

THE GREEN EFFECT  
An original screenplay

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written by  
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INT. APARTMENT – MORNING

LEGEND

“Downtown Philadelphia”

WE ARE STARING at a door to a hallway. A concerned man in his early thirties steps in like he’s about to say something. He has a guitar strapped around his shoulder.

A six-inch replica of Degas’ “Little Dancer” smashes into the bedroom door next to the man. Its ceramic bits shatter and fall to the ground.

ELLIOT MOORE stares down at the pieces.

ELLIOT

I don’t believe you meant that.

ALMA MOORE stands half-dressed. She looks like a librarian and has a kind face. She stares at him with exhausted eyes.

ALMA

You’re in denial. I just threw something at you.

ELLIOT

You threw something near me. I saw the video of you playing softball in high school. You were an assassin. If you wanted to hit me you would have hit me.

Alma laughs even though a tear rolls down her cheek.

ALMA

You’re driving me crazy.

She checks herself in the mirror. She is crying and fixing her makeup.

ALMA

Who wants to be treated by a therapist that looks like this? I’m like Frankenstein.

(softer)

You’re going to be late for your class.

She gathers herself. She starts out the bedroom door. She has to squeeze by Elliot in the doorway. They are close. He stops her.

ELLIOT

See, you worry about me.

ALMA

(whispering)

You know I keep trying to do this so you won't get hurt. You just won't let that happen.

(beat)

There are things you're not accepting here.

ELLIOT

Tell me one.

ALMA

How about the fact that you're never going to be a musician. You're a science teacher.

(she shakes her head)

A really good one.

ELLIOT

(hurt)

And?

ALMA

And us.

(beat)

We're just not a good fit.

ELLIOT

Anything else?

ALMA

Yes, I'm going to tell you one of those secrets you should never tell your spouse. When I walked down the aisle, and you were waiting, I got this sudden feeling I was making a mistake.

ALMA

Do you hear what I'm saying Elliot, I was walking up the aisle and I wasn't sure I was making the right decision.

(beat)

We fight all the time. You're a good guy. We're just not good together. You see that don't you?

Beat.

ELLIOT

(whispering)

I don't believe a word you just said.

Her face hardens.

She walks out into the hall and to the small foyer.

ALMA

I want you to know I'm not doing this to hurt you.

ELLIOT

Why are you acting this cynical? You're not this cynical.

She puts on her coat. Takes her purse. She pulls off her ring.

ELLIOT

Alma don't-

She puts the ring on the foyer table.

ALMA

You believe me now?

She stares at him. He's wobbly for a moment.

ELLIOT

We'll talk about this later. We're angry.

ALMA

That must be it Elliot.

She shakes her head before walking out. She closes the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE – MORNING

Alma hesitates on the top of the stairs of her brownstone. She turns back to the front door to open it. Stops. She looks at the door sadly and then starts down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE MORNING

Elliot is alone with the guitar on his shoulder. He stands in the empty home.

ELLIOT

Okay, breathe.

The clock in the hall reads 8:36.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK – MORNING

LEGEND

“Central Park, New York City 8:33am”

New Yorkers walk their dogs. Thousands of people conducting their morning rituals.

A GUST OF WIND PASSES THROUGH THE MASSIVE TREES OF THE PARK.

A PAIR OF WOMEN sit on a blanket at the dead center of the park. One of them is pregnant with short spiked hair. The other has her hair in a bun. They each have a book.

HAIR IN A BUN WOMAN

I forgot where I am.

She flips through her book.

SPIKED HAIR WOMAN

You're at the place where the killers meet to decide what to do with the crippled girl.

HAIR IN A BUN WOMAN

That's right. That's right.

There are the FIRST SCREAMS from the park. THEY ARE DISTANT AT THE EDGES OF THE PARK. The spiked haired woman looks up. She squints.

SPIKED HAIR WOMAN

Did you hear that?

She stares. She sees people in the distance walking backwards down the pathways and across the lawns.

SPIKED HAIR WOMAN

That's funny.

Beat. She looks around. Stops. Her face crinkles at what she sees.

SPIKED HAIR WOMAN

That's weird. Those people look like they're clawing at themselves. Is that blood?

THE SCREAMS COME FROM ALL DIRECTIONS NOW. The spiked haired woman looks frighten now. She spins around.

She sees people in the park have become still. A couple start walking backwards. She looks around. The people closer to her stumble and fall.

THE WIND BLOWS THE GRASS AROUND THEM.

SPIKED HAIR WOMAN

Clare? You seeing this?... Clare?...  
Clare

The woman with her hair in a bun sits still.

HAIR BUN WOMAN

What page am I on?

The spiked hair woman looks confused at her friend. The expression of confusion washes away. An eerie passiveness is left.

HAIR BUN WOMAN

(soft)

What page?

The hair bun woman reaches up and takes a long hairpin out of her hair AND STABS HERSELF IN THE THROAT.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – MORNING

LEGEND

“New York City three blocks from Central Park 8:59am”

Steel girders are going up in a tree-cluttered city block. THE WIND BLOWS.

A foreman and his crew are waiting for the lift elevator to take them the twelve floors up the building frame.

CREW MEMBER

...So then the little guy says 'You  
have a girlfriend named Wendy too?  
Well I saw your thing it said W-Y.  
'The big guy says 'No man mine says  
Welcome to Jamaica have a nice day.'

The men bellow with laughter.

SOMETHING FALLS in the distance behind them. It lands with A THUD. Everyone turns and goes silent.

FOREMAN

Christ, Mckenzie fell.

The foreman and the men rush over to the corner of the site where the body of the man lies crumpled in the dirt.

The foreman yells into his walkie.

FOREMAN

Medic, we have a major accident at  
the south side of the building! We'll  
need an ambulance!

The foreman takes off his hardhat as he stares down at the mangled body. The crewmembers standing around the foreman are ghostly white.

FOREMAN  
(breaking down)  
Jesus, give him some room.

THUD.

They all turn confused and see another body of a crewmember lying at the far corner of the building site.

FOREMAN  
Davis?...

THE TREES AROUND THE CONSTRUCTION SITE CHATTER AS THE WIND BLOWS.

THUD... A third body falls very close to them.

The crewmembers on the ground pull away from the new body; they are frightened now.

THUD... Another body.

THUD... And another.

The men on the ground begin running. The foreman on the verge of being apoplectic finally looks up not comprehending.

At the top of the twelve-story steel framed structure the workman are casually walking along the beams and stepping off the edge... One after the other. Like dolls off a shelf.

FOREMAN  
(no voice)  
God in heaven...

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM – MORNING

We are in a science class. There is a slide projection glowing in the room. Pictures of cave paintings are projected.

The classroom is silent.

GIRL STUDENT  
Mr. Moore?

Elliot breaks from his thoughts. He realizes the class is staring at him.

ELLIOT

Sorry.

He clicks to the next slide.

ELLIOT

All these images are from Font-De-Gaume in central France. It is the last location of color cave paintings open to the public. I was playing a music festival in a small town, actually it turned out to be just a bunch of street performers.

(waves it off)

Anyway I went to see the cave.

Elliot clicks through a few slides of faded magenta bulls and deer.

ELLIOT

When you walk into this place, it's like a church. If you look up at these paintings through the flickering light of a candle it's like they're alive. These cave people worshiped nature.

Elliot stares at the faded slide.

ELLIOT

This cave was discovered in 1901. Unfortunately, it wasn't protected at first and tourists did some damage.

Elliot clicks a slide. We see a faded cave painting with graffiti etched onto it. Dates and initials of teenagers carved onto a delicate picture of a bull.

The classroom of students laugh.

Elliot looks around at his students.

ELLIOT

I know you don't think that's funny. When they showed me this. I had tears in my eyes.

A couple of the males in the class chuckle. Elliot shakes his head.

ELLIOT

Has everyone gone over to the 'dark side'?

(beat)

Do me a favor okay? Just keep yourself open... to ideas.

The door to the classroom opens. THE LIGHTS GO ON IN THE CLASSROOM. The students shield their eyes and then look to the doorway where a man stands.

ELLIOT

Vice Principal, the rebellion has lost another class.

VICE PRINCIPAL

I'm afraid I have to interrupt you for a moment Mr. Moore.

Elliot sees the tense look under the vice principal's smile.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – MORNING

The vice principal and Elliot are walking down a school corridor.

Elliot HEARS THE LOUD TALKING COMING FROM THE CLASSROOMS. He looks in as they walk by. Children are standing by the chalkboard. Other children are sitting by the windows and talking.

Elliot turns to the solemn vice principal.

ELLIOT

You excused all the teachers?

The vice principal nods, "Yes." Beat.

ELLIOT

You guys make us teach with a foot of snow on the ground. What's going on?

The vice principal opens the door to the teacher's lounge.

CUT TO:

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - MORNING

The entire teaching staff is crammed into the teacher's lounge. All attention is on THE PRINCIPAL at the head of the room.

PRINCIPAL

There appear to be world events happening. Major cities in every country were hit just now with what seems to be a terrorist act.

THERE ARE MUMBLINGS AMONGST THE TEACHERS. Elliot turns and looks at the disheveled teacher standing with him. THIS IS JULIAN.

PRINCIPAL

They're really not releasing much right now. It's some kind of airborne chemical toxin that's been released. New York is one of the cities.

JULIAN

Are people dying?

PRINCIPAL

They're not telling us anything right now. They don't know what the chemical does. They don't know who's responsible for this. All they do know is that the attacks originated in public parks in every city.

(beat)

I spoke with the head of schools. He said we should dismiss the students.

MORE MURMURS FROM THE TEACHERS.

PRINCIPAL

Take your planners home so we can get back when this is over.

The principal looks around the room of worried teachers.

PRINCIPAL

I'm sure they'll have things under control soon.

PRINCIPAL  
All right, let's do our jobs.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

The students are excitedly taking their things from their desks and stuffing their schoolbags.

ELLIOT  
Read the biochemical energy chapter.  
Especially the part of how our bodies  
give off energy and how our energy  
changes when we are around other  
people.

Elliot becomes preoccupied as he packs his desk.

The kids start heading out of the classroom.

ELLIOT  
Hey guys!

The gaggle of students in the doorway turn to Elliot at his desk. Elliot stares at their faces. They stare back at him. Beat.

ELLIOT  
Nothing.

The kids look at each other confused and then return to excited chatter as they leave the room.

Elliot is alone for a moment. Julian appears in the doorway.

JULIAN  
My mother called my cell. She's  
hysterical. I told her the probability of  
something happening in our city is  
very low. I threw her some figures.  
It's good to be a math teacher. People  
are comforted by percentages. She still  
wants us to get out of the city and  
come out to her house. She said for  
you and Alma to come.

Elliot nods.

ELLIOT  
That'll be good for us.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Elliot and Julian hurry down the stairs among the throng of children moving to buses and car pools.

JULIAN  
I'll bring Jess and Evette and meet you  
at the station.

ELLIOT  
Alma and I had another fight.

Julian stares.

ELLIOT  
She says she's leaving.

JULIAN  
You okay?

ELLIOT  
I'm scared witless.

Julian doesn't say anything.

ELLIOT  
Lets just get to your mom's house.

Julian nods. The crowd of kids pours past them.

The two friends separate.

CUT TO:

EXT. TURNPIKE - DAY

LEGEND

"New Jersey Turnpike -- six miles outside New York City 10:04am"

The traffic is practically standstill.

We are at a tollbooth on the New Jersey Turnpike. The TOLLBOOTH OPERATOR leans out of his booth and talks with a motorist.

TOLL BOOTH OPERATOR

...At breakfast she tells me she had a dream about Michael Jackson's old nose. She says in the dream she's playing scrabble with Michael Jackson, but he has his old nose. She said it was very disturbing. So then about ten minutes ago she calls me and says she knew all this stuff was going to happen today because of the dream. Can you believe that? She thinks somehow Michael Jackson having his old nose while playing scrabble, was a sign something bad was going happen?

(beat)

My point is, everybody is overreacting. They're probably going to open that tunnel and let people into New York City any minute now.

The motorist looks ahead. Both directions of traffic are crawling.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAFFIC - DAY

Motorists inch forward down the highway. Most of the cars have their windows down.

A GENTLE BREEZE moves over the cars.

The highway is nestled by trees. They tower on either side. We SEE THE REFLECTION OF THE TREES ON THE WINDSHIELD OF THE CARS as they move.

SUDDENLY WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A CAR CRASHING IN THE DISTANCE. THERE IS THE SQUEAK OF TIRES AND A SOUND OF METAL CRUNCHING METAL. THEN WE HEAR ANOTHER CRASH ECHO OVER THE HIGHWAY. AND ANOTHER RIGHT AFTER IT.

WE SEE A CAR SWERVE AND SMASH INTO THE CONCRETE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE HIGHWAYS.

CUT TO:

A CAR WITH ITS WINDOWS UP. Parents and their children sit inside.

CHILD IN BACK SEAT

I spy with my little eye something red.

FATHER

-Mom's sneaker.

The mother hits the father on the arm. The mother turns to the child.

MOTHER

Honey, you can't keep picking my sneakers. It makes it too easy.

THERE IS THE DULL SOUND OF CRASHES IN THE DISTANCE. The father looks out the window.

FATHER

Hey guys quiet for a second. Do you hear that? It sounded like crashes.

The father sees a guy get out of a car right in front of them.

FATHER

Let's ask if he knows what's going on.

The father's hand goes to the window button and stops. The man is walking backwards towards them.

CHILD IN BACK SEAT

I spy with my little eye someone walking backwards.

The man outside stops and faces them. The man has a passiveness about him that is frightening. The man and the family stare at each other for a moment.

THE MAN STEPS FORWARD AND SMASHES HIS FACE THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD. SHATTERED GLASS COVERS THE SCREAMING CHILDREN IN THE BACKSEAT OF THE CAR.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT – DAY

Alma is on the sofa. She stares concerned at the news. There are two people arguing.

Alma's phone buzzes in her pocket.

She turns down the sound on the t.v.

She pulls out the phone. When she sees the word "Joey" appear on the screen, she doesn't know what to do. She puts the phone down on the coffee table like it burnt her hand. She watches it buzz on the table. She doesn't answer it. It becomes quiet.

Alma jumps at THE SOUND OF KEYS in the front door. Elliot moves in the front door hurriedly.

ELLIOT

Are you packed?

ALMA

Yes.

(beat)

We should finish talking about what we were talking about this morning.

ELLIOT

I want to too.

(beat)

But we should go first.

ALMA

We won't be alone for a while.

ELLIOT

We'll find time. I promise.

Beat.

ALMA

(soft)

Okay.

Elliot looks to the television.

ELLIOT

What are they saying?

ALMA

It's up to twenty-six now.

ELLIOT

You're kidding.

She turns ON THE SOUND. Two guys are arguing in a Crossfire type news show.

RED FACED CHUBBY ANCHOR

It's obviously one of three major  
terrorist groups.

GOVERNMENT GUY WITH GLASSES

You can't say that.

RED FACED CHUBBY ANCHOR

Why not?

GOVERNMENT GUY WITH GLASSES

They just reported Moscow, Paris,  
Manchester, Sarajevo, Nairobi and  
Amsterdam... Who's mad at  
Amsterdam? Tell me that?

(beat)

There's nothing that ties those cities  
together. There's no political  
connection.

Elliot watches carefully.

GOVERNMENT GUY WITH GLASSES

It's like some horror movie where the  
villain has some master plan to kill  
everyone in over-populated cities.

Beat.

RED FACED CHUBBY ANCHOR

(turns to camera)

So who's the villain? We'll discuss  
more after the break.

Alma turns off the television.

ALMA  
I'll water the plants.

Elliot nods. Alma gets up off the sofa. Elliot stares at the dark screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIOT'S HOME OFFICE – DAY

We are in the guest room Elliot uses as his office. Elliot pulls out a storage box from a stack of storage boxes in the closet.

ELLIOT  
(to himself)  
I've taught this before...

He opens the box. Rifles through it.

ELLIOT  
(to himself)  
I've taught this before...

He stops rifling through the files. Pulls out a stack of papers. He flips through the top test paper.

Beat. His eyes scan the words. He grabs a pen from his desktop.

He circles the words,

“Gas-toxin”.

His eyes go down a few lines. He circles,

“unable to identify attackers”

He goes down a couple more lines and circles,

“overpopulated areas”

ELLIOT  
(to himself)  
This is insane.

He closes the test paper. On the front of the paper are the typed words...

“Form IV  
Midterm Test  
Nature”

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER – DAY

Alma waits in the hall. She HEARS THE BUZZ OF THE PHONE. She reaches into her purse and pulls out the phone. “Joey” appears on the screen. Alma is flustered. She looks down the hall nervously as she tries to silence the phone. By mistake she turns the phone to ‘loud ring’ THE PHONE RINGS LOUDLY IN THE HALL. Alma panics and shuts down the phone. She puts it back. She takes a few deep breaths.

Alma stands waiting with a duffle bag. Elliot carries his guitar case and the stack of test papers as he comes out of the room.

Alma stares at him.

ALMA

I’m scared.

ELLIOT

Let’s just see what happens. Things  
will become clearer.

Elliot puts the stack of tests in his bag as he opens the front door. Alma sees his guitar. Elliot sees her looking.

ELLIOT

In case I get time to write.

Alma turns off the lights and grabs her keys from the mail table. The wedding ring still sits on the table. Elliot waits for her to pick it up. He looks up and makes eye contact with Alma.

ALMA

World events don’t change anything  
Elliot. I wasn’t just being hysterical.

She walks out the front door.

Elliot stares at the empty apartment and at the wedding ring seated on the table.

