

Opening Credits)

Movie begins with black screen and silence for 5 seconds.

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

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

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

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

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

Pause/hold shot when credits are complete.

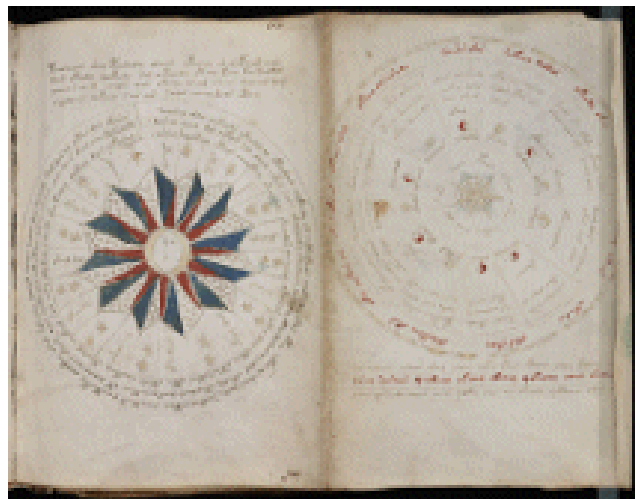
Sound of a book’s pages being turned.

1)

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

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

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



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

CENTAUR: "Keep typing."

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

CENTAUR: "Well, yes."

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

NIMBUS: "Done."

CENTAUR: "Any *other* last words?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Format successful

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

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

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

He will die

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

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



Title fades to black for five seconds.

2)

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

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

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

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

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

MUFON’s eyes snap up.

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

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

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

Cut to register led display: \$6.65

MUFON (off-screen): “Wow, one short.”

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

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

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

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

Sounds in succession: spit smacking, deadbolt turning.

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

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

user name: muffin

password: *****

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

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

MUFON moves the mouse to click ‘mail manager’.

New window:

New messages: 3

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

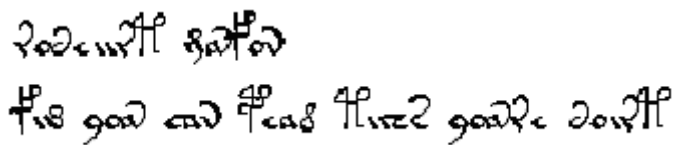
MUFON *clicks* the top e-pistle. Cut to mail window:

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

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

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

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



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

Robert Mufon

If you can read this, you’re dead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3)

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

AUCTIONEER: “...6 million...”

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

MR. ROBIN: “7.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brief cut of PEGASUS watching the AUCTIONEER.

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

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

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

DI MEDICIGAN chuckles slightly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. PENGUIN: “I’ll do two.”

Everyone turns to him.

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

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

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

AUCTIONEER = outrage

MR. ROBIN = mild shock

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

MR. GANNET = disbelief

PEGASUS = puzzled frown

COUNT = wide, bemused grin

MR. TURKEY = outrage and insult

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

MR EAGLE = surprise

[end soundtrack mute]

MR. EAGLE: “Damn.”

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

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

Quick cut to PEGASUS.

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

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

MR CARDINAL: “500 million.”

MR. PENGUIN makes an amused shrug.

AUCTIONEER: “Bidding is 500 million.”

Awkward pause as everyone looks at MR. PENGUIN.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DI MEDICIGAN: “No.”

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

DI MEDICIGAN (long pause): “Si.”

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

Cut to close up of note:

are any of the illustrations architectural?

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

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

no

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

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



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

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

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

COUNT: "€100,000."

MR. PENGUIN: "2."

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

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

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

MR. PENGUIN: "5."

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

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

PEGASUS: "Five million."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4)

Cut to sign:

LottoBall Jackpot:

\$6,000,000!

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

RASTACABBIE: “Where to, mon?”

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

Cut to close-up of paper:

James MacLeod
1187 Hunterbasser #2
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19191

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

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

Cut to RASTACABBIE, nodding happily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JENNA (off screen): "Mom!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

5)

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

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

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

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

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

CENTAUR nods.

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

CENTAUR: “Oh, the auction went well?”

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

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

PEGASUS smiles wryly but says nothing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PEGASUS: “That works.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PEGASUS: “Don’t!”

CENTAUR: “*Exciting and newwwwww!*”

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

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

PEGASUS (matching smile): “Eweige Blumenkraft.”

6)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MUFON: “Fifteen second warning.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New messages: 1

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

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

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

7)

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

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

WILSON: “So what do we got?”

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

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

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

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

OFFICER FRIST: “The mother called 911. She told me that right after her daughter left with the dog, someone buzzed her, asking for MacLeod. The daughter said when she went she saw someone on the intercom. She’d never seen him before, but didn’t pay attention to him and only got a cursory look.”

They reach the body. OFFICER DECONS is in the room, looking over the desk.

OFFICER DECONS: “Hey, Wilson. You working this one alone?”

WILSON (nods hello): “I’ll let you know after I catch the murderer.” He sees Nimbus’s body, walks over to it. Silent study. “This is at least a day old.” More silent survey.

OFFICER DECONS: “Window in the back door has a circle cut out, within reach of the lock. Probably how both the murderer and the flies got in.” Steps away from the desk. “If you can’t see from where you’re standing, half the monitor has half his face on it. Someone shot the computer, too.”

WILSON nods, still looking at NIMBUS. Sees writing on floor; it is badly smeared, with only part of the first few letters readable. There is also a bloody half-bootprint near-by.

Quick close-up of stiff index finger with blood on the tip.

WILSON (off camera): “He tried to write something.”

OFFICER DECONS: “Yeah, I saw that. It’s smeared, though.”

OFFICER FRIST: “Probably the dog did that.”

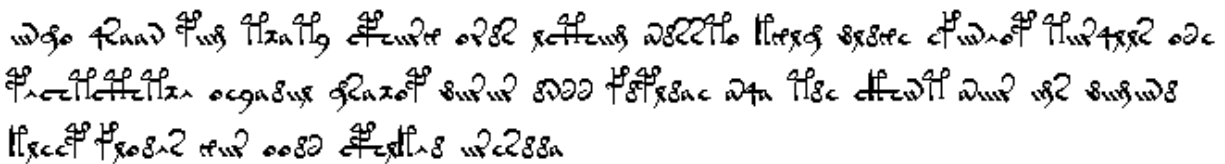
WILSON (squatting down): “No, this is dried and over a day old. Happened at the time.”

Close-up of dried/smeared message.

WILSON (off camera): “What language is that?”

8)

Cut to: computer screen with the same Voynich text on it [amid whole sentences]



Handwritten text in a cursive, stylized script, likely the Voynich script, displayed on a computer screen. The text is arranged in three lines and appears to be a sample of the script used in the film.

Shot pans back to show FRIENDISH at a laptop; he is sitting in a Starbucks-type coffeehouse. Sounds of typing and clicking, and a window appears on the screen, full of buttons and options. With his mouse, FRIENDISH selects:

decrypt: enigma

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FRIENDISH (under breath): “Fuck.”

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

Cut to cellphone display:

Incoming call from: ୨୦୫୩୨୩୨୨୨୨୨

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

Outside: hails a cab; it is RASTACABBIE.

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

FIENDISH: “No. Airport.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cut to cellphone display:

Incoming call from: ୨୦୫୩୨୩୨୨୨୨୨

FRIENDISH puts the phone away.

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

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

RASTACABBIE: “Gotcha.”

Phone *beeps*: a message has been left.

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

9)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Camera continues to turn into darkness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. PENGUIN [coming into view] nods.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fades/rotates away into black.

10)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RIGGS: “Well that’s good.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hangs up; RIGGS’ side of the screen disappears.

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

Cut to screen:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MUFON (awkwardly): “Your tattoo,,,”

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

MUFON: “Sanskrit?!?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALANA: “What’s that? A game?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MUFON: “So do I.”

KIM: “At Meridian?”

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

KIM nods.

ALANA: “Oh, I’m Alana, by the way.”

KIM: “Kim.”

MUFON: “*Uh,,,* Randy.”

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

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

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

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

ALANA: “Yeah, on teeth, but...”

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

MUFON: “I *see*...”

ALANA: “So will you do it?”

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

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

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

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

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

MUFON: “Hey, books are a good thing.”

Camera focuses/holds on matches on counter.

11)

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

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

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

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

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

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

[sound of loose pages being shuffled]

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

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

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

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

PEGASUS (off screen): “Oh yeah?”

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

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

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

Silence. Occasional pages being turned.

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

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

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

HASSAN (off screen): “Woo hoo!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUPERINTENDENT: “Right; anything on this person?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUPERINTENDENT starts to leave.

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

SUPERINTENDENT shuts it on way out.

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

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

13)

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

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

Door jarringly bursts in.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14)

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

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

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

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

Cut to: open phone screen display:

Incoming call: MOLEBACK (520) 230-4732

Cut to: FRIENDISH looking amused.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cut to FRIENDISH, unlocking his room.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KLAUSTINA: “Hello?”

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

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

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

KLAUSTINA (dreamy sigh): “Klaus.”

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

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

FRIENDISH: “Well, introduce me to Klaus.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOLEBACK: “Hammerback?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOLEBACK (with little warmth): “Klaus.”

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

MOLEBACK: “That’s Kay’s department.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cut to close-up of her phone hanging up.

15)

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “Yes.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: "You're kidding."

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: "Do I detect some professional jealousy?"

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

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

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

WILSON: "When was all this?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “Please do.”

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

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

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

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

ADMIRAL: “Well, that changes things.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: "In what way?"

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

WILSON: "Dwarves?"

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

WILSON: "What do *you* think?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

[phone rings]

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



16)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONVEX: "Aw, *shit*."

[grainy *beep*]

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

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

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

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

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

redial: 70849112657770

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

[grainy *beep*]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[SINISTER VOICEOVER]: “CDC?”

CONVEX: “Yeah, straight out of Atlanta.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONVEX: “And they got that.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cut to telephone inside van; line 1 is blinking.

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

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

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

17)

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “And?”

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

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

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

WILSON takes the pages.

Quick cut to a full page of random English letters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “Yeah.”

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

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

PROP: “No one? Except him, I guess.”

Quick cut to tape outline of Nimbus.

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “Like what?”

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

WILSON: “Who’d you have in mind?”

PROP: “Doctor_who.”

WILSON stares at him blankly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILSON: “Yeah.”

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

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

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

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

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

Quick close-up of top line of email:

nimbus,

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

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

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

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

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

[in badly-photocopied hand-written Latin]:

Treatise on the Nature of

Hieroglyphics

by


Jr. Anastasius Kircher

WILSON: “Yeah.”

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

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

Cut to top one:

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

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

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

WILSON: “Here we are.”

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

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

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

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

PROP [off-screen]: “No.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

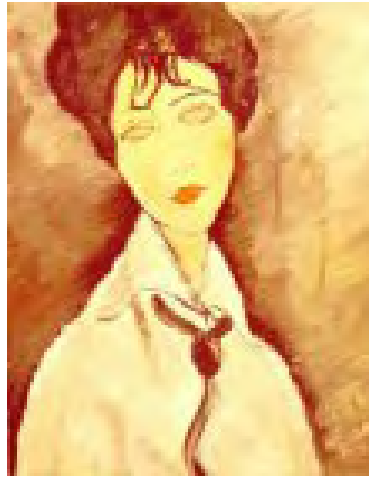
WILSON: "That the Modigliani?"

PROP: "Yeah."

WILSON: "Nice."

Close up of the painting.

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



18)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNT: “*Bah*, I go get us some.”

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

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

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

COUNT: “Good.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HASSAN: “Not yet. Wait 400 years.”

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

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

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

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

19)

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

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

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

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

CONVEX: "Espresso."

BELLE stares at him.

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

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

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

BELLE looks over to the pot; quarter full.

BELLE: "Yeah."

CONVEX: "How *fresh* is it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cut to CONVEX, smirking.

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

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

CONVEX: “Good. Is it smoking or non?”

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

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

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

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

CONVEX: “Do you have a phone?”

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

CONVEX nods and walks back toward the bathrooms.

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

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

CONVEX: “Where exactly *are* we?”

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

BELLE: “Martinsberg.”

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

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

BELLE looks at the pitcher, surprised.

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

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

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

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

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

CONVEX: “What’s this place called?”

BELLE: “Bob’s Baseball Bunker.”

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

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

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

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

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

BOB: “Howdy.”

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

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

BOB: “Got some company coming?”

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

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

CONVEX glances at a neon sign in the window.

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

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

BOB: “Well, *yeah*.”

CONVEX: “Not a problem.”

BOB stares at him, unsure how to handle this.

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

BOB: “As long as I’m here.”

CONVEX: “How long are you here?”

BOB: “Son, I’m *always* here.”

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

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

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

BOB: “Yes sir.”

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

BOB nods, and looks at the jukebox.

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

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

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

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

REGULAR: “I like that song.”

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

Cut to close-up of CONVEX.

CONVEX: “I *don’t*.”

Reverse fantasy blur to bring back the present.

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

BOB continues to stare at him.

CONVEX: “Did I mention a menu?”

BOB: “Yeah.” Doesn’t leave.

CONVEX downs the rest of his drink.

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

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

CONVEX: “Not that I saw.”

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

CONVEX: “Booth Number 7.”

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

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

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

BOB: “Let me know if he orders.”

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

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

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

20)

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

(MUFON coughs violently off screen)

Cut to ALANA, looking concerned.

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

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

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

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

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