was supposed to show at Fashion Week. I wonder if her store is still planning on showing.

VICTOR
I haven't heard anything either way.

MR. DUMAS
You know, Maria and I were close friends as children. We grew up together. Lived next door to each other since we were born. Our parents always wanted us to get married. That didn't really work out when Maria met Nathan.

VICTOR
Is he a nice guy?

MR. DUMAS
Was. Past tense. He was a nice guy. Nice enough.

VICTOR
Are you okay? You seem a little tired, do you want to take a break. I can continue.

MR. DUMAS
No, I'm fine. Don't I seem fine?

VICTOR
You just seem a little tired.

MR. DUMAS
Well I am, okay? We are preparing for Fashion Week and the woman I was supposed to marry was just killed.

VICTOR
Killed? I thought the police ruled it an accident.

MR.DUMAS
They did.

VICTOR
Oh.

Cut back to VICTOR's office. VICTOR sits at his desk, pensive. A look of revelation comes over his face. Quick cut to MIA and GLORIA at MIA's house. Close-up of MIA. The same look comes over her face as she reads one particular passage from MARIA's diary.

MIA
Gloria, listen to this. (Reading from the diary) Just completed the last sketches for Jerry. Thank God. This deal has been a bad one and I'm glad that I'm putting it behind me. Although it was fun to design different types of dresses, I hate being involved with him. He is a strange man -- very different from when he was a boy. I

have a feeling this won't be the last I see of him, but hopefully it will limit our interaction. (Pause -- not reading anymore) Jerry. Isn't that Mr. Dumas' first name? (Not waiting for a reply) Yes. Yes, that's it. His first name is Jerry. What did she mean by "when he was a boy?"

GLORIA
Your guess is as good as mine.

MIA
They couldn't have been friends, could they? They were competitors.

NARRATOR
Mia thought that if she had something that she wanted to keep hidden, secret, and buried, she would keep it so close to her that no one else would ever have a chance to see it. Any more information would be in Mr. Dumas' house, away from the prying eyes of strangers. Yes, Mia knew she had to go to Mr. Dumas' house. It was the only way.

Cut to VICTOR.

VICTOR
(To himself)I have to go to Mia's house. I need to find her before Mr. Dumas does.

Fade out.

22. EXT. CITY

The scene opens on the streets of the city. "Saturday" appears across the bottom of the screen. Pause. We see shots of different couples walking together -- a tall man and a tall woman, a short man and a short woman, a lesbian couple, a gay couple, etc. The couples dress alike and have comparable body shapes and sizes. They look like they fit. As this happens, we hear the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR
Pairs and pairs and pairs. Everywhere you looked, there were pairs of people. Springtime in the city -- the warmth, the flowers, the first glimmer of the summer. Now that the rain had passed and the sun was out again everyone had someone else. Everyone but Mia.

Cut to inside MIA's house. MIA is sitting in the chair by the window reading MARIA's diary.

MIA
(Holding the diary, reading) February. (Not reading) A month before she died. March. (Reading) Today I told Jerry -- I told him about Nathan. He panicked and said that I would regret it. (Not reading) He did something to them -- he did something to us.

We hear a knock at the door. MIA goes to answer the door. GLORIA comes in.

GLORIA
You ready?

MIA
Yeah, I think so.

GLORIA
There's no thinking about it, man. You got to get ready. You're going into battle.

MIA
Don't be so dramatic.

GLORIA
I'm serious. This is important.

MIA
Yeah, I know. I'm aware that it is important. Lucky for you, you can walk away from this whenever you want. I can't. This is my life. This is my

family that someone has torn apart and scattered everywhere. This is my family that someone has stolen from and ruined. This is my broken family.

GLORIA
Okay. Sorry man. (Pause) Let's do this then.

GLORIA and MIA exit the apartment. Fade out.

23. EXT. CITY

We see MIA (only her outline visible) and GLORIA exit to the street and cut through a lawn past the sign from the first scene that says "The CHELSEA BUILDING and Church Parking Only." They pass a bus stop where we see an older man sitting next to a young man on the bench. The speed of the film slows down a little to eavesdrop on their conversation.

OLD MAN
You know I once took a bus from San Antonio to Atlanta. Three days man. I had the worse two-eyeball headache.

YOUNG MAN
Two eyeball headache?

OLD MAN
You know, when you got it right behind the eyes. Yeah, I got like three of those during the ride. It was the worst.

The film returns to its normal speed as we see MIA and GLORIA walking down the street. After a few beats they pass an outdoor café where she sees a young woman eating breakfast. A young man walks up to the table to join her.

MAN
Thanks for getting breakfast. (Pause) Honey, this is a huge coffee.

WOMAN
But Jeffrey, you always get a large!

The film returns to its normal speed and we see MIA and GLORIA walk down the road. Close up on MIA's feet. Her shoes are covered in mud and dust from the lawn. Cut back to MIA and GLORIA walking. They come to a large apartment building. MIA and GLORIA pause outside. MIA is invisible, her outline the only visible part of her. She pulls GLORIA around the corner and begins to whisper.

MIA
Okay, I'll go in. If I have any problems, I have my cell phone in my purse and I will give you a call.

GLORIA
I'll keep watch from the front. Let me know if you need backup.

MIA
Will do.

MIA begins to walk away.

GLORIA
Mia!

MIA
(Turning around) What?

GLORIA points to the ground. MIA's dirty shoes are leaving muddy dusty footprints.

MIA
Oh Jesus. Thanks.

MIA wipes her shoes against the ground and brushes off the dirt with her hands. She then walks around the corner and into the building, only her outline visible. She makes her way past people, trying not to touch anyone, and onto the elevator. But as Mia looks down, she begins to see her right hand become visible, just has it had done in the past. She shoves it in her pocket, willing it to stay invisible.

A ding of the elevator. A few people get out and MIA follows one of them, trying her best to not touch anyone on her way out. She pauses in the hallway until the other

people in the elevator have scattered. She then takes a piece of paper out of her bag. It says "Apartment 17." MIA walks down the hallway, passing each of the apartments, slowly looking at each of the numbers.

She reaches apartment 17. She gently tries the door, which does not open. She pulls a bobby pin out of her pocket and tries to open the door, but that does not work. She then tries a credit card, which does open the door. MIA opens it with a creak. MIA pauses when she hears the creak, but then continues to open the door. Cut to inside the apartment. We see the door opening by itself. Cut back to MIA's POV. We see a large, gaudy apartment interior.

MIA
(To herself) He sure didn't waste my money.

MIA creeps to the back of the apartment where she sees Mr. Dumas' bedroom door open just a crack. Just as she is about to go into the bedroom, a MAID walks out. MIA gasps. Cut to a long-shot. We see only the MAID in the empty apartment.

Cut back to MIA's POV. We see the MAID peer in her direction.

MAID
Hello? Anyone there?

MIA remains silent. The MAID shrugs and walks away. Cut to a long shot. We see MIA standing there, visibly shocked. Cut back to MIA's POV as she walks into the bedroom. It is a modest bedroom sparsely decorated. MIA walks around the room, looking through various drawers.

Cut to VICTOR. VICTOR is standing outside MIA's apartment building, holding a piece of paper and looking up at the number on the building to verify that he is in the right place. He enters the building and climbs the stairs.

VICTOR reaches the door and knocks. He waits for a beat and then knocks again. Cut to inside the empty apartment, the knocking echoing against the walls. Cut back to VICTOR waiting outside. He tries the door, but it

is locked. He decides to wait and sits down next to the door.

Cut back to MIA in MR. DUMAS' apartment. MIA is standing in the middle of the room, looking around the room. She starts to search the drawers, carefully removing the contents and then replacing them. She then stops and considers what to search next.

MIA looks over at the closet, walks over, and opens the door. We see shirts and slacks hanging up with shoes on the floor. Everything is very neat.

NARRATOR
Mia began to think that her efforts were futile and was just about to leave when she could almost hear someone say, "Mia, look closer." (Pause) So Mia looked in the corner -- yes, the right corner. Farther down. There -- look there.

As the NARRATOR advises MIA, she reacts and does what the NARRATOR says, almost as if she can hear the NARRATOR. She peers at the right hand corner of the closet. There is a doorknob. She pushes the clothes to the side to reveal a small door, just big enough for a person if they crouched down. As she reaches for the door, we see her right hand become completely visible, the visibility spreading up her right arm. We see her emerge in a small room on the other side of the door. Covering the walls are her mother's sketches and pictures of her mother. MIA stands in the middle of the room, looking at everything. As she does so, the visibility spreads over her entire body until she is completely visible. The camera slowly travels around counter-clockwise, gaining speed.

MIA focuses on one section of the wall where there are articles from the car accident she was in. They are collaged together in a weirdly cheerful way that makes MIA shiver.

MIA
(Looking at the articles) I bet you did this. I bet you did. You were obsessed.

MR. DUMAS
That's none of your business.

MIA turns around and sees MR. DUMAS standing next to the secret door leading to the closet. Cut to the hall. GLORIA is lying on the floor, knocked unconscious. Cut to the MAID locked in another bedroom. Cut back to MIA's apartment—VICTOR is no longer waiting outside. Cut back to the secret room. MIA stands perfectly still, not moving, thinking she is still invisible.

MR. DUMAS
Well. Aren't you going to say anything? (Pause) Who are you? And who is that woman outside? Is she supposed to keep watch?

MIA continues to stand perfectly straight and stays quiet, although MR.DUMAS is looking directly at her.

MR.DUMAS
Yes, I'm talking to you, Mia. Mia Carmichael. I am very surprised to see you here. Not only are you are in my private room, I also thought you were dead. Haven't heard anything about you since shortly after the accident. Well, either dead or moved away. But I see you have come back, huh? What do you have to say for yourself?

MIA
(Long pause) You can see me?

MR.DUMAS
Well, of course I can. You are standing in the room and I am looking at you.

MIA
Why did you do this?

MR.DUMAS
Well Mia, why wouldn’t I do this? Maria and I were friends. I’m just remembering my friend and her family.

MIA
Why did you hide it then?

MR.DUMAS
We had a very private relationship. Too precious to share with anyone else. (In a mocking voice) I knew your grandpa, worked in his store with him, did everything with Maria. We were best friends.

As MR. DUMAS speaks he slowly creeps closer to MIA while MIA tries to back up as much as possible against the walls.

MIA
You killed them, didn’t you? You killed my family.

MR. DUMAS
I didn’t kill anyone, Mia. It was the car -- the car malfunctioned. It wasn’t me at all. And it was supposed to be my family. Remember, you were supposed to be my daughter.

He creeps closer to MIA and tries to embrace her.

MIA
Get away from me. Don’t touch me. You disgust me.

MR.DUMAS
You look just like her. Twins, almost. No, I didn’t kill anyone. It isn’t my fault that the brakes were weak. (Pause) I thought you could manage without brakes. The police thought differently. Had to buy them off with the money Maria left me.

MIA
My mother didn’t leave you anything -- nothing. She left it all to me. That was my money. You stole it from me.

MR. DUMAS
I didn’t steal anything, Mia. Just like I didn’t mean to kill anyone. Well, maybe just Nathan (laughs). It was always a little crowded with Nathan in the picture. Mia, your mother trusted me and left everything to me. It said so in her will.

He walks over to his bureau and pulls out a will that looks very old and weathered. He holds it up and shows her.

MR.DUMAS
See here? I have it right here!

MR. DUMAS shows MIA the will, which was dated 15 years before the accident.

MIA
She had a new will made up -- that one is old. That one is wrong.

MR. DUMAS
Well, no one was around to correct me were they? Your wonderful family was too busy abandoning you at the orphanage, where I assumed you rotted. But look at you here, standing before me.

MR. DUMAS pulls out a gun.

MIA
What are you doing?

MR. DUMAS
Mia, you have to understand. I thought you were dead all this time. Surely you understand that you can’t be around. You know too much and that would ruin everything for me and Maria.

MIA
Maria -- my mother -- is dead and has been dead for a long time.

MR. DUMAS
Haven't you heard? She's back -- back trying to lead me here to you so that we can be alone yet again. She has been visiting me at the store. She even took her favorite red dress.

MIA pauses -- thinking. We see a group of vignettes of every time MIA stole something from MR. DUMAS' shop. Cut back to the secret room.

MIA
Her favorite red dress?

MR. DUMAS
Yes, didn't you know? Your mother much preferred my dresses; she only designed her dresses because that was the way her father taught her. But she liked mine much better.

MIA
She liked them because they were her designs, you idiot. I know she designed them for you because you were struggling and she was trying to do everything she could to help you. But you are too evil to ever be helped. She wasted her life on you.

MR. DUMAS
Take it back.

MIA
Never. You are worthless.

MR. DUMAS
(Closing his eyes) Take it back. TAKE IT BACK.

FLASHBACK: We see a MARIA and a younger MR.DUMAS sitting in the back room of the original dress shop, working on some new designs together.

MARIA
Jerry, I have to tell you something.

MR. DUMAS
Anything, Maria.

MARIA
Nathan asked me to marry him.

She thrusts her hand at him to reveal her engagement ring. MR. DUMAS stares at it blankly.

MARIA
Well. (Pause) Well aren't you going to say anything?

MR.DUMAS
(Disgusted) I have nothing to say.

MARIA
Jerry, don't be like that. You are my friend, be happy for me.

MR. DUMAS
But you're mine, Maria.

MARIA
Jerry, I don't belong to anyone.

MR. DUMAS
Now you are his.

MARIA
That's not how it is between us. We love each other.

MR. DUMAS
No, you love me and I love you.

MARIA
Jerry, you are starting to scare me.

MR. DUMAS
(Mocking) You're starting to scare me. You're starting to scare me.

MARIA
Seriously, stop it.

MR. DUMAS
You are mine, Maria and you always will be. No matter who you marry or how many kids you have, you will always be mine. You can't get rid of me and you can't leave me. You are mine.

MARIA
I'm leaving. Don't ever talk to me again. If you come near me, I will call the police. You are worthless.

MR. DUMAS
Wherever you go, I will go. You can't get rid of me. And if you try, I'll make you regret it. You will regret it!

Cut back to the secret room.

MR. DUMAS
I'm so sorry, Mia. But this is for the best.

The speed of the film slows down. As he raises the gun, we see -- through MIA's POV -- VICTOR and GLORIA enter the room through the door. VICTOR jumps on MR. DUMAS' back and tackles him to the ground. A gunshot goes off and the two men lay still. The speed of the film returns to normal. VICTOR gets up, not having been shot, while MR. DUMAS lies on the floor, a pool of blood trickling out of his body. Fade out.

24. EXT. MOVIE THEATRE

We see JAMES standing outside the theatre, waiting for MIA. MIA walks up and stands near him, but not directly next to him, looking around as if she is waiting for someone. JAMES approaches her, but before he can speak, she speaks.

MIA
You're James?

JAMES
You can see me.

MIA
Yeah (Pause) I guess I can.

JAMES
(Dumbfounded) How'd this happen?

MIA
It's a really long story. Maybe we can get coffee after the movie and I'll explain it.

JAMES
Sure. (Pause) Well, shall we?

JAMES and MIA begin to walk into the theatre. A stranger bumps into MIA.

STRANGER
Oh excuse me, miss.

MIA
(Surprised) It's okay.

JAMES and MIA look at each other and then go into the movie theatre. Fade out.

25. INT. MIA's APARTMENT

We see the church choir from the start of the film singing. The camera pauses on them for a beat before traveling through the ceiling into MIA's apartment. We hear them singing at full volume throughout this scene. We see MIA and JAMES sitting at her kitchen table eating breakfast. "Sunday" comes across the bottom of the screen. As we hear the narrator, we see MIA and JAMES in different vignettes -- reading together in the park, strolling down the street, at a coffee shop -- very restful activities. Throughout we hear the narrator.

NARRATOR
Mia woke that Sunday morning feeling like a new person. Her invisibility

seemed to have disappeared. Mr. Dumas was dead, the police were called, and her things, her mother's things, were returned to her. Mia was just happy to have finally understood what had happened to her family. She was also happy to be making a new life for herself. She had new friends and a new career -- dressmaking. She had decided to reopen her mother's dress store. Mia had so many new plans for this new life, but all she wanted to do on this Sunday, on the seventh day of her re-creation, was to rest. And that is just what she and James did. They took the seventh day to rest.

The camera slowly travels up through the ceiling, continuing upwards past the trees and tops of buildings until we are able to see the circle of highways that surrounds the city. Pause on this image. The image slowly morphs into a 3-D image of colorful dots as in the beginning of the film. The 3-D image slowly morphs into just a jumble of dots, the image no longer visible. As this happens, we hear the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR

Love is the ultimate act of self-completion. Love of a friend, like Gloria, love of family, love of your true love, like James.. Mia had finally found herself, finally created lasting relationships because she truly understood the past and recreated herself. And that is how this modern tale ends. (Pause) I couldn't be happier for my little girl.

The book closes. Black screen. Credits.