

"Biography"

by
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1 EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

1

A chilly, winter afternoon. A snow flurry is falling.

BRIAN RUSSO, 35, walks down the sidewalk without a care in the world. His salt-and-pepper hair blows slightly in the winter breeze. His puffy jacket, zipped up as far as it will go, keeps him warm.

He accidentally kicks a book lying in his way. He goes to retrieve it.

He picks the book up and ducks into a building front to have a look.

It is a nice, leather-bound, hardcover book, though slightly beaten up. On the spine and cover, in gold leaf, it reads JONATHAN WILLOWAY.

He opens the volume to the first page. Four hand-written addresses are listed there - all but the last one being crossed out.

RUSSO
(sotto voce)
That's right down the street.

He looks at his watch and nods.

He puts the book under one arm and, smiling, goes to return the book to Willoway.

FADE TO:

2 EXT. SHABBY WILLOWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

2

The old house needs some work. A paint job would do a world of good, as would some replacement windows and a new roof. The lawn has not been mown in some time.

Russo climbs the stone steps to the stoop and knocks on the door.

A man (WILLOWAY) answers. He opens the door only slightly.

From what Russo can see, he is nearly bald, sporting several days' growth of beard, and wearing a sweatshirt that very much needs laundering. The sound of a TV with its volume turned up high can be heard in the background.

(CONTINUED)

WILLOWAY
(suspiciously)
Yes?

RUSO
Are you Jonathan Willoway?

WILLOWAY
Yeah, but if you're looking for a
donation, I'm -

RUSO
No, you've got me wrong.
(beat)
My name is Brian Russo, and I'm
not looking for anything.
Actually, I've got something you
might want back.

He hands Willoway the book through the small space of the
cracked-open door.

He is surprised to see his name on the cover and begins
thumbing through the pages, ignoring Russo.

RUSO
I stumbled on it on Everett
Street. Well, I didn't stumble. I
. . . I didn't even *trip*.
(beat)
Your address was on the inside, so
I thought I'd -

Willoway angrily slams the book shut in one hand.

WILLOWAY
What kind of trick is this?

RUSO
(surprised)
Trick? I don't get -

WILLOWAY
How do you know this information
about me? Are you one of those
identity thieves?

RUSO
No.

WILLOWAY
Then how could you -

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

Mr. Willoway, I didn't look at the book - except for your address. I don't even know what's in it. It looked like a nice, old book, so I thought I'd return it to you. That's all.

WILLOWAY

A *likely* story.

(beat)

If you're not off my stoop in five minutes, I'm calling the cops.

Keeping the book, he slams the door shut, energetically locking it from inside.

Russo looks at the closed door in disbelief before starting down the stairs.

RUSSO

(sotto voce)

Some people. . .

FADE TO:

ACROSS THE SCREEN: MONTHS LATER.

The morning rush is on! All the tables and most of the counter stools are occupied by patrons happily eating their breakfasts.

Russo sits on one of the stools intent on his blue plate breakfast special, his extra-large mug of black coffee, and that day's scandal sheet.

He doesn't notice the short, wiry-haired old man with the backpack slowly approach him.

LOUIS points at the empty stool beside Russo.

LOUIS

May I sit here?

Russo barely looks up.

RUSSO

Sure. It's a free country.

LOUIS

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

He climbs onto the stool and puts the backpack down by his feet. He sighs from the exertion.

LOUIS

That's one of the things I've
always admired about this country:
The freedom.

Russo takes a big swig of coffee.

RUSSO

You're not from around here, are
ya?

LOUIS

No. I'm from rather far away.

RUSSO

Welcome to America.

(beat)

The waitress should be back in a
minute or two. She ran across the
street to the bank for some
singles.

LOUIS

(longish beat)

Are you Brian Russo?

RUSSO

Yeah.

Back to the coffee.

LOUIS

I *finally* found you!

RUSSO

Huh?

LOUIS

My name is Louis.

He holds out a liver-spotted hand, which Russo shakes.

RUSSO

You've been looking for me, Louie?

LOUIS

Oh, yes.

RUSSO

If it's about that parking ticket
last -

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

I'm not a member of law
enforcement. I'm here because I
need your help.

Russo cuts into his pancakes as he replies.

RUSSO

Sorry, but I don't do good deeds
anymore. My last one didn't work
out well.

LOUIS

When you returned the book you
found to Mr. Willoway?

Russo stops chewing.

RUSSO

How do you know that?

LOUIS

That's why I'm here. I need to get
that book back. The Boss is very
angry with me for having lost it.

Russo swallows his pancakes and washes them down with
some more coffee.

RUSSO

It's *not* Willoway's book? His name
was on it. That's why I -

LOUIS

It *is* and it *isn't*. It's tough to
explain.

RUSSO

Job on the line?

LOUIS

I hate to think what He'll do if I
don't recover the volume.

RUSSO

Pretty powerful guy?

Louis sighs.

LOUIS

Indeed.

RUSSO

What is he - a CEO?

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

No, a G-o-d.

RUSSO

(beat)

Huh?

LOUIS

God is my Boss.

RUSSO

(longish beat)

Louie, I've been a Protestant all my life. I'm in no mood to have someone try to convert me over breakfast.

(beat)

Maybe you'd better -

LOUIS

I'm not here to proselytize, sir. Wouldn't *dream* of it.

RUSSO

Good, because that's another thing America was founded on: Freedom of religion.

(beat)

So, uhm. . . you a priest?

LOUIS

No.

RUSSO

Minister? Rabbi?

LOUIS

Neither of those.

RUSSO

Then what?

LOUIS

(proudly)

I'm an angel.

Russo catches himself just in time to avoid a coffee spit take.

LOUIS

I *really* am.

RUSSO

And I'm Elton John.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

(sadly)
You don't believe me?

RUSSO

Nope.

LOUIS

What would -

RUSSO

Why don't we put a stop to this
right now, old man? Your crapola
is ruining my breakfast.

LOUIS

One chance? *Please*.

RUSSO

(longish beat)
OK, but when you fail to prove it
to me, you hightail it out of here
and let me enjoy my morning.

LOUIS

Deal.

(beat)
Now, what would it take for you to
believe me?

RUSSO

How about a miracle?

LOUIS

You've got the wrong guy. Angels
don't do miracles. That's reserved
for the Man Upstairs.

RUSSO

How about a little harp music? You
guys always have harps in the
movies.

LOUIS

I didn't bring it with me.

(beat)
Besides, I'm more of a Sinatra fan
myself.

RUSSO

How about *flying*? Angels do fly?

LOUIS

Sure we do.

(CONTINUED)

RUSO

Then do *that*.

(beat)

A little flight around the diner
would convince me.

Louis looks about at the crowded place.

LOUIS

I'll have to pass.

Russo smiles, certain he's winning the conversation.

RUSO

Why?

LOUIS

Look at all the customers!

(beat)

Can you imagine the scene that
would create?

RUSO

What *can* you do then?

LOUIS

What about a *little* flying?

RUSO

How little?

Louis pats his stool.

LOUIS

I could hover over this. No one
should notice.

Russo drains his mug.

RUSO

Knock yourself out.

Louis glances all around. The coast looks clear.

An odd look comes to his face, like a cross between
extreme concentration and the urgent need to visit the
men's room.

LOUIS

There!

Russo isn't even looking. He snaps his newspaper.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

There what?

LOUIS

Will you *please* put that down and
look?

Russo does so, figuring it best to humor the old coot.

Louis *is* flying - hovering about three inches over his
stool. Russo runs his hand in and out of the space
between the stool and the old man's butt.

RUSSO

(amazed)

Will you look at that?

Louis smiles.

LOUIS

I'd like to stop now - before I'm
noticed.

RUSSO

Sure.

Louis descends gently onto the counter stool.

LOUIS

Are you convinced now?

RUSSO

(longish beat)

I *suppose*.

LOUIS

(insulted)

Suppose?

RUSSO

OK. I guess you are an angel.

LOUIS

And I'm an angel who needs your
help in retrieving Mr. Willoway's
book.

RUSSO

Why me?

LOUIS

You found it in the first place.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

So?

LOUIS

It's only logical to ask for your help in retrieving it. Besides, you're a big, strong guy, and Mr. Willoway. . . scares me.

RUSSO

Him? He's a runt.

LOUIS

As am I. I was never the bravest man. In life, I was a botany professor. Fisticuffs weren't my thing.

(beat)

I won my last fight by a hundred yards.

Russo is flabbergasted by Louis's admission.

RUSSO

You ran away?

Louis nods.

LOUIS

And lived to fight another day.

RUSSO

And did you?

LOUIS

(embarrassed)

No.

(beat)

Will you help me?

RUSSO

I suppose so.

(beat)

How'd this book get here anyway?

LOUIS

I dropped it.

RUSSO

From Heaven?

LOUIS

Yes. Everyone on Earth has a life book - that's what we call them.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (CONT'D)

They help us keep track of the billions of people.

RUSSO

Sounds like a big job.

LOUIS

It is, and it's *my* job.

(beat)

Willoway's life book accidentally fell from above. I'm glad it didn't hit anyone! It would have packed quite a wallop, much worse than dropping pennies off of the Empire State Building.

RUSSO

Why don't you keep everyone's records on a computer? It would be a lot smaller. That room of books must be *awfully* big.

LOUIS

Larger than several football fields! My feet really hurt after tramping back and forth among the volumes for eight hours every day.

RUSSO

A computer would free up a *lot* of space. . . and help those feet.

LOUIS

We thought of that, but digitizing all that information would be a huge undertaking. Some of the records of the long deceased are on scrolls and even *rocks*. With all the babies being born, we add new life books every day.

RUSSO

So you dropped one book out of billions. What's the worst that can happen to you?

LOUIS

You don't know the Boss. Sure, He's usually all sweetness and nice, but you don't want to get on His bad side. If I don't recover that book, I could be given even less-desirable duty.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

Like what?

Louis shivers slightly at the idea.

LOUIS

You don't want to know.

FADE TO:

Russo and Louis walk through the park. A light snow is falling.

RUSSO

So everyone has one of these. . .
what did you call them?

LOUIS

Life books.

RUSSO

(beat)
Then *I* have one.

LOUIS

Sure.

Louis stops walking, unzips his backpack, and removes Russo's life book - which looks much like Willoway's, though in better shape from not enduring a Heavenly drop.

LOUIS

I meant to show you this in the
diner.

He hands Russo the book. Russo admires it, but seems uneasy holding it.

LOUIS

Why don't you have a look?

RUSSO

(eagerly)
Could I? I thought you were in a
hurry to get to Willoway's place.

LOUIS

We can spare a few minutes.

(CONTINUED)

They sit on a snow-dusted bench. Russo opens his book to the first page. Like Willoway's, there is a list of past addresses.

RUSO

Yup, those are all the places I've lived.

LOUIS

(proudly)

The last entry is in *my* penmanship.

RUSO

My wife and I have lived there for *six* years. You've been taking care of the life books for that long?

LOUIS

Longer actually.

RUSO

(beat)

May I have a look inside?

Louis nods.

LOUIS

That's why I brought it.

Russo flips through the pages from the beginning as he speaks, impressed.

RUSO

You really have *everything* covered: My birth, my schooling - hey! - there's the day I broke my arm in Little League.

LOUIS

Don't look past page 351.

Russo stops flipping pages.

RUSO

Why not?

LOUIS

That's where your future begins.

He leans closer to Louis.

RUSO

You know my future?

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

Well, let's say your *likely*
future. The free will all people
have can change that.

RUSO

Why do you plan everyone's future
then?

LOUIS

There'd be chaos if we didn't at
least *attempt* it!

Russo holds the book out to the angel.

RUSO

(nervously)

You'd. . . You'd better take this
back. It's too tempting, and I
don't want to mess things up for
you.

Louis takes the book.

LOUIS

Let's look at one future date
together.

RUSO

(eagerly)

Are you sure that's OK?

Louis nods.

LOUIS

I cleared it with the Boss.

Louis opens the life book and flips to a certain page.

LOUIS

Here we are.

(reading)

June 16, 2026 - the birth of your
son.

Russo is amazed.

LOUIS

My. . . My son?

LOUIS

(still reading)

7:53 a.m. Zachary Brian Russo.
Eight pounds, three ounces.

(CONTINUED)

He closes the book and returns it to his backpack, which he zips closed.

RUSSO

(longish beat)

But. . . But that's not possible!

(beat)

The doctors have been telling us
for years that we can't -

LOUIS

They're *wrong*. Doctors have been
wrong sometimes all the way back
to Abraham and Sarah.

Wide eyed, Russo looks up into the sky.

RUSSO

(very happily)

Wow!

LOUIS

Just let it happen. Don't try to
rush it, or it may not occur.

Russo smiles a smile as big as his face can make.

RUSSO

Don't worry, Louie. I'm not going
to do *anything* to jeopardize this.

LOUIS

You can see now why I have to get
the Willoway book back.

(beat)

If he knows facts about his likely
future, he could exploit that
knowledge and change the balance
that we've tried so hard to
achieve.

RUSSO

You mean if he gains from what
he's learned from his life book,
something else might have to. . .
"give" to make up the difference?

LOUIS

Yes. Balance is everything. Yin
and yang.

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED: (4)

4

RUSSO

(afraid)

Could that something be. . . be
. . . my boy?

LOUIS

Anything is possible. What might
change is beyond my control.

Russo stands with a purpose.

RUSSO

Come on, Louie. We've got to stop
this guy.

FADE TO:

5

EXT. SHABBY WILLOWAY HOUSE - LATER

5

Russo hurriedly takes Louis to Willoway's home, but
things have changed: It has a fresh coat of paint, a few
new windows, and the lawn has been meticulously mown.

The mailbox now reads "Leibowitz."

Willoway has moved!

Russo and Louis talk with MRS. LEIBOWITZ, 55, who is
wearing a large jacket and big earmuffs against the cold.

MRS. LEIBOWITZ

I'm sorry but I don't know where
the previous owner went.

RUSSO

No one mentioned a forwarding
address?

MRS. LEIBOWITZ

Afraid not. The house was empty
when we moved in.

(beat)

I've never heard of Mr. Willoway.

FADE TO:

6

EXT. LEIBOWITZ HOME - MOMENTS LATER

6

Mrs. Leibowitz has gone inside. Louis and Russo sit on
the sidewalk. Louis hangs his head in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

Doomed! That's what I am - *doomed*.

RUSSO

Calm down.

LOUIS

The Big Guy won't like this.

(beat)

How are we ever going to find Willoway now?

RUSSO

Relax. There are ways.

Louis quickly looks up.

LOUIS

(eagerly)

There are?

RUSSO

Sure.

(beat)

When did you die?

LOUIS

1902.

Russo rolls his eyes.

RUSSO

Things have changed a lot since then. Nowadays, everyone has an electronic paper trail.

(beat)

We'll find him.

FADE TO:

The man and the angel get out of the car and look up the hill at the newly built, immense McMansion.

RUSSO

Holy crap! He *really* moved on up.

(beat)

Where do you think he got the money?

Louis shakes his head sadly.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

I think I know. It's in his life book.

RUSSO

(surprised)

You've read it?

LOUIS

No, but the Boss filled me in before I came down here.

RUSSO

(prompting him)

Well?

LOUIS

Willoway's Uncle Milton is very wealthy. He made a lot of money in oil down in Texas.

RUSSO

Miltie must have died and left his nephew a bundle.

LOUIS

I don't think so. His death isn't scheduled until January of 2027.

RUSSO

(longish beat)

Do you think Willoway offed his uncle?

LOUIS

"Offed?"

RUSSO

Killed him to get the money?

LOUIS

I hope not, but it's a distinct possibility.

RUSSO

Miltie's death was listed in the future section of Willoway's book?

LOUIS

Yes, because of the dramatic effect it would have on him. Inheriting all that money really changed. . . uhm. . . really will change his life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (CONT'D)

(beat)

Do you think he offed his uncle?

RUSSO

You said our free will can change
the possible future in our life
books.

LOUIS

It certainly can.

RUSSO

So if Willoway knocked off his
uncle - *voila!* - instant cash.

LOUIS

Maybe Uncle Milton simply died
earlier than scheduled?

RUSSO

Could that happen?

LOUIS

Sure.

(beat)

He could have slipped on a banana
peel or fallen into a woodchipper.

RUSSO

It sounds like you've seen those
things happen.

LOUIS

If Willoway has used his book to
change his future, that's all the
more reason we have to get it back
as soon as possible.

RUSSO

Are there other rich relatives he
could knock off?

LOUIS

There are a number of future
events he could hasten that might
benefit him.

Louis touches Russo on the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

Boy, am I glad you're here!
Willoway won't simply give the
book up.

FADE TO:

A tree of a man - CORTEZ - opens the door to Louis and Russo. The top of his head almost touches the threshold. His suitcoat would fit both Russo and Louis, with room to spare.

CORTEZ

Do you have an appointment with
Mr. Willoway?

LOUIS

(scared)
N-N-No, we don't.

CORTEZ

Then I'm afraid I can't allow -

RUSSO

You're his bodyguard?

Cortez nods.

CORTEZ

The name's Cortez.

RUSSO

Jonathan knows me. We met at his
old house a while ago. I returned
a prized possession to him.

(beat)
I'm sure he'll remember me.

CORTEZ

Your name, sir?

RUSSO

Brian Russo.

Cortez steps aside and motions both of them in, closing the door after them. A fire is blazing in the hearth. He motions at a leather couch nestled between a couple of full bookcases.

CORTEZ

Please sit.

(CONTINUED)

The man and the angel do so, though the angel sits faster.

Cortez turns to the busy, blonde assistant in a red dress in the corner of the room - MISS WENTWORTH.

CORTEZ

Please tell Mr. Willoway he has visitors.

Wentworth rises from her desk. She walks to an ornate door in a corner of the room. Cortez looks down powerfully at the men on the couch.

CORTEZ

I'll keep the gentlemen. . . company.

FADE TO:

Jonathan Willoway has changed a lot since he met Russo: He is wearing an expensive suit, he looks leaner and cleaner, and a high-quality toupee now covers his dome.

All around his office are electronics - motion detectors, personal cameras, and the like. His desk is an antique.

Wentworth stands beside him. Willoway barely looks up from the papers on his desk.

WILLOWAY

Visitors?

WENTWORTH

Two gentlemen.

(beat)

One of them is Brian Russo.

WILLOWAY

I don't know anyone by that name.

WENTWORTH

He says you do.

Irrked, Willoway lays down his papers. He presses a button on his desk to activate the security camera feed. The image of Russo and Louis on the leather couch appears on his computer screen. He studies the image.

(CONTINUED)

WILLOWAY

(longish beat)

OK, he's right.

(beat)

But I definitely *don't* know the
old man.

He turns off the feed and rises from his desk.

WILLOWAY

I can spare them a few minutes.

WENTWORTH

I'll let them know.

WILLOWAY

And Pamela?

WENTWORTH

Yes, sir?

WILLOWAY

Tell Mr. Cortez to stand ready.

FADE TO:

Willoway has left his office and is greeting his
visitors.

WILLOWAY

May I offer either of you
refreshments?

RUSSO

I'm fine.

LOUIS

No thank you.

Willoway sits in a leather chair across from them.

WILLOWAY

I'm so pleased to make your
acquaintance again, Mr. Russo.

RUSSO

Really?

(beat)

You weren't too pleased to meet me
the first time.

(CONTINUED)

WILLOWAY

No?

RUSO

You wondered if I was an identity thief and threatened to call the cops on me.

Willoway chuckles slightly.

WILLOWAY

I must have been having a bad day.

(beat)

My apologies.

RUSO

This is my friend, Louie.

WILLOWAY

Pleased to meet you, sir.

LOUIS

And you.

Russo looks around the ornate office.

RUSO

You certainly have improved your station in life since our first meeting.

Willoway smiles.

WILLOWAY

All it took was some business savvy and a little luck.

RUSO

And some money.

WILLOWAY

Of course, money. That goes without saying.

LOUIS

Where'd it come from?

WILLOWAY

(angrily)

You'll excuse me, but that's none of your business.

Cortez takes a few menacing steps forward before Willoway waves him off.

(CONTINUED)

RUSO

Louie, that wasn't very nice. Mr. Willoway could have acquired that money in any number of ways.

WILLOWAY

Exactly.

RUSO

He could have applied for a bank loan.

WILLOWAY

That's right.

RUSO

Or struck it rich on the stock market.

WILLOWAY

Precisely.

RUSO

Or read about some ways to make money in a . . . book.

WILLOWAY

A book?

RUSO

You *do* remember the book I brought you?

WILLOWAY

I'm afraid not.

RUSO

Louie, give me mine please.

Louis unzips his backpack, grabs the book, and hands it to Russo. Russo holds it up, with his name showing on the cover.

RUSO

It looked pretty much like this, except your name was on the cover.

WILLOWAY

(beat)

I don't recall you bringing me a book.

(CONTINUED)

RUSO

That's funny, because I do.
(longish beat)
We need it back.

WILLOWAY

I wish I could help you. If I ever
had such a book - and I'm taking
your word on this, Mr. Russo - I
must have left it at the old
house.

RUSO

I doubt that very much.

WILLOWAY

You do?

RUSO

It's a very special book. It deals
with the past, the present. . .
and the future.

WILLOWAY

I'm not in the habit of reading
science fiction.

RUSO

How about a murder mystery?

WILLOWAY

On occasion.

RUSO

Have you read the one about the
greedy nephew who kills his uncle
after learning -

Willoway quickly rises from his chair.

WILLOWAY

Gentlemen, our time is up.

LOUIS

How is Uncle Milton?

Willoway turns to his bodyguard.

WILLOWAY

Cortez, show our visitors out.

CORTEZ

Yes, sir.

(CONTINUED)

The giant of a man takes a few steps forward as Russo and Louis rise from the couch. He grabs each of them by one arm.

WILLOWAY

(smugly)

Do be careful on the walkway,
gentlemen. The weather has made it
somewhat slippery. I'd hate for
either of you to. . . get hurt.

FADE TO:

Russo and Louis are sitting in the car and talking.

LOUIS

Did you get a load of that
bodyguard?

RUSSO

Did I? I thought Lincoln had
stepped off of Mount Rushmore.

LOUIS

I *really* need to get that life
book back. Do you have any idea
what it would be like to have
someone mad at you for eternity?

RUSSO

Yes - I'm married.

(beat)

We'll get it back.

LOUIS

How?

RUSSO

We'll break in late tonight and
take the book.

LOUIS

But that's a crime!

Russo smiles.

RUSSO

Nothing gets by you.

LOUIS

It's *illegal*.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

So is murder.

Louis holds up one finger.

LOUIS

If Willoway did that.

RUSSO

You saw how he reacted when I
hinted at it.

(beat)

He did it.

LOUIS

I can't break into anyone's house.

RUSSO

Then you're lucky you have me
around.

LOUIS

(surprised)

You know how to do that?

RUSSO

I grew up on the poor side of
town. I lived and learned.

LOUIS

What if we're caught?

RUSSO

Don't worry. It'll be a piece of
cake.

LOUIS

But doesn't Willoway live in that
house too, besides running his
business from there?

RUSSO

Maybe.

Russo holds a finger up to his lips.

RUSSO

(sotto voce)

He'll never know we were there.

LOUIS

But we don't know where the book
is. We can't be rummaging around
looking for it.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

I know where it is.

LOUIS

You do?

RUSSO

Uh huh.

LOUIS

(eagerly)

Where?

RUSSO

In one of the bookcases beside the fireplace.

Louis is amazed.

LOUIS

Where we were sitting?

RUSSO

Right.

(beat)

What better place to hide a valuable book than with other books?

FADE TO:

The fire is dying down, but the room is still fairly well illuminated in the flames' flicker. Russo quickly glances at the titles on the bookshelves.

In short order, he finds the book!

RUSSO

(sotto voce)

Ah ha.

The light switch is flipped on. Willoway, now dressed in his bathrobe and pajamas, steps forward.

WILLOWAY

Back so soon?

(beat)

How'd you get in here?

(CONTINUED)

RUSO

You'd be surprised what you can do
with a credit card.

LOUIS

We found the book.

WILLOWAY

(innocently)

What book?

Russo holds it up for Willoway to see.

RUSO

The book you didn't have.

WILLOWAY

(beat)

Yes, I remember it now.

RUSO

Of course you do. You read it,
particularly the later pages.

WILLOWAY

What if I did? It's my book. It
says so right on the cover.

LOUIS

We'll be going now.

WILLOWAY

Not with my book you won't.

Louis gestures at the full bookcases near the leather
couch.

LOUIS

You have lots of books. You'll
hardly miss one.

Willoway reaches to the top of one of the bookcases and
brings down a revolver, which he points at Russo.

WILLOWAY

Give it to me.

Beaten, Russo very reluctantly hands the life book to
Willoway, who takes it and hugs it.

(CONTINUED)

WILLOWAY

If both of you leave quietly and
never darken my doorstep again, I
see no reason to call the
authorities.

Russo slowly turns toward the door.

RUSSO

(very sadly)
Come on, Louie.

LOUIS

(defiantly)
No!

Willoway holds the gun higher.

RUSSO

What?

LOUIS

I am *not* leaving without the book.
I've come too far and gone through
too much to fail now.

RUSSO

(sotto voce)
Louie, we're on the wrong end of a
gun.

Louis walks slowly toward Willoway.

RUSSO

Give it to me.

WILLOWAY

Stop, old man.
(beat)
I'll shoot!

LOUIS

(calmly)
You'll only be wasting your
bullets.

Willoway fires the revolver. The bullet passes through
the angel and shatters the window behind him. Willoway
looks at Louis and the window in amazement.

Russo sees his chance. He grabs Willoway's right arm and
presses hard.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

Drop it!

WILLOWAY

Let go of me!

They struggle. Willoway's grip on the gun lessens.

RUSSO

Louie, get the gun!

After some trouble, Louis is able to remove the gun from Willoway's grasp.

LOUIE

Got it!

RUSSO

(to Willoway)

Now the book!

WILLOWAY

No! There's so much more I can do with it.

RUSSO

Not with a broken arm!

Willoway tries to escape Russo's hold. He loses his grip on the book, and it falls into the fire. As the flames catch it, there is a large puff of white smoke.

Surprised at the noise, Russo breaks from Willoway, whose exposed skin bubbles and turns red. He claws at his eyes, drawing blood.

Louis puts an arm in front of Russo, pushing him away from the scene.

LOUIS

This isn't going to be pretty.

A flame erupts from Willoway's mouth. Soon, his body is a pillar of fire, and he screams in agony.

Less than a minute later, he crumbles into a pile of cinders on the rug.

Louis looks down at the remains and shakes his head.

LOUIS

If he had only listened.

(beat)

Poor Willoway.

(CONTINUED)

Confused, Russo seems to be waking from a long sleep.

RUSSO

Will *who*?

LOUIS

Jonathan Willo-

(beat)

Oh, yes. You wouldn't remember.

Russo looks about, concerned.

RUSSO

What am I doing here?

LOUIS

I'll explain what I can later.

(beat)

C'mon.

He gently grabs one of Russo's arms and leads him out the door.

FADE TO:

Louis, now sporting a halo, stands with his hands on his hips, looking over the vast expanse of life books.

Where to begin?

ST. PETER enters. His robe is a gleaming white, and his halo, an extra-bright gold.

ST. PETER

Louis.

LOUIS

Peter.

(longish beat)

Do you think the Boss is mad about the book?

ST. PETER

I doubt it. It's not your fault it burned up.

(beat)

Some things will have to be adjusted, of course, but it shouldn't take much to make up for Willoway's absence and bring about order again.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS

(hopefully)

Maybe the birth of Brian Russo's son could be moved up a bit?

ST. PETER

That *would* be a suitable reward for his help.

(beat)

I'll suggest it at our next meeting.

LOUIS

Could you mention one other thing to Him for me?

ST. PETER

Certainly.

Louis waves an arm at all the life books.

LOUIS

Maybe we could get a computer - we'd probably need *several* - and digitize all of this so what happened never happens again.

ST. PETER

We've always put that on hold because of the great deal of time such a project would entail.

LOUIS

It's only going to get worse, sir.

St. Peter nods reluctantly. He knows Louis is right.

ST. PETER

Who will do the work?

LOUIS

I will.

ST. PETER

You?

(beat)

It will take so long!

LOUIS

What does time matter up here?

FADE TO BLACK.