The Book of the Dead

(Sex and Violence in the New York Public Library)

by

Adam Tobin

1455 Mills Ct
Menlo Park, CA 94025
AdTobin@gmail.com
917-805-0258
EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS on an ancient scroll --

HUMAN FIGURES with ANIMAL HEADS, DOGS with CROCODILE FACES, EAGLES beside UNBLINKING EYES.

The voice of VIRGIL (GIL) SUSSMAN, professorial yet energized, begins:

    GIL (V.O.)
    The Egyptian Book of the Dead. The most sacred text of a civilization that lived thousands of years. Perhaps the oldest book on Earth.

At the end of the scroll we find... IT'S BURNING. A red line creeps back to destroy the rest. And what's worse...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - PRESENT - NIGHT

It's lying in a New York gutter.

SFX: AMBULANCE SIREN

An AMBULANCE speeds past, careening through the streets. Into a hospital pickup zone.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

PARAMEDICS WHEEL A MAN ON A GURNEY through the ER.

    PARAMEDIC
    Thirty-two-year-old male, multiple GSWs to the chest. Trauma to the spine from five-story dive. Down ten minutes.

    DOCTOR
    Oh Jesus, this guy is gone.

She inspects the DEAD MAN just the same. In his 30s, his hair a mess, he wears broken spectacles and a bow tie. His hand tightly grasps a piece of PARCHMENT.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

The hand still grasps the PARCHMENT as the body, covered by a sheet, is wheeled into the morgue. An ORDERLY places the DEAD MAN beside others laid out to rest.

The Orderly propositions the NURSE with him:
ORDERLY
Come on, baby, they won't notice.

NURSE
I'm not doing it in here. That's sick.

ORDERLY
This guy don't care. You know what he'd say if he could talk? Grab life while you can, right? Probably be the hottest thing he's seen in years.

(Reaching for her)
I know you want to, you're burning up.

She looks down and pushes him away.

NURSE
That's my phone, genius. Next time try some flowers.

She's gone. He follows.

ORDERLY
Janine!

And he leaves. The bodies are all alone.

CAMERA MOVES OFF TOWARD THE DOOR. Until...

GIL (O.S.)
It's not true, what he said.

CAMERA SUDDENLY STOPS AND PULLS BACK. Back-tracking--

To the DEAD MAN, GIL SUSSMAN, sitting on his gurney, propped up on one arm behind him.

He is very clearly dead -- pale skin, bullet holes in his chest -- but also moving and aware. Though he looks like an old-fashioned bookkeeper, he has a relaxed, almost suave manner.

He pats down his mussed hair, notices the bullet holes and, as if pained by the lack of tidiness, covers them up. Takes off his broken glasses to clean the lenses.

GIL
About it being the hottest thing I've seen. A few a weeks ago perhaps...

He shakes his head and smiles. He lies back on the gurney, his hands behind his head, gazing up at the ceiling.
GIL
Dead right about the first part. Grab
life while you can. Could've used a
dash of that myself. Holy hell, was I
a stiff.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

GIL, 32, VERY MUCH ALIVE, LOOKING IN A MIRROR--
The terms geek, wonk, and bookworm leap to mind.

GIL (V.O.)
Now really, can you believe this guy?

Wire-rim glasses, bow tie, suspenders. Gil could be handsome
if he'd ever once leaned that way. But he never did.

Instead he looks stoic and sad. Pats down his hair, turns to--

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A tiny New York studio. Barely big enough for the perfectly-
made bed, which is surrounded by stacks of books.

He grabs the bed-frame and raises an end -- it's a fold-away
Murphy bed -- leaving a perfectly rectangular empty space on
the floor bordered by the books. Like tiny castle walls.

Gil steps back over the books to his tweed blazer, hanging on
a hook. Reaches in and pulls out a WORN PAPERBACK -- THE
ILIAD. An old copy.

He opens the cover -- inside is an inscription in pen:

TO VIRGIL, LOVE MOM AND DAD.

And below it, in child-like crayon scrawl:

EX LIBBIS, GIL SUSSMAN.

He smiles, barely. Flips it open and reads a line, CRACKS
UP, shaking his head as if to say, that crazy Homer. Then
his smile fades.

In the back of the book is a crisply folded note. It reads:
MEMENTO VIVERE.

Gil steps over the stacks of books, placing the note in the
middle of the room.

Stares at it. Then steps back over and heads out. Into...
EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

THE WORLD OF NOISE that’s NEW YORK: horns honking, people yelling, the subway rumble, sirens wailing--

It is not pleasant for Gil. He walks quickly, determined.

EXT. 42ND STREET AND 5TH AVE - DAY

He crosses the street through traffic, passing a crazy STREET PREACHER who waves a bible:

PREACHER
The Word is the answer! Through the Word shall you receive life everlasting!

Gil walks right past him. Steps in front of a truck and gets a BLARING HONK. He keeps on, unfazed.

But finally stops and looks up at his destination: stone stairs leading to...

EXT. THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

The grand beauty of the New York Public Library.

Granite steps, flanked by two LION STATUES. Beyond them is the perfect symmetry of the building's classical entrance.

A moment of relief passes his face. Then stone sadness again.

GIL (V.O.)
The New York Public Library. That noble fortress of the people's knowledge. But to me much like the Medieval castle tower -- both a safe-haven and a prison.

He hurries up the steps, through the revolving doors and into...

INT. MAIN HALL - THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Silence. The total quiet of the vast lobby. He's healed a bit.

Suddenly, across the room a RATTLE RINGS OUT, echoing. A YOUNG WOMAN on the library tour has dropped her keys.

EVERYONE ELSE glares at her. She looks around with an apologetic, almost mortified look--
YOUNG WOMAN
(Whispered)
Sorry. Sorry.

And silently picks them up.

INT. LIBRARY - LOBBY STEPS - DAY

Gil walks up the marble indoor steps, still emotionless.

GIL (V.O.)
No books may be checked out of this building, only read within the confines of these ancient, well-endowed walls.

INT. LIBRARY - MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

He walks through the McGraw Rotunda, a lobby on the third floor with impressive murals: an early printing press, a Medieval scribe, Moses destroying the Ten Commandments.

GIL (V.O.)
The building itself is a delight for art lovers, tourists, and the odd homeless person fashioning conspiracy theories out of nanotechnology, dinosaurs and the concavity of the Earth.

Gil walks down the marble hallways. Passes a giant banner: "THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESENTS: THE BOOK OF THE DEAD!"

The banner is decorated with Egyptian Hieroglyphics and cheesy pictures of a camel and pyramid. He shakes his head.

GIL (V.O.)
Ah yes, the Book of the Dead. Well we'll get to that, won't we. At the moment, I had something more pressing to attend to.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGE OF THE LIBRARY - DAY

Gil stands, windswept, out on a stone ledge five stories up.

He looks down and SWOONS from the height. It's a long way.

Terrified, he tries to force himself to move. His foot shuffles. Shuts his eyes tight...

And then a PHONE RINGS. Inside the building.
He pauses. RING. Ignore it. Put it out of your mind, refocus on the jump. RING. RING. RING.

GIL
Oh hell.

And finally he gives in -- heads back inside.

INT. GIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Into a very plush office, so full of leather, artifacts, and oak it belongs in a British Hunting Club, not a library. Someone donated a lot of money for this room.

He answers the phone:

GIL
Dr. Sussman, Antiquities.

CALLER
What?

GIL
Antiquities Department. May I help you?

CALLER
Is this China Chef II?

GIL
I'm sorry?

CALLER
China Chef II. I want to place an order.

GIL
I'm sorry, this is the New York Public Library Antiquities collection. We study and restore ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts.

CALLER
Really? Do people want that?

GIL
Excuse me? Yes. Yes they do. Many people do.

CALLER
Why?
GIL
Why? Because they're extremely applicable to the modern--

CALLER
Can you give me the number for China Chef II?

A beat.

GIL
Hold on.

And he turns to his computer. Slumps into his chair and reluctantly searches the net.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A beautiful bright day on an empty cemetery lawn -- green grass, blue sky. An open grave with MOURNERS crying.

An older woman is there, propped up by a library guard:

OLDER WOMAN
I still can't believe he's gone.

And a professorial figure:

PROFESSORIAL FIGURE
How will we ever get along without you, Doctor Sussman?

Last, a gorgeous woman steps up to the grave.

GORGEous WOMAN
I loved him all through graduate school and never said a word. And now he's gone!
(Bursting with emotion)
I can't let it end this way!
(Leaps into the grave)
Come back to me, Gil! Gil!!

INT. GIL'S OFFICE - DAY

EMRITA
Gil! Wake up! Doctor Sussman.

Gil wakes in a comfy chair in his office to find a less gorgeous coworker, EMRITA, standing over him.
The Trustees are waiting! I can't believe you fell asleep! Sheesh!

She pushes a stack of papers into his hands and heads out. Groggy, Gil gathers himself together and follows.

INT. TRUSTEES' CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A conference room lined with paintings of robber barons. And sitting below are the living versions thereof: the Astors and Rockefellers of today.

At the center is MARGARET PUTNAM, Library Administrator. Putnam has a mediocre talent for flattering rich people.

PUTNAM
It's not as though his collection is deluged with visitors...

Which is when Gil arrives, out of sorts but doing his best. Followed by Emrita.

GIL
Good afternoon, Mrs. Putnam.

PUTNAM
So nice of you to join us, Mr. Sussman. Of course you'll know our panel... Mr. Scott, Mrs. Cuthberton. This is Mr. Sussman.

Gil nods at the decision-makers seated across from him.

GIL
Uh, it's Dr. Sussman actually.

PUTNAM
Excuse me?

GIL
Dr. Sussman, Mrs. Putnam.

PUTNAM
Oh, of course. Doctor, doctor. Why do I always forget?

Then Gil hears a HACKING, ROUGH COUGH. Notices one more trustee at the end of the table, sitting in darkness.

PUTNAM
Oh, and Mr. Billings, of course. He's taken a particular interest in your collection.
The man behind the cough leans in: BILLINGS is HUGE, even sitting down. In fact he's in a wheelchair, strapped to an oxygen supply and mask.

A lit cigar in his hand, he's imposing -- like Orson Welles or John Huston in their final days. Unnerved, Gil nods.

GIL
Mr. Billings. A pleasure.

Billings takes off the mask. In a slightly western drawl:

BILLINGS
How. Haven't met me yet.

And Gil settles down into the chair facing them.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER --

Gil being grilled by the panel.

GIL
No, I must insist. Theophrastus's "Enquiry into Plants" is a seminal piece. With it we have restored fifteen of his supposed lost works.

PUTNAM
But for whom, Mr. Sussman? How many visitors does your department receive?

He shoots a glance to Emrita, who shrugs.

GIL
Well, I don't have exact numbers... The grammar school program was well attended--

PUTNAM
They were bussed in. And three of them left crying from your inappropriate reading selection.

GIL
I wouldn't say inappropriate--

PUTNAM
A king impaled on a spear, his blood flowing across the floor? I mean really...
GIL
The Death of Priam was a bit ambitious, perhaps, for the third grade--

PUTNAM
They were terrified! Or in other cases asleep.

The others chime in:

SCOTT
Really, we're all for the classics, Doctor Sussman, but do they have to be so... well, serious?

CUTHBERTON
Difficult. To be honest, kind of dull.

SCOTT
And don't forget expensive.

GIL
Yes. Yes, they have to be. They're vibrant pieces of wisdom from a time when studied insight was society's highest goal. Look I've received word of three new fragments of Xenophon's Scritpa Minora. You shut us down now and they will go completely untranslated. Do you truly want that on your conscience?!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY
Conference room doors SLAM in Gil's face. Emrita next to him.

EMRITA
No, really, I think that went well.

INT. HALLWAY - LIBRARY
Depressed, Gil walks down the hall to a door -- carved oak, with a glass window pane that reads:

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT COLLECTION OF ANTIQUITY

VIRGIL D. SUSSMAN, Ph.D., LIBRARIAN

Heads in, to...
INT. ANTIQUITY COLLECTION/GIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gil's office, the posh room from earlier. Oak bookcases full of ancient artifacts: manuscripts, chipped vases, a bust of Aristotle.

Long mahogany tables and high-backed leather chairs.

Gil pauses, then heads to the WINDOW. Opens it and climbs--

BILLINGS (O.S.)
I wouldn't jump just yet.

Caught, Gil turns to see Billings at the door.

BILLINGS
All may be lost but that don't mean all's lost.

GIL
Sorry?
(Re: the window)
Oh, you thought-- Oh, no, I was just, uh, the window sticks-- That's...
uh, that's very funny.

Billings is skeptical.

BILLINGS
Mm-hm.

Wheels his chair into the room. Lights a cigar.

GIL
Excuse me, Mr. Billings, smoking is strictly prohibited here. The books--

BILLINGS
I don't take prohibitions from my doctor, I certainly ain't takin' 'em from a librarian.

A quick HACKING COUGH breaks out from Billings then subsides.

GIL
Apparently a fine course of action.
(beat)
You said all's not lost... Have they decided to keep the collection afloat?

BILLINGS
Would'n think so. No, I mean every ending's a new beginning and all that
(MORE)
crap. After all, I could pony up the dough myself.

GIL
Well, that would be very generous.

BILLINGS
'Course I won't.

GIL
Oh.

BILLINGS
Let me ask you something, Dr. Sussman. How much exactly do you make?

GIL
Well, really, that's privileged--

BILLINGS
Thirty-eight thousand a year. Practically under the poverty line.

GIL
Yes, well, the librarians' union isn't terribly intimidating. Look, Mr. Billings--

BILLINGS
Do you understand the value of money, Doctor? What if for instance...
(He picks up an old book)
I offer you... thirty-eight thousand dollars to let me burn this book.

He holds the cigar dangerously close to the book.

GIL
I'm going to have to ask you to put that cigar down and leave. Right now.

BILLINGS
Because that's the difference between money and value. I can pay you any amount to burn this book, but once it's gone, it's gone. I can never go back in time and get it back.

Billings casually moves the cigar back to his mouth.

BILLINGS
There are certain immutable rules. You understand that. For example, if I die someday...
GIL
If?

BILLINGS
Yes. If.

GIL
No disrespect, but I doubt even you could pony up enough to dodge that one.

A beat. The old man wasn't joking.

BILLINGS
Mm-hm. Come by my office tomorrow night. I have a business idea you might be just the man for.
(Corrects himself)
For which you might just be the man. Goddamn Victorians and their goddamn prepositions.

He hands Gil his card.

BILLINGS
Remember Doctor, when the gods close a door...
(Nods to the window)
They open a window.

And wheels himself out.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil enters his apartment, dejected. Hangs up his coat, but as he turns away it falls to the ground. He doesn't even notice.

But across the room he spots, on the window sill, THREE GLASS BOWLS. His face falls a bit.

Like he's done it a hundred times, he crosses to the window, stepping over the rows of books, picks up the suicide note and copy of the Iliad and pockets them both.

He crouches down and stares familiarly at the GLASS BOWLS:

The first contains THIRTY-ONE WHITE STONES, the second, about FIFTEEN BLACK STONES, and the third, also about FIFTEEN BLACK STONES.

He scans them in indecision. His hand reaches out for the WHITE BOWL, hovering over it, but can't reach in.
Resigned, he moves to the far BLACK BOWL -- takes a stone out and drops it in the center bowl.

He's even more depressed.

LATER --

Gil sits on his bed, watching TV. It's Xena. Though he's smug, he also seems to be a regular.

GIL
Oh come on, Ares would never do that.

CUT TO:

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHT

Gil lies in bed. Eyes open, sleepless.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Bryant Park, the beautiful lawn behind the Library. A gorgeous day and New Yorkers are taking advantage -- playing, picnicking.

Gil walks to a chair, unwraps a sandwich and unhappily chews it.

GIL (V.O.)
It was in this state of decidedly quiet desperation that I had what would turn out to be the most transformative moment of my life.

He gazes around the park, watching the people:

OFFICE WORKERS eating and laughing; A COUPLE lying on a blanket, kissing lovingly; A WOMAN playing with her DOG. Gil sighs...

And then freezes. Directly across the lawn he notices--

A WOMAN.

She's small, bookish, but somehow a perfect package. Business suit, hair up, undeniably beautiful.

Unaware of Gil, she lets down her hair, letting it wash over her shoulders. Fluffs it out. Then puts on a pair of glasses and reaches into her bag--

GIL (V.O.)
From that distance I couldn't be sure.
There was no way I could read the
title. But somehow I just knew...

He gets up, absently dropping his sandwich. SOUNDS around
him suddenly change: more vibrant and more distant at the
same time. He edges steadily towards her.

HE STEPS on PICNICKERS, gets one leg wrapped up in a DOG'S
LEASH, and then finally, when he’s only ten feet away, he
sees the title--

GIL (V.O.)
Ovid's Ars Amatoria. The Art of Love.

She looks up, sees him and smiles. And then--

FRISBEE GUY
Heads up!

Gil turns just in time to get HIT IN THE FOREHEAD with a
FRISBEE. Doesn't knock him out, just down.

A young FRISBEE GUY runs up.

FRISBEE GUY
Really sorry, bra. You okay?

Gil rubs his head, flushed with embarrassment -- everyone's
staring. As he turns slowly to look back at the WOMAN--

SHE'S GONE.

He scans the crowd, desperately hoping to spot her. At a
distance, she's heading to the side entrance of the library.
He gets up and hurries after her.

INT. LIBRARY SIDE ENTRANCE - 42ND STREET - DAY

Out of breath, Gil bolts through the library side door to
find a guard, LENNY, 20s, far too self-important.

Lenny searches the bags of a TOURIST FAMILY (Mother, Father,
Little Girl) at the desk as Gil tries to get through to
follow the Woman.

LENNY
Check. No books or other contraband.
(Re: lipstick from the purse)
Yours? Seems way too red for you.

She grabs the bag back. Gil is eager to get through.
GIL
Lenny, excuse me, I've--

LENNY
Just a minute, professor.

He searches the father's bag. Nothing there.

LENNY
Okay, Papa Bear. Move along.

Now Gil has enough room to get by -- he dashes past, but she's nowhere in sight.

GIL
Damn it.

And just then, the family walks through the exit scanners.

ALARMS GO OFF. The muted WOOP-WOOP of a library siren. Lenny leaps out, slams the exit door shut.

LENNY
Everybody freeze!

The family is stunned. Gil too.

FATHER
Now wait a minute...

LENNY
Can it, Honcho Choncho! Theft of library property is punishable by forty days in jail and/or a substantial fine. I'm going to have to frisk you, sir.

He motions for the father to raise his arms. Reluctantly the father does.

GIL
Lenny? Is this really necessary?

LENNY
I don't tell you how to read the books, professor, you don't tell me how to protect 'em.

GIL
They're tourists, Lenny. And you've already searched their bags.

Lenny spots a tiny purse on the little girl's shoulder.
LENNY
Oh have I?

On one knee, he puts out his hand for the girl's purse. She shakes her head no. He nods curtly and she hands it over.

LENNY
Aha! Exhibit A.

He pulls out a BOOK. A small one. Hands it to Gil.

GIL
Congratulations, Lenny. You've stopped the interborough smuggling of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. All Narnia may breathe a sigh of relief.

LENNY
I wouldn't think you'd treat it so lightly, professor. She stole a book.

Gil takes a beat.

GIL
You know what, you're absolutely right. Tell you what, I'll escort them to main security and we'll throw the book at her. Not this one. Another book. A much larger book.

LENNY
Well... I shouldn't relinquish custody... but can't desert my post either. Okay, ten-four, professor, that's a big help.
(To the little girl)
We catch you again, Missy, it's the big house for sure.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY DESK - DAY

Gil hands the little girl a card.

GIL
This is a library card. Use it.
(To her parents)
I've reserved a copy of *Wardrobe* at the lending branch across the street. Please impress upon her the wonder of a lending library.
MOTHER
We will. Thank you.

The little girl smiles at Gil as the parents usher her out. Embarrassed, he stiffly smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. MCGRAW LOBBY - DAY

Gil walks down the hall, a bit happy. Passing the Exhibit Room, he hears construction going on inside.

Suddenly, there's a flurry of activity. TWO MEN wheel a GIGANTIC CRATE, flanked by SECURITY GUARDS, into the Exhibit Room.

As the CRATE passes there's almost a GLOW about it -- seems to exude its own power.

It's followed by VINCENT ANDREWS, 40s, big guy, broad and with a gut, but imposing.

Andrews scans the lobby while the box gets wheeled into the Exhibit Room. He follows inside and the doors slam shut.

Gil just stares, stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Gil continues down a hall when...

PUTNAM
Mr. Sussman!
(He stops, no escape)
I know -- Doctor. I don't know why I forget, I guess I'm just used to my doctors being medical professionals. At any event, we've been looking for you positively everywhere.

GIL
Imagine our luck you've found me.

PUTNAM
A few dear friends of the trustees have just missed the four o'clock tour.

A GAGGLE of OLD-MONEY WOMEN shuffle up, one escorting her BORED TEENAGE GRANDSON.
PUTNAM
And I was wondering, since you can't possibly be busy with your collection...

GIL
I'm sorry, Mrs. Putnam, I'm not a tour guide, I'm--

And then walking past him, there she is, THE WOMAN FROM THE PARK. She turns down another hallway. He leaps up--

GIL
Step lively, everybody, right this way.

And RUSHES off after her. The stunned group takes a moment, then follows him as fast as they can.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Gil darts into the main lobby, spotting the Mystery Woman walk briskly up the grand staircase.

GIL
Main hall, grand staircases, rich people engraved in stone. No need to check, you're probably related.

And he dashes on. The group, out of sorts, tries to follow.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

He double-times it up the stairs as she disappears above. The group hustles after him as fast as they can.

GIL

OLD WOMAN #1
Excuse me, when was the--

GIL
1911. Please save all questions for the end of the tour.

INT. ROSE MAIN READING ROOM - DAY

Gil dashes into the ROSE MAIN READING ROOM, the library's biggest attraction: a glorious hall full of tables, ringed along the walls with bookshelves and balconies.
Arching windows let the sun stream in, revealing giant chandeliers. Gold brocade surrounds ceiling murals of an almost apocalyptic sky.

Dozens of people sit at the tables, reading or working at portable computers.

Gil looks around for the Mystery Woman. Doesn't see her. The TOUR gazes, amazed at the hall.

Then Gil spots her, heading back out the door.

GIL
Nothing to see here, moving on.

And he darts back out, following her again.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

He rushes into the McGraw Rotunda -- outside the Exhibit Room with the "Book of the Dead" banner hanging above it.

The MYSTERY WOMAN is there, perusing giant MURALS on the walls:

They're "The Story of the Recorded Word" -- an early printing press... a Medieval Scribe with a manuscript... and MOSES destroying the TEN COMMANDMENTS.

He stops, watching her.

The group straggles along, catching their breath. Some clutch their chests in shock, sit on the stone benches.

Seeing that she's not going anywhere, he takes his time:

GIL
(To the group)
This is the McGraw Rotunda. You'll notice Edward Laning's exquisite murals on the development of the written word. A medieval scribe, moveable type and...
(Nearing Moses, close to her)
A bearded gentleman in the desert dashing tablets against the rocks.
(Beat)
Ironic, actually, that in destroying the tablets Moses became the first person to break the Ten Commandments.

She smiles a little. He gains some confidence. Which is when the teenager points to the Exhibit Room.
TEENAGER
Is that where the Mummy's gonna be?

Gil, distracted, tries to answer and keep the Woman in sight:

GIL
Not, um, Mummy, no, but yes, the Scroll of Nu, the finest existing manuscript of The Egyptian Book of the Dead, will be on loan from the British Museum this week.

TEENAGER
A scroll? That's it?

GIL
A scroll that some say gave the ancient Egyptians the power of life after death. And at over three thousand years old, arguably the oldest book on Earth.

The old ladies titter, impressed. The Teenager's not.

TEENAGER
So?

GIL
So, the book is the great record of human knowledge.  
(On a roll, trying to impress Mystery Woman without looking) 
Through it we witness the triumphs and failures of geniuses long past, the giants upon whose shoulders we stand. It is the sum of the knowledge of all humanity. And in its authorship is our best chance at personal immortality!

The ladies ERUPT in APPLAUSE. He bows slightly, sure he looked very impressive. Casts a glance over his shoulder--

And does a double take. She's gone again.

GIL
How does she do that?

CUT TO:
INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Deep in the bowels of the library, seven stories underground, is Gil's document workshop. It's a small place, closed off from the book shelves beside it.

Emrita works at a drafting table with a magnifying lamp and paintbrush. Gil arrives via an elevator and peers over her shoulder.

GIL
Don't forget the edges, that's--

She interrupts him by holding up the document-- it's done perfectly.

GIL
Oh. Very good. Best not to start on the next one, all things considered.

Emrita nods.

EMRITA
What'll you do, Dr. Sussman? If they...

GIL
Oh, I shouldn't worry. Everyone needs a good Classics librarian these days.

She smiles wanly. He notices something in his pocket -- Billings's card. Offhandedly:

GIL
Keep an eye on the shop, would you, Em?

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

Gil stands on Park Avenue, looking up at a gleaming monolith of a building towering over him. He rechecks the address on the card and heads inside.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - NIGHT

A modern, high-security lobby. Gil approaches the LARGE GUARD at the desk.

GIL
Mr. Billings, please. Gil Sussman.
INT. BILLINGS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A guard ushers Gil into a large circular room and leaves him there.

The room is strangely plush and barren at the same time. As if Ralph Lauren decorated the lair of a Bond villain who loved books.

The walls contain grand old oak shelves in 360 degrees, filled with books. The floor is metallic and bare.

DIM RED LIGHT illuminates the room. In the center is a RAISED PLATFORM surrounded by a thick RED CURTAIN, like a hospital ward for the insanely rich.

Nearer to Gil, in vertical display cases hang books, manuscripts, scrolls. Gil reads the sign on each:

CANTERBURY TALES, FRAGMENT I. Chaucer. 1406.

FIRST FOLIO. Shakespeare. 1623.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. Rough draft.

      GIL
      Jesus.

      Billings (O.S.)
      Not yet, but I'm working on it.

The curtain pulls back to reveal...

BILLINGS. Propped up in a hospital bed. Surrounded by machines, NURSES, and a GUY in a suit. Behind his headboard is a birdcage with an OWL inside.

Though he's hooked up to the machines, Billings is still very active. He gives a wave and his staff leaves in an instant.

      BILLINGS
      Welcome to my little slice of heaven. Ain't she grand?

      GIL
      Very impressive, yes.

      BILLINGS
      What do you think of my babies?

      GIL
      They're... incredible. Are they real?
BILLINGS
C'mon, Doc. What kinda question is that? The money I paid for 'em, they damn well better be real.

GIL
They should be in a museum.

BILLINGS
Soon enough. Soon enough.

He breaks into another COUGHING FIT. This time it doesn't stop.

GIL's concerned:

GIL
Should I call someone?

Billings waives it off. Manages to put his oxygen mask on. The coughing subsides.

GIL
I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were--

BILLINGS
Dying? You were gonna say sick, but the word's "dying". It's alright, we're all dying. You're dying too. I just get a head start.
(waves Gil forward)
Cm'ere, please, Doctor Sussman. I got something to tell you.

Gil walks up to the bed, Billings pats the space next to him.

BILLINGS
Right up here, next to me.
(Gil sits)
Closer. It's a secret.

Gil looks around, not about to mention they're completely alone. Scoots closer anyway.

BILLINGS
I'm gonna live forever.

Silence. Gil struggles for something to say.

BILLINGS
Crazy, right?

GIL
No, not at all. With your charitable works, your family name--
BILLINGS
I'm not talkin' about that crap and you know it. I'm talkin' eternal life.

GIL
Oh.

BILLINGS
What do you know about the Book of the Dead, Doctor Sussman?

GIL
Not much, I'm afraid. I'm a classicist, not an Egyptologist.

BILLINGS
Humor me.

GIL
Uh, this particular version is the Scroll of Nu, a papyrus document discovered in 1858 and dated at approximately 1500 BC.

BILLINGS
Go on.

GIL
It contains a set of prayers or spells to resuscitate the dead in Pharaonic culture. And then to protect him or her against the trials of the afterlife... spirits, the mythic crocodiles of the East, West, North, and South, that sort of thing.

BILLINGS
But what does it do?

GIL
I'm sorry?

BILLINGS
Quit bein' sorry all the time. What does the scroll do to the reader?

GIL
Well the narrator, and thus the reader, invokes the passages, rises from the dead, and goes on to face the god Osiris, who weighs his heart and judges his life's worth. At least that's the story, anyway.
BILLINGS
What if it's not a story.

Gil looks at him.

GIL
Well, it is a story.

BILLINGS
What if it's not?

GIL
But it is.

BILLINGS
What if it's not.

GIL
Well if it's not, then you live forever and meet the Egyptian god Osiris, which is why it is.

BILLINGS
You know what's in your future, Doctor?

GIL
Look, maybe I should go.

Billings hoists himself out of bed and, leaning on Gil, into a wheelchair.

BILLINGS
Tomorrow you'll pack up your precious little books and abandon the Antiquity collection, which will be shut down. At which point you can go file for unemployment, or you can accept a new job as curator of the Book of the Dead exhibit.

Gil stares at him, stunned.

GIL
I... That's not my area of expertise.

BILLINGS
I don't give a damn about your expertise. I want the Book of the Dead.

GIL
You're... either joking or you're, well, you are crazy.
BILLINGS
That scroll's like oxygen to me. I need it to survive. And you can get it.

GIL
Me? Wh... Setting aside the fact that no piece of papyrus is going to give anyone eternal life... Why? Why would I possibly break the law, endanger my life, and violate a sacred trust?! What would possibly make me do such a thing?

BILLINGS
Thirty-eight million dollars.

Gil is, needless to say, stunned.

GIL
Excuse me?

BILLINGS
Thirty-eight million dollars.

GIL
Thirty-eight million dollars.

BILLINGS
Yes.

GIL
Wh... How can you... How does somebody even say a thing like that? Thirty-eight million dollars?! I mean, that's your starting offer? How does one person even have that much money to throw away?

Billings shrugs. He takes out a live mouse from a box under the cage and feeds it to the owl.

BILLINGS
Most of this country's wealth is in the hands of a very few people. Like me, for instance. I just choose not to waste it on political office or professional sports teams. I've donated millions to the Library, I'm just asking for a return on my investment. Lending privileges, if you like.

GIL
I do not li-- You're--
BILLINGS
It would take a hundred years at your current salary to garner that sum, two hundred with taxes. Thirty-eight million for you, or if you prefer, your collection. Which, as of this moment, is closed.

Gil glares at him.

BILLINGS
Tomorrow you'll either be the new head of the exhibit, or you'll be unemployed. Get me the scroll before the exhibit closes in three weeks, and you'll be rich.

Gil sits on the bed, shell-shocked.

BILLINGS
You know Dr. Sussman, the Egyptians had a myth about the creation of death. They say the great spirit came down with an offer for the first human couple. He offered them a stone, but they were unimpressed. So then he offered them a banana, which they quickly chose. He shook his head and sighed, and our fate was cast. Instead of enduring like the stone, human beings would, from then on, rot like a banana.

He presses a button. The doors swing open.

BILLINGS
Choice is yours, Doc. You wanna be the stone or the rotten banana?

And Billings wheels himself away. Gil stands there, shaking in impotent rage.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gil striding furiously down the street, talking to himself.

GIL
Stone or rotten banana! Why not just call me a chicken and cluck around the room? As if that'd make me steal a priceless ancient manuscript!
People on the street are staring. Gil gives a defiant look and storms off.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil prepares for bed, still ranting.

    GIL
    Thirty-eight million dol... Can you
    believe...?! The gall!

He goes to the three bowls at the window sill. Annoyed, he takes another BLACK STONE and drops it in the center bowl.

INT. GIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gil in his office, resentfully packing up things from his desk into a cardboard box.

    GIL
    Rotten banana! I'll show him a rotten
    banana!
    (Pauses, annoyed)
    I have no idea what that means. I'm
    not even making sense anymore!

And he drops one of his books. Reaches down to pick it up, and as he's bent over, he hears the DOOR to his office SHUT.

He looks between his legs, and there, upside-down, he sees...

THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN.

He straightens up quick, hitting his head against the side of the desk. SWOONS. Then manages to stand.

    GIL
    Alright, no problem. I'm fine. Just
    a little head rush.

She doesn't say anything, just runs her hand along the books.

    GIL
    Excuse me? May I help you?

She steps up on a stool to a higher shelf, showing some ankle.

    GIL
    You're really not supposed to be in
    here without an appointment. It's a
    private collection.
    (No answer)
    How did you get in here, anyway?
She takes down a book in her hands.

MYSTERY WOMAN
Aren't antiquarian books just the most sensual experience? The smell, the aura. Something about them just makes me... terribly...

GIL
Nostalgic?

MYSTERY WOMAN
Stimulated. Since I was a teenager old books have driven me crazy. I suppose that's why I seduced my high school librarian.

Gil is quite literally speechless.

GIL
I... well...

MYSTERY WOMAN
Through the door.

GIL
Excuse me?

MYSTERY WOMAN
How I got in. The door was ajar. All these books and no one gets to take them home. Hold them. Turn their pages. Finger their leather spines.

Gil finally gets the ability to say something.

GIL
There are... other lending libraries. We just ensure that, well, some people don't treat rare books with the respect they deserve.

MYSTERY WOMAN
I respect them more in the morning when I'm done with them.

Gil is about to melt down completely.

GIL
I... uh... well, that is...

She's looking at him. And then it dawns on him. He starts laughing:
GIL
Oh. Very good, Q.E.D. What's the gag?

MYSTERY WOMAN
Excuse me?

GIL
Who put you up to this? Emrita? Is this some kind of going-away get-the-boss thing?

MYSTERY WOMAN
I don't know what you mean.

GIL
Well, it's just... I mean, really...

The Mystery Woman is not pleased. Stunned, borderline angry.

MYSTERY WOMAN
If I understand correctly, you've just labelled me a prank of some kind. Or worse. But Fortune favors the bold, and at this point in my life I know what I want. Most men are intimidated by women with intelligence or sense of self. I thought I had found another sincere bibliophile. Frankly, I'm mortified. Good day.

She leaves. Gil is still smug, then suddenly realizes he may have just made the biggest mistake of his life.

GIL
Wait!

And chases after her.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

She walks briskly down the hall, heels clicking on marble.

GIL
Wait, please!

She gets to the elevator, presses the button. Waits.

GIL
Please. I'm sorry if I offended you...

The elevator doesn't come, so she heads down the stairs. He follows.
...I just-- well, you're just... I couldn't imagine you were... to me. It's... unimaginable.

MYSTERY WOMAN
Apparently one does not need an imagination to receive a doctorate in Classics.

She's reached the second floor. Here the elevator opens and she goes to get in.

GIL
No, wait!
(She gets in)
Please! I can show you one million four hundred thousand books.

She arches an eyebrow. He's piqued her interest. As the elevator door shuts she puts her arm out to stop it.

INT. STACKS - DAY

GIL
Fiat Lux!

She's impressed. He smiles.

GIL
Seven floors of stacks. The bulk of the Humanities collection of the New York Public Library.

She walks the aisles, running her finger along the books.

GIL
I'm sorry again, I just...

MYSTERY WOMAN
Shh... No one's allowed down here?

GIL
Staff only. It's a veritable labyrinth.

She notices a pipe and little latch. Plays with it.

GIL
That's the pneumatic tube system. From the 1920s. We still use it for
(MORE)
GIL (cont'd)
call slips and such. There's all sorts of book elevators and pulleys too. They say the computer will supplant them all someday, books included.

MYSTERY WOMAN
I don't think so. You can't curl up with a good laptop.

GIL
Not computer anyway.

She smiles, rolls her eyes a bit. He's embarrassed.

MYSTERY WOMAN
Do you believe what you said about the Moses mural? That sin is inscribed in the presentation of the tablets? That a text's destruction is implicit in the very act of its creation. As death is implicit in life.

He's stunned.

GIL
I had never really considered it.

MYSTERY WOMAN
Or is it rather a case of the book's author loving the material more than his audience did?

She keeps walking, runs her hand along the book spines.

GIL
What's your name?

MYSTERY WOMAN
Patience.

GIL
Patience? Really?

MYSTERY WOMAN/PATIENCE
You don't like it?

GIL
No, no I love it, I just... that's the name of one of the lions--

PATIENCE
In front of the library, I know. Patience and Fortitude. My father was (MORE)
a big fan of the library, and of the lions, so he named me Patience. Incredibly inaccurate as it turned out. Good thing I didn't have a sister, she could've gone through life named Fortitude.

GIL
My parents named me after great authors. Virgil Dante Sussman. No pressure there.

PATIENCE
You seemed to have measured up fairly well. They must be proud.

GIL
My mother was. She didn't get to see me working here, but... she passed away a little over six years ago.

PATIENCE
I'm sorry. And your father?

GIL
He died when I was young. All he left us was alone.

PATIENCE
Papa was a Rolling Stone.

GIL
I'm sorry?

PATIENCE
The song. When he died, all he left us was alone.

GIL
Yes, that's right.

PATIENCE
You just quoted Motown.

GIL
I did, didn't I.

PATIENCE
There's more to Dr. Virgil Sussman than he lets on.

GIL
At any rate, I swore I'd get out of Canarsie. It turned out I had a knack (MORE)
for reading. Languages. And a fairly photographic memory.

She looks at him.

PATIENCE
Remarkable.

Gil is once again on the border of heaven.

GIL
And you are... forgive me for being so blunt, but... you are... extraordinary.

She smiles. Takes out an old book. He stops her. Starts to leaf through the pages.

GIL
Is it true what you said about, you know... books?

PATIENCE
Well. I don't want you to get the wrong impression...

CUT TO:

They're KISSING VORACIOUSLY -- pressed up against the bookshelves, pawing at each other's clothes.

PATIENCE
"Come with me and be my love and we shall all the pleasures prove."

She rips open his shirt, pulls at his suspenders, pulling him away from the shelf--

KNOCKING OVER A ROW OF BOOKS with him.

CUT TO:

He's pawing at her suit, undoing the blouse and kissing her neck:

GIL
"Give me a thousand kisses, and then a hundred more, and then another thousand, and add five score."

They kiss more fervently. She stops.

PATIENCE
Who's that?
GIL
Catullus.

PATIENCE
Oh. Nice.

CUT TO:

They're on top of each other. Surrounded by books that have fallen to the ground. Gil's reading from one, she's going crazy:

GIL
"The Hapsburgs' downfall was once thought to be due to a preponderance of attention-drawing debacles..."

CUT TO:

And as she climbs up on him:

PATIENCE
I do so like Green Eggs and Ham! I DO SO LIKE THEM SAM I AM!

CUT TO:

LATER --

Gil and Patience sit against the shelves in each other's arms. He strokes her body slowly as she flips through a book entitled "On the Egyptian Book of the Dead":

PATIENCE
"The Prayer of giving a heart to the deceased in the underworld. Of not eating filth in the underworld" -- that's a good one. Oh, here it is, "The Prayer for walking forth by day after death." The motherlode.

He strokes her shoulder, notices a tattoo.

GIL
Is this a tattoo?

PATIENCE
Virgil, you're incorrigible. Yes, it's a tattoo. Now would you let me read--

GIL
Where'd you get it?
PATIENCE
It was a present to myself on my sixteenth birthday. Poor Daddy never knew what to do with me.

He pushes back her blouse to reveal the tattoo fully. It reads: EX LIBRIS.

GIL
Ex Libris? But there's no name.

PATIENCE
I don't belong to anyone yet.

She goes back to reading.

PATIENCE
"I am Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, and I have the power to be born a second time. I soar like a bird and descend upon the earth... I am the Lord of those who come forth from the darkness."

GIL
Patience, I don't want you to stop, but... can't you read something else?

PATIENCE
Really, Virgil, don't you find it fascinating? Possibly the most powerful single volume in the history of the world will be sitting in this very building.

GIL
Actually it's already here. You know, I could arrange a preview. I'm in charge of the exhibit.

PATIENCE
Now you're just trying to impress me.

GIL
Really, as of today. Cross my heart.

PATIENCE
Hope to die?

GIL
Not at the moment.
INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

Gil leads Patience into the rotunda. The door to the Exhibit Room is closed, Lenny standing guard.

GIL
Lenny. We've come to see the exhibit.

LENNY
No can do, professor. All locked up 'til tomorrow. So-called crack security company's got some glitch with the system.

GIL
Well I don't know if you've been told, but I'm the new curator, and--

LENNY
King Tut himself couldn't get in there tonight, not on my watch.

PATIENCE
It's okay, Gil. We'll go tomorrow.

Gil gets a little gleam in his eye.

GIL
Sure we will.

INT. THE STACKS - DAY

He leads Patience to a dusty forgotten corner of the stacks.

PATIENCE
Again? Gil, we already--

GIL
Not like this.

He opens an old squeaky door to reveal a chain safety gate, the kind old elevators use to keep people from falling in.

Pushes the gate open. Beyond it is a platform -- bigger than a dumb-waiter but smaller than an elevator. He wheels an old book cart off it and waves her in.

PATIENCE
I'm not going in there.

GIL
It was built to hold literally a ton of books. Fortune favors the bold, right?
She meekly steps on. He smiles and follows.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR - DAY

It's small, they're awful comfy. He closes the gate.

GIL
Ready?

PATIENCE
Yes, Mr. Wonka.

He pushes the elevator button and it jerks to a start. She grabs him for safety, he smiles.

PATIENCE
This better be worth it.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR - FOLLOWING

It comes to a stop. He opens the gate, but there's something just beyond it, blocking their path.

GIL
And now, Arcanum arcanorum, secret of secrets.

He reaches up to the thing blocking the path. Gently presses against its sides, lifting up.

CUT TO:

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

The Exhibit Room of the Book of the Dead. A marble room smothered in faux Egyptian decor, with fake sarcophagi flanking the doors and a glass DISPLAY CASE.

Floating in the case, almost magically, is...

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.

It's beautiful, mystical, and yes, ethereally powerful. A faint light shines on it from above, halo-like.

A collection of paintings line the walls, including a portrait of George Washington.

The PORTRAIT STARTS TO MOVE. It lifts up, as if of its own power, and lowers to the ground...

To reveal GIL, climbing out of the hole behind it. He holds out a hand for Patience, helping her in.
GIL
Your chariot has arrived, Milady.

She looks around in wonder.

GIL
This was originally a supplemental card catalogue room, with its own book elevator. I doubt they even know it's here.

PATIENCE
What about the painting? Didn't we just set off an alarm or something?

GIL
Old George was painted by the first chief librarian. Might as well be in clown makeup on black velvet, they can't give him away.

She sees the empty display case.

PATIENCE
Is that...?

Gil nods. They slowly approach the scroll, transfixed.

GIL
Three-thousand years ago a human hand scratched this out in ink. It's outlived dynasties, countless possessors. Imagine what the world was like when it was made.

PATIENCE
The world was new. Like now.

He looks at her.

PATIENCE
Must be worth a fortune.

GIL
Priceless. Literally. When there's only one, it's particularly hard to sell.

(Suddenly remembers, defensive)
Not that anyone wants to buy it. Who would want to buy it? I mean, it's not for sale. That's who.

PATIENCE
Gil are you alright?
GIL
Fine. Fine. We should go.

PATIENCE
I just want to look a minute more.
It's so beauti--

But she's gotten too close to the glass--

SUDDENLY ALARMS GO OFF, WAILING LOUD--

FLOOD LIGHTS BLIND THE ROOM.

SOMEONE'S JIGGLING THE DOOR HANDLE, UNLOCKING IT.

GIL
Come on!

He pulls her back to the elevator. They climb in and replace
the painting just as...

The doors fly open. Lenny charges in, looking for action.

LENNY
Freeze, slimeballs!

But no one's there. He's disappointed.

LENNY
State of the art my asteroid.

EXT. LIBRARY - EVENING

Gil and Patience come running out of a side entrance, practically giggling with excitement.

PATIENCE
I can't believe we did that!

GIL
You set off the alarm!

PATIENCE
Shh! Nice to see you can come to my rescue and whisk me away.

GIL
Not quite Bonnie and Clyde. I'm the getaway driver in an elevator.

She catches her breath.
PATIENCE
Oh, thank you for the day, Virgil.
It's been... like something out of a book.

She kisses him.

PATIENCE
When will I see you again?

GIL
How about right now?

PATIENCE
Virgil...

GIL
Tomorrow. Dinner at my place.

She smiles, nods. They kiss again. And she leaves.

EXT. 42ND STREET AND 5TH AVE - NIGHT

Gil still bops happily down the street, singing/speaking:

GIL
Papa was a rolling stone. Wherever he laid his hat was his home. And when he died, all he left us was alone, lone, lone...

A bum on the street hears him.

BUM
Sing it brother.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil enters his apartment, whistling and joyous. Tosses his coat onto the hook. It stays. Gil pumps his fist in victory.

And then he sees them -- the BOWLS at his window.

He rushes over, clomping over the bed to get there. Peers into the bowls, savoring the moment.

He reaches up, into the WHITE BOWL, and takes a WHITE STONE out. Drops it in the CENTER BOWL with glee.

And just stares at it.

CUT TO:
EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The open grave from before. Alone, no one around. And then...

Gil leaps up out of it, dancing happily and geekily. Boogies out of frame, dances back in with PATIENCE as they waltz around the grave.

CUT TO:

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil sleeps happily.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

A bright, bright sunshiny day. He walks to work, gleeful.

As he passes through traffic, a car HONKS loud. Gil happily waves back. He passes the street preacher--

PREACHER
The Good Book has the answer! Seek the Good Book--

GIL
Amen! Sing it brother!

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Gil skips up the steps like a speed-skater, jumping from side to side as he climbs.

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

He sits at a desk in his basement workshop, boxes piled around him, a dreamy look on his face.

Emrita arrives, carrying a box of her things.

EMRITA
At last I can start suffering and paint that masterpiece.

GIL
Don't worry, Em. Things have a way of working out, you'll see.

She rolls her eyes and exits.
INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

Gil whistles his way past the Exhibit Room, its doors open. He looks around. No one nearby. Peeks in, then... STEPS IN.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - NIGHT

THE SCROLL is still there. He can't believe he was just in here with Patience.

He stares at the scroll, its squiggly lines perfectly laid out. Mesmerized, he reaches out to touch it...

ANDREWS
I'd ask you not to touch that, please.

And Gil almost leaps out of his skin. Turns to see the security expert from before.

ANDREWS
We had a false alarm last night, so we're running diagnostics. Wish we had the video up yesterday. Vincent Andrews, Fortress Security.

Gil puts out his hand, still shaken.

GIL
Virgil--

ANDREWS
Sussman, I know. New exhibit honcho. Mrs. Putnam asked me to give you the once over on the bells and whistles. There's always glitches with old buildings like this. But don't worry, your little bambino's as safe as a prom queen at a eunuchs' convention.

Takes out a pad and pen and writes that last part down:

ANDREWS
Workin' on a detective novel. Similes are the real sons of bitches. Okay, so, shall I show you what I've done with the place?

GIL AND ANDREWS--

Walk around the room, Andrews pointing things out.

ANDREWS
Security cameras blanket the area, video feeds to the office next door.
ANDREWS (cont'd)
We got motion sensors on every inch --
they're off during the day on account
of the tourists, but at night this
room's hotter than a pig in luau-
ville.
(Beat. Considers the pad)
Nah, kinda a stretch. Anyway...
(Motions to the doors)
There'll be an armed guard on the
front doors at all times.

Gil sneaks a glance over to the George Washington painting.

GIL
And there are no other entrances?

ANDREWS
Well, the chandeliers hang low, but
there's no roof entry, so that
shouldn't be a problem. No entry
under the floor either. Basically
that's it.

This is Gil's chance to mention the painting. But he doesn't.

GIL
Well. That sounds fine then.

Now they get to the case in the center of the room.

ANDREWS
And the piece of resistance, as they say.
Unbreakable glass, stuff they used on the
Space Shuttle. Temperature controlled,
pressure sensitive. Infrared. The key
has a computer code recognized by the
casing unit, both of which change at
random when the key and case connect.
Impossible to forge. If anyone uses a
fake or gets too close--

He reaches in, THE ALARMS go off.

Andrews takes out a BLACK CARD KEY and swipes it through the
key slot on the case. Alarms cut out and the doors unlock.

ANDREWS
Sorry, can't resist it.

GIL
And you have the only key?
ANDREWS
Mrs. Putnam'll have one too. Don't worry, my guys'll give you carte blanche whenever you want.

GIL
And the library guests?

ANDREWS
We'll keep 'em back a few paces. With a thing like this, it's strictly look don't touch.

Gil sees TWO MEN working behind the mummy cases.

GIL
What are they doing?

ANDREWS
A little extra icing on top. Sixty percent Argon gas, forty percent CO2, same stuff they use to stun poultry. Shoots out from the mummy's eyes. Kablammo.

(Sees Gil's discomfort)
Don't worry, Doctor Sussman. You let me do my job, nobody gets out of here with the scroll.

GIL
Yes, as if anyone would try.

ANDREWS
We hope to discourage them from even thinking about it.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - FOLLOWING
As Gil leaves the Exhibit Room, he sees out of the corner of his eye something crossing the hall -- a man in a wheelchair.

He leans over and clearly sees... BILLINGS, talking with a sycophantic Putnam. Billings locks eyes with Gil and stares him down.

Gil looks back, then quickly averts his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. FINE WINE STORE - EVENING
Gil enters one of New York's finer liquor establishments.
INT. FINE WINE STORE - EVENING

He scans the shelves. Sees a good wine, priced at 60 bucks. Next to it, the bargain special, at $5.99.

He wavers. Picks up the 5.99 bottle and heads away. Then turns around and swaps it for the good stuff.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As nice as the small pad can possibly be. The bed stowed, a table in the center of the room, bordered again by books.

Gil slides some of the stacks aside, making a little aisle to walk through.

There's candlelight, tablecloth, the works. Dressed in jacket and tie, he's way too formal, but he's made an effort. More handsome and less dour.

The BUZZER rings. In his happiest yet smoothest voice:

    GIL
    Hello.

    PATIENCE (O.S.)
    It's me.

    GIL
    Come on up.

He buzzes her in. Buzzes a few extra times for good measure. Then LEAPS for a chair.

He sits, trying to look as casual and sexy as possible. There's a knock on the door.

    GIL
    Entre!

And Patience peeks in. She sees the cramped place and her face registers a bit of shock/disappointment. So does Gil's when he sees her look.

Then she sees the candlelight and Gil there. She smiles brightly, genuinely.

    PATIENCE
    Hi.

CUT TO:
LATER--

The two sit, eating and drinking wine. Patience looks around, trying to put the best face on things.

    PATIENCE
    It's a quaint place.

    GIL
    In civilized countries they call it a closet.

    PATIENCE
    Did you put these books out for me?

    GIL
    Hm? Oh, no. No, I... Just something I had lying around.

    PATIENCE
    Shame they don't have a real home. I'm sorry, was that rude? There I go, cutting through the chaff again.

    GIL
    No, it's okay. I like it when you cut through the chaff. Besides, you're right.
    (At her)
    The place benefits from some beauty.

    PATIENCE
    Flattered, she changes the subject. How about this: If you could do anything, live anywhere, where would you be?

    GIL
    Right here, right now.

    PATIENCE
    That was the sweet answer, Virgil. Now give me the real one.

    GIL
    Call me Gil, please.

    PATIENCE
    Gil. What would you do?

    GIL
    Suppose I'd search for undiscovered manuscripts. Not too sexy perhaps, but... when one brings back a document
    (MORE)
from near destruction, it's... You've delivered a frail creature safe to present and future. Immortalized. There's no feeling quite like it.

PATIENCE
Actually, it's very sexy.

The wine glass shakes in his hand. He gulps.

GIL
Your turn.

PATIENCE
It'd definitely be my own island. With a castle. And the man I loved and thousands of books. He goes off for days at a time to let me read, and then comes home and cooks me dinner with fine wine.

(Beat)
Ever think about the future, Gil?

GIL
You know, before yesterday I never gave it a second thought.

LATER --

Gil and Patience lie in bed in each other's arms, bathed in streetlights coming through the window.

PATIENCE
It was so magical. Powerful.

GIL
Thank you.

PATIENCE
The way the glyphs are aligned. Ordered but chaotic. Ethereal but earthy.

GIL
Oh. The scroll.

PATIENCE
I can still see it, floating there. What would it be like to possess it...

GIL
Patience.
PATIENCE
You couldn't really own it, of course, but I keep fantasizing...

GIL
If I didn't know better I'd think you just wanted me for my scroll.

PATIENCE
Whoops. Caught me. I faked the whole thing to get my hands on an old parchment. Somehow I got a librarian instead.

(Gives him an extra squeeze. Then)
Gil?

GIL
Yes.

PATIENCE
What's with the stones?

GIL
Hm?

PATIENCE
The black and white stones on the window.

GIL
Oh. Silly habit. It's a Roman tradition. At the end of every day, you choose a stone -- white if the gods were smiling on you, black if they were unkind. Then at the end of the month you empty the bowl and have scattered before you the record of your month.

PATIENCE
Hm. Fatalistic, but I like it. How come yours go from all bad to just a few good?

Gil smiles.

GIL
No reason.

She pinches him hard. He lets out an "Ow!"

PATIENCE
No reason my ass.
He smiles. Kisses her.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Gil walks through the halls, happy again, when he hears that voice:

PUTNAM

DR. SUSSMAN!

He stops.

PUTNAM

Terribly sorry, I’ve just spoken with Mr. Billings, and -- he’s not a well man, you know -- and tragically we’ve had to cut the Exhibit budget a bit. Your salary to be more precise. By half, actually. A bother, I know, but we’ve all go to chip in. For the good of the library!

Gil is pale as a ghost. Putnam goes to leave, then remembers something:

PUTNAM

Oh, and where is my head? We’ve received an exciting offer for your old office: the Amazon-dot-com collection of technology! Isn’t that terribly terribly exciting?

And she’s off. Gil is stunned, pissed.

INT. BILLINGS’S OFFICE - DAY

Gil walks in amid the encased documents in Billings’s office. Shouting out to space:

GIL

You truly think this is enough?! Starving me into submission?

There is no answer. Gil waits.

GIL

You do not get your way just because you have money. Those of us without money, we are not all mushy bananas! We too can be like the block of stone!

He goes to storm out.
GIL
You haven't seen the last of me, pardner!
(Beat. Stops.)
Or rather, you have seen the last of me. You shall see me no more! Got that?! No more!

He storms out.

MATCH CUT TO:

BILLINGS WATCHES GIL LEAVE ON CLOSE SCREEN TV.

Smiles.

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Gil sits with Patience, on a blanket, eating lunch.

PATIENCE
I'm so sorry, Gil. Pearls before their swine, that's what you are.

She feeds him a grape.

GIL
I just... And that Putnam, she...
(Beat)
Patty? What would you think if I were rich? Incredibly rich.

PATIENCE
I don't know. Maybe "Whoopie"?

GIL
I'm serious.

PATIENCE
You're serious. Seriously incredibly rich. Okay, let me try.
(Beat)
I'd wonder where you got it. And worry you'd run off with some money-grubbing Victoria’s Secret model.

GIL
What if we were rich together? Island castle rich?

PATIENCE
Gil, what's gotten into you? What are you talking about?
Off Gil's look:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Patience storms down the street, Gil following.

PATIENCE
You must've heard wrong. That's insane.

GIL
He is insane. Thinks it'll make him live forever.

PATIENCE
I can't believe you'd even consider it. So how much did he offer, hm? What's the going rate for the oldest book on Earth? As if you could put a price on that.

GIL
That's what I said.

PATIENCE
What was it, thirty, forty thousand?

GIL
Uh, no.

PATIENCE
A hundred thousand?

GIL
No.
(Silence. She's waiting.)
Thirty-eight million.

She's speechless.

GIL
I know, how can he even say that? How does someone offer thirty-eight million dollars with a straight face?

PATIENCE
Thirty-eight million dollars?

GIL
That's not a real thing, it's like an idea of a thing. "Yes, I'd like that in three ten-million dollar bills, two fives, and the rest just give me in (MORE)
hundred thousands." That's not real, that's a fantasy world or something.

PATIENCE
Thirty-eight million dollars?

GIL
Patty.

PATIENCE
I know. It's wrong. But... does he even have that much money?

GIL
Oh, he has it.

PATIENCE
Thirty-eight million.

GIL
You know what, I'm sorry I brought it up. Wipe it from your mind completely.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

They sit on the subway, staring straight ahead.

PATIENCE
What if we didn't give him the scroll. Just a copy. A fake.

GIL
What?

PATIENCE
We could get our island. Or beach at least. With every book known to man.

GIL
I don't believe this. You're the one who said it was crazy. It's against everything I've ever stood for. I'd think it'd be wrong for you too.

(She looks down, sheepish)
I don't know how to break into Space Shuttle glass, do you? I wouldn't even know where to begin.

A GUY sitting nearby looks up at them. Gil moves away and whispers, but still rants:
GIL
There are security professionals with infrared beams and gas jets. This is not the movies. I don't have high-tech rappelling equipment. I might as well walk up and beg them to handcuff me. I'd end up running for my life through the library.

PATIENCE
You do know every inch of that building though--

GIL
Patty--

PATIENCE
Hypothetically. It can't be as high security as say, the Met. It's a library, not Fort Knox. Plus you have total access.
(Beat)
Okay, I'm done.

GIL
I am not going to "case the joint" where I work, Patience. That's it. End of subject, end of discussion.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

As he walks into the Rotunda, Gil starts noticing things...

INTO SLOW MOTION --

A VERY OLD GUARD at the door, watching the TOURISTS...

A SURVEILLANCE CAMERA at the end of the hall. TWO STAIRCASES leading down, an OPEN WINDOW out to a ledge. The "IN CASE OF FIRE" pull switch on the wall.

He's doing a mental inventory of the skylights, ceiling, doors -- In other words, casing the joint.

And then a SECURITY GUARD leans in to make eye contact.

Gil jumps, nervously... waves, and gets going.

CUT TO:

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The bowl of stones by Gil's window is now full -- the bottom half with black stones, the top half with white ones.
Gil and Patience are lying on the bed in each other's arms. She's finishing a story...

    PATIENCE
    Danced at the Met when I was fourteen.
    It was so beautiful. I loved to dance.

She stops talking, distant.

    GIL
    Why'd you stop?

    PATIENCE
    I had an injury. Old story.

    GIL
    Not to me.

She kisses him...

    PATIENCE
    Be right back.

And gets up for the bathroom. Then, brushing her teeth:

    PATIENCE (O.S.)
    Gil?

    GIL
    Hm?

    PATIENCE (O.S.)
    How come I never see you read?

    GIL
    Sorry?

    PATIENCE
    You don't read. Not here, not in the park. Not anywhere, really.

    GIL
    I read all the time, I read professionally. I just don't do it with you, that's all. I read plenty. I read too much.

    PATIENCE
    Okay.

    GIL
    I read a lot.
PATIENCE
Okay.

Moment of uncomfortable silence. She's still in the bathroom, closes the door.

GIL
You know, today I realized just how crazy that old man was. I mean, even if you could steal the scroll -- even if you get into the Exhibit Room, which, come to think of it is pretty easy considering the book elevator -- even then you'd still have to get around all the motion sensors and cameras. Although during the day the sensors are turned off, so you'd just have to get rid of all the people -- a fire or something. And then avoid the cameras, concealment or better yet turn them off. You'd still have that case -- which come to think of it simply requires lifting the key from old lady Putnam. Wouldn't be all that difficult, really. As you said, it's not Fort Knox.

Silence. He thinks.

GIL
But still. Why? Why would you possibly do it?

Patience comes out of the bathroom, towel wrapped around her.

PATIENCE
Did you say something, hon? I just jumped in the shower.

GIL

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHT

Patience sleeps. Gil lies awake, staring at her lovingly.

He tenderly slips his arm out from under her and gets up. As he shuffles happily to the bathroom in the dark, he BUMPS the bedside table, knocking Patience's PURSE to the ground.

He picks it up and notices something strange --

The side seems to have SPLIT OPEN. Concerned, he looks at her but she's still asleep.
INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

He closes the door, turns on the light, and raises the purse to find --

It's not split, there's actually a POCKET there, where the folds of the purse seem to be. There's a snap inside, but from the outside it's completely invisible.

And there inside... is a little GUN.

He's stunned. Near panic. Tries to calm himself:

GIL
So? She has a gun.

Which is when he finds--

HER DRIVER'S LICENSE. Patience's picture, but the name is...

LORNA BILLINGS.

His whole life sinks.

PATIENCE (O.S.)
Gil? You coming back to bed?

GIL
Just a minute.

Light-headed, he sits on the toilet, his head in his hands.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They lie in bed again, she's almost asleep, her arm draped over his chest. Then, a test:

GIL
Patience?

PATIENCE
Hm?

GIL
How come you never mention your family? Mother, father.

PATIENCE
Not much to say really. Mom's a social worker, Dad was a New Jersey trooper. He passed away a few years ago, she moved to Florida.
GIL
You must miss him quite a bit.

PATIENCE
I do.

GIL
Policeman, huh? Strange he was such a library expert.

PATIENCE
He happened to be very well read, Doctor Snobismo.

GIL
I'm sure he was.

PATIENCE
Really, Gil, can we talk about this in the morning?

She rolls over and goes to sleep. He stares up at the ceiling, his mind racing.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

A sweaty, painfully bright and muggy day. Gil wanders the streets in a daze, crosses through traffic. Cars swerve and honk, narrowly missing him.

He passes a FRUIT STAND, where an OLD LADY complains to a VENDOR:

OLD LADY
These bananas are mushy! Who in the hell wants mushy bananas? Huh?

Gil stops, then walks on.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

To the stone steps of the library, bumping into seemingly every person he passes.

As he starts up the steps, the STREET PREACHER passes by:

PREACHER
Woe to the solitary man, for dust shall be his inheritance! Yea, it is later than you think!
GIL STOPS. Freezes for a long moment. Then TURNS DECIDEDLY and heads back down the steps, away from the library.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLINGS'S OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Gil marches up to the LARGE GUARD at the security desk.

GIL

Billings.

SECURITY

Mr...?

GIL

Doctor. Sussman. He'll want to see me.

INT. BILLINGS'S OFFICE - DAY

Gil strides past the rare documents on a mission. Goes to the red curtain, grabs it, and YANKS IT OPEN...

To find the bed empty, perfectly made. The owl sleeps in its cage.

BILLINGS

It's considered polite to knock.

Billings wheels in -- visibly weaker than before, but Gil's in no mood to pity him.

GIL

I don't want your thirty-eight million. Just give me enough to retire to some beach somewhere. Four million should do nicely. Plus enough cash to get me there safely. Around fifty thousand.

BILLINGS

Very generous of you.

GIL

Not quite. The rest goes to the Bryant collection of Antiquities. Do it publicly, cut a ribbon. Hell, take it off your taxes. But if it doesn't happen, I'll spill everything.

BILLINGS

Anything else?
GIL
Just one. Keep her away from me.

BILLINGS
I don't--

GIL
Lorna. She's a fine artist, you should be congratulated. Just keep her away.

BILLINGS
I really don't get your meanin', Doctor, but whatever you say.

Gil falters for a moment. Unsure.

GIL
There may be some things I need. I'll let you know.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gil comes in quickly, slams the door. Catches his reflection in the mirror -- a moment of doubt, then steeled determination.

And then he sees the bowls.

He storms over, opens the window... and CHUCKS THE SIDE BOWLS OUT. CRASH! CRASH! Finally, the middle bowl, with all the stones --

FALLS, SHATTERS into pieces on the ground, stones flying.

NEIGHBOR
Hey!

GIL
Oh, Vade ad abyssus!

NEIGHBOR
Same to you! Hey, what does that mean?!

GIL
It means go to hell.

NEIGHBOR
Then why don't you just say that then?!
INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Gil watches a small fire in a trash can in the middle of his apartment. Picks up the suicide note and drops it in, watching it burn.

GIL (V.O.)
From that moment, there was no fortunate or unfortunate. I was no longer a slave to the mercurial whims of the gods. For better or worse, I was taking life into my own hands. From then on, there was only what I decided.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

The Exhibit's GRAND OPENING, the Exhibit room is streaming with people.

Completely composed, Gil wanders in. Alongside the tourists, he brings out a CAMERA and takes a pic or two. Shrugs at the GUARD as if to say, hey, I'm a fan too.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

He enters a door marked "Art Reference Room." In a moment he returns carrying a stack of books.

INT. GIL'S BASEMENT WORKSHOP - DAY

At Emrita's workshop table in the basement, Gil spreads out his supplies: ruler, knife, paintbrush, canvas.


Last, his PHOTOS of the scroll. Inspects them with the magnifying glass.

He dips the paintbrush in ink, and starts to paint--

GIL
"Mighty Osiris, great and noble..."

DISSOLVE TO:

A canvas full of the same hieroglyphic written over and over again. More precisely drawn as they go. Gil paints the line on a fresh blank canvas, still engrossed in the work.
EXT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He returns home to his apartment building to find...

Patience, sitting on his stoop. She stands, smiling. He walks by without a word.

PATIENCE
Gil?

She follows him inside.

PATIENCE
Gil, what's going on? Is something wrong?
(He doesn't answer)
I'm beginning to get a little upset with you, Virgil.

GIL
Oh are you, Lorna?
(She freezes)
Just tell me this -- are you his daughter or his wife?

Beat.

PATIENCE/LORNA
Daughter.

GIL
Well, there's that at least. Small favors.

From now on, PATIENCE is LORNA.

LORNA
He said you're going to do it.

Gil doesn't answer as she follows him up the stairs.

LORNA
I want to help.
(Still silence)
I guess thirty-eight million dollars wasn't so insane after all.

GIL
I didn't take all the money. Most of it goes to the Library.

He enters his apartment.
INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

LORNA
What?!

And she comes storming in after him.

LORNA
You idiot, that money was ours!

GIL
Ours? Really? I thought it was mine. What did you think I was, a sap for you to manipulate? A doormat?

LORNA
I thought you were smart. Why do you think I did all this, hm?

GIL
You really don't want me to answer that.

LORNA
Do you have any idea what it's like to live with that as your father? Controlling, manipulative, abusive.

GIL
Oh no... Fool me once...

LORNA
I've been imprisoned under that lunatic my entire life. He looks harmless in a chair. You wanna know why I stopped dancing? I had an accident and fell down a flight of stairs. I was sixteen and I spilled a mocha latte on his copy of the goddamn Articles of Confederation. He threw a fit and, well let's just say I spent a lot more time reading and a lot less time dancing. Look, that scroll, it's the... It's everything. I don't think it can bring somebody back from the dead, I don't know. But there's power there. It's palpable. You've felt it too, haven't you, Virgil? And it's wrong to give it to the old man. It's wrong. It belongs to true lovers of books. Like us.

(Beat)
Okay, yes, I started out using you, I (MORE)
admit it. I just didn't know I'd end up wanting you to use me.

He stops. Then shakes himself out of it again.

GIL
No. Not again.

LORNA
The island... and our little lives together. I couldn't shake it. For the first time in so long I liked the idea of a future. It sounded... peaceful.

For a moment he wants to give in, but can't.

GIL
Bullshit. Or should I say cut the chaff. Isn't that what you do?
(Remembering her fake name)
Patience! That's rich. Named after the lions! What a performance -- "Oh, it's crazy Gil!... Well, you do know the library inside and out..." They should give an award -- best supporting tramp. Of course they wouldn't know what name to inscribe on the trophy. Is Lorna real or just what you give the DMV?

LORNA
It's real. He named me after Lorna Doone.

Beat.

GIL
I don't even know when you're lying anymore! And you know what, doesn't matter.
(He's unpacking his supplies)
The tattoo! That was really the topper. You get that last week at some East Village storefront? Part of the profile to catch yourself a librarian? What a colossal fake you are!

LORNA
And you're not? Oh, you love saving the dying manuscripts, but you hate them afterward, don't you? Admit it. I've seen you -- you don't even read.
Don't tell me I don't fucking read! I've been drowning in the written word in seven different languages for thirty years! I've read everything about everything over and over and over again! And I am just so fucking sick of the constant din, the thousands of boasting, gossiping know-it-alls, I could torch every book known to man and feel all the better for it. So don't tell me I don't fucking read!

Beat. He sits, resigned. She takes a moment. Then, almost laughing:

LORNA
Why would a man who hates to read work at the library?

GIL
I didn't always hate it. It was escape. Heroes conquering death. Icarus flying to the sun. And in a language only I could unlock. Only it turned out... nobody else wanted in. I got trapped. After a while there's no danger, no surprise. Just dead men writing about dead people in dead languages. That wasn't life, life was...

(At her)
Life was something else. And that turned out to be a lie.

LORNA
Maybe, okay, yes. But was it really so terrible? A lie you and I both liked better than the truth? You don't go by Virgil, you go by Gil. Why? Because you chose to move away from -- I don't know, from the greatest writer of all time or from a name that sounds too much like "virgin" for a grade school playground. When is it a lie, Gil, and when is it a choice to live a happier life?

GIL
When the other person doesn't know there was a decision. That's when it's a lie.

LORNA
You really want that first life back? Or you want this new one?
She kisses him, though he doesn't respond. Then slowly she heads out, closing the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

Intently focused, Gil paints another row of symbols on canvas:

GIL
... I soar like a bird and descend upon the earth...

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

A local Mom and Pop hardware store. Gil nears the counter.

GIL
Um, yes, hello. I'm looking for your gloves please?

COUNTER GUY
Work gloves or rubber gloves?

GIL
Yes, well... whatever kind of gloves are best for--

COUNTER GUY
Either way, aisle two.

GIL
Aisle two. Thank you.

GLOVES AISLE --

Gil takes down a pair of work gloves. And a pair of rubber gloves. And a pair of winter gloves. Just to be sure.

GIL'S PREPARATION MONTAGE...

THE LIBRARY STACKS--

Gil scans the shelves until he finds: a slim, small book... *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Slips it into his pocket.

HIS OLD OFFICE--

Gil passes a WORKER repainting the glass on his old door to read: AMAZON.COM COLLECTION OF TECHNOLOGY (WWW.AMAZON.COM/NYPL).

ARMY/NAVY SUPPLY STORE--

Gil trying on GAS MASKS with considerable difficulty.
THE PARK--

Gil sits in the park, immersed deeply in a volume about the Book of the Dead. Fascinated once again at reading as he turns the pages.

THE BOOK ELEVATOR--

He stands by the book elevator with a STOPWATCH. Stretches out as if a long distance runner. Then starts the watch and runs as fast as he can away from the elevator.

HIS BASEMENT OFFICE--

More hieroglyphics. Line after line the same. But on another canvas, there's a copy which closely resembles the Book of the Dead...

BOOK ELEVATOR--

He frantically runs back to the book elevator. Opens the gate, trips over the BOOK CART, pushes it out of his way.

Gets in, closes the gate. Presses the stopwatch again. Satisfied.

END PREPARATION MONTAGE.

INT. HALLWAY - LIBRARY - LATER

Gil walks down the hallway, casually, but with a bit more bounce in his step than ever before. Turns a corner...

Then leaps back, hiding in an alcove adorned with a statue. Beside a FIRE ALARM SWITCH.

Holding the stop-watch, he simultaneously starts it and PULLS THE ALARM!

INT. LIBRARY - VARIOUS - CONTINUING

ALARMS RING THROUGH THE LIBRARY. Annoyed people at their desks look up. Security guards usher them out.

Guards usher people out of the EXHIBIT ROOM as well, slam doors behind them. Two guards remain out front of the room.

Gil arrives -- Andrews is already there.

GIL

Mr. Andrews. Shouldn't we leave the building?
ANDREWS
Probably just a prank. You can go if you want.

GIL
What about the scroll? Is it safe?

ANDREWS
Case is fire-proof and vacuum sealed. No air, no fire. We'll check the video, make sure no one's ripping it off.

(To guards)
Gentlemen, no one goes in without my say-so.

He walks off. Gil follows.

INT. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY


ANDREWS
Tony, how's the bambino?

VIDEO GUY
All tucked in, Vin. No problem.

Gil looks over the monitors. PHONE RINGS, Andrews answers.

ANDREWS
(Into phone)
Yeah. Yeah, okay, great.

(To Gil)
False alarm. They'll have the sirens off--

(The alarms end)
Right about then.

Gil slyly reaches into his pocket and stops the stopwatch.

GIL
What if it were a real fire? What then?

ANDREWS
Then we just wait for the fire department.

GIL
How long would that take?

ANDREWS
Jeez, Doc, don't worry 'bout it.

(To Tony)

(MORE)
ANDREWS (cont’d)
Way he worries, you’d think he wrote
the thing himself.

He laughs, Tony the video guy laughs, so Gil laughs.

INT. LIBRARY HALLWAY - DAY

Gil steps out into the hall. Checks the stopwatch: 2:35.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

Gil’s basement workshop is crowded with books, canvas and art
supplies. Quite mad, like DaVinci's studio.

And Gil looks a little wild himself. Feet up on his desk, cigar
in his mouth, he clears his throat and picks up the PHONE.

CUT TO:

INT. PUTNAM'S OFFICE - DAY

The PHONE RINGS in the Library’s administrative office. It's
not so plush, more making do with what they’ve got. A
frazzled young SECRETARY answers the phone.

SECRETARY
Office of Pargaret Mutnam, I mean,
Margaret Putnam, Library Administrator-

INTERCUT -- GIL AT HIS DESK

He’s putting on a fake voice. As upper-crusty as he can be.

GIL
Yes, is Maggie in, please?

SECRETARY
May I ask who's calling?

GIL
Reginald Gates... From the Bill and
Melinda Gates Foundation.

SECRETARY
Oh! Yes Mr. Gates, right away, Mr. Gates!

INT. PUTNAM'S OFFICE - DAY

A much more plush version of the office outside. This is
where their money goes.
Margaret Putnam lies on a leather couch, trying to relax... whale song in the background, cucumber slices on her eyes.

SECRETARY
Mrs. Putnam! It's Bill Gates! Not Bill Gates but it's his foundation!

PUTNAM
What?

SECRETARY
They're on the phone! Right now!

Putnam leaps up. The cucumbers go rolling. Alice scurries to get them. Putnam rushes to pull the plug on the CD.

PUTNAM
Why didn't you... What do they... Nevermind, I'll get it...

She jumps to the phone, tries to sound calm:

PUTNAM
Helllllooo...?

INTERCUT GIL AGAIN:

GIL
Mandy? Mandy Putnam?

PUTNAM
Uh, It's Margaret actually. Some dear friends call me Maggie, but--

GIL
Great Mandy! Reggie Gates here, little Bill's uncle. He's put me somewhat in charge of the trust, you know. Entrusted the trust, if you have my drift.

PUTNAM
(Laughing)
Oh yes of course. Of course. Very clever.

GIL
Honestly Mandy... Bill and Melinda and I are just the greatest fans of your library. Always have been. That wonderful Antiquities Collection gave Bill his first taste of logic as a child -- you know, Zeno and all that.
PUTNAM
Yes, of course. Well we're thrilled to--

GIL
I'm sure he'd love to visit, especially that collection. The library does still have that collection, doesn't it?

PUTNAM
Oh, of course, I mean--

GIL
Listen, Mandy, there's been some clamor lately, a rumor you might be, well it's so tacky to even mention it, developing a collection with... Amazon.com.

PUTNAM
Well, now, that is--

GIL
I assured Bill that couldn't be the case...

PUTNAM
Oh.

GIL
Because on the one hand while that would disturb us greatly, and I'm sure you don't want to disturb us--

PUTNAM
Certainly not--

GIL
On the other it would require us as a foundation to make a -- how shall I say -- ultra-competitive offer?

Putnam freezes in joy. Thinks she's struck gold.

PUTNAM
Well then, yes, I'm compelled to inform you, yes, we have begun some, as we say, substantive preliminary discussions.

GIL
I feared as much. Listen, Mandy, I'll be flying in from Seattle next Tuesday, I'm wondering if you might (MORE)
meet me and we can once over the place.

PUTNAM
Of course. That'd be--

GIL
Give me a chance to see that new exhibit. The Book of the Dead, I understand. No Jerry Garcia references, I should hope.

He laughs. She fakes a laugh too, not getting it.

PUTNAM
I should hope not.

GIL
Brilliant then. We'll meet at the Exhibit next Wednesday. At noon. I'll be wearing my lucky Seattle Mariners' cap. Oh, and invite your Antiquities librarian. Love to meet the chap.

PUTNAM
Of course, of course.

GIL
Till then, Mandy old girl. Till then.

And he hangs up.

PUTNAM
Till then, Mr. Gates.

She hangs up. Yells:

PUTNAM
Alison! Find me what the hell a Seattle Mariner looks like!

ANGLE ON--

GIL-- pleased with himself.

INT. LIBRARY LOBBY - DAY

Gil strolls through the lobby. Putnam spots him from a distance, yells out, frantic.

PUTNAM
Doctor Sussman!
Gil turns slowly.

PUTNAM
Dr. Sussman, aren't you just the most accessible fellow. Listen, I need a favor, regarding an exciting new opportunity.

She takes his arm and walks him away.

GIL
Anything to chip in for the library, Mrs. Putnam.

EXT. THE LIBRARY FRONT STEPS - DAY

Out in front of the building, Gil lights a cigarette with his gold lighter, takes a deep drag and then exhales, gazing happily at the surroundings:

People sitting on the steps. Taking pictures with the lions. He sees the lions and his smile fades just a bit.

Then, from off:

LENNY (O.S.)
I know what you're doing.

He turns to see Lenny, eyeing Gil suspiciously. Gil's a little thrown.

GIL
I... excuse me, Lenny?

LENNY
Don't play dumb with me. I know all about your little double-cross.

GIL
I'm not sure what--

LENNY
What really gets me, what really chafes my undies, is the total disrespect for the institution and all it represents. It's a crime, that's what it is--

GIL
Look, Lenny--
LENNY
I mean letting her go is one thing, but actually reserving her the book? What kind of message is that?

GIL
The little girl? The Narnia book?

LENNY
Sure, it starts with Narnia. But then it's Goosebumps and Harry Potter and before you can say Lemony Snicket she's got the entire World Book Encyclopedias A through Gr under her sweater. Where does it end, professor? Huh? Where Does It End?!

Gil, relieved, is able to walk away.

GIL
Here Lenny. It ends here.

And he walks off.

LENNY
I'm watchin' you professor! Every step!

(To a tourist leaving the library)
Hey! You check that bag with security?!
Okay then.

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

Gil stares closely through Emrita's magnifying lamp at one his Book of the Dead reproductions.

He looks closer, seeing something he doesn't like.

GIL
Damn it! Oh, damn it all to hell!

And he pushes the lamp away, annoyed.

INT. BILLINGS'S OFFICE - DAY

Gil enters Billings's office, finding the old man helping his assistant pack up the books from the shelves into boxes. The bed is gone.

Billings is even more frail this time, the illness wearing him away.

GIL
Going somewhere?
BILLINGS
Reckon where I go depends on you.

GIL
I need some assistance. Supplies.

BILLINGS
Mm-hm.

Billings waves the assistant away, out of the room.

BILLINGS
Go on.

GIL
I need a three thousand year-old papyrus. Blank.

BILLINGS
Blank.

GIL
For a decoy. Papyrus has a very distinct texture and appearance. We don't need the real thing, just a reasonable facsimile. I have some ideas...

He hands Billings a sheet. Billings nods.

BILLINGS
That all?

GIL
I'll also need an assistant for the diversion.

BILLINGS
I've got one person available. Patience--

GIL
Lorna--

BILLINGS
Alright, Lorna, is on this account. Too many others know, it gets messy. You can deal with her--

GIL
I told you--
BILLINGS
Yeah, now I'm telling you. You'll get
your money and your precious
collection. She can provide the
resources you need. But you will deal
with her.

He breaks out into another COUGHING FIT. Painful. Then it
subsides.

BILLINGS
God awful life, don't know why I'd
want to keep livin' it.

He turns back to the boxes of books. Pulls a FRAMED PICTURE
out of one nearby and passes it to Gil. A YOUNG LORNA in a
ballet leotard.

BILLINGS
My daughter's a very resourceful
woman, Sussman. She can handle all
your needs.
(Beat)
Maybe that wasn't the best way of
puttin' it.

GIL
And if I refuse?

BILLINGS
Look, ya pansy ass bookworm. Even
this sick I could kick your boney butt
and destroy any record you ever
existed without breaking a sweat. You
get me the damn scroll and quit
whining. Or I will make it my last
act on this earth to piss on your
mutilated body. You understand?
(Beat)
Now anything else, or are you and me
gonna slow dance?

EXT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil comes to his apartment building to find Lorna sitting on
the steps.

GIL
Abandon all hope ye who yadda yadda
yadda...

He passes her and she follows.
INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He opens the door. Puts down his bag, hangs up his coat.

    GIL
    I'm told we're stuck together.

    LORNA
    I've brought the papyrus. We did what you suggested, treated some single-weave canvas.

Gil inspects it. Nods.

    GIL
    I need a diversion. I've procured a map, please memorize it.

He hands her a map, neatly printed and folded in thirds like a pamphlet. She looks at it.

    LORNA
    Is this a pamphlet from the library?

    GIL
    Yes.

    LORNA
    (Laughing)
    You're actually planning a heist based on the Welcome to the Library booklet?

    GIL
    It was for you. I don't need it, I know the building.

    LORNA
    Very thoughtful. Thank you.
    (Beat)
    Picked out where you're going yet? When it's all over, I mean.

    GIL
    The hell away from here, that's for sure. Apparently there's a shortage of islands with castles and libraries.

She looks up. He has melted just the tiniest fraction, then goes back.

    GIL
    This is what I'm thinking...

    CUT TO:
LATER - NIGHT

He's pacing. She sits on the bed, looking at him.

**GIL**
It can't look like a diversion.

**LORNA**
I'm familiar with the idea. Why don't we just set a real fire?

**GIL**
I am not setting fire to that library. If nothing else I'm not doing that.

**LORNA**
Reconsidered the "torch every book known to man" plan, hm?
   (He doesn't meet her gaze)
Smoke canisters it is. But if they find the cans--

**GIL**
How long before they find them?

**LORNA**
They burn ten minutes. Impenetrable smoke unless you have a mask, which fire fighters often do.

**GIL**
So they'll call the fire department, which means my two and a half minutes is five at least. More than enough time. As long as we... synchronize our... watches.

She starts laughing.

**GIL**
Am I just a constant amusement to you?

**LORNA**
I'm sorry, it's just...
   (Tosses him a CELL PHONE)
Welcome to the twenty-first century. Text me when you're ready. I'll set it to vibrate. So what else -- want me to bake a file into a cake? Tap out messages in Morse code?

**GIL**
You're a delight. Sorry if I won't make it into the cat burglar's union,
   (MORE)
GIL (cont'd)
but some of us are new at this lying business.

She's hurt. Without a word she gathers her things and goes. He follows.

EXT. GIL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

She exits the building, putting a cigarette to her lips, looking for a light. He watches, then throws her his lighter. As she lights up he turns to go back inside:

LORNA
Gil?

He turns back.

LORNA
What's it going to take? Hm?

GIL
I think I've fully outlined--

LORNA
Not the job. A few weeks ago you thought you were lucky to find someone like me.

A moment.

GIL
I just don't know if I found her or she wants me to think I did.

LORNA
You want proof.

He shakes his head. Not even able to look at her.

GIL
I just want to believe again.

He turns to go inside. His back to her, he hesitates at the door, leaning against it, weak. She notices.

LORNA
You know, those heroes of yours didn't become heroes by staying locked up. They went out and did things worth writing about.

GIL
I know.
And he heads back inside. She watches him go.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gil stands in his apartment, looking at the young picture of Lorna. She's maybe 16, standing proudly in a ballet pose, her back slightly turned to us.

He notices something there in the picture, on her shoulder. Can't quite make it out. Takes out his magnifying glass and looks closer... EX LIBRIS. The tattoo.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY STACKS - BOOK ELEVATOR - DAY

Gil slowly, steadily, loads up books on the cart beside the book elevator. Checks the PNEUMATIC TUBE again.

CUT TO:

INT. GIL'S BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

Gil spreads out the new papyrus-like canvas in front of him. Brushes it clean. Measures down on the canvas with a ruler. And then... begins painting.

GIL
Mighty Osiris, great and noble...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GIL'S BASEMENT OFFICE - NIGHT

Much, much later. Gil sits, now surrounded by two copies of the scroll.

As he finishes the final stroke, he exhales in incredible relief mixed with fatigue. He puts the pen down, draws the scrolls side by side.

TWO FAKE VERSIONS OF THE SCROLL are on his table. Gil surveys his work, impressed.

As he rolls them up, he hears a voice behind him--

EMRITA
Doctor Sussman?

Gil spins quick, guiltily. Caught.

GIL
Emrita? What are you doing here?
EMRITA
I came back for my brushes. What are you doing?

GIL
Oh, you know, odds and ends. No rest for the weary. We should really go out for a drink sometime, yes?
(Ushering her out)
Now quick before the old bat sees us, she’s clamping down on my staying late. Energy efficiency. Lunatic, really.

He puts her on the elevator and presses the up button.

GIL
Call me tomorrow, we'll do lunch.

The elevator closes. He exhales.

GIL
Sussman, you are terrible at this.

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - EVENING
Gil loads up his art supplies into a box. Cleans the brushes with a handkerchief -- wiping off fingerprints, not the paint. Does the same for the ink bottle, etc.

Rolls the two scrolls up separately, placing each one in a different, identical cardboard tube.

EXT. LIBRARY ENTRANCE - EVENING
He carries the box out of the library, headed for home. LENNY eyes him suspiciously.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT
On some dark anonymous street in the city, Gil drops the box into a dumpster.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT
Gil stands at a real cemetery this time. Looks down at a pair of graves. Cleans off the gravestone -- EMMA SUSSMAN, BELOVED MOTHER. He pulls out the ILIAD book from his jacket and leaves it on her grave.
_EXT. THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

A beautiful bright morning. Once again the library sits amid New York like a fortress of calm truth.

CUT TO:

_INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gil prepares, lining up his things: a black sweater, the cell phone, the two poster tubes, a lint brush, a gas mask. Places all the objects in his cloth tote bag.

CUT TO:

_EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Gil walks up to the library's main entrance, passing a woman trying to work a BABY CARRIAGE up the steps.

He holds the door open for her... and we see it's Lorna. They interact as if strangers:

    LORNA
    Thank you.

He nods and she goes in.

_INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

Outside the open Exhibit Room doors, Gil stands, facing the scroll.

    GIL (V.O.)
    This was it. My Rubicon. From this moment on, it was Caesar or nothing.

And almost in slow motion, he walks in...

_INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Putnam sees him. She's standing by the scroll wearing an UNBELIEVABLY HUGE HAT:

    PUTNAM
    Dr. Sussman! Did you see him, perchance? A distinguished older gentleman with a Seattle Mariners baseball cap?

    GIL
    No, not yet.
PUTNAM
He'll be sure to notice my hat.

GIL
Yes. Brilliant idea.

PUTNAM
And I do appreciate you not mentioning
the recent unpleasantness with your
collection. So very good of you.

GIL
Well it's the least I can do for--

And he bumps into the scroll case.

ALARMS GO OFF, THE DOORS SLAM. People are shocked, Putnam's
irked, and Gil looks like a guilty child--

GIL
(OVER THE ALARMS)
Oh my. Did I?

PUTNAM
You most certainly did!
   (Looking through her bag)
Where did I put that...
   (Fishes out the key)
There!

She swipes the key through the magnetic card reader. The
alarms turn off and the doors open.

PUTNAM
Really, Dr. Sussman, I can't believe,
and with Mr. Gates coming--

GIL
I'm sorry, I'm so clumsy, I--
   (Stops. As if seeing someone.)
Mrs. Putnam, did you say a Seattle
Mariners cap? An older man?

PUTNAM
Yes I... Where? Where is he?

GIL
I just saw him leave the room. He
looked quite at a loss.

Putnam is mortified. Heads out immediately. But as she
does, Gil nudges her, knocking her past the velvet ropes into
the area of the SCROLL CASE again.
ALARMS GO OFF. The DOORS SLAM SHUT.

GIL
Oops, you did it this time.

She rushes to the doors.

PUTNAM
No! I must go to him! Dr. Sussman, here--
(She gives Gil the key)
Turn it off! Just turn it off! I'll go after him. Return the key to my office safe. Behind the Monet.

GIL
Of course, Mrs. Putnam. Right away Mrs. Putnam.

PUTNAM
Now, Sussman!

He slides the card through. Alarms stop.

PUTNAM
Damn librarians.

And she rushes out. He smiles, pockets the key and casually leaves.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

As Gil leaves the Exhibit Room, Andrews arrives.

ANDREWS
Everything okay, Doc?

GIL
Yes, of course. Seems Mrs. Putnam and I were both a bit jumpy. We're waiting on a very important meeting.

ANDREWS
Yeah, I saw on the video. Look, do us a favor? From now on, watch the scroll from a distance?

INT. PUTNAM'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Gil strides in. Putnam's secretary is frazzled with work.

GIL
Afternoon, Alice. Mrs. Putnam wanted me to return her key. I'm putting it in her office safe.
Alice nods, barely aware.

INT. PUTNAM'S OFFICE - DAY

He enters, goes to the painting behind her desk. It's not a Monet:

GIL
It's a Manet, you pompous twit.

And without touching a thing he turns right around and goes out again.

INT. PUTNAM'S OUTER OFFICE

He passes Alice the secretary.

GIL
Thank you, Alice.

And he's gone.

INT. STACKS - BOOK ELEVATOR - DAY

Deep in the recesses of the library, Gil dons a black sweater. Then yellow kitchen gloves, then for good measure work gloves on top of the kitchen gloves.

Checks the tote bag: gas mask, cell phone, and poster tube inside.

He pushes the BOOK CART, FULLY LOADED WITH BOOKS, onto the elevator. Then steps in after it, closes the gate, and presses the up button.

INT. LIBRARY HALLWAY - DAY

With some difficulty Lorna pulls her baby carriage off the public elevator, to the sound of a crying baby inside.

LORNA
Shhh. Hush, little girl.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR - DAY

Gil rides the book elevator. Cramped and hot. Tries to put the gas mask on and once again has trouble. He stretches, pulls. Just as he's about to give up--

The ELEVATOR comes to a JARRING HALT.

GIL
Oh come on.
He tries shake the elevator car loose. No dice. Looks up:

ANGLE ON--

THE BOOK ELEVATOR ROPES ARE STRAINING, the works jammed.

INT. LIBRARY

Lorna strolls the baby carriage to a bench. Uncovers the blanket to reveal: a baby doll, a tape recorder, and a diaper bag full of smoke canisters and detonator.

She casually pulls out one of the cannisters, presses a button to arm it (with a red light) and tucks it under the bench.

Covers the "baby" back up. And waits.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR

Gil shakes the stuck elevator cage again. Nothing.

So he prepares himself... and jumps with all his might, slamming his feet down on the elevator platform.

Nothing. Then the elevator JOLTS, tilting to one side.

GIL

Oh god.

He looks up. Just out of reach at the top of the gate-- is the ledge to the opening at the Exhibit Hall.

He stretches his hands up-- reaches through--

And can't quite reach it.

GIL

Damn it!

INT. ROSE READING ROOM

Lorna stops at a shelf of research materials. Tucks a smoke cannister behind the row of books, hiding it.

A guard notices her reshelving a book and smiles -- she smiles back. Then moves along.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR

Gil still reaches up. Can't get it.

GIL

Come on, Sussman. Think!
He looks around the elevator. Realizes:

GIL'S FEET--

Are perched on a pile of books, giving him another foot of height. He extends, one hand on the roof of the elevator, one reaching up for the ledge above...

And just barely, barely...

He makes it. Grabbing the ledge. Pulls on the ledge, while pushing on the top of the elevator car...

And the elevator lurches to a start. He quickly pulls his hand back but the chain gate catches it.

GIL

Owww!

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM

In the exhibit room, two members of the milling crowd stop, as if they heard something.

BOOK ELEVATOR--

Gil freezes in place, biting his lip.

EXHIBIT ROOM--

And the people move on.

BOOK ELEVATOR--

Gil breathes a sigh of relief. Shakes off the pain in his hand and pulls out the cell phone.

Goes to dial, but has to take off the gloves first. The work glove, then the rubber glove.

GIL

Finally.

And he looks down at the phone. The screen reads: SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE.

GIL

Oh come on.

He extends the antenna. Waves the phone around the elevator, trying to get the signal.
GIL
I told her synchronizing watches. But no, she had to be twenty-first century. The Trojan Horse didn't have to wait for an out-of-service-area signal.

He's still waving it around.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM

Lorna wheels her baby carriage through the Exhibit Hall. She looks around, worried. Checks her beeper -- no message.

And just then she looks up at...

The bad portrait of George Washington. And it's moving, ever so slightly.

LORNA
NO!

Everyone looks at her. The painting stops moving. She looks down at the carriage.

LORNA
Bad girl! You spit up all over your couture bib?! Now we'll just have to wait a minute, won't we? Just wait a minute!

She presses play on the tape recorder. Crying comes from the carriage again. She pushes it out of the door quickly.

INT. BOOK ELEVATOR

Inside the book elevator, Gil looks at his watch.

GIL
Told her so.

And firmly puts on his GAS MASK.

INT. LIBRARY HALLWAY

Lorna ducks into a doorway. Takes out the small DETONATOR and PRESSES THE BUTTON.

INT. LIBRARY - VARIOUS

At locations all over the library, huge plumes of smoke break out. People notice. Freak.
TOURIST
Fire! Fire, somebody, there's a fire!

A guard tries to fight the smoke but it's too thick. Another guard pulls the alarm.

ALARM BELLS RING OUT THROUGH THE LIBRARY--

Once again the guards evacuate people from the building and the Exhibit Room.

GUARD
Ladies and gentlemen, please leave the building calmly and promptly...

Everyone rushes to get out.

INT. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM

Andrews hears the sirens.

ANDREWS
Again?

INT. HALLWAY

Andrews storms out of the video room. From around a corner Lorna sees him. She sneaks up to the room, holding a cannister behind her back.

INT. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM

She opens the door and slides in.

LORNA
I'm with the Administrator's office, we need you to evacuate the building.

VIDEO GUY
Sorry, ma'am. I stay here 'til Mr. Andrews says otherwise.

She looks up at the monitors. Sees the painting begin to move. She points to another monitor--

LORNA
What part of the library is that?

She leans close behind the video guy, pressing seductively against his back.

VIDEO GUY
That's, that's the Exhibit Room. These are all the Exhibit Room.
LORNA
Wow. And you're in charge of it all?

Behind her back, she flips the switch on the smoke cannister and drops it under the seat.

SMOKE STARTS POURING UP FROM UNDER THE CONSOLE.

LORNA
Oh no! It's in here too! Oh!

And she promptly faints. As the Video Guy picks her up, she points the smoke cannister right into his face, blasting him with smoke. He sucks in a mouthful and falls to the ground.

Lorna gets up quickly and PRESSES STOP on all the digital recorders.

CLOSE ON THE MONITOR OF--

THE BAD WASHINGTON PAINTING MOVING...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

The painting rises in the now empty room, then gently lowers to the ground.

But instead of Gil coming out, what we see is...

The BOOK CART. It slowly moves across the floor toward the glass case and the scroll.

REVERSE ANGLE--

Gil, with the gas mask uncomfortably covering his face, is pushing the cart along, eyeing the doors and the scroll.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - DAY

Still some madness in the library, people filing out. And the thick smoke.

But in the middle of it all stands ANDREWS, holding his ground. To the guards:

ANDREWS
Nobody goes in.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

Gil is at the exhibit case. He slips the card key through the pad.
GIL
Just like that...

And tries to pull on the case's door. It won't open. He pulls harder. It won't open.

GIL
What the...
(And then he realizes)
Vacuum.

He pulls with all of his might, can't open it. Finally climbs up, literally up in the air, his feet on either side of the case door. And pulls--

Wrenching the door open and flying to the ground. A THUD.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA

Andrews. Did he hear something? He turns to the doors--

But along comes Lorna with Tony the Video Guy, who's having trouble breathing.

LORNA
The room was on fire! He carried me out just like a hero!

ANDREWS
Who are you?

LORNA
He was so brave. I think he's in shock.

She leads Andrews away from the doors.

ANDREWS
Tony, you alright?

Tony's coughing up a lung, but he nods. Andrews looks at her. Then at the Exhibit Room doors, suspicious.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM

Gil hears voices on the other side of the door. He's pulling out the real scroll, replacing it with his fake. Shuts the glass door.

As the Exhibit Room doors begin to open... He looks over at the book cart -- too far away.
Panicking, he rushes toward the Mummies, which SHOOT OUT A STREAM OF GAS. He inhales, but is fine. He runs back the other way.

Looks around. Spots the chandeliers, hanging low. Rolls his eyes, prepares, and leaps!

Just as TWO GUARDS come in through the doors. They hit the GAS and collapse. Andrews covers his mouth and follows, looking around.

And then...

LORNA (O.S.)
My baby!

Andrews turns back to see Lorna at her BABY CARRIAGE, engulfed by SMOKE. She can see, behind Andrews, Gil swinging on the chandelier!

LORNA
Oh god, somebody save my baby!

Annoyed, Andrews quickly heads back to the carriage. Lorna drops back and slyly closes the Exhibit Room doors.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM

Gil lands back on his feet. Ducks behind the book cart. Pushes it as fast as he can to the elevator, books flying.

He tries to pick them up, but he's got to keep moving.

Gets to the elevator. Climbs in, pulls the book cart behind him. But the wheel gets stuck on the rut between the elevator and the floor.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA

Andrews is looking through the smoke, can't get through it, can't find the baby.

ANDREWS
It's not... it's not in there.

LORNA
What?! What do you mean she's not in there?!

ANDREWS
Maybe someone already saved her?
LORNA
You mean somebody took her? Where?
Oh my Lord. Patty!

ANDREWS
Look, calm down...

Suddenly NYFD FIRE FIGHTERS tromp up the stairs.

ANDREWS
Thank god. Wanna take care of this, fellas?

He doesn't wait for an answer, just heads right back to the Exhibit Room.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

Gil yanks one last time on the book cart, pulls it on. Opens the pneumatic tube and stuffs the scroll tube inside, watching it fall below.

INT. MCGRAW LOBBY - DAY

Andrews pushes open the Exhibit Room doors--

To see the Book of the Dead right where it should be in its case. Two guards asleep on the floor. The Washington painting is back in place as well.

But there are books scattered all over the floor. He leans down to pick one up, concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

As the elevator sinks, Gil rips off the gas mask in relief. Takes off the black sweater. Then pulls out the lint brush and rolls the black lint off his shirt.

Notices his hand bleeding from where it got caught in the gate.

INT. BASEMENT

Gil opens the elevator door and emerges, dressed in his trademark suspenders and tweed jacket. A handkerchief wrapped around his hand.

CUT TO:
INT. PUTNAM'S OFFICE

Alarms still ringing, Gil strolls through the empty Administration office into Putnam's office.

Raises the Manet print to find a safe. Opens it, places the key in the otherwise empty safe and closes it. Spins the dial and replaces the Manet.

CUT TO:

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - DAY

Gil arrives to find Putnam and Andrews in the Exhibit Room.

PUTNAM
Really, Mr. Andrews, if this is the kind of security you provide...

ANDREWS
Scroll's still here, ain't it?

But he's not at ease.

GIL
Everything all right?

Andrews looks up at him, surly. Putnam chimes in.

PUTNAM
Certainly not. Mr. Gates ran off in all the madness. I don't blame him.

GIL
The scroll, Mr. Andrews?

ANDREWS
Seems to be okay. But it wasn't no fire, those were smoke cannisters -- this was a designated hit. And these books... You have your key, Mrs. Putnam?

PUTNAM
What? Oh, I... I gave it to Dr. Sussman--

GIL
Yes, and I returned it to her safe. Alice was there, she can attest to it.

ANDREWS
Well then I guess everything's fine then.
But he's not so sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUMPSTER - DAY

Gil ducks into a side street and once again finds the dumpster he used before. Drops the ski mask, sweater, and gloves into it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gil walking down the street, happy as a clam. He's even skipping. The world is his playground.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT

He swings open the door and leaps in.

GIL

Uh veni... uh vidi... uh vici!

Lorna comes out of the bathroom.

LORNA

All go well?

GIL

Perfectly. As we speak Gil Sussman's Book of the Dead is encased in burglar-proof glass and the three-thousand year-old artifact is safely in my control.

She takes out another library tote bag with a paper bag inside. Opens it.

LORNA

Here's the fifty thousand. And the access codes for your new account. It's through Daddy's data haven in the North Sea, should be untraceable. You're a rich man, Dr. Sussman.

GIL

And very well deserved. Thank you.

LORNA

I didn't have to bring it to you, you know. I could've walked away with it.

He looks at her. She's right.
LORNA
Congratulations Gil.

She hands him the bag. As he takes it, she sees his bloody hand.

LORNA
You hurt yourself.

GIL
It's fine. Nothing.

He goes into the bathroom to wash it off.

LORNA
So... where is it?

GIL
Right here on my hand. It's no big deal.

LORNA
The scroll, Virgil.

GIL
Ah. Yes. The oldest, most powerful book on earth, entirely in my control. Safely tucked away. In the library.

She grabs the money bag back.

LORNA
You left it? You're crazier than the old man!

GIL
I couldn't risk being stopped with it after all that commotion. Really, Lorna.

LORNA
What good does it do us in the library? They've found your trail of books, they'll find your little secret-of-secrets-dumbwaiter.

He hadn't really thought of that.

GIL
Of course, I've thought of that. I'll go back and take it out tonight. After things settle. Truly, for an ex-ballet dancer someone lacks a certain poise.
LORNA
I lack poise?! Whose ass did I save repeatedly today? What were you doing up there, a triceps workout on the chandelier?

Facing off, close.

GIL
Listen Miss Queen of Deception, you were a diversion. You diverted. Something you do particularly well. Meanwhile I did all the work. I succeeded, and within hours I shall have the scroll safely in your ass-saving hands.

LORNA
Well I'll be looking forward to that!

GIL
It's a date then!

And he storms out again.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gil storms down the street, talking to himself at high volume. But it's New York, who's gonna notice?

GIL
What is it with that woman!? She can't be happy for one minute, she can't permit me one moment of true success?! Zeus and Athena, she makes me so... Gaah! She just makes me wanna...

LORNA
Wanna what?

He turns around to see her there.

GIL
Wanna do this.

And he takes her in his arm and kisses her. She kisses back, they're all over each other. For a while. Then they slowly detach:

LORNA
What time did you say you had to be back at the library?
INT. GIL'S APARTMENT - LATER

They're lying in bed, arms around each other again. Happy.

GIL
Well.

LORNA
Well.

GIL
At least we still agree on something.

There's a silence. He's pensive.

GIL
I still don't understand. Even after the accident, you had intelligence, money, beauty. You could've done anything you wanted.

A beat.

LORNA
Librarians aren't the only ones who lack imagination.

GIL
You would've been a magnificent ballerina.

LORNA
Flatterer.

GIL
So. Care to come with me?

LORNA
You mean to the library?

GIL
No.

He means afterwards.

LORNA
An interesting offer.

EXT. LIBRARY - EVENING

It's getting dark and people are filing out as Gil approaches the library.
INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

At the book elevator and pneumatic tube, Gil smiles. Opens the hatch...

And it's empty. He can't believe it. He looks around, doesn't see the poster tube. He looks into the pneumatic tube and sees...

The poster tube, stuck inside about four feet up.

    GIL
    All right. Not insurmountable. Come now, Sussman, no big problem. Just reach in...

He reaches his hand in -- to his elbow, then his shoulder. As far as he can, and can't seem to get it. Pushing so hard, his face is red, his arm's in pain, pushing further.

CLOSE-- IN THE TUBE

His fingers, just inches away from the scroll...

BACK TO GIL--

    GIL
    Gaaaah!

And he gives up. Walks away.

CUT TO:

GIL STORMING BACK--

With a broomstick. He shoves it into the tube, but it won't fit. Tries to break it over his knee--

    GIL
    OWWW!

And puts himself in extreme pain.

    GIL
    Oh, now that's gonna bruise.

So he puts the broom handle down on the floor. Puts one foot on the end, the other in the middle, and proceeds to raise the other end -- he's gonna break it by stepping on the middle.

It's incredibly awkward. And just as he's about to break it--

ANDREWS walks in.
ANDREWS
Need some help there, Doctor Sussman?

Gil falls off the broom, practically racking himself with it.

GIL
What? No. No, I'm fine.

ANDREWS
Whatcha doin' there?

GIL
Just uh, we were doing some cleaning down here, it gets very dusty.

ANDREWS
And you decided to take it out on the broom?

GIL
What? Oh, no. No, I was experimenting with different sweeping techniques. The ancient Akkadians attached brushes to their feet to clean while walking. Of course, they also dirtied up with every step, so, so much for that idea. At any rate, how can I help you?

ANDREWS
Those books I found in the Exhibit Room, they're from the stacks. Nobody had 'em out yesterday. I'm just wondering, you wouldn't know anything about them, would you, Doc?

GIL
Me? Of course not. They weren't from the Bryant collection, were they?

ANDREWS
No. Not from your collection, no--

GIL
Well then I really couldn't be of much help--

ANDREWS
But they were from the stacks. Which, apparently, you like to keep neat and clean.

GIL
Yes, well, I hadn't seen them--
ANDREWS
I didn't say which books they were yet.

GIL
I really... If they're not Bryant books they'd be a little out of my bailiwick.

ANDREWS
Your what?

GIL
Bailiwick. My element.

ANDREWS
Why not say that then.

GIL
Listen, Mr. Andrews, I appreciate all you're doing for the scroll's security, I'm just wondering what help I can be. Would you like me to keep an extra eye on it?

ANDREWS
Won't be necessary, thanks. Insurance company's sending their authenticator. What with the mix-up this afternoon, all these false alarms with you and Mrs. Putnam, then the staged attack. We just want to be sure.

GIL
Of course. Very prudent of you. Very prudent. Now if you don't mind, a clean library is a happy library.

And he starts sweeping up a storm. Andrews stops him.

ANDREWS
Just one more thing, Doc. I want you to take a look at something.

INT. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

Andrews turns on the video of the exhibit room for Gil.

ANDREWS
The video was shut down just when Tony left the room. I'm wondering if you remember the woman with the baby?
GIL
Um, no, not really. I was in the basement when the alarm went off--

ANDREWS
We've already spoken to the police about finding her, asking her some questions.

GIL
Really? I mean, fascinating, but... after all the scroll is--

ANDREWS
Yeah, like I said before, we're checking on that. But there's something else she didn't stop us from taping.

He rewinds the image... to a picture of Lorna in the Exhibit Room, walking past the Washington picture. It moves just the slightest bit.

ANDREWS
There! The picture moved.

GIL
No it didn't.

ANDREWS
Yes it did.

GIL
No it didn't.

ANDREWS
Dr. Sussman, you might know your collections or whatever, but I know surveillance. That picture moved.

GIL
So you're saying she's telekinetic? Or wanted to steal an incredibly bad portrait of George Washington?

ANDREWS
I'm saying she's the key to all of this. And the sooner we find her, the sooner we know what exactly happened today.

Gil pauses a moment.
GIL
Well, you're absolutely right, of course. The best of luck to you. Again, if there's anything I can do... Otherwise I should really be getting back to work.

ANDREWS
Go right ahead. But stick around, I may need more of your expertise.

GIL
Of course.

ANDREWS
Happy sweeping, Doctor.

INT. BASEMENT - BOOK ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Gil comes running up to the elevator. Quickly steps on the broomstick, breaking it in half, and shoves it up the pneumatic tube.

In a second, the poster tube comes free and slips down into his hand. He tosses the broken broom and runs off.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - NIGHT

Andrews walks around the Exhibit Room, coming to the bad portrait of George. He inspects around the edges.

INT. SIDE ENTRANCE GUARD DESK - NIGHT

Lenny checks a FAMILY through the exit. Gil approaches, nervous. Double-checks his tote bag, which holds his tweed jacket and, peeking out from underneath it, the poster tube.

Lenny is thoroughly searching the bags, not letting anyone through. Gil looks around for any ideas.

INT. EXHIBIT ROOM - EVENING

Andrews lifts up the George Washington painting and sees the shaft entrance behind it. Peers down, annoyed and excited.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDE ENTRANCE GUARD DESK - EVENING

Gil looks around for help. Sees Lenny again, who is checking the bag of an old man, but who now eyes Gil suspiciously. And then, outside through the open door, Gil sees...

Lorna. On the street, looking at him.
He waves her to go away. She doesn't understand. Lenny sees him and leans over the desk to see who's out the door. But just as he does...

EMRITA
Hello, Dr. Sussman.

GIL
Emrita. What are you doing here?

EMRITA
I came to see the show. Guess there was more than they expected, hm?

Gil notices the twinkle in her eye. Does she know?

GIL
Yes. I suppose so.

And he turns, bumping into the OLD MAN.

GIL
Oh, terribly sorry.

OLD MAN
My fault.

As Gil brings his bag up for Lenny's inspection... the old man passes through the detectors -- and the ALARM GOES OFF.

Lenny forgets Gil and pounces on the old man, pushing him up against the wall. From the old man's coat he pulls out: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER.

LENNY
Tryin' to pull a fast one, eh?

And with a smile Gil slips out toward the door. Home free.

When...

Emrita grabs him.

EMRITA
Gil! Help him, this is crazy!

She pulls him to help the old man, and accidentally pulls the tote bag off Gil's shoulder. It falls to the ground, the TUBE ROLLS out.

Emrita reaches down and picks it up.

EMRITA
What's this?
She opens it and takes out the scroll. Her face goes pale.

EMRITA

Gil?

She looks crushed. Lenny freezes and looks up. Gil freezes. Lenny sees the scroll. Gil sees him see it.

Gil and Lenny facing off like two snakes waiting to pounce. And then... Gil grabs the scroll and runs back into the library-- Lenny running after.

INT. LIBRARY - MAIN LOBBY - NIGHT

Gil tears through the main lobby, clutching the scroll to his chest and running for dear life.

KNOCKING OVER TOURISTS and LIBRARY WORKERS carrying stacks of books. Makes for the main staircases.

Lenny chases him, talking into his walkie-talkie as he does:

LENNY

All officers. Suspect fleeing with stolen scroll heading north via main staircase...

INT. BASEMENT - BOOK ELEVATOR

Andrews stands in the basement by the book elevator. Hears on his walkie-talkie.

LENNY

Request backup. Perp is one Virgil Sussman.

INT. HALLWAY - LIBRARY

Gil comes tearing through the hallways. People scatter.

GIL

Aaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!

They hide and he keeps running.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - NIGHT

Gil slides to a stop in the McGraw rotunda. Exhausted, doesn't know where to go.

Turns to see, towering behind him, the picture of angry MOSES breaking the tablets. Gil feels the wrath, then runs.

Lenny sprints through, close on his trail.
INT. ROSE MAIN READING ROOM - NIGHT

Gil rushes in past all the people. Climbs a staircase to the balcony that runs around the edge of the large room.

Lenny busts in. Takes out a GUN from his belt.

LENNY
Everybody down!

And everybody hits the floor. Lenny shoots at Gil, up on the balcony. It hits the metal rail and sparks.

GIL
Jesus! Lenny, that's a gun!

Lenny fires again, hits some books. Gil is now running back and forth, shooting gallery style.

GIL
Stop that! I'll destroy the scroll!

LENNY
Don't matter to me, professor!

And he shoots again. Then...

LORNA
Stop it! Stop shooting!

Lenny stops. Looks behind him. Lorna's got her little gun pointed at him.

LORNA
Put it down.

LENNY
Never.

LORNA
It'll drop when I shoot you in the back.

As Lenny slowly turns to face her, Gil climbs back down from the balcony.

Lenny gradually puts the gun to the floor.

LORNA
Kick it away.

He does. She picks up his gun. But now Lenny suddenly is smiling.
LORNA
What the fuck you smiling at, rent-a-cop?

Then Gil sees it -- behind Lorna is Andrews, drawing his gun.

GIL
Lorna, behind you!

ANDREWS
Freeze!

Lorna spins, gun in hand, toward Andrews. Before she can shoot--

ANDREWS FIRES. Gets her in the chest.

GIL
No!

Gil dives for her. Catching her as she goes down. He still grasps the scroll in one hand while cradling her.

GIL
Lorna! No. No. It'll be alright. I'll take care of it. I will. We'll get our island.

She looks up at him, smiling.

LORNA
Believe it now?

As she collapses in his arms, he sees on her shoulder -- the tattoo. It now reads:

EX LIBRIS GIL SUSSMAN.

He weeps and pulls her close to him. MUMBLING SOMETHING under his breath. Indecipherable.

ANDREWS
It's over, Doc. Give us the scroll.

Gil is at a total loss. Grief-stricken. Looking around, nowhere to go. Doesn't know what to do.

ANDREWS
Come on, Gil.

And something in him just snaps.

GIL
No. No fucking way.
He reaches into her purse and pulls out his LIGHTER. Lights it and holds it under the scroll.

GIL
Drop the gun or I'll burn it. I swear to God! Ashes to ashes.

ANDREWS
Don't be an idiot, Doc. Put it down.

GIL
You put it down. I'll burn it, I swear. Where's your vaunted security then, huh, Andrews? All I want is out of here.

Andrews slowly lowers his gun. Still watching him.

Gil, holding the scroll over the flame, edges slowly toward the exit. Andrews watches him, watches him, but doesn't stop him.

Soon Gil is clear, walking back like a hostage-taker with his hostage, out into the rotunda.

INT. MCGRAW ROTUNDA - NIGHT
He steps out into the rotunda... And runs like hell.

READING ROOM--
Andrews and Lenny run after him.

HALLWAYS--
Gil runs like a madman. Shooing away guards and tourists:

GIL
I'll kill you all!! Rage! Sing of the Rage of Achilles!

The guards don't know what to do. He runs, they follow.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GIL'S OLD OFFICE - NIGHT
He tears down the hall, finally coming to his old office. Now the collection on Technology.

Tries the door, it's locked. BREAKS THE WINDOW with his elbow, shattering the "Amazon.com" inscription. He reaches in and opens the door.
INT. GIL’S OLD OFFICE – NIGHT

His old office is now a post-modern nightmare of steel and neon tech. He comes in, runs right to the window. Opens it, and as he's climbing out, stops.

GIL
Jesus. Look what they've done to the place.

A gunshot rips into the wall beside him. Andrews is at the door. Gil lights the lighter again and rushes out.

EXT. LIBRARY LEDGE – NIGHT

He edges along the outside of the building, hugging the ledge. Below there are people in the park, looking up at him.

Andrews peeks out.

ANDREWS
Sussman! This is crazy, give us back the scroll and get in here!

GIL
No doing. Coward lives a thousand deaths!

ANDREWS
An idiot dies right away.

Gil doesn't answer. He's now scaling the huge bricks on the side of the building, climbing up.

EXT. ANOTHER WINDOW

Lenny follows him out on the ledge.

EXT. ROOF

Gil gets to the roof, trying to find a way down. As he does, he also shoots glances at the scroll, mumbling more. But this time we understand what he's saying:

GIL
"I am Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, and I have the power to be born a second time."

He comes to the north side of the building, where there's another roof about two stories down. Starts climbing down. Hanging.
"I soar like a bird and descend upon the earth--"

Just then, Lenny comes around the corner.

LENNY
That's it, professor! Hand over the scroll!

Grasping the ledge, Gil still holds the scroll. Looks down at the ground below him.

Looks back up at Lenny and down at the ground.

LENNY
Do it, professor!

And he nods... And lets go!

SLOW MOTION--

As he falls, Lenny rushes forward--

ANDREWS
No!!

And Lenny FIRES! Repeatedly!

As Gil's falling -- ONE, TWO, THREE BULLETS hit him. And a FOURTH tears through the scroll, IGNITING IT.

Gil falls slowly, dying from the shots, but somehow at peace.

As he's about to hit the ground--

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Gil sitting, dead, on the morgue slab, telling the tale.

GIL
At which point I awoke in this lovely place, promptly disproving the saw that dead men tell no tales. Don't misunderstand, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone not holding the key to life everlasting in their dying hands. But as for me, I lived more in the last three weeks than I did in the thirty-two years before them.

(Beat)

(MORE)
The scroll. You're wondering about the scroll.

He rolls up his pants leg. There, wrapped around his ankle, is the real Book of the Dead.

GIL
Two copies, yes? I never intended to add it to the old man's collection. Even over my dead body.

He gets up off the gurney, brushes himself off.

GIL
So for me, it's mostly a happy ending. Yes, there are those killer crocodiles of the East, West, North and South to face. And the judgement of Osiris, but I'm not particularly worried. Oh, and Lorna?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. READING ROOM

Gil holding Lorna, mumbling under his breath.

GIL (V.O.)
You didn't think I'd leave without her, did you?

This time we hear what he's mumbling:

GIL
"I am Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, and I have the power to be born a second time."

BACK TO PRESENT-- GIL SMILING

LORNA (O.S.)
Are you done? Can we go now?

Camera pulls back to reveal Lorna, sitting up on the next gurney.

GIL
I'm done.

LORNA
By the way, I was much more heroic than you actually told it.

She kisses him and turns out the light as they head out.
OVER CREDITS:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

Gil and Lorna, walking down a Manhattan street after dark, holding hands, carrying the tote bag full of money. Singing and dancing a bit...

GIL AND LORNA
Papa was a rolling stone. Wherever he laid his hat was his home. And when he died, all he left us was alone, lone, lone...

FADE OUT.

THE END