

DREAM SCENARIO

Written By

Kristoffer Borgli

FINAL DRAFT

1

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - MORNING

1

It's a quiet morning in a suburban neighborhood. SOPHIE, a twelve-year-old girl, is seated by the patio table, while her father PAUL is hosing the lawn. Suddenly a set of keys falls from the sky and through the patio table, shattering the glass. Sophie is startled, but Paul doesn't seem to mind. A shoe suddenly falls from the sky and lands on the lawn. Then a person with one shoe falls from the sky, landing right by the pool.

SOPHIE

Dad?

PAUL

It's OK sweetie.

Sophie suddenly starts to slowly levitate off the chair.

SOPHIE

Dad, Dad. Dad, help me!

She tries to hold onto the chair, but it lifts up with her. She keeps getting pulled upwards through thin air, she's now several feet up and the chair slips out of her hands.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Dad, please help me! Please help me, please!

Paul is indecisive, just standing there, unable to act as we hear the screams of his daughter disappearing into the sky.

2

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

2

We are in an upper middle class home during a weekday breakfast. Paul and his wife JANET are listening to Sophie retell her dream.

SOPHIE

And um, I guess ... and then I woke up.

PAUL

Why didn't I do anything?

SOPHIE

I don't know.

PAUL

It's like the third time now, why am I always just standing there?

(CONTINUED)

JANET
Don't make her feel guilty about
her dreams, Paul.

PAUL
You don't see me that way, right?
That's not how you think I'd react
in real life?

SOPHIE
If I was floating?

PAUL
Remember that time you almost
drowned? How fast I reacted.

JANET
She was four.

SOPHIE
I remember you telling me
about it.

HANNAH, their 15 year old daughter, pops her head into the
kitchen on her way out.

HANNAH
Bye!

JANET
Hannah!

She returns.

JANET (CONT'D)
Remember you have to be home with
Sophie tonight.

HANNAH
No, that's tomorrow night.

PAUL
No, the play is tonight, it was
always tonight.

HANNAH
Really? She can't she be alone for,
like, a few hours?

SOPHIE
(sotto)
I don't mind..

JANET
You already agreed to this.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH
OK, fine. Bye!

3 INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING 3

Paul is getting ready to leave for work.

JANET
So, should I just meet you there
or?

PAUL
Yeah probably, I'm not sure how
long it'll take with Sheila, so...

JANET
Are you nervous?

PAUL
No. Not really. I think it'll be
good, I think she'll understand,
hopefully apologize, and that'll be
that.

JANET
Can you record it?

PAUL
Are you serious?

JANET
Yeah, just the audio. On your
phone. I want to hear how she
reacts.

PAUL
(smiling)
Wow, so vindictive Janet.. I'll
think about it.

JANET
But, you should go, you're gonna be
late.

PAUL
No, I'll be fine.

JANET
Have a good one.

PAUL
You too.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: 3

He gives her a peck and leaves.

3A INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - DAY 3A

Paul is running through the hallway, late for class.

4 INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY 4

Paul is giving a lecture to his students. There's a projected image of a zebra to his side.

PAUL

So when talking about adaptive strategies, why does the zebra look the way it does? You can spot it miles away, so it's not very functional, right? Any theory on how the black and white stripes could be a benefit?

He looks around the room in hope for a response. He notices two of his students, GRETA and ANDY, whispering about him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No one?

He clicks a button for the next slide. This time it's a herd of zebras hunched together.

PAUL (CONT'D)

From what we know, the camouflage isn't effective in terms of blending in with the environment, rather it's about blending in with the herd. You see, predators need to identify their prey, they can't just attack the whole group. So if you stick your head out you make yourself a target. Does that make sense?

Paul notices the same two people still whispering and seemingly talking about him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hi. Hey! Focus.

They just stare at him for a beat, then start whispering.

ANDY

Is this how it went?

(CONTINUED)

GRETA
No, it's different now.

PAUL
Do you wanna share your discussion
with the class?

GRETA
(to Paul)
Sorry, no.

PAUL
Ok, because you just made
yourselves a target by speaking
when you weren't supposed to. You
get the analogy?

GRETA
I get the analogy.

PAUL
Ok. Good. So in contrast, can
anyone think of instances where
"sticking out" can be an
evolutionary benefit?

MILES, another student raises his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Yes..

MILES
Mating?

PAUL
Mating.

5 **INT. RESTAURANT MADRE - LATER - DAY**

5

Paul approaches AVERY, the hostess of the restaurant, which
just opened for the day.

AVERY
Welcome to Madre.

PAUL
Hi... I have a table... for
Paul...?

The hostess just stares at him for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)
What?

AVERY
I'm sorry, don't I know you?

PAUL
I don't know, do you?

AVERY
Yeah, I . . .

PAUL
Well, Osler, maybe? I'm a professor there.

AVERY
No, I didn't go there. Have you been with us lately?

PAUL
No.

AVERY
Yeah. Okay. Sorry... I'm just going through some major deja-vu or... Brian, right?

PAUL
Paul.

6 **INT. RESTAURANT MADRE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER - DAY** 6

Paul is now seated alone in a mostly empty restaurant. He suddenly remembers to take out his phone and starts an audio recording. He puts the phone on the table and after a few beats SHEILA arrives, a fifty-something academic with a friendly face. She waves and smiles as she approaches.

SHEILA
Hi Paul, it's so nice to see you.

PAUL
Yeah, it's been too long Sheila.

SHEILA
I barely recognized you, wow.

PAUL
Oh yeah? The beard maybe?

SHEILA
No it's the whole... You know...

(CONTINUED)

She makes an awkward gesture.

PAUL

So how long are you in town for?

SHEILA

Just a few days. Visiting my brother. How's everything with you? You're still at Osler, right?

PAUL

Yeah I am. And, you're publishing another paper, I heard!

SHEILA

Oh yeah. We're just doing final revisions now, so it's looking good.

Sheila starts perusing the menu.

PAUL

Where'd you end up? Which publication?

SHEILA

Uh... Do you want to-- Should we look at the menu?

PAUL

Yeah. Which publication though?

SHEILA

Uh... Nature.

PAUL

Nature?

Paul is starting to sweat.

SHEILA

Yeah, we're happy about that, I mean it's been a while. So... Yeah.

PAUL

Why haven't you contacted me?

SHEILA

What?

PAUL

Why am I not being credited?

(CONTINUED)

SHEILA

What do you mean?

PAUL

Come on. Swarm intelligence? Ant colony algorithms?

SHEILA

Yeah?

PAUL

Sounds awfully similar to my research, no?

SHEILA

Well, I... Do you mean from grad school?

PAUL

Yes! You weren't even interested in networks back then, you were all about senescence!

SHEILA

Yes, I mean, yes, I've expanded my interest over the last thirty years?

PAUL

Are you using "antelligence." You know I coined that, right?

SHEILA

I'm not using "antelligence." Look there's a big difference between talking about an idea and actually doing all the work.

PAUL

No, no I've been working. I've got a book.

SHEILA

Uh, do you have a publisher?

PAUL

Well, I want to finish it before I take it out, I don't want to be influenced by any sort of corporate agenda.

SHEILA

Can I read a draft, or?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Oh, why? Do you need more material?

SHEILA

Come on, Paul, let's be adults here. How far along are you?

PAUL

Well, I haven't really started the actual "sitting down and writing" portion of it yet... But I

7

INT./EXT. PAUL'S CAR/PARKING LOT - LATER

7

Paul is now sitting in his car, alone, listening back to the audio recording via the car stereo bluetooth.

PAUL (V.O.)

"So, this kind of ruins everything for me, Sheila. It's just a complete appropriation. I mean...

Can you at least credit me?"

SHEILA (V.O.)

"There's nothing wrong with just being a professor, Paul. You don't need to be a researcher too."

PAUL (V.O.)

"Please Sheila, I need this!"

He stops the recording out of embarrassment and deletes it and starts driving.

8

EXT. THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

8

Paul is waiting for Janet outside the theater. There's another person out there smoking a cigarette who keeps looking at him. It seems like the man is trying to place Paul, on the verge of talking to him, but doesn't. Then Janet arrives.

PAUL

Jan!

JANET

Hi!

PAUL

You got the tickets?

(CONTINUED)

JANET
Yeah. How'd it go?

PAUL
Oh, you mean with Sheila?

JANET
Yeah?

PAUL
Yeeh, well... Yeah, you know it's technical. I mean she totally saw my argument, but we didn't fully, you know, resolve it yet.

JANET
Really? So what's next?

PAUL
I'll figure it out.

JANET
Was she defensive? Did you record it?

PAUL
Oh... No, I kind of felt, you know, unethical or whatever. You wanna go inside?

9 **INT. THEATER - HALL - NIGHT**

9

A wide shot of the audience watching the play. We slowly zoom in on Paul and we can sense that his mind is elsewhere. A few rows back, far to the side, there's a woman who keeps trying to get a good look at Paul.

10 **INT. THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT**

10

The play has ended. Paul and Janet are walking through the lobby as they talk about the experience. From deep in the crowd we hear someone shouting.

CLAIRE (O.C.)
Paul. Paul!?

Paul and Janet stop and turn to see CLAIRE, the woman we saw staring at him earlier.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Ah! I thought that was you!

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Claire? Hi! My god...

CLAIRE
Oh, it's so good to see you.

PAUL
You just saw the play?

CLAIRE
Duh, yeah. Of course.

PAUL
This is my wife, Janet.

CLAIRE
Oh hi, I'm Claire.

They shake hands.

JANET
Hello, Janet.

CLAIRE
When did you get married?

PAUL
Oh. Wow. That's about... Well,
let's see...

JANET
Fifteen years.

PAUL
Yeah, fifteen years ago.

CLAIRE
Well, I'm so glad I ran in to
you. You've been on my mind a
lot lately.--

JANET
--I'm sorry. How do you two
know each other?

PAUL
Oh, well, Claire and I used to
date.

CLAIRE
Yeah, wild right? Anyway, you've
been on my mind recently.

PAUL
Yeah? I uh... I haven't thought
about you in a while..

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE

Okay? Good to know I guess?
(Chuckles). Anyway, the reason that
you've been on my mind is because
you keep popping up in my dreams.

PAUL

Really?

CLAIRE

Yeah. Like, a lot in the last few
weeks.

We can feel the tension rising between Janet and Paul.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It's so strange. You don't do
anything, you're just there, even
if the dream's completely unrelated
to you. Like, the other night: a
good friend of mine was lying in
the street, hit by a car, bleeding,
dying in my arms, right? And
then... this is just in the dream
of course. And out of nowhere,
there you are! Just strolling by!

We see a QUICK CUT of a dream: Claire is crying over someone
dying in the middle of the street after being hit by a car.
She turns around to see Paul just standing there, in the
street, watching, half-smiling nonchalantly.

PAUL

Wow, I'm—Well, I mean that is so
strange.

Paul looks over to Janet, who's not as bemused as him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So I don't intervene at all? I
don't help out?

CLAIRE

You're still doing that?

PAUL

What?

CLAIRE

Searching for the insult? No, you
don't do anything, but it's not
like I blame you. I was gonna say
that my therapist suggested I reach
out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

That maybe you and I need to sort something out. You know: subconsciously.

JANET

Did -- Did you know he was here?

CLAIRE

No, no, no. I just happened to see you guys! Which feels like a sign, you know? Synchronicity.

PAUL

Okay. Okay, Yeah...

CLAIRE

Do you think we could grab a coffee or something? You know, just catch up and stuff?

Paul glances quickly over at Janet and back to Claire.

PAUL

Yeah, we... we could do that. Sure, why not? I mean, you know... Yeah.

CLAIRE

Should I take your number?

PAUL

Oh, uh. Okay, yeah.

CLAIRE

Okay. Put your number in there.

Claire takes out her phone and gives it to him. He types in his number and stores it under his name.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(to Janet)

Did you like the play?

JANET

I did, yeah. Yeah...

Paul hands her phone back. She looks at his name.

CLAIRE

What, you changed your last name?

PAUL

Yeah. I took hers. We thought it was... I thought it was appropriate-- I wanted to.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (4) 10

Janet smiles at him mockingly.

11 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT** 11

Paul is brushing his teeth in the bathroom right next to the bedroom, while Janet is getting ready for bed.

JANET

Why'd you get all red?

PAUL

Well, I was just taken aback by the whole situation. Wouldn't you react the same if some old boyfriend cornered you like that?

JANET

I don't think I'd turn into a stuttering fool.

PAUL

I don't think I was stuttering...

JANET

She seemed really happy to see you.

PAUL

Well, yeah, but not because... It's because of these dreams!

JANET

Why are you defending her?

PAUL

Are you just trying to pick a fight with me right now?

JANET

No, I'm just nervous what this women will do to you when I'm not there.

PAUL

"Do to me?" What is she going to do to me? Jump me?

JANET

Why did you ask if she was married?

PAUL

I was making conversation!

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Ok, well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't worried at all.

PAUL

That's fair. But I'm just meeting her for coffee, that's it. I love you.

JANET

Have you ever fantasized about other women?

Beat.

PAUL

Yeah, of course I have.

JANET

But never cheated.

PAUL

Oh my god, Janet. Do you really think I'm that cool? Do you think I could handle the emotional burden of having an affair?

JANET

(smiles)

No. No, you're right...

PAUL

Just try not to let your neuroticism hijack you.

JANET

Oh come on, not the gender psychology bullshit again!

PAUL

We both know you score high in neuroticism, it's best to just own it and be pragmatic about it.

JANET

Yeah, well you score high in... Assholeness.

PAUL

I score high in "assholeness"?

(CONTINUED)

JANET
(sarcastically)
Yeah, so, just own it. Be pragmatic about it.

PAUL
How about this: I'll keep it very formal when I meet her, I won't even smile, would that work for you?

JANET
She might like that.

12 INT. DINER - DAY

12

Claire and Paul are having that coffee date, and Paul is smiling.

CLAIRE
... Yeah, well, it's just so intense, you know. And I usually don't even remember my dreams.

PAUL
Wow... I feel like I want to apologize for barging into your head like that.

CLAIRE
No, it's okay, it's just funny, you know? Anyway, thanks for meeting me.

PAUL
Of course.

CLAIRE
There's actually something I want to ask you...

PAUL
Oh yeah? What?

CLAIRE
Would it be OK if I wrote about this?

PAUL
What do you mean, in what way?

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE
Well, I write for this magazine
called The New Inquiry?

PAUL
Really? You're publishing?

CLAIRE
Well, it's just online. It's more
like a blog. Nobody really reads
it.

PAUL
What... What sort of stuff do you
write about?

CLAIRE
Mostly psychology... Jungian stuff.

Paul laughs a little.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Yeah, okay. I knew you'd scoff at
that.

PAUL
Sorry I didn't mean to. What, you
want to write about me?

CLAIRE
No, I want to write about the
dreams, about randomly seeing you,
just that. It's just very on brand
for what I do.

PAUL
I mean... yeah, if you don't
portray me as this inadequate loser
like in your dreams.

CLAIRE
You're seriously insulted?

PAUL
No, of course not, I'm joking.

CLAIRE
So you'd be OK with it?

PAUL
Yes, yeah. Go ahead.

CLAIRE
Yes. Thank you. Yes.

(CONTINUED)

Paul almost says something.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

What?

PAUL

No, it's just... My wife suspected you had ulterior motives.

CLAIRE

Like what?

PAUL

Well, that you still had feelings for me, that you missed me?

CLAIRE

Really? That's so funny. Why would she say that?

PAUL

Oh... I mean... I don't know I...

CLAIRE

Oh shoot. I have to run. Uhm... well thank you. Thanks for doing this, really. I guess I'll see you in my dreams.

PAUL

Hah! Yeah... of course not!

Paul is walking through the hallways of the university when he overhear, MILES and JESSIE two students talking around the corner.

MILES

Is it him?

JESSIE

Yeah, it's Paul for sure.

MILES

That's so weird, we're basically having the same dream.

JESSIE

I know, it's so random. It's just like... Paul, every night for some reason.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

Paul nonchalantly walks around the corner. Jessie and Miles see him and stop talking.

PAUL
Hi.

JESSIE
Hey.

PAUL
You guys... Good?

JESSIE
Yeah... You?

PAUL
Yeah...

Paul keeps walking, and then we hear Miles and Jessie both burst into laughter. Paul starts rushing down the hallway.

14 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - BRETT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY** 14

Paul enters his colleague, BRETT's office. Paul just stares at Brett for a moment.

BRETT
What?

PAUL
Have you been dreaming about me?

BRETT
Have I been dreaming about you?

PAUL
Yeah.

BRETT
Ever in my life, you mean?

PAUL
No, recently.

BRETT
I don't know, I don't keep track of things like that.

Paul, scans the room for anything out of the ordinary.

BRETT (CONT'D)
You're kind of freaking me out,
what's going on?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

PAUL

Nothing...

Paul leaves the office to Brett's confusion.

15 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER - DAY**

15

The family is eating dinner together.

PAUL

Can we please put our phones away
and have a real conversation?

Sophie and Hannah both look at Paul with slight annoyance. They look over at Janet, but she doesn't budge. They reluctantly put their phones down.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So... How was school today Sophie?

A smartphone placed on a console table in the hallway starts ringing. Paul deliberately ignores it.

SOPHIE

Dad.

PAUL

It's fine, I'll call them back
later. Tell me about your day.

HANNAH

Can you turn the sound off at
least?

PAUL

Yes, I'll do that next time.

JANET

It'll stop soon.

PAUL

Sophie? Didn't you guys decide
which character you're going to be?
For the play? Or-

It keeps ringing.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Let me just hang up.

We follow Paul as he walks into the kitchen. He looks at the screen. It's his friend RICHARD.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)
I have to take this!

SOPHIE
(to Janet and Hannah)
That's not allowed!

He answers and walks further into the living room for privacy.

PAUL
Richard! Hi!

RICHARD (V.O.)
Is this a good time? Do you have a minute?

PAUL
Yeah, what's going on?

RICHARD (V.O.)
So... Where do I start.

PAUL
Wow, it sounds serious.

RICHARD (V.O.)
No, it's funny. You know sometimes I have these dinner parties, right?

PAUL
Yeah? Is this finally the invite?

RICHARD (V.O.)
No, it's... Uh... I just had one.

PAUL
Oh... OK, and?

16

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

16

We see RICHARD, a well-dressed professor, seated at his long table for a dinner party with an eclectic group from the intelligentsia, all mostly in their 40s and 50s. They're listening to NAOMI, a New Yorker type journalist, telling a story.

NAOMI
So, I've told this to my husband ad
nauseam, but it's about a recurring
dream I've had. Or not so much a
specific dream, but a specific
person I keep dreaming about.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NAOMI (CONT'D)

He looks perfectly average, he's a remarkable nobody, who just shows up. He just occupies the space like an awkward guest at a party that no one really knows.

RICHARD

You mean like Sidney?

They all look over to SIDNEY, another guest in his 50s who actually kind of resembles Paul. They all laugh assuming it's a joke, but Naomi responds:

NAOMI

Yeah, kind of! Yes.

They laugh again. But then Richard's wife, CARLOTA, enters the conversation.

CARLOTA

I have also ... I've also had that experience. I already told Richard about it. I did, I told you...

RICHARD

Yes and I'm kind of upset, to tell you the truth. She's dreaming about another man!

CARLOTA

Yeah, very similar to yours Naomi, except in my case it's this guy that we sort of know, this old friend of Richard's, Paul.

RICHARD

Well, we went to the same university.

(then to Carlota)

He's actually not that memorable. He's kind of boring. I don't get why you're so into him.

CARLOTA

(laughing)

I'm not into him!

NAOMI

What does he look like?

CARLOTA

Well, he does actually kind of look like Sidney.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (2) 16

NAOMI

Do you have a picture?

17 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - TV ROOM - PRESENT** 17

We see part of Paul's reaction to the dinner party flashback.

18 **INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT** 18

Richard gets his phone out and opens Facebook to find a photo of Paul. He then passes the phone to Naomi to show her.

19 OMITTED 19

20 OMITTED 20

21 OMITTED 21

22 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MEANWHILE** 22

Sophie, Hannah and Janet all react to the sound of glass hitting the floor and breaking in the kitchen. They get up.

23 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS** 23

Paul's body is on the floor with the phone and broken glass scattered beside him. Janet runs over and shakes him.

JANET

Oh, my God. Paul, Paul! Oh, my God.

We can hear Richard yelling through the phone on the floor. Janet takes it.

JANET (CONT'D)

Hey, wait -

She hangs up, shakes Paul's face and he comes to.

JANET (CONT'D)

What happened? Hey.

24

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - LATER

24

Paul is sitting by his desk holding an ice-pack to the bruise on his head as he's checking his Facebook. There's close to a hundred message requests. He clicks to see them.

PAUL

Janet! There's like a hundred messages on here!

No response from Janet. Paul keeps clicking through.

Janet walks into the office.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Probably Claire's article. She must've linked it to my profile or something! Somebody wants to interview me!

JANET

Why are you so excited?

PAUL

Why? What's wrong?

JANET

This is strange Paul. Maybe you should take a minute and think before you do anything drastic.

25

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - DAY

25

Edited video montage of local news - flashy news graphics and a little anthem transitions to a zoom interview with Paul, sitting in his office with a shirt, jacket and tie.

PAUL

(smiling and joking)

Why me? Uh, I don't know, I'm special I guess!

Transition to more graphics and Paul's Facebook photo, as we hear the news anchor:

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

An area man has found himself at the center of a strange "dream epidemic", which scientists are struggling to make sense of.

They cut to a zoom interview with a sleep scientist.

(CONTINUED)

SLEEP SCIENTIST

So we actually don't know what's causing this, but it's sort of like a dream version of the "Mandela Effect," which is when multiple people report having the same false memory without any logical explanation. Now, then there's something called "astral projection", right? This is a spiritual type of dream visitation. Scientifically this is dubious, of course, but it has been reported. It's a very interesting time in my field.

They cut the sleep scientist off, to show info-graphics of a poll they've conducted.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

Our online poll shows thousands of reports of the phenomenon.

They cut to an interview with Paul via zoom.

PAUL

But I'm always inclined to think rationally that anything supernatural has to be socially constructed, but this one is... Mysterious. Even for me.

26

INT./EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - TV ROOM/BACKYARD - NIGHT

26

That news segment is on the TV in the living room. Paul is on the phone in the background, Janet seems somewhat skeptical of the whole ordeal, while Sophie and Hannah are watching the TV.

PAUL

(to his phone)

No mom, I don't know. I didn't do anything. I don't know either(...) Do you remember Claire?(...) What are you getting so upset for, Mom? I'm fine. I'm missing the whole segment now...

HANNAH

This is gonna be so weird to explain at school...

27

INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

27

Paul steps into the lecture hall. It is unusually full. Some start clapping as he arrives, and the rest follow suit.

The whole room is cheering, and some are recording on their phones. Paul can't help smiling as he tries to calm them down.

PAUL

Ok.. Ok.. Please, calm down. Calm down. Thank you.. Who's really here for the lecture on "kin selection"? Show of hands.

Around 20% of the class raises their hands.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ok, the rest of you, I'll give you five minutes before I start the lecture, OK? Ask me anything.

Andy holds up his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yes, you.

ANDY

How does it feel to go viral?

PAUL

Hah! Well we can discuss that when we get to memetics later this year.

GRETA

Why is this happening?

PAUL

I have no clue! My guess would be as good as yours.

ELI

Are you gonna do, like, Stephen Colbert or anything?

Students laugh.

PAUL

Not a chance. I actually enjoy my anonymity, if you can believe that.

Paul scans the room again with enthusiasm.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)
Ok... you!

Another student, ROBBIE, chimes in.

ROBBIE
I think maybe I had a dream about you but it's like super blurry, and like, I wanna like be better at remembering them... And Uh... How do I do that?

PAUL
I'm not really an expert here. Keeping a dream journal is a common exercise, but isn't seeing me in class enough?

The students laugh. More people raise their hands. Paul looks at his watch.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Who's certain they've actually had a dream about me?

Around 15 students raise their hands.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Ok. Let's explore this, this might get us somewhere interesting. Does anyone want to share the content of their dream? Yes, you.

ANDY
Well uhm... I'm in this forest, wandering around, eating these strange mushrooms. And I'm in like a full tuxedo, for some reason, and there's other people also dressed up, but they're all scared, like, frozen in fear. And then I realize it's because of this really tall man running towards me.

28 **EXT. FOREST - DUSK (DREAM)**

28

We see Andy walking around, eating mushrooms, in a full tuxedo, passing other people in tuxedos who are standing still, facing away from him. Suddenly he hears something, and sees a very tall man in the distance, seemingly chasing him. Andy runs away, then sits down behind a big rock to try to hide, frozen in fear. Out of nowhere, Paul is suddenly in front of him just casually walking around.

(CONTINUED)

ANDY

Hide.

Paul just keeps casually strolling around. There's more of the colorful strange mushrooms on the trees around.

PAUL

Are you talking to me?

ANDY

Yes, Paul. He'll kill us! Paul.

Paul sees the mushrooms, takes a closer look.

PAUL

I've never seen these, beautiful.

ANDY

No! No!

We hear the killer off camera, the camera whip pans, and we smash cut to:

29 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY**

29

ANDY

And that's all I remember.

The students laugh.

PAUL

Huh... Interesting... So I'm looking at the mushrooms... Instead of helping.

ANDY

Oh... I suppose, yeah.

PAUL

Ok. Let's hear another one. Anyone?

30 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - ATRIUM - NIGHT (DREAM)**

30

We're in the main atrium of the university. There's about seventy students there, all panicking and screaming because there's an earthquake happening. Tables are shaking, people are pushing each other out of the way as they panic. Things are breaking as they hit the floor and there's smoke everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

A person hiding under a table is eating a dead rabbit and another student has her face and arms covered in snails. The rest of the students are either running away or trying to hold onto whatever they can find. Greta is scared for her life, but notices in the chaos of it all: Paul just standing there, not bothered by the ordeal. He smiles at her.

31 INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

31

PAUL

Ok, so, I'm just observing again...
But that's funny... Interesting
one. Anyone else?

32 INT. GREENHOUSE - DUSK (DREAM)

32

ELI, another student, is standing alone in an abandoned green house. He takes a tooth out of his bloody mouth, then sees that Paul is standing outside watching him.

33 INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY (DREAM)

33

LEAH, one of Paul's students, is stuck on top of a full piano as there are alligators on the floor trying to eat her, in the middle of a big living room in a manor house. Paul is standing far away just staring at her.

34 INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

34

Students laugh again.

PAUL

It ends like that?

LEAH

Yeah! That's, uh, all I can
remember.

PAUL

Does anyone have a more original
one? Maybe where I'm actually doing
something?

They all look at each other, nobody raises their hands.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No one? Ok, well, let's just hear
them anyway, who's next?

35 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - LATER** 35

They've reached the end of class, and the whole time was spent talking about their dreams. A few of the students have now lined up by the door to take photos with Paul. We can see Paul try to hide his excitement as he poses.

36 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING** 36

Like in the opening scene, the family is having breakfast. This time Hannah comes in and sits down with them.

HANNAH

Dad.

He looks over, she snaps a photo.

PAUL

Oh my god, delete that.

HANNAH

No it's fine! I'm just sending it to Kyle.

PAUL

Who's Kyle?

HANNAH

Tammy's friend. He doesn't believe you're my dad for some reason.

PAUL

Oh... You guys are flirting?

HANNAH

Nooooo... He's just asking about you.

PAUL

So I'm finally cool, huh?

HANNAH

Well, I wouldn't go that far.

PAUL

(playful)

You hear this Janet? She's saying I'm a cool dad now!

HANNAH

(while smiling)

I didn't say that!

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE
Can you drive me to school today?

PAUL
You want me to?

She nods, Paul checks his watch.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I guess I can make it. Janet, does that work?

JANET
Yeah, take her.

37 **INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM OFFICE - DAY**

37

Janet is by her desk at the boutique architecture firm where she works, and her colleague CHRIS is chatting her up.

CHRIS
Dude, this is like so insane. Like, how's he dealing with all this?

JANET
We're not even the type of people that like attention, you know? The whole thing is so bizarre.

CHRIS
So bizarre. So bizarre. My sister is actually, like star struck that I know you, you know. She sent me this article and she's like: "Check this guy out, Paul." And I was like: "Uh, that's Paul Matthews. I know his wife."

JANET
That's so funny.

CHRIS
Yeah. They also talked about Paul on this podcast I listen to.

JANET
Oh yeah?

CHRIS
Yeah. Also I was listening to this podcast that I like. They were talking about Paul.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Oh yeah?

CHRIS

Yea. They were relating Paul to, like, this old internet meme, and then they were talking about how, like, all memes will become dreams or something like that.

JANET

Ph, that's interesting...

CHRIS

It is interesting.

JANET

How is the museum going, by the way?

CHRIS

The what?

JANET

The museum.

CHRIS

Oh, yeah. No, it's good. It's good. I feel like there's a few challenges for us to still wrap up, but overall it's going good. Thanks for asking.

JANET

Great. I know it's not my project, but I'd love to be involved somehow.

CHRIS

Oh yeah, no thanks, I feel like we're in a pretty good position.

JANET

Yeah. You know, just, if you wanna bounce ideas, or want some feedback.

CHRIS

Yeah. No, yeah. I think, uh... yeah. You just want to bounce ideas back and maybe just... yeah.

38

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

38

Janet is in bed, Paul is undressing.

PAUL

I thought you weren't on that project?

JANET

Well, I wasn't, but now Chris wants me on.

PAUL

Well that's great, I'm happy for you! We also got an invite to one of Richard's famous dinner parties.

JANET

Really? When?

PAUL

On the fifth. Can you believe it? After all these years. I was tempted to say no, but I think we should go.

JANET

Hey Paul...

PAUL

Yeah?

JANET

Why do you suppose you're not showing up in my dreams?

PAUL

(jokingly)

Well, because you get the real deal, it wouldn't be fair if you got both.

Janet doesn't bite.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Are you jealous?

JANET

I don't know... I mean, rationally I'm not, but...

PAUL

Maybe I should give you a little visit..

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)

What would you want me to do, what would you want to see... In your dream?

JANET

Wow, uhm... I want to see you... Remember when you wore that Talking Heads suit for Halloween?

PAUL

Yeah?

JANET

There was just something about it. Something kinda weird and sexy. You should wear that... And save me... From, like, some situation.

PAUL

That's your sexual fantasy? The sky is the limit here, and you settle for me wearing a comically large suit?

JANET

I don't know! I'm not good under pressure! Just show up naked? On a horse? With a huge penis? Is that better?

PAUL

Who has the huge penis? Me or the horse?

JANET

You!

PAUL

I'm doing the David Byrne suit, it's been decided.

JANET

No, let me think about it.

PAUL

No, you immediately said the suit, and that's what you're getting.

JANET

Fine!

(beat)

Do you think other people are seeing you naked? In their dreams?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Does that turn you on?

JANET
Does it "turn me on"?

They exchange bedroom eyes.

PAUL
Maybe somebody's dreaming about me
right now.

JANET
Yeah?

They both start breathing heavier.

PAUL
Maybe a bunch of people... At the
same time.

JANET
How many?

PAUL
Hundreds? Maybe thousands?

They're both enjoying the role play.

JANET
Oh, that is so irresponsible of
you... I can't accept that.

PAUL
What are you going to do about it?

JANET
I'm going to make sure you stay
right here.

INT./EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

- Tristan walks around the neighborhood at night, wearing
dirty sweatpants and a hoodie. He sees Paul's house.

- He walks around and tries a back door, which is also
locked. He notices the glass door by the porch, which he
discovers is unlocked.

- He enters and goes to the kitchen, finds a knife, and then
proceeds to walk upstairs.

(CONTINUED)

- He walks up the stairs and heads towards the bedroom.
- He enters, and is now standing right before the bed staring at sleeping Paul.

TRISTAN

I have to kill you Paul... I have to...

He starts crying, which wakes both Paul and Janet up, who both immediately react.

PAUL

What are you doing?

The man is still just crying.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Who are you?.

(to Janet)

Call the police.

Tristan drops the knife on the floor, Paul gets up slowly and picks it up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What are you doing in our house?

TRISTAN

I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

PAUL

Get out!

Sophie, who is now awake and standing in the hallway, starts screaming. Hannah comes out of her room too.

SOPHIE

Oh, my god.

PAUL

Hannah, Sophie stay back!

SOPHIE

Mom! Mom!

JANET

Do something!

PAUL

Hannah... Hannah take Sophie to your room and lock the door.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

I'm sorry.

PAUL

Put down the knife.

TRISTAN

I can't, I have to kill you.

JANET

Do something Paul!

TRISTAN

I have to. I have to. I have to
kill you.

Tristan suddenly has a fit, lies down on the floor and screams. Paul is worried and perplexed, unable to act.

40

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

40

Paul and Janet, now dressed and tired, are at the dining table drinking coffee. DAVID, a police detective, sits across from them.

DAVID

He's had manic episodes in the past. It seems that he stopped taking his medications.

PAUL

So what's going to happen to him?

DAVID

Psych evaluation, date with a court, and then a judge will decide.

PAUL

So he might be back out?

DAVID

After possibly serving a sentence, yes.

Paul and Janet exchange worried looks.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You know, fame can come with some less-than-desirable side-effects.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Strangers might want to talk to you, some of them might be mentally unstable, you should be prepared for that.

PAUL

I'm not getting a gun.

DAVID

Well, I'm not necessarily talking about weapons. You have no alarm in the house, and you had an unlocked entry point. That makes you vulnerable. You could consider a dog.

PAUL

Sophie, our daughter, is allergic.

DAVID

Well, then you may want to consider moving to a new house, keep your phone number and address unlisted.

JANET

No, we're not moving. I grew up in this house.

DAVID

Security cameras. Tasers. Strengthening your deadbolts. Securing your windows. Self-defense classes. It seems like you were pretty helpless in this situation.

MONTAGE: As we keep hearing this dialogue we see Janet and the police officer walk around the house, both inside and out, to look for potential weaknesses and possible improvements. Paul feels weak next to the composed officer and keeps a little distance.

41

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - LATER THAT MORNING

41

The detective has left. Paul and Janet are now alone in the front hallway.

JANET

Maybe we should cool this thing off. You know, this is why I was skeptical in the first place.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Oh, you knew specifically that this would happen?

JANET

This *kind of thing*, Paul. Strange consequences...

INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - BRETT'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul is in conversation with his colleague Brett in private.

BRETT

I think she's right. Take it as a warning. I really feel like you're playing with fire here.

PAUL

What do you mean? What am I doing?

BRETT

Going on TV, playing along with the story, this thing is clearly working like catnip for lunatics.

PAUL

What do you mean "playing along"?

BRETT

Do you actually believe people are randomly dreaming about you? You don't think it's because you're popping up all over the news and one the internet?

PAUL

Well yeah, maybe that accounts for some of it, but it doesn't really explain everything.

BRETT

Ok, so you think something magical is happening?

PAUL

Well, why is it just me? Why not you, or anyone else for that matter?

BRETT

So you believe in metaphysics if it proves you're special?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
No. I don't know, I'm still processing it, but that guy was just some delusional man with his own wild ideas, I don't think that's going to be a recurring event.

BRETT
But why risk it?

PAUL
Well if people know who I am it's just easier to for me to get my foot in the door.

BRETT
Which door are we talking about here Paul?

PAUL
A publisher. For the book I wanna write?

BRETT
Oh, Ok. Am I sensing a little midlife crisis here?

PAUL
Oh come on, you're the one who just bought a fucking Kawasaki!

BRETT
Ok, calm down.

43 **INT. NYC - CORPORATE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAYS LATER - DAY** 43

Paul is waiting in a comically modern chair in the lobby of a high rise building belonging to a talent agency. MOLLY, an assistant in her mid twenties, comes out of the elevators to pick him up.

MOLLY
Paul?

PAUL
Hi, yes.

MOLLY
Hi, I'm Molly. They're ready for you upstairs.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

PAUL

Great.

They enter the elevator together.

44 **INT. NYC - CORPORATE BUILDING - ELEVATOR -CONTINUOUS- DAY** 44

They're alone in the elevator and an awkward silence emerges. Molly starts laughing.

PAUL

What?

MOLLY

It's nothing.

PAUL

No, come on.

MOLLY

It's just... Really weird to see you in real life.

PAUL

Oh, you've been--

MOLLY

-- Nonstop. Every night. It's crazy, man.

PAUL

Wow. Well, I hope I'm... Behaving.

She laughs again.

MOLLY

Well, no... You're not. No. Not at all.

Ding! Elevator door opens.

45 **INT. NYC - CORPORATE BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY** 45

TRENT is sitting by the end of the conference room table with his colleague MARY, when Molly and Paul walk in.

MOLLY

I got Paul here.

TRENT

There you are!

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Here I am.

TRENT
Paul, Trent. Hey. I have been
dreaming about this meeting.

PAUL
Aw, yeah, me too.

TRENT
Really?

PAUL
Oh you mean-- literally dreaming?

TRENT
You know I've actually had dreams
about this very meeting. I think
they were just normal dreams
though, not part of the whole
"who's this weird guy in my
dreams".

PAUL
Oh -- I'm weird?

TRENT
No, I mean.. You're not weird. No,
the whole thing is weird. Right? I
mean, Molly's dreams have been
nuts.

MOLLY
Trent!

TRENT
You wanna talk about weird. But
this is my colleague Mary Wiggins.

MARY
Hi, Paul.

TRENT
Sit down!

PAUL
Here?

TRENT
Wherever you want. How are you?
How's life?

(CONTINUED)

They sit.

PAUL

Well, things have been pretty different since, you know, since the dreams started.

TRENT

Yeah, how fun is that? I mean, I wish I was the one people were dreaming about.

MARY

Me too!

45

PAUL

Yeah, no, it's something.

TRENT

Well, we're...we're just so excited to have you here.

MARY

Oh, yeah, we're really fired up. It's probably really overwhelming, right, to walk into a room like this, it's like: "who are these people? What am I doing here?" Maybe we should back up and just talk about what we do.

TRENT

Yeah, yeah, so we started "Thoughts?" earlier this year, so we're a pretty new agency, and we focus mostly online -- sort of trying to holistically pair brands and more, shall we say *unconventional* celebrities, if that makes sense? And I think of you, right now, in this moment, Paul, as the most interesting person in the world.

Paul laughs.

TRENT (CONT'D)

I mean it! I mean it. And we don't just throw that around.

MARY

No we really don't throw that around.

(CONTINUED)

Paul looks over at Molly who is gazing at him.

TRENT

I mean, the advantage that you have, Paul, is that your impact is not just tied to any one social arena. I mean, you're not just famous for people on *TikTok* or for people who read, say, *The New Yorker*. You're in people's minds, when they sleep, which means that anyone who's dreaming, you know, could be your audience.

MARY

How amazing is that? Who can say that?

TRENT

You know, is that a big enough audience? So, you know, we've been brainstorming a bunch of cool ideas that we want to talk about with you. But before we get into any of that, we were just kind of curious what you're thinking. Where do you want to go? What do you want to achieve? What are your "dreams"?

MARY

What are your "dreams"?

PAUL

Well, I've been meaning to write a book for a few years now. I just never found the time.

TRENT

Ok, so you're a writer? That's awesome. You know, we talked about selling your life rights to a movie studio actually.

MARY

Oh because with all the buzz around this, I think we could probably get a six figure deal. And that's life rights.

PAUL

Really? Life rights?

MARY

The rights to your life!

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Anyway, here's somewhere cool that we thought might be a good place to start. Sprite.

MARY

Sprite...

PAUL

Sprite?

TRENT

Yeah, they want us to run their social, I think somebody over there must have lost their minds or something, but they're down to go pretty weird with it. So we thought it could be fun if maybe they, like, tweet a new photo of you every night, holding a can, with a fun little caption, just to really manifest that connection in people's minds and to hopefully alter the phenomenon, at least temporarily, to make people dream about you and the product, together.

MARY

How amazing would that be, right? And if we couldn't figure that out we could always just suggest that it did work, and we could build stories around that.

TRENT

(to Mary)

Yeah, absolutely, I mean if we fail all-together then we... that's kind of a fun story, too. You know, like we tried to make people dream about Sprite and it didn't work. I mean, it's so dumb, that it's kind of cool. You know, it kind of works.

PAUL

Can I just--

TRENT

Yeah?

PAUL

Can we go back to the book?

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

What book?

PAUL

My book. The book I want to write. I just want to make it clear that I actually don't want this whole phenomenon to be what I'm known for. I don't want that to be the main thing on my Wikipedia, you know?

TRENT

Ok... So... What are you thinking?

PAUL

Well, I'm an evolutionary biologist. That's what I've dedicated my life to. So whatever we do, I want it to be related to my doctorate.

MARY

Wow, wow. Ok see I didn't know about that at all.

TRENT

Well, you're famous for the dreams, right? I mean that's why anyone's interested. So it might be a bit of a stretch to get you into a totally different space.

PAUL

I'm a tenured professor, I'm already in "the space".

TRENT

Ok, well...Just to give us a point of contact as to what we're talking about, who are some of the big names that you like, in that space?

PAUL

Well. There's a bunch. Robert Sapolsky, his career has been pretty admirable.

TRENT

Oh is he, um... No, I don't think I'm familiar with him, actually.

PAUL

Herman Tig maybe?

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Who?

PAUL

Herman Tig.

MARY

Yeah, I know that name.

PAUL

Oh, you do?

TRENT

Well, these are not really celebrities I suppose.

PAUL

No. that's the point. I don't care about fame, I just see this as an opportunity to get some recognition for my work, you know? One door opening another door.

TRENT

Yeah, no I get that you're talking about an audience pivot... which I think is very smart, I just don't know if you can pivot that hard right now without a significant drop-off. I mean a book about... What? Plants?

PAUL

Yeah, well I'm not really interested in doing Sprite ads.

TRENT

No, no, no. Well that's just one example, though, Paul, we have a ton of ideas.

MARY

Oh, that is just the very tip of the iceberg, we have so many ideas... Um, one idea we had was to make Obama dream about you. That would get you into some of those "high culture" spaces you've been mentioning. I know Malia, so we can make it happen.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Maybe this isn't really what I'm looking for, I don't think we're really speaking the same language here...

TRENT

No, Paul... If that's how you're feeling, then I'm failing, ok? Can we just... Can I... can we start over?

Trent turns around, away from Paul. Molly and Mary are confused, they haven't seen Trent like this before. While Trent is still facing away, Paul feels like he needs to say something.

PAUL

I just thought you guys could help find a publisher.

Trent turns back around.

TRENT

First off I would like to apologize... I lied earlier. I never dreamed about you, I just thought that would be a fun way to start the meeting. Ok but what is absolutely true is that I have been thinking about you a lot, and I just really feel that we're gonna do something very special together. So let's just say we move forward with your plant book..

PAUL

I never said anything about plants.

TRENT

Oh no. Your... your book, about.. Evolutionary...?

MARY

Plants.

PAUL

It's about ants.

MARY

Ants!

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Ants. Ok! Great. Well, let's say we go forward with that, we'll help you set that up.

PAUL

(skeptical)
Really?

TRENT

Yes. I just... I really want to work with you Paul... I mean, like I said... "Most interesting person in the world".

PAUL

Ok, but then... no ads, no Sprite. We're focusing on the book.

TRENT

Yes. And you know, if you're not feeling Sprite, we'll respect that, I would just ask in return that you hear out our pitches and just keep an open mind, you know, especially with things like Sprite because, you know, the door is kind of wide open there, right now. And they're ready to have that conversation with you.

MARY

And that door closes, I'll just say.

PAUL

Yeah ok.

Molly and Paul are in the elevator.

MOLLY

So, plans for the night?

PAUL

Uhm... No. I've got a really early flight back, so...

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

MOLLY
If you want to get a drink, just let me know. I could come near you if that's easier. They have you at the Ace, right?

47 INT. NYC - HOTEL ROOM - LATER

47

Paul is sitting on the bed of his hotel room chatting with Janet on the phone.

PAUL
They were so great! They really know their stuff. They're gonna set me up with a publisher, get the book rolling.

JANET
Oh wow! That's great! Now you just have to write it.

PAUL
Yeah... Of course.

JANET
So what did they say?

PAUL
They called me "the most interesting person in the world right now."

Janet starts laughing.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What?

JANET
No... Nothing. I'm sure that's very flattering.

PAUL
No, they specifically said they didn't just throw that around.

JANET
Okay.

PAUL
I don't think they were just saying it to make me feel good Janet, They're already talking to big clients who want to work with me.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Like who?

PAUL

Like.. I mean, and this was just one example, but they mentioned Sprite--

JANET

Sprite? You're gonna work with Sprite?

(to someone else)

I'll be right there.

PAUL

Who's there?

JANET

Chris. Our deadline is tomorrow, so we're just here finishing up.

PAUL

Right. Where are the kids?

JANET

They're out trick or treating... With Kyle.

PAUL

Oh, Kyle. Ok.

JANET

Yeah, well, congrats Paul. I'll see you tomorrow then?

PAUL

Yeah... Ok. Well, they also talked about Obama too... Like, maybe he'll dream about me?

JANET

Ok...?

PAUL

I...I'm just saying it wasn't just Sprite.

JANET

You don't have to impress me Paul. I love you.

PAUL

I love you too.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2)

47

JANET

Ok. See you tomorrow.

PAUL

Yeah... Bye.

They hang up. Paul is just sitting there.

48

INT. NYC - HIP BAR - NIGHT

48

That night, Paul has met up with Molly at a trendy hipster bar in the lower east side of Manhattan. The clientele are mostly in their late twenties or early thirties. Paul and Molly are seated at a table drinking cocktails. There are Halloween decorations and some of the patrons are dressed up in spooky outfits.

MOLLY

Did you read that article about people dreaming backward in Australia?

PAUL

No?

MOLLY

It was cause of, like, the gravitational pull or something? They mentioned you in it so.

PAUL

How do they dream in China then, upside-down?

Paul laughs at his own joke. Molly blushes a bit.

MOLLY

So, how long have you been a professor?

PAUL

Oh wow, I think... what... about twenty years...? Since ninety-six.

MOLLY

I was born in ninety-six!

Paul looks over to the bartender.

PAUL

Check please!

(CONTINUED)

Molly doesn't get the joke. She turns around as if confused if he's actually getting the check.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No, no I'm kidding... Like, you're too young for me...

MOLLY

Aren't you married?

PAUL

No, I wasn't implying... it's a joke.

MOLLY

Yeah, no, I mean, I get it...

PAUL

Oh... Ok. But, yeah I am married... How about you?

MOLLY

No, I'm not really seeing anyone or anything. I'm focusing on my career right now, you know?

PAUL

Yeah, you mean with the agency?

MOLLY

You hated it so much didn't you?

PAUL

No, it's just... It kind of felt like...

MOLLY

A cult?

PAUL

Yeah, sort of.

MOLLY

I mean, I tried telling them: "he's a super smart professor, he's gonna see through the bullshit." But honestly though, like the Sprite thing is cool, you should do it.

PAUL

Yeah? I'm struggling to imagine anyone seeing my face and immediately craving a Sprite.

(CONTINUED)

MOLLY

I would.

She gives a flirty look.

PAUL

Can I ask you something?

MOLLY

Yeah, what?

PAUL

I felt like you implied something earlier... About your dreams...

She blushes.

MOLLY

It's embarrassing...

PAUL

What? Do I act weird or something?

MOLLY

I don't know if I should say.

PAUL

Well it's just dreams, I won't judge... You don't really get to decide what happens... So...

MOLLY

Uh...Well... uhm... We fuck.

Paul blushes.

PAUL

Really?

MOLLY

I have the most intense sex dreams. Usually I'm, like, home and it's late and I'm alone and I'm watching TV or something. And then ...

Molly is in her kitchen, dressed in a sweatsuit and slippers. She pours herself a glass of wine and walks over to the living room area. She sits down on the couch and continues to watch TV. She looks over to a dark corner of the apartment where she suddenly notices what looks like the silhouette of a person.

MOLLY

Is someone there? Who are you?

The person just stands there.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Hello?

Paul slowly emerges from the dark corner. Molly is startled.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Who are you, how did you get in here?

Paul walks over to her calmly. Molly responds with a calm voice:

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Please, don't hurt me.

Paul sits down on the couch next to her and licks her earlobe. Molly closes her eyes and moans. Paul moves his hand down towards her crotch.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm so wet.

They start making out.

INT. NYC - HIP BAR - MEANWHILE - NIGHT

Paul is sweating listening to this story. Molly is suddenly embarrassed again.

MOLLY

I'm sorry, I've had like, one drink and I'm like, no filter.

PAUL

No no, it's fine, it's fine.

MOLLY

No, it's so graphic, I'm sorry.

PAUL

No, I'm glad you told me. Usually what I hear is that I'm just... Passively hanging around. Kind of nice to hear I'm doing something.

MOLLY

Yeah, I guess I'm lucky.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Well, I don't know about that.

MOLLY
No, it's sooo good, trust me.

QUICK CUT: We see a second of the dream scenario of Paul having passionate sex with Molly on her couch.

Paul's heartbeat rises.

PAUL
Do you want another drink? I need another one. Martini, right?

Paul gets up. He's getting anxious.

MOLLY
Dirty.

PAUL
OK.

Paul walks over to order. As he stands by the bar he looks back over to Molly. She's checking her phone. Paul keeps staring, and suddenly Molly turns over and smiles, he quickly turns back towards the bartender. He orders two more drinks.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Can I get another cabernet and one martini, please?

51 **INT. NYC - HIP BAR - LATER - NIGHT**

51

They are a few drinks deeper in the conversation. There's a bigger crowd in the bar now, more noise around them.

PAUL
... And that's the thing with the zebras. The camouflage is for blending in with the herd. Because the lion can't hunt the whole group, it has to identify a single target... Right?

Paul notices Molly not paying attention.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What?

MOLLY
Sorry, but those people are staring at us.

(CONTINUED)

Paul looks over to see a crowd in the corner of the bar who seem fixated on him.

MOLLY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
I mean, at you obviously.

PAUL
(stressed)
Jesus... Should we not be here,
maybe? Or, should we just--

MOLLY
Why? What's wrong?

PAUL
No, I mean... I just don't want,
you know, any rumors... I mean, if
I'm meeting Obama... And...

MOLLY
What do you mean?

PAUL
No, I mean... I'm, I'm not used to
this.

MOLLY
Should we..... Uhm...

PAUL
What?

MOLLY
I can't get it out of my head, and,
I'm here with you and so... Ok,
fuck it: can you do me a favor?

PAUL
What?

A 30 year old guy dressed up as Paul, bald piece and all, for Halloween walks in. It startles Paul.

We hear a key at the door and we see Molly and Paul enter her apartment. They're both a bit drunk. Molly flips the light switch and walks over to the kitchen.

MOLLY
Yeah, so this is me.

She takes out a bottle of wine and pours two glasses.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
It's nice... Small... And nice.

MOLLY
Well, I don't have rich parents,
so...

PAUL
No, it wasn't a jab, I mean, it's
cozy. You've done a good job.

MOLLY
Sit down.

She gestures him towards the couch. He takes a seat. She sits
next to him. They both take a sip of the wine.

PAUL
So...

MOLLY
So...

They look at each other. Molly laughs.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
So... This is insane. You have no
fucking idea how crazy this is to
me.

PAUL
I shouldn't even be here.

MOLLY
No, please, don't leave.

PAUL
I think I'm a bit drunk.

MOLLY
Me too. Just stay. Please... You
just got here, just stay for a
second.

Paul scans the room and sees a bike.

PAUL
Is that a... Fixed gear?

MOLLY
Uhm... No. It's like a... Regular
one...

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Ah... So... How do we do this?

MOLLY

Oh, Uhm. Okay. I feel like I want to change first, is that cool?

PAUL

Sure.

MOLLY

Okay two seconds.

Molly leaves to her bedroom. Paul spends the moment doubting his actions, gets up from the couch, but suddenly she comes back in a sweatsuit and slippers, just like in her dream.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Everything good?

PAUL

Yeah... Uhm... So... Where do you want me?

MOLLY

Could you remove your jacket?

PAUL

Uhm, sure.

Paul removes his jacket.

MOLLY

Okay, now would you stand in that corner over there?

PAUL

Over there?

MOLLY

Yeah.

Paul walks over to the corner.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Get all the way up against the wall.

Paul does what she says and fades into the darkness of the corner as he presses up against the wall with his back. We can barely see him, just like in the dream. Molly starts breathing heavy.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Okay, did that work for you, or-

MOLLY

Sorry, sorry, Shut up! Please, just... I'm sorry, just, can you just go on for a little more?

PAUL

Just... You know... I'm married.

MOLLY

I know, we can stop any time you like, just please, Let me just..., a little longer.

Beat.

PAUL

Okay.

MOLLY

This time, please don't speak this time. Just do the dream.

Paul leans back in to the corner again. Molly starts breathing heavier. He stands there for a good minute, then he walks out of the corner towards her, still in character.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Who are you?!

She moans a little. He sits down right next to her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Please don't hurt me.

Paul doesn't know what to do next.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Touch me.

Paul is conflicted, hesitant, but finally moves his hand slowly over her thigh and up to her crotch. Molly moans even louder. Paul is starting to sweat, his forehead now dripping. She's waiting for him to do something.

PAUL

What?

(CONTINUED)

MOLLY

It's just... In the dreams you usually, like, take the lead..

PAUL

Yeah? What... What do you want?

She stares at him for a beat and then starts making out with him. He follows her lead. Then she starts removing his belt, and at that moment Paul involuntary farts.

MOLLY

Oh.

PAUL

I'm sorry, it's just-- nerves... biologically speaking, it's... healthy--

MOLLY

Yeah, it's fine.

PAUL

It's a sign of a healthy.. Uhm.. Gastro.. Uhm--

MOLLY

It's fine. Relax.

PAUL

Ok.

Molly reaches back to continue. She moves slowly and sensually, she continues removing his belt, and Paul then prematurely ejaculates.

MOLLY

Did you just cum?

Paul farts again, he's incredibly embarrassed. He has no words, he takes his jacket and leaves.

Paul is lying in his hotel bed later that night. A clock indicates 4:33 AM. He's not able to sleep at all. He takes the clock, throws it against the wall in anger and frustration and tries to force himself to sleep. We see him slowly falling asleep, his face twitching a bit.

54 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - MEANWHILE - NIGHT** 54

- Sophie is sleeping. Her hand starts twitching. We see a QUICK FLASH of Paul coming out of her closet in an eerie way and walking towards her fast. She screams.

- Sophie wakes up with a jolt. She's scared. She walks over to the closet. She hesitates but opens it, and no-one is in there. She goes back to bed but can't sleep.

55 OMITTED 55

56 OMITTED 56

57 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LATER - DAY** 57

Paul is back home from the airport, his travel bag next to him on the floor as he's reading from the latest Nature magazine.

PAUL

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Yeah, you-- Fuck!

He slams the magazine onto the table to show a page with the headline: "Sheila Harper's "Antelligence theory" changes the way we understand the hive mind." There's a photo of her smiling underneath.

58 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - DORMITORY - NIGHT (DREAM)** 58

Paul knocks on one of the dorm room doors and Greta opens. She seems surprised to see Paul there, and leaves the security chain attached.

GRETA

Professor? What's going on?

PAUL

Can I come in?

GRETA

Why?

PAUL

I need help with something...

GRETA

Ok...? What?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
I don't want to stand here in the hallway and explain.

GRETA
Well, can it wait? I'm in the middle of something.

PAUL
Just five minutes...

GRETA
I'll come out--

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'd be better if we sat down.

Greta's face turns pale, she removes the chain and lets Paul in. Once inside he freezes, mute, for a few beats. Greta seems confused.

GRETA (CONT'D)
So... What's going on?

PAUL
That was a mistake.

GRETA
What do you mean?

PAUL
What just happened. That was a mistake. You shouldn't have done that.

GRETA
I don't understand--

PAUL
You're just so fucking stupid sometimes. Do you know that? Have you heard that before?

GRETA
Okay, okay, please leave...

Paul stares at Greta for a few beats, then rushes over and starts strangling her. There's a fight. He pushes her up against the wall, she struggles, they end up on the floor. He keeps strangling her, her face now turning red as she's gasping for air. Her eyes tear up. He keeps going, putting even more pressure on. Eventually her life fades out of her body, she stops breathing.

59 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - MORNING** 59

There's only five students present when Paul arrives.

 PAUL
 Where is everybody?

The students look at each other.

 ROBBIE
 I'm not really sure.

60 OMITTED 60

61 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - NIGHT (DREAM)** 61

Andy is walking through the hallway alone, late. He's the only one left in the building, and there's an eerie feel to it. Suddenly, out from one of the classrooms, Paul comes running into the hallway with a hammer in his hand, smashing it over Andy's head who falls to the ground. Andy immediately has a seizure, Paul leans down and flips him around, looks him in the eye and continues to hammer his face in.

62 **INT. OSLER UNIVERSITY - BRETT'S OFFICE - LATER - DAY** 62

Paul is shocked by the story. What we just saw was the retelling of Andy's dream.

 PAUL
 I'm shocked.

 BRETT
 Yeah, and they got worse, some are even sexual in nature, so they don't feel comfortable being in your classes right now.

Scattered throughout their conversation we see little flash cuts of the student's nightmares.

 PAUL
 Jesus, they had some bad dreams and now they're not gonna show up for class? I mean, we can't just accept that?

 BRETT
 I don't know what to do here. Obviously, I have to take the students' concerns seriously, too.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Yes, of course, but... Isn't this a bit of an overreaction? They're dreams, it's not real. I'm not actually doing anything to them.

BRETT
As I said, this is really new territory. I think I just need to consult with HR.

PAUL
Do you, Brett, as my friend, and not speaking as the dean of Osler, think that we should pause the semester because some students are having bad dreams?

BRETT
Well, I haven't had one of these dreams so I can't really speak to the--

PAUL
No, no, no, don't say "lived experience."

BRETT
But it sounds like they've actually been traumatized.

PAUL
Trauma is a trend these days, it's a joke! Everything is trauma. Arguing with a friend is trauma. Getting bad grades is trauma. They need to grow up!

63 OMITTED

63

64 **INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

64

Paul and Janet are finally doing that dinner with Richard who is now reluctantly greeting them in the hallway.

JANET
Hi, Richard.

RICHARD
Hi!

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Richard! Carlota! It's been too long!

They hug. Paul notices the empty hallway and no sounds coming from the house.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Are we the first ones?

RICHARD
Oh, actually it'll just be us.

PAUL
Really? I thought this was gonna be one of your famous "bring people together" things.

Carlota and Richard seem a bit uneasy.

RICHARD
Yeah, we... Uh... We thought it would be nice with just us four.

PAUL
OK... Yeah... More wine for us!

Paul pretends to drink straight from the bottle he brought, as a joke.

65 **INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER**

65

That bottle is now opened on the table. Richard pours everyone a glass. There's tension in the air. Paul raises his glass.

PAUL
Cheers guys.

Richard and Carlota cheer him back with low enthusiasm.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(to Carlota)
So, Carlota, I heard you're at a new practice now?

CARLOTA
Yeah, I am.

PAUL
Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CARLOTA

Yes.

Awkward silence.

JANET

This is so good by the way.

PAUL

Oh my gosh, these Brussels sprouts
are amazing.

RICHARD

Yeah, got them from... Shelly's.

PAUL

Ah!

New awkward silence.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So I'm starting to think maybe Nick
Bostrom was right about the
simulation theory. That would sure
explain a lot about, you know, my
whole situation.

Richard looks over at Carlota, who doesn't seem engaged.

RICHARD

Oh yeah, remember Nick, Carlota?
Swedish guy, philosopher at Oxford.

PAUL

He was here?

RICHARD

Yeah, once or twice.

PAUL

Invite us both next time... He'd
probably love to speak with me...

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wasn't I the one who even told you
about him?

RICHARD NO,

I don't think so...

Janet sees that Carlota has zoned out.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Carlota, are you still doing your pottery?

Carlota chokes on her food and coughs. Richard pats her back.

CARLOTA

Please! Don't be so rough!

RICHARD

Sorry... You OK?

CARLOTA

You're slamming my back!

Paul and Janet are baffled by the awkwardness.

PAUL

Everything good?

Carlota doesn't answer.

RICHARD

She's had a rough day at work,
so...

PAUL

Ah. Ok.

More silence.

Carlota's lower lip is starting to shiver.

We see a FLASH CUT of Carlota's nightmare. Paul is strangling Carlota from behind with a metal wire normally used for pottery, in her pottery studio.

JANET

Oh no, what's the matter?

CARLOTA

Sorry, I can't do this... I can't.

Carlota storms out. Richard runs after Carlota. We can hear them discuss loudly.

PAUL

(to Janet)

What the hell is going on?

JANET

I have no idea.

Richard comes back down. He seems distressed.

(CONTINUED)

JANET (CONT'D)

Richard, what's wrong?

RICHARD

Uh... Guys, I think we need to wrap this up. Carlota isn't feeling well.

JANET

Is she... Ill?

RICHARD

Uhm... Well... She uhm... It's you Paul... She's had some pretty brutal nightmares lately.

Paul is caught between two states: trying to show sympathy, but also being fed up with this phenomenon.

PAUL

Oh... Wow... Shit... I just couldn't.....

JANET

I'm so sorry, you could have told us.

RICHARD

I convinced her not to cancel, I shouldn't have done that.

PAUL

Well...

(beat)

Should the three of us still finish though? Would be a waste to just--

RICHARD

--No you have to leave.

PAUL

Really?

RICHARD

Yeah, really! Why do you think no one else is here?

In what looks like an emergency crisis consultation, all of Paul's students have gathered, sitting on chairs on the basketball court while CANDICE, a woman from HR addresses them.

(CONTINUED)

CANDICE

The basic idea with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is that we'll go through gradual exposure to what we feel is threatening us, to familiarize with it instead of fearing it. What doesn't kill us makes us stronger, right?

The students look at each other.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

I know that a lot of you have had upsetting dreams about your professor. The dreams suggest that Paul Matthews is a harmful person, and your mind is trying to keep you safe by creating certain emotional triggers, motivating you to avoid him. I want to defuse those triggers by showing you that Paul is in fact a kind, loving and harmless human being.

She holds up a photo of Paul smiling to everyone. One of the students is visibly upset by this. Candice then puts the photo down.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

OK. So, I'm going to invite Paul in to the room. He's going to step inside that door aaaaall the way over there. And he's going to stay at that safe distance until everyone feels it's comfortable to invite him closer. All right? If anyone feels unsafe you may calmly state "Candice, I don't feel safe at this moment." Does everybody understand that?

The students nod and say yes.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

All right. Paul?!

After a few anticipating beats, Paul opens the door at the far end of the court and takes two steps in. Everyone stares at him, there's a few awkward beats before Candice interjects:

(CONTINUED)

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Ok, that wasn't so bad, was it?
Let's have him step forward, get a
little bit closer. Paul?

Paul takes a few slow steps closer. The students start feeling uneasy.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Paul is not going to hurt you. Can
we let him get even a bit closer..?

Nobody responds.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Paul, step closer please.

Paul takes a few more steps, inching closer, then stops. He's now at a half-court distance from the students. Tension is building. Candice waves Paul closer, and he takes another few steps. Tension is at a peak, everyone is frozen in anticipation.

PAUL
So...

A student starts running towards the doors, which triggers the rest of the students to follow, as though they just realized Paul is holding a gun. Candice yells at them to stop, Paul is just standing there, disappointed.

Paul is on foot through the campus, walking to the parking lot. All the students in the campus area are scowling at him, following him with judgmental looks as though he's an outlaw being banished from the town. We can tell Paul feels a bit nervous, like as if the whole crowd could suddenly turn violent. When he finally reaches his car he sees someone has graffitied "LOSER" on it. He turns around and looks at all the students who are watching him from a distance.

PAUL
Hey! HEY! Who did this? Tell me
now! Stop being little fucking
brats! Who the fuck did this?

This aggressive behavior seems to confirm their belief that Paul is evil, and some seem upset and frightened. One of the students is recording Paul on his phone.

68

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

68

The family is having dinner.

JANET

So what did Brett say?

PAUL

"See it as a little vacation" - can you believe it? I'm a tenured professor and they're basically letting the students run the school.

JANET

So how long are you not gonna be working?

PAUL

I don't even know if I want to go back at this point, you know? I should just go all-in with the book.

HANNAH

What did you do? Like, why did everything change?

PAUL

I didn't do anything, Hannah.

HANNAH

You must have done something.

PAUL

Well, I didn't... So...

HANNAH

Have you seen twitter?

PAUL

No?

HANNAH

There's like thousands of people sharing nightmares, about like torture and rape and--

PAUL

Enough! Ok, new rule: no phones at the table and no discussion of... The dreams... OK?

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

HANNAH
I'm just saying I understand
why your students--

PAUL (CONT'D)
You already broke the rule,
Hannah Let's start over. No
mention of this by the table
ever again. Please.

There's an awkward silence.

JANET
Are you gonna clean that stuff off
the car?

69

INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM OFFICE - DAY

69

Janet is having a private meeting with Chris in a glass
cubicle at the office.

JANET
They're kicking me off the project?

CHRIS
It seems like they just want to be
extra careful moving into the final
stages, just as a precautionary
measure.

JANET
Because of Paul?

CHRIS
You know, I'm really against, like,
cancel culture and everything but I
think it would be better if you
kept a lower profile until the
whole scandal dies down... Does
that make sense?

71

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

71

Sophie is in bed and Paul is about to turn off the lights in
her room.

SOPHIE
They call you Freddy Krueger... At
school.

PAUL
Oh... Do they... Do you know who
that is?

SOPHIE
I google'd it.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Yeah... They're just trying to
tease you.

SOPHIE
Julian said you tied him up and cut
off his toes and ate them.

PAUL
You think I would cut someone's
toes off?

Beat.

SOPHIE
No?

PAUL
Dreaming is like a psychosis,
Sophie, our brain decides to start
hallucinating at night, which is
part of its housekeeping process,
we need that to happen, for some
reason.

SOPHIE
But why are you so mean in the
dreams?

PAUL
It's their dreams, I have nothing
to do with it. You understand that,
right?

SOPHIE
I guess...

PAUL
Good night.

72

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

72

Paul and Janet both get into bed without talking to each other. After a long period of silence, Paul tries to bargain for peace:

PAUL
I'm just gonna stay at home
tomorrow. If you want me to... Cook
or something...

JANET
Who's Molly?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
What?

JANET
You have texts from someone named Molly.

PAUL
Oh, she's just an assistant... At the agency. She's just setting up a call.

JANET
You never mentioned her.

They stop talking again.

73 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - MISC - DAY** 73

MONTAGE: We see multiple tableaux of Paul dressed in sweatpants and a T-shirt, going about his day inside the house: making himself breakfast, trying to play piano, attempting to exercise in the basement.

74 OMITTED 74

75 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - DAY** 75

While googling himself on the computer, Paul is talking to his agents on his cell phone's speaker.

TRENT
Two seconds Paul, I'm just trying to connect Mary to the call.

PAUL
Yeah, no problem.

MOLLY
Hi, Paul.

PAUL
Who's this?

MOLLY
It's Molly. I'm just listening in.

PAUL
Oh hi Molly, how... how are you?

(CONTINUED)

TRENT
Hello? Is everybody on?

PAUL
I'm here Trent.

TRENT
Mary? You on too?

Silence.

MOLLY
Oh, Trent: Mary just texted me, she had the wrong link.

PAUL
Should we just start?

TRENT
Uhm... Yeah, we could start. We could catch up--

Paul sees a TMZ article about him with the headline "PAULTERGEIST: NIGHTMARE PROFESSOR'S ANGRY MELTDOWN" with a video of him screaming at his students, without showing the context of the vandalized car. Paul is shocked and gets out of his chair and paces around the room.

MARY
Hello?!

TRENT
Oh there you are.

MARY
Can you guys hear me?

TRENT
Yeah... Paul?

PAUL
Yes, I can hear you. What's going on guys?

MARY
Ok. Hi. What a crazy week, right? Uhm. So obviously we have to change strategies to adapt to the current situation...

PAUL
Is Obama still a thing? That might be helpful now, right?

(CONTINUED)

MARY

What?

PAUL

Obama. You guys were talking to him, right?

MARY

Oh, I mean, Obama's not an option anymore.

TRENT

Yeah, Paul, we're talking about a complete 180, we have to think fresh. Corporate culture won't touch this. It's too risky.

Paul notices two students, Robbie and Miles, who are loitering outside the house, immediately making him anxious.

MARY

But we are getting positive signals from a different venue, the whole kind of.. I don't want to say "altright" but the kind of antiestablishment space, you know? Kind of the Jordan Peterson route?

TRENT

Yeah we could maybe get you on Rogan or something, share your experience getting cancelled and just, like, pivot the convo to your plant book..

PAUL

Guys.. No. I hate that idea.

MARY

Just so we can understand you better, what exactly are you opposed to?

PAUL

I don't want to be some "culture war person"! I don't want to be "controversial".

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Ok. Ok. This is gonna go right against what you're saying right now, but... There's like maybe a chance to go on Tucker Carlson this week though...that's a big audience. Just think about that, don't answer now, just think about it.

MARY

Yeah, and then there's France. For some reason they love you over there, even with the nightmares! They love it!

Paul walks over to his window to get a better look at the students who are now on his property.

TRENT

Yeah, we're building a fanbase over there.

PAUL

Isn't there some type of charity I can do, maybe?

MARY

No, that's sweet, but no.

TRENT

It might seem apologetic.

76 OMITTED

76

77 **INT. DINER - LATER - DAY**

77

Paul, wearing casual attire and a baseball cap for anonymity, enjoys a meal while reading a Robert Sapolsky book at a local diner. GRACE, the waitress then approaches him.

GRACE

Hi.

PAUL

It's good! Thanks.

Paul smiles then gets back to his reading, but Grace is still hovering.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What?

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

I'm so sorry sir, I hate to do this, but there are some people who aren't really comfortable with the fact that you're here.

PAUL

Ok?

GRACE

Yeah..

PAUL

Well, if they're so uncomfortable maybe they should leave?

GRACE

Uhm, sure yeah, but--

PAUL

I'm just enjoying my meal. I haven't said or done anything.

GRACE

Right... I mean, I guess I could tell them you're about to leave?

PAUL

Why should I leave, I haven't broken any of your rules have I?

GRACE

Uhm... I mean, no, but...

PAUL

Great, then that's that, right?

GRACE

Uhm, yeah, I guess... Ok.

Paul gets back to his book and continues to eat. Grace leaves to talk to the two people who were complaining. After some moments another patron of the diner, a LARGE MAN, walks over to Paul.

LARGE MAN

Hey. Hi. Would you do us a favor and wrap that up? Nobody wants you here, man. It'd be great if you could just leave.

PAUL

Well, I'm staying.

(CONTINUED)

LARGE MAN

Are you sure about that?

PAUL

Yeah, I'm going to enjoy my food
and leave when I'm done... Ok?

LARGE MAN

Ok.

The large man takes his plate and spits on his food and puts it back. Paul is shocked. The large man walks back to his table, while Paul picks up his food and throws it at the guy.

INT./EXT. PAUL'S CAR - LATER - DAY

Janet is driving with a badly bruised Paul, plastered in medical strips and gauze to cover cuts around his eye, sitting in the passenger seat.

JANET

Listen... Maybe you need to be more
pro-active about this.

PAUL

What do you mean?

JANET

Make a public statement or
something... Maybe you should
apologize.

PAUL

I should apologize? Look at my face
for Christ's sake.

JANET

Just to get people off your back!
Off our back.

PAUL

No, that's ridiculous. I'm not
gonna do that.

JANET

You're not alone in this, I almost
lost my job!

PAUL

Which is completely uncalled for.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Sophie is getting picked on at school, Hannah is depressed, we get weird phone calls in the middle of the night, people are breaking in to our house!

PAUL

So are we going to let the terrorists win? And who's to say anything will be different if I apologize?

JANET

So you're basically choosing for us to be more miserable-

PAUL

Would you fucking stop!?

Janet is caught off guard by his temper.

79 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

79

Paul is preparing the couch in the living room for a night of sleep. Janet switches all the lights off as she's going upstairs.

Janet puts the lights back on and continues upstairs.

80 OMITTED

80

81 **EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN (DREAM)**

81

Paul is out jogging in the early morning mist. The streets are completely empty, no one is out yet. Suddenly out of nowhere an arrow hits him in the arm and gets stuck. Paul, shocked and perplex tries to understand what has just happened, and sees that a mysterious man in the woods next to the road is approaching him with a crossbow in hand. Paul starts running as he's also trying to prod the arrow out of his arm. As he's running another arrow hits him in the back. This one stings and slows him down, he can see that the mystery man is catching up with him.

Paul then takes a turn and tries to shake him off. Another arrow hits him in the leg, and he stumbles. He quickly hides behind a tree. Paul is desperate and in pain. It's quiet. The mystery man nowhere to be seen. He stays still for a while, then starts looking around to see if he's safe to move again.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

Then suddenly the mystery man appears in front of him, and we can now see that the person who has been chasing him is in fact another Paul. The nightmare version of Paul, who now aims the crossbow at his face. The real Paul is extremely uncomfortable having an arrow pointed at his face, which the nightmare Paul seems to enjoy as he waits to pull the trigger. Then suddenly he fires one off that goes straight into Paul's neck, hitting the artery and making him bleed heavily.

82 OMITTED

82

83 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - TEACHERS OFFICE - DAY

83

Paul, still with a visibly bruised face, sits next to Janet in the office of Sophie's teacher KAYLA, who's standing in front of her desk. There's a mirror on the wall, and Paul catches a glimpse of himself and is reminded of his own nightmare.

KAYLA

It seems like there's a consensus between the parents, and if it's not too much to ask, we'd like you to sit this one out.

PAUL

But it is, it is too much to ask. This is ridiculous. This is a huge moment for her, of course I'm going to be there!

JANET

Paul, please...

PAUL

What? They're imposing an exile! I'm supposed to just accept that?

JANET

Don't be so dramatic.

KAYLA

We'll have someone record it, OK? You'll get to see it, just not in the room on the night.

PAUL

You're aware that I have a PhD, right?

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
Yes?

PAUL
And you? BA?

KAYLA
MA.

PAUL
What I'm saying is that I don't
need your opinions on pedagogy.

KAYLA
I understand that you want to be
there, but at this point the
majority of the parents don't.
They're worried their kids will
feel unsafe, and obviously this
isn't totally unwarranted.

Kayla is gesturing towards Paul's bruised face.

JANET
Paul, why don't we make this
easier on everyone and just--

PAUL
Why don't you take my side--
Janet?

JANET (CONT'D)
Sophie shouldn't suffer just
because you want to make a point.
Don't make us all die on your hill!

An ASSISTANT knocks on the door and pops her head in.

ASSISTANT
(to Paul)
Hi, sorry to bother you. Do you own
the car that says "Loser"?

Paul is suddenly embarrassed.

PAUL
Yes...

84 INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - NEXT DAY - DAY

84

Paul is seated by his computer, preparing to make a video recording of himself. He spends time trying to make himself look emotionally worked up. When he's almost brought himself to tears he starts recording.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Where do I begin?
(beat)
Let's start with this: I'm sorry.
I'm sorry I didn't address this
earlier, I'm sorry to anyone who's
had one of those terrible, terrible
nightmares. The reason I'm so
emotionally distressed right now is
because I've just had one myself.
I've experienced what so many of
you must have experienced: being
violently attacked and abused by a
man that looks like me. I have to
stress: that man is not me. And I
speak now from actual lived
experience. I'm one of you.

Paul starts tearing up.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I've been vilified in my life,
haunted in my dreams. My mere
presence upsets people... And not
because of what I've actually done,
but because of what people *imagine*
I've done. Should I really be
punished for that? Aren't I the
biggest victim of this whole
phenomenon? Just look at how it's
affecting my life!

Paul forces himself to cry. It's very operatic.

85 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - DAY**

85

We hear a muffled argument between Paul and Janet in the distance. Hannah and Sophie are both on their phones, watching the apology video.

HANNAH
I'm actually gonna kill myself.

SOPHIE
What is he doing?

86 **EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BACK PATIO - DAY**

86

Paul and Janet are having a heated argument.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

It was completely insincere and self-serving.

PAUL

What? Which part?

JANET

It's embarrassing Paul! It's embarrassing to be married to you right now.

That comment hits Paul hard.

87

EXT. BRETT'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATER - NIGHT

87

Brett greets Paul in his driveway as Paul pulls out a gym bag full of clothes out of his car.

PAUL

Thanks for letting me stay...

BRETT

Yeah... Just a little heads up, my wife wasn't too hot on the idea, so I think it'll be downstairs, if that's OK?

88

INT. BRETT'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER

88

Brett is now showing Paul the guest room in his basement, which besides the bed and a ping pong table is completely empty. You can hear the buzz from the light fixtures.

PAUL

What's the smell?

BRETT

I think that's the propane tank... I'll crack a window.

Brett shows Paul his depressing bed for the night.

PAUL

I can't just sleep on the couch upstairs?

BRETT

I'm sorry man. Uhm... If you need anything, just text me? And I'll come down?

Paul reaches the auditorium, but the doors are locked. He can hear music coming from inside and starts gently knocking. Kayla, Sophie's teacher, opens the door and is immediately shocked.

KAYLA
(whispers)
You can't be here Paul.

PAUL
Let me just watch, I'll leave
before it's over.

KAYLA
No, I thought we had an agreement.

PAUL
Come on, I just wanna watch for a
few minutes.

KAYLA
Please, Paul, respect our
boundaries.

PAUL
This is ridiculous, let me in!

Kayla is trying to push the door shut, which Paul is blocking, but he suddenly moves away from the door as he sees the young staffer now accompanied with a security guard deep in the corridor. The door slams, then slowly creaks back open as Kayla screams in pain from her fingers being jammed. Several fingers are clearly broken and she's bleeding onto the floor. Paul walks through the doorway to check on Kayla, who keeps screaming and starts running down the aisle holding on to her mangled hand, fingers broken so severely they are bent impossibly out of shape.

KAYLA
He attacked me! Paul Matthews
attacked me!

The lights turn on, the play stops. Paul stands there, perplexed. Paul sees Sophie on stage, and Sophie stares right back at him. He tries to plead with the shocked parents.

PAUL
It was an accident! She wouldn't
let me in! I just want to see my
daughter! She wouldn't let me, it
was an accident!

Paul sees Janet seated next to an incredibly embarrassed Hannah, and to our surprise Chris is there too.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: (2)

91

Janet can't believe what she's witnessing. Suddenly, the security guard enters and Paul impulsively tries to run away.

SECURITY GUARD

Hey! Stop!

Then a bunch of the other parents jump up from their seat and tackle Paul to the ground.

PAUL

No, it was an accident, an accident! Sophie, it was an accident! Get off me!

Sophie starts crying, Hannah and Janet are in shock as Chris tries to comfort Janet.

CUT TO BLACK.

92

INT./EXT. TV SEGMENT FROM ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT - DAY

92

With a documentary style camera, we are introduced to a big mansion in the Hollywood Hills where about ten influencers live and work together. They are interviewed on camera, intercut with observational footage of them working, laughing, and living. Everyone is wearing the same piece of high tech jewelry on their wrists (The "Norio") and dressed in coordinated outfits.

CARTER

I think social media is over. I truly do. If you can, like, promote a song or like a product like actually in someone's head? That's way more powerful, you know?

HUNTER

It's really hard to do! I don't think people understand that. They think you can just, like, get a Norio and like, that's it... Like... No.

Shots of the "dreamfluencers" working in the house.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Welcome to the Dream House in the Hollywood Hills, where the next big thing in advertising is happening.

A shot shows seven of the dreamfluencers lying on their backs on the floor, with their eyes closed as though meditating, with the Norio on their wrists, then:

(CONTINUED)

CHLOE

"Dreamfluencer", "mindvertiser". I don't think there's like an official title yet.

HALEY

We work with everyone... Adidas... Capitol Records. Like, combined, you know, we're able to, like, do thousands of hits every night.

DYLAN

I think people who judge it doesn't really understand it. It's not that weird. It's just like, we'll be in your dream for a brief moment, showcase some merch or play a hot new track, say a few things, then leave. That's it!

Close ups of the Norio watches they use.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

From mysterious phenomena to internet controversy, the case of Paul Matthews completely changed the science of dreams.

Cut to interview with BRIAN, a 40-something scientist.

BRIAN

We had to rethink the whole field. Consciousness is more complex than we thought. Dualism was right, Jung was right. There is a collective unconscious, Paul Matthews proved that, even if accidentally. The Norio would definitely not exist without him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Brian Berg is the inventor of the Norio, a wearable device that activates the brain during deep sleep and promotes what is called "lucid dream travel", which enables users to appear in others dreams. The device also has a sleep incubation mode, which lets you decide what to dream about.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You can either buy one for about five thousand dollars, or get the ad supported version for free - if you don't mind commercials.. In your dreams.

BRIAN

Norio takes consciousness to a new level. It interacts directly with the sleeping brain and manipulates the dreams as they are happening. What's puzzling about Paul Matthews is that he tapped into this on a massive scale without even trying, which is really hard to do even with the Norio.

Four dreamfluencers sit next to each other and discuss Paul Matthews:

HUNTER

They always bring up Paul Matthews as, like, the cautionary tale.

HALEY

Yeah.. on one end it's like, this industry probably wouldn't exist without him, but then he also put such a negative stamp on it.

AMBER

It's kind of crazy that he unlocked this power just to, like, terrorize people.

DYLAN

Yeah, why choose that when it's so easy to spread positivity?

CARTER

When I first got the Norio I was practicing on my mom, like, I would try to enter her dreams every night, just to, like, get good at it. But she kept saying I was taking the form of a table, like, I was a talking table in her dreams. It took me months just to figure out how to control my appearance.

DYLAN

The mind is trippy, loose, flexible, and abstract.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED: (3)

92

DYLAN (CONT'D)

You're floating, dancing, swimming,
then, like, on fire, on a boat, on
the moon. I love this industry, I
love dream traveling. This is what
I want to do for life.

93

INT. PAUL'S NEW APARTMENT - MONTHS LATER - DAY

93

Paul, Hannah and Sophie are inside of an empty and uninspiring three-bedroom apartment. Paul looks different, many months must have passed. A REALTOR is showing them around.

PAUL

Ah... Nice, OK. Girls, wanna look
at the bedrooms? See which ones you
like?

HANNAH

I don't like it.

PAUL

Go look at the bedrooms. Please.

The girls go to scope the bedrooms. The realtor and Paul stay in the living room.

REALTOR

Uhm... My friend... Used to have
those dreams... So she claimed at
least.

PAUL

Oh... Huh... Yeah.

The realtor makes an awkward knife stab motion as a joke.

REALTOR

So what happened? It just stopped,
or? Feel like I haven't heard about
that in a while.

PAUL

Yeah, I don't know, people stopped
having them I guess. If I hear
anything now it's mostly abroad.

Sophie pops her head in.

SOPHIE

What's the smell?

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

REALTOR

Oh... I was told that the owners
were big animal lovers. It'll air
out in time I'm sure.

94 **INT./EXT. PAUL'S CAR - EVENING**

94

Paul has parked the car outside his old house. Before Sophie
and Hannah get the chance to get out, Paul interjects:

PAUL

Hey, before you leave... Have you
seen that guy Chris around the
house lately?

SOPHIE

Uhm... Yeah?

HANNAH

Yeah, like a week ago?

PAUL

Is he here often?

SOPHIE

... I mean, Not really?

PAUL

Does he stay over?

SOPHIE

I don't think so?

Hannah is concentrated on her phone.

PAUL

Hannah, does he stay over?

HANNAH

I don't know!

95 **EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

95

Janet comes out of the house. Sophie and Hannah both take
their bags and run inside.

SOPHIE

Bye, dad.

HANNAH

Bye...

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Bye! I love you. I'll bring you
something cool from France!

Janet approaches Paul.

JANET
How was the place?

PAUL
Uhhh... It was nice. Good location.

JANET
Good.

PAUL
I don't think Sophie really liked
it... She kept asking why I don't
just move back in... with us...

JANET
Yeah... And cost-wise? Good?

PAUL
Yeah, you know, between the
settlement from Osler and the book
deal I should be fine. More than
fine actually.

JANET
Ok, great.

There's a hint of a smile lurking in Janet's expression.

PAUL
Yeah... Have you seen me in your
dreams lately by the way?

JANET
No? Why do you keep asking?

PAUL
Just curious...
(Paul checks his watch)
Shit, I'm late.

JANET
Where are you going?

PAUL
I've got a zoom call with the
publisher... They're trying to
expand the tour, might be a whole
month in Paris now, it's crazy.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

That's exciting. I guess I won't see you before you leave then?

PAUL

It's in four days. I could swing by...

Paul looks at her for a beat. He embraces her and she whispers something in his ear. He looks back at her and she laughs.

Cut back to reality.

JANET

No, that's fine. I'll see you when you're back.

PAUL

Ok... Uhm... Well... Bye...

JANET

Bye...

INT. PAUL'S NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT (DREAM)

- Paul is getting to bed in his new apartment. He has almost no furniture there. He folds his clothes on a little chair he has set up next to the bed.

- He then walks to the kitchen to get a glass of water. The dead animals are still there but he just steps over them, barefoot.

- When he returns to his bedroom, there's a teenage boy there, one of the dream influencers. He's wearing very youthful trendy clothes.

DREAM INFLUENCER#3

Hey Paul. I love those on you.

Paul looks down, and he is suddenly wearing very flashy sneakers. The boy starts dancing in a trendy Tik-Tok style.

DREAM INFLUENCER#3 (CONT'D)

Come on, try them out, dance with me.

Paul is suddenly enraged and tries to punch the guy in the face, but his punches are weak and slow, typical of dreams, not really harming the guy.

(CONTINUED)

DREAM INFLUENCER#2 (O.C.)
Please don't hit Dylan...

Paul turns around and sees another dreamfluencer behind him, staring at him with a murderous look, which quickly turns into a "sales pitch face" as he reveals a supplement pill bottle in his hand:

DREAM INFLUENCER#2 (CONT'D)
... Cause your punches would pack more heat with these ultra yummy keto supplements from Alpha Monster Gains. Oh fuck, let me try this again... your punches would pack more heat with these-- ultra yummy keto supplements-- from Alpha Monster Gains.

97 **INT. PARIS - HOTEL - PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT** 97
Paul wakes up from the dream, a bit confused, in a hotel room in Paris. The keen observer will notice him wearing a Norio device on his wrist.

98 **EXT. PARIS - STREET - DAY** 98
Paul and Trent are walking through busy streets of Paris.

TRENT
First up is a magazine called Rue Morgue. They write about myths, cults, horror movies, stuff like that.

PAUL
Did you bring a copy of the book?

TRENT
No, it's going straight to the store, we'll see it there.

99 **INT. PARIS - MANOR HOUSE - DAY** 99
Paul is being photographed for a French magazine in a stylish old manor house. There's a crew of about five people there, makeup, wardrobe, and some assistants. Trent is also present, watching from the sideline. CLAUDE, the thirty-something photographer is instructing Paul.

The assistant picks up a movie prop, the knife glove from Nightmare on Elm Street, and gives it to Paul, who immediately hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

CLAUDE
Can you put it on Paul?

PAUL
Uh, I'd rather not.

CLAUDE
What? Don't be silly Paul. It's cool.

PAUL
No, I just... I don't want to.

CLAUDE
What? The glove is cool, I think you should wear it.

PAUL
Can I say no?

CLAUDE
Come on, it makes sense, you're nightmare guy, it's totally cool.

Paul looks at Trent, Trent nods approvingly, and Paul caves and puts the glove on.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
See, not so bad? Looks good.

Claude snaps some photos.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Could you stand behind the chair Paul? And sneak up like a little monster.

Paul does what he's told.

100 OMITTED 100

101 **EXT. PARIS - STREET - DAY** 101

Paul and Trent are walking through busy sidewalks in Paris, again.

TRENT
No, it's still the store, but a different room or something? Maybe they need a bigger space?

PAUL

I guess it got shorter in translation? "Je suis ton...." They changed the title too?

JEAN

"I am your nightmare"? That's not the title?

PAUL

Oh... It was supposed to be "Dream Scenario." This is fine, I guess. Yeah... It's fine. Probably works better for the... Demographic.

He forces a smile to Jean and Trent.

104

INT. PARIS - BOOKSTORE - BASEMENT - LATER - DAY

104

A line has formed leading up to the table, eagerly awaiting Paul to sign their copy of the book. It's not a big turnout, even for the smaller location, but Paul seems bemused just by the fact that he has fans here. FONTANE (38) a heavy set man wearing a Rosemary's Baby t-shirt hands him his copy.

PAUL

Who do I make this out to?

We can hear footsteps from the large crowd upstairs, the other event is so packed that dust from the ceiling lands on the table in front of Paul. As he looks up, the light fixture hanging from a chain falls off and lands on his forehead, causing a cut.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Trent rushes over.

TRENT

Shit, are you all right?

Paul feels his forehead and then sees blood on his hand. Someone hands him a napkin which he presses against his head. Trent is looking for the manager for assistance.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Jean? Fuck where did he go?

105

OMITTED

105

106 OMITTED 106

107 OMITTED 107

108 OMITTED 108

109 OMITTED 109

110 OMITTED 110

111 **INT. PARIS - HOTEL - PAUL'S ROOM - LATER - NIGHT** 111

Paul is looking at a video called "No Bullshit Guide To Dream Travel" on his laptop as he puts his Norio on his wrist.

CUT TO:

Paul is now lying down on the floor, on his back, eyes closed and really focused. He slowly raises his arms up in the air as though reaching for something, as we hear the video guide him. The camera pushes in slowly towards his face.

112 **EXT. BIG EMPTY GRASSY FIELD - DAWN (DREAM)** 112

It's a foggy morning, we're in a big open field. There's a big stone fountain in the middle of it, and Janet is tied up to it. Instead of water, there's flames at the base of it. It's like she's a witch burned at the stake. She's helplessly struggling to get out without much success. All of Janet's movements are a little bit slow, and sounds are more pronounced than normal. She notices someone coming towards her. It's Paul. He is wearing that oversized Talking Heads suit they discussed, indicating that we must be inside of her dream, and that Paul has managed to get inside of it. Janet smiles. He reaches for her, grabs her hand over the flames.

113 **EXT. EMPTY SUBURBAN STREETS - SUNRISE (DREAM)** 113

The two of them walk through a beautiful slightly foggy suburban street with sunbeams shooting through the haze. Paul is still wearing his Talking Heads suit as they walk side-by-side holding hands. The birds are chirping. Paul does some silly Talking Heads moves with his suit. Janet laughs. Then he initiates a slow dance, and Janet follows.

PAUL
I wish this was real.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

They look at each other for a bit. Both their eyes are getting teary. Paul then suddenly starts to levitate off the ground, away from Janet.

CUT TO BLACK