

THE STAND

Part I

by

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ACT 1

BLACK SCREEN

We hear two SOUNDS: a lonely desert WIND, and the steady but not quite rhythmic TICK-TICK-TICK of METAL ON METAL.

One by one, these lines form, white on black:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.
T.S. Eliot

FADE OUT EPIGRAPH AND FADE IN ON:

1 A SIGN, ECU

1

It's old and weatherbeaten, the letters faded. It jitters back and forth against its post in the desert wind, creating that metallic TICKING sound. Dust blows past in gritty clouds. In spite of these problems, we can read the sign quite well. The first three lines are in faded white paint, the last in red.

THIS IS A U.S. GOVERNMENT RESERVATION
 ABSOLUTELY NO TRESPASSING
 HIGH-VOLTAGE WIRES
DANGER OF DEATH!

SOUND: A crow's LOUD CAW. And then the crow itself, almost obscenely large, flutters down onto the sign. Its tailfeathers ruffle in the dry desert wind. It looks toward:

2 PROJECT BLUE COMPOUND

2

We see a huddle of Quonset huts and large barnlike structures with corrugated metal sides. Dirt streets run between these. Tumbleweeds blow. On the sides of the big structures are signs reading AGRICULTURAL TESTING CENTER #1, AGRICULTURAL TESTING CENTER #2, HYDROPONICS LABORATORY, and COMPUTER CENTER. It all feels weirdly deserted. On the far side of a large open space, we see a large rusty gate standing open on a rusty metal track. Beyond it, a two-lane blacktop road leads away into the desert.

To one side of the larger buildings are ramshackle wooden boxes that might be offices or "civilian housing." And that's all there is...or at least all that meets the eye. There must be a thousand little raggedy-ass military and/or government outposts like this tucked away in America's empty places, involved in God knows what.

CONTINUES

2 CONTINUES

TITLE CARD: SOMEWHERE IN THE MOJAVE JUNE 12

THE CAMERA MOVES IN on one of the nondescript, paint-peeling wooden blocks that passes for housing out here. Standing in front is a battered old Chevrolet, idling raggedly, rusty tailpipe blowing blue smoke. It's the only sign of life we've seen so far

CHARLES CAMPION (voice)
Hurry up! Get the baby!

SALLY CAMPION (voice)
Charlie, what's wrong?

CHARLES (voice)
They're dead down there, that's what's wrong--all of them, it looks like on the monitors, and it happened like that!

SOUND: CHARLES snaps his fingers.

SALLY (voice)
Dead? What killed them?

3 INT. LIVING ROOM OF CAMPION ██████████ QUARTERS 3

It's dark, lower-middle-income, grim. Beer cans on top of the TV, Cheez Doodles between the cushions of the lumpy couch. Jesus on one wall and Elvis on the other, looking remarkably like brothers.

There's an open door at the back of the living room, giving on a short hallway. CHARLES CAMPION, a man of about thirty in khaki pants and unbuttoned Army shirt, comes out of the baby's bedroom and into the hall. He's got the crying BABY LAVON (she's about two) in the crook of one arm; a box of Pampers and a carry-all bag stuffed with baby clothes in the other. A teddy-bear also peeks out, like an unnoticed hitchhiker.

CHARLES
One of the bugs they were playing with, I suppose. It doesn't matter. We're getting out before it seeps topside--
that's what matters. Hurry up, Sally.

4 EXT. OUTSIDE THE CAMPION HOUSE 4

They hurry down the walk toward the idling Chevrolet through the blowing grit. As they approach the car, SALLY suddenly realizes they're the only ones out and moving around.

SALLY
Charlie...everyone?

CONTINUES

4 CONTINUES

CHARLES (coughing)
 I'm pretty sure, yeah.
 [He looks around nervously]
 Now for God's sake, get in the car.

She does as he says. CHARLES throws the luggage helter-skelter into the back, COUGHING DRYLY as he does so. BABY LAVON'S teddy bear, which was precariously tucked into the carryall to begin with, tumbles to the ground. CHARLES doesn't notice; he goes around the car and gets behind the wheel, leaving Teddy in the dust. It stares up into the bright desert sky as the Chevy heads through the blowing sand toward the open gate.

SOUND: A WARNING HOOTER GOES OFF, sending bright pulses of sound into the desert sky.

5 INT. THE CHEVY, WITH THE CAMPION FAMILY 5

CHARLES
 Damn!
 SALLY (alarmed)
 What's that?

6 EXT. THE GATE 6

It starts to slide closed. The HOOTER BLATS STEADILY.

7 INT. THE CAR 7

We can see the gate sliding across through the windshield.

SALLY
 Stop, Charlie. Stop! You can't--
 But he can try. CHARLES' floors the gas-pedal. The old Chevy lurches forward.

SALLY (screams)
Stop it, Charlie, that's electrified wire, you'll get us all killed!

CHARLES
 Don't you get it? If we're still here when the pumps vent whatever got loose down there...never mind. Just hold onto the baby.

She does, shutting her eyes. The sliding gate looms ahead.

8 EXT. THE GATE AND THE CHEVY 8

It slides through the narrowing gap at the absolute last second, and as it speeds off down the empty road, already appearing ghostlike through the blowing veils of dust, the gate SLAMS SHUT

9 EXT. THE CROW ON THE NO-TRESPASSING SIGN 9

Can crows look pleased? If so, this one does. It CAWS and shifts its position on the sign, shiny black feathers fluttering.

10 INT. THE CHAMPION CAR 10

SALLY

They told us nothing could happen! Ever!

CHARLES

They also told us we won in Vietnam.

SALLY gives him a stricken look. CHARLES starts to give her a reassuring smile, then has another COUGHING FIT. This time she really hears it and gives him a frightened look.

SALLY

That cough, Charlie--

CHARLES (grins)

Just dust, darlin. Nothin two or three beers won't cure.

11 EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP AND CHEVROLET, LONG 11

It's rolling along fast, putting Project Blue behind the Champion family as fast as possible.

12 EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHAMPION HOUSE 12

With a TRIUMPHANT CAW, the crow lands on BABY LAVON'S forgotten teddy-bear. It stands there a moment, flexing its scaly talons, fluffing its feathers in the desert wind. Then it leans forward and ~~plucks~~ plucks one of Teddy's glass eyes out with its beak.

THE ~~CAMERA~~ CAMERA BEGINS TO SINK DOWN, actually into the ground. As we lose the dusty surface of the compound (and the crow), we hear MUFFLED MUSIC. There is a sense of downward movement, of passing through strata of dirt and rocks...and then we come out through the roof of an underground room. This is where the real project is (or was). No dust here, just bright banks of fluorescent lights over a big laboratory room full of beakers and chemistry equipment and electronics readouts.

The MUSIC is clearer now, although still distorted by echo and faint with distance; it is Blue Oyster Cult, singing "Don't Fear the Reaper."

<CONTINUES

12 CONTINUES

As THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO BOOM DOWN, we see there are three or four people in this room...but they are no longer alive. Dressed in white laboratory coats, they lie crumpled on the floor. One lies over a work-table, near a Bunsen burner which is still flaring a blue tongue of flame. His eyes are wide open, looking at with an expression of terminal surprise that perhaps reminds us of BABY LAVON'S Teddy. Twin trickles of blood have run from his nose and pooled on the table. His cheeks are discolored. His neck is swollen.

BEGIN CREDITS as we DISSOLVE TO:

13 INT. PROJECT BLUE

13

The CREDITS RUN in a series of SLOW DISSOLVES that give us an overview of a project which has gone disastrously wrong. With each DISSOLVE, "Don't Fear the Reaper" grows louder, closer, less echoey and distorted.

a.) A HALLWAY, STRETCHING AWAY TO A POINT IN THE DISTANCE

Bodies litter it like dead fish after a red tide. In the f.g., some sort of supply-cart has been overturned and a number of beakers have shattered. Blue, green, and yellow gluck runs together.

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE

Go to the nearest clean room now.
Walk, do not run. Go to the nearest--

b.) A SECRETARIAL POOL/RECORDS AREA

There are rows and rows of computers, all on. Twenty or thirty clerical personnel sit at them, men and women, but nothing's getting done, because they are all dead.

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE

--clean room now. Walk, do not run.

c.) TV LOUNGE

Four of five off-duty personnel dressed in coveralls sit in hard plastic contour chairs. All are dead; all have bled from the nose; all have soot-colored cheeks and swelled necks; all apparantly died looking up at the TV bolted to the wall, where a game-show is cackling away.

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE

Go to the nearest clean room ██████████--

CONTINUES

13 CONTINUES

d.) A CAFETERIA

There are perhaps forty dead people either slumped over the long tables, crumpled on the floor, or lying in the serving line by the steam-table. One woman, dressed in a white food-service uniform, is face-down in a big tray of Hungarian goulash.

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE

now. Walk, do not--

e.) A REC ROOM

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE

--run. Go to the nearest clean room now.

Two men have died playing ping-pong; one is sprawled across the table with his paddle clutched in one hand and his ball in the other. Others have died eating snacks and playing video-games. One man and woman have apparently died while kissing. Whatever it was, it happened fast. In the corner is a juke-box; this is where the music is coming from.

Suddenly the main power goes out. It is replaced by the creepy flat yellow of battery-powered emergency lights mounted high up on the walls. "Don't Fear the Reaper" doesn't so much end as unwind. THE CAMERA MOVES AMONG THE DEAD, their faces lit by that ghastly ocher light, their eyes as blank and glazed as those in the heads of stuffed animals.

14 EXT. THE COMPOUND AND THE CROW

14

CREDITS CONTINUE.

With a rusty CAW, the CROW takes wing--places to go and things to do, don't you know. Now the CAMERA is looking at BABY LAVON'S teddy-bear, lying in the dust and looking up with an eye as glazed as those of the corpses lying below it.

15 EXT. A DESERT HIGHWAY, FROM ABOVE NEAR SUNSET

15

As the FINAL CREDITS ROLL, we see the CAMPIONS' battered Chevrolet busting along at high speed. It is little more than a black silhouette against the furnace of the setting sun, and if it looks like the silhouette of a hearse, that's fitting; it is carrying an unseen load of death which will soon spread across the country and the world. We TRACK WITH THE CAR, then

DISSOLVE TO:

16 EXT. HAPSCOMB'S SERVICE STATION, LONG JUST PAST SUNSET 16

This gas station is the only building visible along this stretch of U.S. 93; empty countryside stretches away on either side. The road is currently deserted.

Very faint, we hear Hank Williams: "My Yvonne...sweetest one... me-oh-my-oh..."

TITLE CARD: ARNETTE, TEXAS JUNE 17

17 EXT. THE GAS STATION, MUCH CLOSER 17

THE CAMERA is on the far side of the tarmac, with the pumps between us and the office. CRICKETS CHIRRUP in the oncoming dusk and moths flutter around the lights on the gas islands. The SOUND of Hank Williams singing "Jambalaya" is louder.

The gas station is an island of light in the country dark. It's a warm night, and the door has been chocked open to let in some breeze. Inside, we can see five men sitting around in those we're-shooting-the-shit postures that are unmistakable pure-d country. The man at the desk is BILL HAPSCOMB, the owner. He's about 45. The other four are NORM BRUETT and TOMMY WANNAMAKER (both about 30), HENRY CARMICHAEL (about 60), and VIC PALFREY (about 70). Standing apart from them, by the open door and listening as he looks out into the night, is a sixth man--STU REDMAN. He's thirtyish, and good-looking in a rugged, unpretentious way.

THE CAMERA MOVES ACROSS THE TARMAC and TOWARD THE STATION. We pick up on what HAP'S saying as it does.

HAP

Now what I say is this. They just gotta say screw this inflation shit--

RADIO

"This is Q-106, Houston's home of country music. That was the immortal Hank Williams--"

VIC PALFREY turns the radio off.

VIC

Immortal, my fanny. He's as dead as John the Baptist.

HAP looks annoyed to have his sermon interrupted. STU, standing by the door, looks quietly amused. He continues to look out the door at U.S. 93.

HAP

Will you listen to me, old man?

CONTINUES

17 CONTINUES

VIC

Been listenin to you for twenty years
or more, ain't I? All that wisdom and
I ain't rich yet.

The others laugh. STU, arm up and leaning on the doorjamb, smiles to himself. HAP frowns at VIC. NORM BRUETT gets up, goes over to the soda machine, and gives it a boot. A bottle of Dr. Pepper drops down. The feeling we get is that these men have been here, doing these same things, for a good many years.

HAP

All I can say is if they'd get more
money into circulation, the problem'd
take care of itself. It's simple economics.

TOMMY

There ain't nothin simple about it.
If there was twice as much money in
circulation...

STU has been half-listening to all this, letting it flow over him--just another night with the boys at Hap's gas station, and nothing being said they haven't all heard before. Then his gaze sharpens as he spots something of interest coming along the road toward the station.

18 EXT. ONCOMING CAR, STU'S POV

18

In the gathering gloom we really can't see much but the headlights, but it's CHARLES CAMPION'S Chevy, of course, and it's all over the road, pitching and yawing from side to side as it approaches the gas station.

19 EXT. THE GAS STATION, FEATURING STU

19

From this angle we can see the oncoming Chevy, but STU remains the **only** one aware of the developing situation. His initial **interest** has evolved into sharp concern.

STU

Hap.

HAP takes no notice. TOMMY and VIC are getting into it, which is always amusing. He and the others are watching the face-off.

VIC

You don't know nothing, Tommy Wannamaker!
I guess lickin the glue on the back of all
those food-stamps must have finally
done something to your brain.

CONTINUES

19 CONTINUES

STU

Hap, turn off your pumps!

HAP looks up, his mind still on the argument.

HAP

What--?

He suddenly realizes that, outside the dirty plate glass, headlights are boring right at him.

HAP

Hey!

The others look around. STU moves to his left, fast, opens the switch-box there, and turns them all off at once with the heel of his hand.

20 EXT. THE PUMPS, CU 20

The digital read-outs go dark as the power cuts out.

21 EXT. CAMPION'S CHEVY 21

CHARLES'S voice is so thick with phlegm he's almost gargling his words.

CHARLES (voice)

Hold on, darlin...and hold Baby
Lavon. We're goin in.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as the old Chevy veers off the road and across the service station tarmac, headed straight for the pumps.

22 INT. HAP'S SERVICE STATION 22

STU stands in the doorway, looking out. Behind him, the other men scatter like quail.

TOMMY

Holy God, he's comin all the way through!

STU (mostly to himself)

I don't think so.

23 EXT. THE TARMAC OF THE SERVICE STATION

The Chevy swerves at the last moment, taking out all the pumps on one island before coming to a stop. The driver's side door pops open. CHARLES CAMPION flies out and hits the cement like a rag doll. He raises his awful, swelled face toward the light and starts to crawl toward it.

24 INT. THE STATION

24

The men are stunned and horrified.

TOMMY

Holy moly! Will she blow, Hap?

HAP

If it was gonna, it already woulda.

HENRY (to STU)

Lookit that fella! Did he do that to his face when he fell outta the car?

STU

I doubt it.

He starts out. The others look dubious, then they go, too. HAP leads this second wave; after all, it's his station.

25 EXT. AT THE WRECKED CAR

25

STU kneels over CHARLES, who is still trying to crawl, and takes him gently in his arms. VIC, HENRY, and HAP stand behind them in a semi-circle. NORM and TOMMY go to investigate the car.

CHARLES struggles in STU'S arms. STU restrains him gently.

STU

Steady, fella--I got you.

[To HAP]

Phone Rescue Services. Braintree. Now.

HAP

Right.

He turns and runs back toward the office.

STU (to CHARLES)

Stand down, fella. Just stand down.

26 EXT. NORM BRUETT AND TOMMY WANNAMAKER, AT THE CAR

26

TOMMY puts his hands over his mouth, runs to the edge of the tarmac, and vomits into the weeds. NORM just goes on staring into the car, his face frozen with amazed horror.

SOUND: BUZZING FLIES.

NORM (low)

Lord God in heaven.

27 INT. THE CHEVY, NORM'S POV

27

We've got a better view of the car than before--probably better than some of us would have wanted. Its full of crumpled taco and hamburger wrappers, soda cans, used diapers, baby bottles, and all the assorted et ceteras that accrete during long, hard hours on the road. The luggage is still piled in the back.

In the corner of the front seat, SALLY clutches BABY LAVON on her lap. The fact that CHARLES was talking to SALLY only underlines his delirium; these two have been dead for quite awhile. Days, maybe. Several squadrons of flies are practicing landings and takeoffs on their faces.

28 EXT. NORM

28

He staggers back, utterly overcome.

29 EXT. STU AND CHARLES CAMPION

29

HAP hurries back, pushing between VIC and HENRY.

HAP

Ambulance'll be here in ten minutes.

CHARLES claws up at STU.

CHARLES

Sally...the baby...sick...need help...

STU looks around at the car just as NORM joins the group. NORM looks like a man who hopes he's having a bad dream. STU looks a question at him. NORM slowly shakes his head. Any other questions are answered by his green face, and by TOMMY, who's still being sick over in the high toolies.

CHARLES

Please help...wife...Baby Lavon...

HAP (with a sick grin)

They're fine, mister. Both of em. Now you just want to take it easy...the ambulance is on the way...

CHARLES

We didn't...get out in time...after all...

STU

You better be quiet, friend. Rest yourself.

CHARLES (persists)

Gate malfunctioned...only reason we got out at all...me...Sally...Baby Lavon.

CONTINUES

29 CONTINUES

He starts to cough. The coughing turns to thick choking sounds. HENRY, HAP, and NORM back off a few steps, grossed out.

VIC

Git his head over to the side, Stu--he's goan choke on it.

STU does as VIC advises, and CHARLES'S coughing eases.

CHARLES

Sally and the baby...sick since Salt Lake City. I was okay until... this morning.

The other men exchange sudden, frightened looks and back off another step. CHARLES reaches up and grabs STU'S shoulder.

CHARLES

Sally and Baby Lavon? Are they all right? Mister? Are they--

He starts to COUGH and CHOKE again.

STU

Take it easy, friend. You just settle down and take it easy.

CHARLES'S eyes roll madly in their puffy sockets.

CHARLES (raving now)

Did you bring in the dog? I ain't got time to run the neighborhood lookin to throw a line over that dog's head! You mind me now! You just--

He COUGHS, CHOKES.

30

EXT. THE OTHER MEN

30

HAP (to HENRY)

What's he got? Any idea?

HENRY

Food-poisoning, maybe--car's got a California plate. They coulda got some bad chow at a roadside stand--

VIC

I hope you're right, because I seen cholera back in 1958, down near Nogales, and this is what it looks like.

CONTINUES

30 CONTINUES

NORM (soft, horrified)

Damn.

They all take another step back.

31 EXT. STU AND CHARLES CAMPION

31

CHARLES

I knew it was trouble when I saw the crow. Damn bad-luck bird.

STU

Be quiet, friend. The ambulance will be along pretty quick.

CHARLES

We couldn't...outrun it.

He dies in STU'S arms. STU holds him a moment longer before realizing, then lowers him to the tarmac, takes off his outer shirt, and covers CHARLES'S face with it. Then he stands up.

TOMMY (joins them)

There's two more in the car. A woman and a little girl. Both dead.

HAP (nervous)

There's some of his blood on your neck, Stu. You better go on in the bathroom and wash it off. In case he's...you know...

STU

Contagious.

HAP

Uh...yeah.

STU starts for the station. The men draw back from him as he approaches them--they look ashamed, but they do it. In the distance we hear the FAINT SOUND OF AN AMBULANCE SIREN.

VIC

Stu? Did he say what happened?

STU turns back, looks at them gravely. The smear of CAMPION'S blood above the round collar of his undershirt is very prominent

STU

He said they couldn't outrun it.

He starts for the station again. The other men stand in a little knot, looking at each other uneasily, with CAMPION and the crashed Chevy behind them.

32 EXT. U.S. 93, HIGH AND LONG NIGHT 32

Far below us are pulsing red sparks that are the flashers of the Braintree Rescue Services ambulance. The SIREN WAILS. We HOLD ON THIS, then slowly

DISSOLVE TO:

33 EXT. THE OGUNQUIT BREAKWATER DAY 33

This is a long finger of rock that sticks bravely out into the Atlantic Ocean. Sitting out at the end of it, and chunking rocks into the water as he waits for his lady-love, is JESS RIDER.

ROMANTIC SOUNDS: BREAKERS and CRYING GULLS.

ROMANTIC TITLE CARD: OGUNQUIT, MAINE JUNE 18

34 EXT. THE OGUNQUIT BEACH PARKING LOT 34

We can see the breakwater in the b.g. A subcompact car pulls into a space near the parking lot attendant's shack. FRAN GOLDSMITH gets out. She's a good-looking young woman of about twenty-one, now wearing an attractive shift-dress (perhaps over a swimsuit). Her good looks aren't forbidding; this is a lassie who likes to laugh.

GUS, the parking lot attendant, ambles out to meet her.

GUS

Your fella's out at the end of the pier,
Miss Goldsmith.

FRAN

Thanks, Gus.

She walks toward the breakwater. On the way, she passes a bike-rack with one bike in it, a nifty ten-speed. Pasted on the carry frame behind the seat is a bumper-sticker which says SPLIT WOOD, NOT AXOMS. FRAN touches it, then looks out toward the breakwater where JESS is waiting for her. The expression on her face is a complicated mixture of amusement and exasperation.

Slowly, she walks on.

35 EXT. THE END OF THE BREAKWATER 35

JESS, a highly romantic young man of twenty-one or -two, sits in the f.g., with a highly romantic--and slightly sappy--expression on his face. Here's lonely Lord Byron, tossing pebbles into the Atlantic and thinking up his next poem.

CONTINUES

35 CONTINUES

Lord Byron doesn't see FRAN tiptoeing up behind him; she arrives within striking distance unnoticed. JESS--alias Lord Byron--draws back his hand to toss another stone (with the proper melancholy expression on his face, of course), and FRAN grabs it

FRAN (gleeful)

Booga-booga!

JESS SCREAMS and leaps to his feet, transformed from Lord Byron into one of the Three Stooges in the wink of an eye. He whirls. FRAN, startled by his surprise, takes a step backward and falls on her fanny. Hard.

FRAN

Ow!

Then she starts to giggle, even though there are tears of pain in her eyes. She reacts like this a lot of the time. In the words of that old Little Richard tune, the girl can't help it.

JESS, instantly contrite, kneels beside her. He's sympathetic, but something in his voice says he believes she got about what she deserved for scaring a fellow out of his romantic ruminations that way.

JESS

Fran? Are you okay?

FRAN (laughing and crying)

I don't know. Can a person fracture her ass, do you know?

JESS

I think that's actually called "an insult to the lower spine." You scared the hell out of me.

He ~~helps~~ her to her feet.

FRAN

I know. I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me.

JESS

The same thing that always comes over you.

FRAN stops laughing and looks at him curiously, solemnly.

CONTINUES

35 CONTINUES (2)

JESS (irritably)
I love you, Frannie; it's just that
sometimes you're a pain in--
[He points at what she fell on.]
Come on; let's see if you can walk okay.

They start back down the breakwater. FRAN'S walking just fine, and soon JESS stops looking for possible injuries and starts observing her form in a less detached fashion. The waves break, the gulls soar, and when he stops to take her in his arms, I'm sure no one would blame him a bit.

FRAN
Sure you're not mad?

JESS
I couldn't stay mad at you for more
than five minutes if they gave a prize
for it.

Their lips move closer and closer together during this exchange.

FRAN
I think we're going to test that.

He misses the sense of this entirely; he's off in his own romantic world again. They kiss. It's a long one. At last:

JESS
Nice?

FRAN
Very nice.

They begin to walk along the breakwater toward the parking lot again, arms around each other.

JESS
I saw Flip Thompson in Portland.
He's still cooking in that little
dive on Forest Avenue. You know the
one I mean...The Hungry Bear?

FRAN speaks casually, but she's watching JESSIE very closely.

FRAN
Uh-huh. Guess what? I'm pregnant.

JESS
Really? That's good. I asked him if he
meant to spend the rest of his life
flippin burgers and he said--

CONTINUES

35 CONTINUES (3)

It hits him at last, and his face freezes. He comes to a dead stop. His arm pulls away from her. She looks at him with that same pleasant expression, but the light has gone out of it.

FRAN

Caught you by surprise again, didn't I? I keep forgetting I'm not supposed to do that. Silly me.

JESS (uncertain)

Big joke, Frannie.

FRAN

Not this time, Jess. On this particular subject I seem to be all out of jokes.

JESS (slow, but getting it)

You really are...

FRAN (big eyes; does Shirley Temple)

Yes! I really are!

JESS

Well, there's no need to get mad about it. I mean...hey! You really surprised me, and...

She wheels angrily away from him and starts walking fast along the breakwater, toward the parking lot. JESS stands where he is for a moment, nonplussed, then hurries to catch up.

36 EXT. FRAN AND JESS, FROM THE PARKING LOT

36

They approach THE CAMERA as they talk. Nearby is the bike-rack with JESS'S ten-speed in it.

FRAN

I needed to catch you by surprise because I had to say what I came to say before I lost my nerve. I came to tell you I'm pregnant with your child. Okay, mission accomplished. I also came to tell you that I want to spend the next month or so thinking about what comes next. What I didn't come for was to be blamed, fixed, or scolded.

JESS

Fran, I want us to be together.

CONTINUES

36 CONTINUES

They reach the bike-rack, FRAN a little ahead of JESS. She takes a deep breath and starts to gain control again. She pats the seat of his bike.

FRAN

I want you to get on this and ride back to Portland. Call me the week after the Fourth of July. Maybe we'll have dinner, and maybe then we can talk.

JESS

But...I reserved a motel room for tonight and tomorrow night!

FRAN (dangerously sweet)

And at summer rates, too! Well, maybe they'll refund your deposit, Jess-- what do you think? I mean, it is still pretty early in the ~~summer~~ season.

She stretches toward him and gives him a kiss--the merest peck.

JESS (completely lost)

Jess...I don't know what you...

FRAN

I know you don't...but that's okay. Just remember the rules: no calls until at least July 10th. I need time to think. About the baby, about us. And if you don't call, I'll know something else, won't I?

He tries to sweep her into his arms--Lord Byron forging past all petty human concerns in the name of love--but she pushes him back so hard he almost falls over his bike. She smiles, but there are now tears in her eyes as well.

FRAN

That's not the solution, Jess--that's the problem. Call me next month. After the 10th.

She turns abruptly and starts toward her car. JESS looks after her, stunned and suddenly very young. Very bewildered.

JESS

I love you, Fran!

37 EXT. THE PARKING LOT, A NEW ANGLE WITH FRAN 37

Now the tears are rolling down her cheeks, but there's no sign of them in her voice as she fumbles out her car-keys.

FRAN (without looking back)
After the 10th! If you still want to!

GUS comes out of his little shack. He's concerned.

GUS
Everything all right?

FRAN (crying)
Fine, Gus. I just fell down. Bruised my tailbone.

She gets into her car, crying harder, starts it up with a ROAR. GUS stands looking after her, puzzled and confused.

38 EXT. JESS, AT THE FOOT OF THE BREAKWATER 38

He's also looking after her, stunned and bewildered, with all those breaking waves and soaring gulls--all that romance--now very much in the background.

DISSOLVE TO:

39 EXT. A SMALL GOVERNMENT COMPOUND ON THE PACIFIC DAY 39

Two or three concrete buildings--squat and windowless block-houses--crouch on a rocky promontory overlooking the Pacific. Wire surrounds the place. Armed guards are in evidence at the single checkpoint. Off to the left, a row of microwave radar dishes point their bland, blind faces at the sky.

TITLE CARD: BLUE BASE BAJA, CALIFORNIA JUNE 18

40 INT. A COMMAND CENTER 40

It ~~looks~~ like the NASA control room at Cape Canaveral. Thirty or forty ~~men~~ and women sit at computer work-stations, cross to other work-stations, or confer with each other urgently. Urgency is, in fact, the overriding feeling of the place. These people are playing catch-up.

One wall of the room is dominated by a huge map of the continental U.S., with the states outlined. The map is aqua, except for one small blinking red light that marks the Project Blue installation in the Mojave from which CHARLES CAMPION fled. An inset map of California may help make this clearer, if it matters.

CONTINUES

40 CONTINUES

LEN CARSLAIGH enters the room from the far end. He is spruce and squared away in his military uniform; he'd be a walking recruiting poster...if they put full colonels on them, that is. He has a briefcase in one hand and his hat tucked under the other arm.

As he strides up the aisle toward THE CAMERA, head up, eyes front, back so straight you could hang a plumbline from it, he is occasionally approached by harried techs who want to show him their computer print-outs or graphics. CARSLAIGH (we can read his name on his lapel name-tag) waves them all away.

41 INT. A GLASS, ECU

41

A bottle hits the rim. Two inches of amber liquid pour into the glass. Probably not iced tea.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK, showing us a conference room--the real heart of Blue Base--and its current sole inhabitant, GENERAL WILLIAM STARKEY. STARKEY is the antithesis of his spruce, squared-away second-in-command. His shirt--suntan, not dress--hangs wrinkled on the chair behind him. He's in his undershirt. His cheeks are rough with stubble, his eyes bloodshot.

He is sitting at the head of the long conference table. It's littered with sheaves and crumpled balls of paper; looks like someone had one hell of a board meeting. Fax machines--at least three--are ranged along one wall, along with several computer terminals. Along another wall is a row of five TV monitors, now turned off.

STARKEY reaches behind him, fumbles in one of the pockets of the suntan shirt hung on the back of his chair, and pulls out a blue pill. Anyone who's ever taken a Valium will recognize it at once. The rest of us will probably guess. He swallows it with booze, then gets up and walks slowly over to the bank of TV monitors.

A **KNOCK** at the door.

STARKEY (doesn't look around)

Come.

He begins turning on the monitors. Each shows a different image of the dead folks under the Mojave--the hallway with the overturned supply cart; the dead clerical personnel; the dead Ping-Pong player; the kissing couple. The fifth monitor shows the cafeteria, and features the woman face-down in the Hungarian goulash. At the bottom of each screen the words FATAL INCURSION flash on and off like neon from hell.

CARSLAIGH steps in.

CONTINUES

41 CONTINUES

CARSLEIGH (salutes)
General Starkey, sir!

STARKEY continues to study the monitors. He's fascinated by them.

STARKEY
Close the door and drop the bull, Len.

CARSLEIGH
Yes, sir.

He closes the door, spins his hat onto the table, and walks over to STARKEY.

STARKEY
This is a mess, Len.

CARSLEIGH
Billy, I have what may be--

STARKEY (overrides him)
Shifting antigen flu--probably the most deadly virus ever created. Mortality and communicability believed to be over 99%. We have 248 known casualties, but the real problem is our one known survivor. Campion. Know what he was doing? Replacing coaxial cable in the video system. The whole world is at risk because of one glorified TV repairman who happened to be in the right place at the wrong time. He saw what happened...and took it on the run. He's the problem.

CARSLEIGH is bursting with barely suppressed triumph.

CARSLEIGH
That's why I'm here, Billy! We've located Campion!

At first STARKEY can barely believe it. Then his face lights up. He wheels from the monitors and grabs CARSLEIGH by the shoulders. Holds himself under control with an effort.

STARKEY
Tell me.

CARSLEIGH
He crash-landed at a gas station on the outskirts of a little East Texas town.

CONTINUES

41 CONTINUES (2)

STARKEY (terrified all over again)
So far! My God, so far! He made it
almost all the way across the country?
How could he do that, Len? How? How
the hell did he get out in the first
place, for that matter?

CARSLEIGH
That isn't the important thing--not
right now. Investigations can come
later; the important thing right now
is containment.

STARKEY (still slumping)
99% communicability--do you understand
what that means? Do you get it? Do you
have any idea how many people that
idiot and his wife must have talked to
on their way across the country? How
many faces their idiot child must have
sneezed in?

CARSLEIGH
We can't think that way, Billy. If we do--
He shrugs. If we do, that shrug says, all this is useless. If
we do, maybe we have to admit our responsibility in killing
the world.

Slowly, STARKEY nods.

STARKEY
Yes--you're right. Of course you are.
[Gradually becomes more brisk]
What about the Campions? Dead or alive?

CARSLEIGH
Dead. Their contact with the townspeople
was minimal.

STARKEY
That doesn't matter! That town's got
to be locked up, shut down! We've got
to dig a moat around it!

CARSLEIGH (soothing)
That operation's already underway.
And if we're lucky--very lucky--
containment is still a possibility.

STARKEY
When do we go in?

CONTINUES

41 CONTINUES (3)

CARSLEIGH

Soon. The next couple of hours.
The story is anthrax. A new strain.

STARKEY (looks at the monitors)

Oh, it's new, all right. Very new.
And very virulent.

42 INT. THE MAP IN THE BIG COMMAND CENTER

42

THE CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY. A cool aqua, except for that one
flashing red point in the Mojave.

CARSLEIGH (voice)

It's bad...but it could be a hell
of a lot worse.

STARKEY (voice)

What's the name of this town?

But we already know. A tiny point of red light starts to flash
near the place where Texas borders Arkansas and Louisiana.

CARSLEIGH (voice)

Arnette. Arnette, Texas.

We hold, CU, on that ominous flashing red dot.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 1.

ACT 2

43 EXT. A BUSINESSMAN IN NEW YORK DAY

43

He's on the curb, waiting to cross the street in a driving down-pour. A passing cab douses him with water. The BUSINESSMAN starts to cough and hack.

ANNOUNCER (v-o)

Cold got you down? Chills, fever?
Sounds like you need a buddy! Flu-Buddy!

An animated bottle of Flu-Buddy dances over to the coughing BUSINESSMAN, who looks delighted to see it.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK, first showing us a TV screen and then the world around it: Hapscomb's Service Station near the end of a lazy summer afternoon. VIC PALFREY is sitting at the desk, watching the little portable. His nose is running and his eyes are watery. He has a cold. Or something like it. The SOUND of BANGING TOOLS COMES from the garage-bay.

On the TV, the animated bottle of Flu-Buddy is now dancing with the BUSINESSMAN. VIC grabs a handful of tissues from the box on HAP'S desk and sneezes.

Outside, a Texas State Patrol car pulls up at the pumps. VIC cranes around to look at it.

VIC (calls)

State Patrol, Hap! Looks like your
cousin Joe Bob!

Then he sneezes again into his wad of tissues.

HAP (calls)

Okay!

44 EXT. HAP'S SERVICE STATION

44

HAP comes out of the garage bay, wiping his hands on a ball of waste, and approaches the S.P. cruiser. JOE BOB, a trooper of perhaps thirty-five, is just starting to pump himself some gas. Off to one side, stacked like dead soldiers, are the pumps CHARLES CAMPION took out.

HAP

Hey, Joe-Bob, I'll do that, you want.

JOE BOB

Naw--I'm just toppin the tank, Hap.
I come by for somethin else.

CONTINUES

44 CONTINUES

JOE BOB sees VIC, standing in the door and blowing his nose.

JOE BOB

That old geezer here last night
when the guy took out your pumps?

HAP

Vic? He's here most every night.

VIC, hearing his name, joins them.

JOE BOB

Then maybe he ought to hear, too.

VIC

Hear what?

JOE BOB

There's strangers crawlin all over
Braintree. S'posed to be U.S. Health
Service guys, but they came in a C-5A
transport, and they look like regular
army to me. And there's three more big
transport planes landed over at Starland
in Arkansas since noon.

VIC

It was cholera! I knew it was!

JOE BOB

I don't know nothing about that.

As he speaks, he finishes pumping gas, hangs up the nozzle,
and roots in his pocket for cash.

JOE BOB

I think maybe the Feds have decided
they got somethin nasty here. If
they're thinkin about a quarentine--
and they could be--you might have a little
more to worry about than just cholera.

HAP and VIC look at each other, frightened.

JOE BOB

Just thought you ought to know what's
stirrin in the weeds, Hap. And if you
see any of the other fellas who were
here last night, you might want to
pass it along. Just don't mention
my name.

CONTINUES

44 CONTINUES (2)

JOE BOB comes up with a five-dollar bill. As HAP takes it, VIC starts sneezing again. JOE BOB looks at him with some amusement as he takes the dollar's change HAP is holding out to him and pockets it.

JOE BOB

You want to take care of that, old-timer. Them summer colds are the worst.

He gets into his cruiser and pulls out in a harsh puff of dust. VIC looks at HAP, frightened.

VIC

What if it ain't just a cold? What if I got whatever he had? That guy last night?

HAP

Naw; you just got a cold.

But he's uneasy...and now HAP's the one who sneezes. They stare at each other, both suddenly very worried campers.

HAP

Maybe I'll close the station for the rest of the day. Call some of the other guys. See how they're feelin.

VIC

Might not be such a bad idea.

They start toward the station together.

45 EXT. A STRETCH OF TEXAS TURNPIKE LATE DAY 45

Here comes a State Patrol cruiser--JOE BOB'S--heading east. Coming the other way is a whole convoy of vehicles.

46 INT. THE CRUISER, WITH JOE BOB 46

He's **staring**, surprised, into the westbound lanes. They're Army trucks, and they're headed for Arnette--dozens of them, maybe hundreds: big brown hulks with their lights on in the daytime.

JOE BOB

God-dang!

He COUGHS NERVOUSLY and grabs his mike. During the following, the trucks continue to stream by on his left, looking like something left over from Maximum Overdrive.

CONTINUES

46 CONTINUES

JOE BOB

This is Unit 16, Base. I got the granddaddy of all convoys headed west on I-17, toward Arnette--do you know anything about that? Bye?

47 INT. STATE POLICE COMMUNICATIONS ROOM

47

BASE, a pretty blonde woman in an S.P. uniform, is surrounded by soldiers with guns. She looks nervous. The man in charge gives her an impatient nod and cranks his hand for her to go on.

BASE

Please advise if you've been anywhere near Arnette today? Bye?

48 INT. THE CRUISER, WITH JOE BOB

48

His face says "Uh-oh!" in large letters. He lets go of the mike's transmit button to COUGH, then pushes it down again.

JOE BOB

Negative, base. I been over by the Arkansas line all day. Bye.

BASE

That's fine, then. Suggest you let the Army mind its business and you and you mind yours, Unit 16. Bye.

JOE BOB

It's like that, huh? Okay; unit 16, over and out.

He racks the mike. COUGHS NERVOUSLY--harder, this time--into his closed fist.

JOE BOB

God-DANG!

49 EXT. THE TURNPIKE, HIGH AND LONG

49

JOE BOB'S cruiser passes the tail end of the army convoy.

DISSOLVE TO:

50 EXT. A STATE ROAD LEADING INTO ARNETTE

50

More Army trucks go rolling down this road, past a sign which reads ARNETTE, 2. The last one in line pulls over. Soldiers in combat dress jump out. They quickly unroll a wire barricade and put up signs which read QUARENTINE ZONE KEEP OUT!

51 EXT. DOWNTOWN ARNETTE

51

In the f.g. of this shot is the roof of a high building. From this vantage-point we see Army trucks converging on the center of town from every direction. People scurry to avoid being run over, and civilian drivers are forced to sidewalk their cars.

AMPLIFIED VOICE [REDACTED]
YOU ARE IN NO DANGER, AND YOU WILL BE
BRIEFED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! ATTEN-
TION, PLEASE!

A plump crow lands on the edge of the roof like a professional mourner eager to get a ringside seat at a funeral. It watches.

52 EXT. STU'S HOUSE

52

A '50s ranch job, not handsome but servicable and neat. An Army panel truck pulls up. The DRIVER gets out, along with an older guy carrying a clipboard. The guy with the clipboard is DR. DENNINGER. Both men are wearing NASAL FILTERS. The slide panel opens, and six armed men exit the truck's body.

DRIVER (to DENNINGER)
 Stuart Richard Redman, sir.

DENNINGER puts a check-mark on his list, then starts up the walk. The soldiers flank, three on a side, spreading out across the lawn. Behind them, at the intersection of this residential street and the more heavily travelled boulevard which crosses it, there's heavy traffic. All of it is military.

As they approach the door, it opens. The DRIVER, walking beside DENNINGER, hastily unstraps the flap across his sidearm. There is the SNAK!SNAK! SOUND of the other soldiers chambering rounds. DENNINGER exhibits no fear, but neither is it bravery we feel surrounding him; this is a pompous little bureaucrat who cannot, at bottom, imagine anyone doing anything which runs counter to the things on his list.

DENNINGER stops at the foot of the steps as STU comes out onto the stoop. He's holding a small travelling-bag, not much bigger than a gym-bag, in one hand. In the other is a light jacket with a Houston Oilers logo. STU doesn't seem a bit surprised to see heavily armed, nose-filtered soldiers on his lawn. He immediately picks out DENNINGER as the head honcho.

STU
 Havin a busy day, from the sound.

DENNINGER mounts the steps and takes STU'S arm.

DENNINGER
 Lieutenant Herbert Denninger, Mr. Redman.
 Will you come with us?

CONTINUES

52 CONTINUES

STU looks down at DENNINGER'S arm, then up at DENNINGER. His voice and his face are both mild, but his eyes BURN WITH RAGE.

STU

You got about three seconds to get your hand off my arm, Lieutenant. Then I'm gonna rip it off you and stick it where the sun don't shine.

For the first time DENNINGER looks really unsettled, and he takes his hand off STU'S arm in a hurry.

DENNINGER

I hardly think, Mr. Redman, there's any reason to be rude.

STU surveys the SOLDIERS, then looks at DENNINGER with quiet contempt.

STU

Then you're even dumber than you look, my friend.

DENNINGER (turns to his troops)

He was one of the men who had direct contact with Campion. Put him in the back of the truck. If he resists--

STU

I'm not gonna resist. Rude don't mean stupid, Lieutenant.

He starts down the walk toward the panel truck; the SOLDIERS move with him. Coming out of the house next door are NORM BRUETT and his wife, LILA. They are being herded by another pair of SOLDIERS. LILA is hysterical, pleading with them to be told what's going on. The SOLDIERS ignore her.

LILA (hysterical)

I ain't going! I ain't!

And ~~although~~ she probably thinks Ghandi is a brand of pork-rind made in Fayetteville, she understands passive resistance well enough to collapse to her knees on the BRUETT walk.

In the f.g., STU has stopped on his walk. He, DENNINGER, and STU'S personal COMPLIMENT OF SOLDIERS watch the action next door, where one of the SOLDIERS now reaches down and grabs LILA by the hair.

NORM

Hey! Get your hands off'n her!

CONTINUES

52 CONTINUES (2)

He reaches for the SOLDIER pulling LILA'S hair. The SECOND SOLDIER rams him in the side of the head with the butt of his rifle. NORM staggers two steps onto the lawn, one hand pressed to his bleeding, swelling cheekbone, and then collapses to his knees, dazed.

Similar scenes are being enacted all up and down this suburban street...but STU has seen enough of this one. He runs across to the BRUETT lawn. The SOLDIERS who have been flanking him immediately raise their rifles.

DENNINGER

Redman! Get back here!

STU takes no notice of him.

53 EXT. ON THE BRUETT LAWN, FEATURING STU AND LILA

53

LILA's still on her knees, with her hands laced protectively over the back of her head, trying to protect her hair from being pulled again. She is sobbing hysterically. STU squats beside her, and she looks at him with a kind of panicky relief.

LILA

Stu, what's happening? They want us to go to Vermont! I ain't never been to Vermont! I ain't never been further north than Delaware! And they hit Norm!

STU

Norm's all right, Lila.

[To NORM]

Come over here, Norm, show her you're all right.

NORM staggers over. He looks like Foreman after his match with Holyfield.

NORM

I'm all right, darlin.

STU (to LILA)

Best you go with them.

LILA

But--

SOUND: DISTANT GUNFIRE and FAINT SCREAMS.

CONTINUES

53 CONTINUES

STU, NORM, LILA, and SOLDIERS all look toward the SOUND, and DENNINGER joins them, accompanied by the SOLDIERS who were flanking STU.

DENNINGER (annoyed)
Mr. Redman, I insist you get in the truck right now. Or--

STU (utter contempt)
Or what? You'll shoot me? That don't scare me much, Lieutenant Denninger; if we got what that guy Campion had, we're dead already. Right?

NORM (frightened)
Stu? What do you mean?

STU
Never mind.
[He helps LILA up]
Just take care of her.

NORM puts his arm around LILA. She puts her head on his shoulder and touches his bleeding cheek.

STU cuts across the lawns toward the panel truck. DENNINGER, looking bewildered (it never went this way in the training exercises, his face says), trails after him. The SOLDIERS bracket STU. He pauses to grab his gym-bag and jacket, then goes on to the curb, where he stops to look at DENNINGER.

STU
There's going to be a bill for all this, you know.

DENNINGER
Come along, Mr. Redman.

STU starts to step into the van via the slide door, then stops to look back.

STU
You want to remember what I said.
Bills have a way of comin due.

He steps inside the van. The SOLDIERS get in behind him. The truck pulls away.

54 EXT. A MILITARY AIRSTRIP DAY

54

TITLE CARD: BRAINTREE, TEXAS

A C-5A Starlifter--the world's biggest transport plane--lumbers down the runway and finally staggers into the air.

55 INT. THE C-5A

55

If you've never been in one of these babies, you have to rethink your concept of the word big as it applies to aircraft. In the center of the fuselage, surrounded by gloom and shadows, is a little island of humanity: about forty people from Arnette sitting in makeshift aircraft seats.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN on them as the plane levels off. The NOISE is initially VERY LOUD, and many of our friends from Texas have their hands clapped over their ears. As the PLANE LEVELS, the SOUND ALSO LEVELS--people take their hands off their ears.

DENNINGER (voice)

Folks, our flying time today will
be three hours and forty minutes...
and Uncle Sam's buying all the drinks!

A number of BURLY SOLDIERS wearing NOSE FILTERS begin to circulate. They look like the bouncers in Jack Dempsey's Bar used to look, but their attitude is that of waiters in high-class restaurants...deferential and just a bit snotty.

As THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO MOVE IN, we see all the people we met at the gas station, plus their wives, if they have them. The others are neighbors, friends, family. They all look stunned. HAP is sitting next to STU as one of the "STEWARDS" approach.

"STEWARD"

Drinks, sir?

STU and HAP look at each other. STU shrugs.

STU

Got a beer?

"STEWARD"

Of course, sir.

HAP

Scotch on the rocks.

"STEWARD"

Very good, sir.

He starts away.

CONTINUES

55 CONTINUES

HAP

Better make it a double. (Pauses)
And never mind the rocks, now that
I think about it.

[To STU]

I ain't been this scared since the
Mekong Delta, back in '69. (Pauses)
No--that ain't true. I never been
this scared. (Pauses) It's just the
ones that was there when Campion croaked,
ain't it? Us, our families, the people
we been around since.

STU

On this load, yeah.

HAP

What do you mean, this load?

The "STEWARD" returns with their drinks. They wait until he's gone before resuming their conversation, this time in the low tones of World War II POWs. STU sips his beer; HAP drains half of his Scotch in one long swallow.

STU

I mean Arnette's been cancelled.

HAP (horrified)

You serious?

STU

Yeah. Think so.

He looks at:

56 INT. LILA, NORM, "STEWARD"

56

A professional-looking bandage has been placed on NORM'S cheek. The ~~grizzled~~ "STEWARD" gives him a can of suds and LILA a mixed drink that looks like a Mai Tai. She's recovered enough (maybe it's just the prospect of a drink) to flirt with the "STEWARD" a bit. He smiles back dutifully, but his eyes are hard.

57 INT. STU AND HAP

57

STU

Pretty funny bunch of old boys they
got servin the drinks, wouldn't you say?
Not one of em under fifty...and not a
single one wearin a weddin ring.

HAP and STU look at each other with frightened eyes.

58 EXT. THE C-5A 58

Winging its way north. We HOLD ON IT for a moment, then
DISSOLVE TO:

59 EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET IN QUEENS EARLY MORNING 59

TITLE CARD: QUEENS, NEW YORK JUNE 19

It's so early that nothing is stirring yet. This was probably a nice neighborhood--in an Archie Bunker kind of way--a few years back, but it's gone a long way downhill since then. Bags of garbage, many of them ripped open, line the streets. Graffiti decorates the pushed-together semi-detacheds.

Around the corner comes a snazzy Iroc-Z. From inside, muffled (it must be really cranked if we can hear it out here) comes the sound of "Baby, Can You Dig Your Man?" by Larry Underwood. When the Z pulls up in front of one of the houses, we can read the California vanity licence plate: LARRY-1.

60 INT. THE Z, WITH LARRY UNDERWOOD 60

He's maybe 23, and looks like what he is--a middlebrow rocker of the Michael Bolton stripe. He's good-looking but obviously tired. He looks, in fact, like death warmed over. The interior of the Z is an upscale version of the interior of CAMPION'S Chevy; a better class of road-food wrappers and a lot of beer cans. It's also littered with cassettes. Most of them are the album Pocket Savior, by Larry Underwood. With our boy's picture on them. The music coming out of the Iroc's multiple speakers is cranked to nose-bleed levels.

RECORDED LARRY

"But bay-yay-vaby you can tell me if anyone can,
Baby, can you dig your man?
He's a righteous man..."

LARRY turns off the car and the music dies. He looks out the window, the expression on his face lonely, hopeful, depressed.. but maybe in the end just tired.

LARRY (soft)

To market, to market, to buy a fat pig.

He opens the door and gets out with what is clearly an effort.

61 EXT. BESIDE THE Z, WITH LARRY 61

LARRY (soft)

Home again, home again, jiggedy-jig.

CONTINUES

61 CONTINUES

He sighs, starts across the sidewalk, remembers he's in Fun City now, returns to the car, locks it. Then he crosses, climbs the steps, and looks at the bell.

62 EXT. THE DOORBELL, LARRY'S POV 62

ALICE UNDERWOOD, the little card beneath reads.

63 EXT. LARRY 63

LARRY

Home again, home again, jiggedy-jig.

He rings the bell. We hear the SOUND, FAINT. He waits. Rings again. Waits again. Starts to ring again, and then the curtain beside the door is twitched aside. A woman looks out.

LARRY grins--a slightly manufactured grin. Raises a hand.

LARRY

Ma! It's me!

The curtain falls back into place. The door remains closed long enough for LARRY'S grin to falter back toward uncertainty. At last the door opens. ALICE UNDERWOOD stands there, unsmiling, looking at her son. She's wearing a cleaning woman's uniform.

LARRY (with a grin)

Hello, Ma--I'm home.

ALICE (unsmiling)

So I see.

LARRY

Aren't you glad to see me?

ALICE

Should I be? Should I be, Larry?

LARRY

I guess I can be glad for both of us...if I have to be.

He steps forward and puts his arms around her. ALICE'S face opens with reluctant love, and we see she's afraid of that love...afraid of being hurt again. Nevertheless, she opens her arms and hugs him back.

ALICE

Come on inside, Larry, before the neighbors get an eyeful.

She leads him in and closes the door behind him.

64 INT. ALICE UNDERWOOD'S KITCHEN EARLY MORNING

64

Some time has passed--maybe only fifteen minutes, but long enough for LARRY to regain all his skin-deep charm. The scared kid who turned up on ALICE'S doorstep is gone, replaced by the Big-Time Rock Operator and Star of Tomorrow. He's shovelling up a huge plate of his Mom's bacon and eggs while he talks.

LARRY

So when the record cracked the top fifty on the Billboard chart--you've heard it, haven't you?

ALICE

Of course I have. You sound black.

LARRY does Eddie Murphy, complete with the little aspirated laugh at the end.

LARRY

"That brown soun, it sho do get aroun."
Anyway, when it cracked the top fifty, all at once everyone in L.A. was a pal. And it occurred to me that if I didn't head east in a hurry, I was gonna turn into just another L.A. gameshow host with a blow-dry and a headful of capped teeth.

Which, of course, is exactly what he has turned into. He gives Mom a big sparkly smile. ALICE, who knows all his tricks, doesn't smile back.

LARRY (eating again)

So how's your back, Mom?

ALICE

Pains me some, but I got my pills.
What kind of trouble are you in, Larry?

LARRY gives her a wide-eyed "Who, me?" look that cuts no ice at all. She just looks back at him.

LARRY

Well...maybe I overspent my advance a little. I didn't know the record company was gonna be so cheap. Anyway, I...well...I borrowed some money.

ALICE

But you wouldn't be here after all these years if it was the bank you'd borrowed it from. You went to the leg-breakers, didn't you?

CONTINUES

64 CONTINUES

His downcast look is answer enough. ALICE gets up and begins clearing the table.

ALICE

Are they different out there on the west coast, Larry? Do they give you a Perrier and lime first? You're just like your father.

LARRY

I am NOT just like my old man!

ALICE

You sound mad.

LARRY

I am mad!

ALICE

Good. It's good to know there's still a real person in there someplace. How deep a hole are you in? And don't lie-- I've seen the car, the clothes, and the gold chains you're wearin.

LARRY (reluctant, ashamed)

About forty thousand.

ALICE (closes her eyes)

Jesus wept.

LARRY gets up and goes to her, smiling rapurously, eyes full of a new tomorrow...the con-man in full plumage, in other words.

LARRY

But "Baby Can You Dig Your Man"'s up to number twenty-one this week, Ma--with a bullet! The album isn't in the Hot One Hundred yet, but I know it will be! Forty thousand's nothing! I'm not going to let them make me a one-hit-wonder, either; I'm going to stick around.

He pauses, then delivers the big news in reverent tones.

LARRY

I'm going to be famous. Even better, I'm going to be rich.

CONTINUES

64 CONTINUES (2)

ALICE (sighs)
The bed's still in your old room.
I'll make it up, but then I have to
go to work. I'm going to be late
as it is.

He hugs her fervently. Over his shoulder we see the same
expression on her face, the one that says her love for him
is something she cannot change, only hope to endure.

LARRY
Thanks, Mom! Thanks!

CAMERA MOVES IN on her patient, long-suffering face.

ALICE
Welcome home, Larry.

DISSOLVE TO:

65 INT. A CONTROL ROOM

65

It's a high-tech version of a hospital ICU monitoring room.
CAMERA SLOWLY PANS all sorts of equipment--we probably recog-
nize the EEG and EKG screens, and can guess that others are
monitoring various metabolic functions. There are also TV
monitors, some on and some off.

SOUND: SOFT, RHYTHMIC BEEPS.

TITLE CARD: VERMONT DISEASE CONTROL HIGH-SECURITY CENTER JUNE 19

We also PAN by half a dozen PERSONNEL. All wear white coveralls
and soft white hoods. Nose-filters are standard issue. Four of
those present are dealing with the gadgets. The other two, DEITZ
and DENNINGER, are monitoring the patient.

CAMERA PANS TO a window. Through it we can see a patient in a
hospital bed. He's got about a billion tubes in him and a forest
of IV bottles hanging around him, but we recognize VIC PALFREY.

66 INT. PALFREY'S ROOM

66

His face is swelled, his cheeks are purple-black, his neck is the
size of an innertube. His breathing is HARSH, STAGGERING. We see
him doubled in the mirror which is a window on the other side.

Suddenly his eyes fly open. HORRIBLE CHOKING NOISES escape him.
He raises his hands toward his face, yanking IV needles from
their backs, as the GRINDING, COUGHING, CHOKING SOUNDS continue.
His whole body stiffens, then arches. An IV stand falls over,
and the bottles that were hanging from it SHATTER. VIC'S eyes
roll up...and he collapses back onto his pillow, DEAD.

67 INT. THE CONTROL ROOM

67

The BEEPS become a HIGH, BLANK HUM--the sound of equipment which is suddenly doing nothing. All the lines on all the monitors go flat. DEITZ and DENNINGER look at each other.

DEITZ

God, it's quick. So damned quick. The only two left from the gas station are Bruett and Redman, is that correct?

DENNINGER (no emotion)

Yes. Bruett's critical and sinking fast. He'll be dead by nightfall.

He leans forward and snaps on one of the blank video screens.

DENNINGER

Which leaves Redman, who's not even sick.

The TV image shows STU, sitting in his own room, reading a book. He puts it down and goes to the window.

DEITZ

No. Not even sick. How in God's name is that possible?

DENNINGER

I don't know, but we're going to find out.

68 EXT. STU REDMAN, ECU

68

We're looking at him as he looks out his window. The window is covered with mesh. It may look like a hospital, but it's really a prison. STU knows it, and so do we.

DENNINGER (v-o)

We have to find out. And soon.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 2.

ACT 3

69 EXT. A RADIO ON A WINDOWSILL, CU

69

It's pointed outward, for the benefit of someone working outside.

ANNOUNCER (Paul Harvey?)

"In other news, U.S. Government health officials claim there's nothing strange in their decision to quarentine a small east Texas town where a new strain of what's believed to be Swine Flu has got half the population in bed and the the other half down with the sniffles."

During this, THE CAMERA WIDENS OUT to show a pleasant New England house standing on a hill and overlooking a small seacoast town. The man wearing a floppy straw hat and weeding the garden on the far side of the driveway is FRAN GOLDSMITH'S father, PETER. As THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO WIDEN, we start to LOSE THE RADIO.

Vermont

ANNOUNCER (continues)

"At the ██████████ Center for Disease Control, Dr. Herbert Denninger said..."

A fattish young man comes to the foot of the driveway and starts up. He's about nineteen and trying to look cool in his faded jeans and cowboy boots. He can't, though, and not just because his hair is matted and his ass is two axe-handles wide. He can't look cool because he's HAROLD LAUDER, whose karma seems to call for him to look like an overweight, oversmart nerd forever. In one hand he carries a ██████████ magazine.

HAROLD (waves)

Hello, Mr. Goldsmith!

PETER (waves back)

Hello, Harold!

HAROLD

Is Fran around?

70 EXT. LOOKING IN THE KITCHEN DOORWAY, WITH FRAN

70

She's looking out, and clearly dismayed and chagrined.

FRAN

Oh no.

PETER (voice)

She's in the kitchen, I think.

Determined to make the best of it, FRAN fixes a smile on her face and steps out the door.

CONTINUES

70 CONTINUES

She's more revealingly dressed than she was on the breakwater-- shorts and a blouse knotted below her breasts, say. HAROLD'S eyes will be all over her in the following conversation. In addition to the sex thing, he's just pleased and excited to see her; he's got a big-time case of puppy love.

HAROLD

Hi, Fran!

FRAN

Hi, Harold.

[And, with some sarcasm]

Thanks, Daddy.

PETER (bland)

Don't mention it, sweetheart.

HAROLD

I brought you something.

He hands her the magazine.

FRAN (makes the best of it)

Harold! How sweet! (Pause) What--oh my gosh, is this you?

She taps a name on the cover. HAROLD tries to look suitably modest but swells visibly as he nods.

HAROLD

Of course Everleaf's only a small literary magazine...small but prestigious ...and they only pay in contributor's copies, but...

FRAN

Daddy, look! We know a real published writer!

PETER comes over and looks with interest at the cover of the magazine. It has the murky but pretentious look of a student publication. The names of the contributors are listed on the front, and sure enough, HAROLD'S is there.

HAROLD joins them, standing close enough to FRAN to make her feel uncomfortable. She tries to slide away and can't--HAROLD'S hemming her in on one side, and her father on the other.

HAROLD

My poem's called "The Crushed Rose."
I actually sent them three poems, but
of course their space is very limited.

CONTINUES

70 CONTINUES (2)

He takes the magazine, flips to the poem, then gives it back to her. He's clearly hoping she'll read it then and there, but FRAN closes the magazine after a single glance. She does tuck it under her arm, however (and HAROLD no doubt feels thrilled just to have his name against the swell of her breast).

FRAN

I'll read it as soon as I get the bread in the oven, Harold. Meantime, congratulations.

HAROLD puffs up a little more.

HAROLD

Thank you. (Pauses) I had another reason for dropping by, as well.

FRAN

Oh?

HAROLD

I thought you might care to accompany me to the Railroad Cinema in Boothbay this Friday night. They're having a Bergman festival. I've always found Cries and Whispers especially moving.

FRAN

Gee, Harold, Amy Taft and I made plans to go to Old Orchard. AC/DC's playing.

HAROLD

Oh. Well...maybe another time.

FRAN leads him down the driveway a bit, away from her Dad.

FRAN (gently)

I'm sure you can find someone else to go with, Harold. Someone more your own age.

HAROLD freezes. For a moment we see he's positive he's committed some horrible social gaffe. Then his mask locks back into place.

HAROLD

Oh. I see.

FRAN

Harold, that's not to say I don't like you; it's just that--

CONTINUES

HAROLD turns away from her. His face is still frozen in that look of haughty intellectual arrogance, but it can't quite hide the painfully self-conscious, socially immature teenager lurking behind his rather pitiful defenses.

HAROLD

You don't have to say any more, Fran--I understand completely. I hope you like my poem. And the rest of the magazine, of course.

FRAN (distressed for him)

Of course I'll like it. Don't go so soon, Harold; I just made some iced tea. Maybe you'd like--

By now HAROLD is almost running down the driveway.

HAROLD

No thanks. I'm actually in sort of a hurry.

He almost collides the Goldsmith mailbox, then hurries off down the street with his head down.

FRAN walks over to the garden. PETER has given up any pretense of weeding. As he looks from HAROLD'S blundering exit to his daughter, his expression is one of sympathy rather than his former amusement.

FRAN

Well! I handled that very well, don't you think?

PETER

Considering the fact that Harold Lauder's had a crush on you since he was nine and you were twelve? Yeah, I'd say you did okay.

FRAN looks at the magazine again. PETER takes it from her and turns to HAROLD'S poem.

PETER

"I have stridden the fuming way
Of sun-hammered tracks and
Savage hobo jungles--"

FRAN

Stop. Please.

He closes the book and hands it back to her.

PETER
Frannie? Are you okay?

FRAN
Okay? Of course I am--the yeast made, the bread rose, and I'm the object of a young poet's unrequited love--what else could a young girl want?

PETER
You and Jess haven't had a fight? I just realized I haven't seen very much of him this summer.

FRAN
We...decided to spend some time apart.

PETER
Oh! Like that, is it?

FRAN
Uh-huh. Like that.

She tries to laugh, but what comes out sounds like a sob.

PETER
C'mere. Give your old man a hug.

She does. There's a deep well of love between these two. After a little father-comfort, she begins to pull some weeds herself.

FRAN
What about you, Daddy? Everything okay with you?

PETER
Yeah--I was just missing your mother. After seven years, there's a lot of places in the house she ain't...but the garden's not one of em. Sometimes when I'm out here yankin weeds, I can almost see her.

FRAN (hugs him again)
I love you, Daddy.

PETER
I love you, too...although I've resigned myself to losing you to Harold Lauder someday.

They both laugh at this, then fall to weeding, side by side.

71 EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET IN OGUNQUIT, WITH HAROLD

71

He walks along muttering under his breath--stuff we can't quite hear. His face is knotted with tension. Every now and then he punctuates some muttered phrase by smacking one fist into his open palm. This is a third side of HAROLD--not intellectually snobbish or hurt and insecure but full of fury and resentment.

As he reaches THE CAMERA, he stops and looks back over his shoulder for a moment.

HAROLD

You better not be laughing at me.
You just better not be.

His hands are rolled into tight balls. Now he opens them and looks at the bleeding crescents his nails have cut in his palms. Nor is this the first time; there are little white crescent-shaped scars all over his palms. This young man is full of bottled-up rage.

HAROLD

You just better not be.

He walks on quickly, MUTTERING TO HIMSELF as he goes, his hands rolling into tight fists again.

72 INT. A CONTROL ROOM AT THE VERMONT INSTALLATION

72

Like the one we saw before, but without the crisis atmosphere. Two or three TECHS in white coveralls, hoods, and nose-filters tend the machinery. DEITZ and DENNINGER are peering into a one-way glass that looks into STU REDMAN'S room. There's a cute little NURSE in there with him. She has a blood-pressure cuff in her hands, but there's a disagreement of some kind here. Cute or not, STU isn't letting her take his blood-pressure.

DEITZ

Let's have some audio, please.

One of the techs flips up a switch.

NURSE

Please, Mr. Redman; it's just your blood-pressure. Doctor's orders.

STU

Nope. No more tests. Not until I talk to a doctor.

NURSE (wheedling)

I'm sure that you will be talking to a doctor very soon, Mr. Redman--

CONTINUES

72 CONTINUES

STU

So am I.

She looks at him, nonplussed, slowly realizing that she's not going to be able to jolly him or flirt him into giving her his arm. She slowly lowers the blood-pressure cuff.

DEITZ (to DENNINGER)

I think you better get in there, don't you?

DENNINGER only looks at him, clearly unhappy with his assignment

73 INT. STU'S ROOM

73

STU is looking out the window again. From behind him comes the SOUND of a PUMP. He turns. On the far side of the room is a door that looks like the hatch in a sub. A RED LIGHT is on above it. When the light turns GREEN, the PUMP STOPS. The door opens. DENNINGER, respendent in his white coverall, soft hood, and nose-filter, steps through and then uses the wheel in the center of the airlock door to swing the door closed behind him.

STU

Well, say. It's Lieutenant Denninger--the man with the clipboard and the armed escort.

He crosses the room, his hand out in a parody of hospitality. DENNINGER raises his own hands and takes a nervous step backward

DENNINGER

I'm sorry, Mr. Redman. We don't shake hands. Just a precaution.

STU

A precaution. Uh-huh.

DENNINGER

Patty Greer says you gave her some trouble. She's quite upset.

STU

Me too. Bein kidnapped and poked and prodded by a lot of big sonsofbitches in white-suits and nose-filters does that to me every time. So tell me somethin, Lieutenant Denninger, and maybe I won't try to see if I can manage to rip your nose-filter out before you can get out of this room. Tell me what the hell's goin on here, and how come I'm not sick yet.

CONTINUES

73 CONTINUES

DENNINGER starts to back away from him, looking nervous, but with the airlock door shut again, there's really no place to go, at least for the time being. And STU'S bigger than he is.

DENNINGER

Now, Mr. Redman...I hardly think this is the time...

STU'S mouth spreads in a small, chilly grin as he looms over DENNINGER.

STU

I want some answers.

DENNINGER

I...I'm sorry, but--

STU makes a not-quite-playful grab at the small tubes which lead from DENNINGER'S nose-filter down into his white-suit. DENNINGER shrinks back, terrified, and almost trips over STU'S chair. He regains his balance and bolts toward the closed door. He grabs frantically at the wheel which will open it.

DENNINGER

Don't come near me! You'll get all the answers you need in due time! In the meantime, just...just be reasonable!

He's not having much luck with the wheel, and we can see he's afraid that maybe he's actually locked in here with this potentially contagious madman. Panic flickers in his eyes.

To DENNINGER'S great relief, STU turns away from him and crosses the room to the barred window. He looks back at DENNINGER with a lethal combination of anger and contempt.

STU

After two days locked up in this place, I ain't in a very reasonable frame of mind. Get outta here, you little weasel, and send me someone who'll give me some answers.

DENNINGER glances at the mirror that's really a window, then back to STU.

DENNINGER (blusters)

You don't seem to realize your position here, Mr. Redman.

CONTINUES

73 CONTINUES (2)

STU

I do. That's the trouble. I do. Go on-- get out. Until you send me someone who'll tell me what the hell happened and what my status is, the store's closed. Find yourself another guinea-pig. You ain't gonna get so much as a throat-swab outta me.

DENNINGER looks at him a moment longer, balked and furious, then turns to the airlock again. This time the wheel spins. He opens the door, goes through, and slams it behind him. The PUMP CYCLES. The RED LIGHT comes on.

74 INT. STU, AT THE WINDOW

74

Although he's put up a good front for DENNINGER--a noble front, some might say--he's clearly scared to the depths of his soul, and now that DENNINGER is gone, that fear shows clearly. He goes to the bed, lies down on it, and turns despairingly toward the wall.

STU (low)

Christ. Oh Christ.

DISSOLVE TO:

75 EXT. SOMEWHERE IN EAST TEXAS DAY

75

The WIND blows sand across two-lane blacktop in gritty clouds. Parked askew off the road is JOE BOB'S S.P. cruiser. An army sedan pulls up behind it. The two SOLDIERS who get out are wearing all-over suits with hoods as well as nose-filters.

In the extreme f.g., a CROW comes down and lights on a telephone wire to watch the show.

TITLE CARD: FIFTY MILES SOUTH OF ARNETTE JUNE 20

76 EXT. JOE BOB BRENTWOOD

76

He's behind the wheel, head tilted back, staring sightlessly at the cruiser roof with eyes that are almost buried in their swelled sockets. His flesh is gray-black. His neck swells over his collar.

SOUND: FLIES BUZZ.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show us the SOLDIERS. They approach the driver's side window and look in. They communicate by radio link

CONTINUES

76 CONTINUES

SOLDIER #1

Brentwood?

SOLDIER #2

I'd say so. Right offhand, how many people do you think this idiot passed it to since he caught it from those yo-yos at the gas station?

SOLDIER #1

It's getting out of control, isn't it, sir?

SOLDIER #2

No. It's been out of control. From the very beginning it's been--

#2 bursts into a fit of coughing so strong it doubles him over. His partner looks at him with surprise and dawning horror.

SOLDIER #2 (coughing)

Don't go getting ideas. I--

He can't finish. He's coughing too hard. His nose-filter pops free. #1, more horrified than ever, starts backing away from him.

SOUND: A CROW, LAUGHING...er, CAWING.

77 EXT. CROW, SOLDIER'S POV

77

Flies off the telephone wire and wings ^{away.} ~~away.~~ Things to do and people to see, you know. We

DISSOLVE TO:

78 EXT. A STRETCH OF COUNTRY TWO-LANE BLACKTOP NIGHT

78

A sign in the f.g. identifies this as Arkansas Route 27. Walking toward us is a slim, good-looking young road-warrior of about 22 with a pack on his back--NICK ANDROS.

TITLE CARD: SHOYO, ARKANSAS JUNE 20

VOICE #1 (RAY BOOTH)

Shh! Here he comes!

VOICE #2 (VINCE HOGAN)

We ain't really gonna hurt him, are we, Ray?

Headlights brighten the horizon. NICK turns and assumes the unmistakable pose of the hitchhiker. The lights approach and sweep by. Undaunted, NICK turns and starts walking again.

CONTINUES

78 CONTINUES

SOUND: RUSTLING BUSHES, BREAKING STICKS.

VOICE #3 (MIKE CHILDRESS)
Quiet down, Vince!

NICK gives no sign he's heard, simply keeps moving on down the road. Behind him, the bushes shiver and then three country assholes, lead by the incomparable RAY BOOTH, burst out.

RAY
Get him!

But for a moment VINCE and MIKE only stare down at NICK, who is strolling unconcernedly on up the road. RAY, who was expecting to strike terror into the drifter's heart with his yell, looks po'd. None of them understand NICK is a deaf-mute who didn't react to the shout because he didn't hear it.

RAY (to VINCE and MIKE)
What the hell you waitin for?

He starts the charge and the others quickly catch up.

79

EXT. THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, WITH NICK

79

MIKE grabs him first. NICK reacts quickly in spite of his surprise and slips out of MIKE'S grip. Just then VINCE grabs his arm and RAY spins him around.

RAY (panting)
Next time I talk to you, you goan
pay attention, friend. I guarentee it.

NICK pulls free of VINCE and pistons his fist into RAY'S nose, bringing a spray of blood. RAY ROARS WITH ANGER.

RAY
Hold im! Hold the sucker!

MIKE and VINCE aren't crazy about the idea, but they're scared of RAY and do their best to secure NICK'S arms. NICK takes a backward step and kicks VINCE in the balls. He goes down with a moan. MIKE gets in one whack, but when he lets fly with what's meant to be the final persuader, NICK jerks his head aside. The blow hits RAY instead. His grip loosens and NICK tries to run.

RAY (to VINCE)
Get him, you fat fool!

VINCE grabs NICK'S leg as NICK runs by, and NICK spills to the road. MIKE pins his arms behind him. VINCE staggers to his feet and gives token help. RAY approaches, head down like a bull, snuffling back blood, panting angrily.

CONTINUES

79 CONTINUES

RAY

Hold im. I'm gonna mess im up.

MIKE (nervous)

Ray, why don't he say nothin? Why don't he--

RAY

By the time I finish with im, he'll be singin "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Sucker ruined my favorite shirt. I'm gonna mess im up.

He gives NICK the old one-two: first the gut, then the face. In the course of the beating, we see that RAY is wearing an ostentatious fraternity ring with a big purple stone. NICK sees it, too

VINCE

Stop it, Ray! You're killing him!

RAY hits NICK. The purple stone flashes. And now the horizon is brightening again.

MIKE

Ray! Car!

RAY

Get his pack!

MIKE rips it free. RAY whirls the semi-conscious NICK around, toward the road--

VINCE

Ray, no!

RAY ignores him and shoves NICK into the brightening road.

MIKE

Let's get outta here!

80 EXT. NICK, IN THE ROAD

80

He stumbles to his knees, and the approaching headlights pin him like a bug to a mounting-board. He collapses forward.

81 EXT. NICK, CU

81

His head hits the pavement. A moment later a tire with treads seemingly as deep as the Grand Canyon comes to a SCREECHING HALT less than six inches from his battered, bleeding face.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 3.

ACT 4

82 EXT. A DOWNTOWN AREA (VIDEOTAPE) 82

It's a MOVING SHOT, from a car. The streets sweeping by aren't deserted, but it's close; few cars, even fewer pedestrians.

FEMALE NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice)
Streets in downtown Dallas were eerily deserted this afternoon as rumors of the so-called "superflu" continue to spread. Many of the shoppers who were out wore flu-masks.

83 EXT. VIDEOTAPE ON DALLAS SIDEWALK 83

This is a "soundbite interview." The man being interviewed is wearing a surgeon-style mask over his nose and mouth.

REPORTER (off-camera)
Why are you wearing the mask, sir?

MAN IN THE STREET
Dunno. Just feel safer.

84 EXT. PRETTY FEMALE REPORTER, DOING A SIDEWALK STAND-UP 84

She's holding a flu-mask.

FEMALE REPORTER
Katy, Dr. Richard Gillen of the Atlanta Disease Control center told me that "One of these wouldn't stop a flu-germ with a hang-over." So I guess we all ought to thank our lucky stars that this outbreak of "superflu" is just another urban myth, like UFOs or alligators in the sewers of New York City. Back to you in the studio.

85 INT. NEWSROOM, WITH FEMALE ANCHOR 85

KATY
That's a big relief for those of us who haven't had our flu shots yet! Don will be in with a look at sports right after this.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK from the start of a Flu-Buddy ad and we see we're in the bullpen of the Shoyo County Jail. Two men, SHERIFF JOHN BAKER and DR. AMBROSE SOAMES, are playing gin at one of the desks.

CONTINUES

85 CONTINUES

BAKER (lays down his hand)

Gin.

He starts to COUGH.

SOAMES

I don't know about all those urban cowboys in Dallas, but you sure sound like you got the flu, Johnny.

There's a small black bag on the floor beside SOAMES'S chair. Now he lifts it up and opens it. Takes out a stethoscope.

SOAMES

Better let me take a listen.

BAKER

Forget it.

SOAMES

Aw, come on. You know how hot ~~it~~ it always makes me when you take your shirt off.

A SCRAPING SOUND, followed by the SQUEAK OF HINGES. BAKER looks relieved by the distraction. He gets to his feet.

86

INT. REAR OF THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE, BAKER'S POV

86

NICK is slowly walking out of the drunk-tank at the back of the office and toward the bullpen area. His face is heavily marked with souvenirs of the beating he took. As he joins the two men, BAKER stands with his hands on his hips, looking at him critically.

BAKER

When I was a boy, we caught ourselves a mountain lion up in the hills, shot it, n drug it twenty miles back to town. What was left of that critter when we got home was the sorriest-lookin sight I ever saw. You the second-sorriest, boy.

SOAMES gives an impatient look, then helps NICK sit down.

SOAMES (to BAKER)

I'm gonna get somebody to take off their damn shirt before I go home tonight.

[To NICK]

It's okay, son. I'm a doctor. I'm also the guy who damn near ran you over.

CONTINUES

86 CONTINUES

NICK begins to slowly unbutton his shirt and take it off.

BAKER

You got a name, Babalugah?

NICK puts a finger to his swelled lips and shakes his head. Puts a hand on his throat and shakes it again. Cups his ears and shakes it a third time.

BAKER

What the hell?

SOAMES

It means he's deaf and dumb.

[Prods NICK'S chest]

That hurt?

NICK raises his hand with the thumb and forefinger slightly apart: "A little."

SOAMES looks in NICK'S eyes, listens to his ticker, tests his reflexes, bandages his cut cheek. He's a throwback to the great old country doctors of yore.

BAKER

If you're deaf and dumb, how the hell am I supposed to find out what happened to you tonight?

NICK reaches into his back pocket and brings out a steno pad. He flips past all the old messages, finds a blank page, takes the pencil BAKER and SOAMES were using to score their gin game, and writes swiftly:

87 PAD, INSERT

87

Nick Andros. Beat up & robbed. Three men.

88 INT. NICK, BAKER, SOAMES

88

BAKER

Can you read lips, Babalugah?

NICK nods.

BAKER

Thank God for small favors. Tell me this--would you know the guys who jobbed you if you saw em again?

CONTINUES

88 CONTINUES

NICK nods, then points at BAKER'S right hand.

BAKER

What?

Excited, NICK picks his hand up. There's a ring on one of the fingers. The purple stone is unmistakable. NICK points at it.

BAKER (incredulous)

One of em was wearin a ring like this?

NICK NODS emphatically.

SOAMES

Uh-oh. That's a fraternity ring, my silent friend. Available only at a few of the south's finer play-football-and-learn-to-read schools.

BAKER (amused)

Watch your mouth, peckerwood!

SOAMES

And the only two people around these parts who have 'em--that I know of, at least--are our esteemed Sheriff and Ray Booth. They went to Fayetteville together. Course, Ray flunked out after two or three semesters. I guess he wanted to get an early start on his calling as town bad boy... and Sheriff's brother-in-law, of course.

NICK'S eyes widen with surprise, understanding, and worry. He is, after all, an outsider. A drifter. And the man who beat him up is the brother of the sheriff's wife.

BAKER

My wife's gonna love this.

He starts to laugh, though. The laughter turns to COUGHING.

SOAMES

Welcome to Shoyo, Mr. Andros--just another hotbed of Southern hospitality.

He begins to laugh, too. He claps BAKER, who is red-faced from coughing, on the back. BAKER'S coughing fit gradually becomes a laughing fit again. NICK looks from one to the other, wide-eyed and amazed: what kind of people are these?

DISSOLVE TO:

89 EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE 89

TITLE CARD: JUNE 21

ANNOUNCER (v-o)

...yet reports of the supposedly lethal
flu epidemic continue to spread.

90 EXT. VIDEO ARCADE IN TIMES SQUARE DAY 90

SOUNDS: BEEPS, CRASHES, EXPLOSIONS. Video games, in other words.

ANNOUNCER (v-o)

Many downtown shopping areas in
southern Florida are virtually empty
this morning, and the flu rumor
actually seems to be gaining credence,
despite statements from health
officials in Atlanta and Vermont...

91 INT. THE ARCADE 91

ANNOUNCER (v-o, fading)

In Vermont, Dr. Herbert Denninger
said, "Let me put it in five simple
words: Captain Trips does not exist."

THE CAMERA moves among the games. The ANNOUNCER fades beneath
an onslaught of ELECTRONIC SOUNDS and ROCK MUSIC. Then we
hear LARRY UNDERWOOD'S voice. It gets louder as we approach
him. There's a bank of phones at the rear of the arcade. Most
of the people on them look like they're making dope deals.
There's only one Yuppie here, and LARRY'S it. He talks with
one finger plugged into his ear.

LARRY

Is Sarah there? [Pause] Thanks.

He waits for his friend SARAH. While he does, he looks
around the video parlor.

92 INT. THE VIDEO GAME PARLOR, LARRY'S POV 92

There's a white guy at one of the Road Race games playing
with a flu-mask on his face. He is joined by a black
friend who's also wearing a flu-mask. These two feel LARRY'S
gaze and look toward THE CAMERA. It's not a friendly look.

93 INT. LARRY 93

LARRY looks down hurriedly, concentrating on the phone.

SARAH (filtered voice)
Hello?

CONTINUES

93 CONTINUES

LARRY (turns on the charm)
Sarah! How's the prettiest bartender
in L.A.?

SARAH (voice)
Larry? Is that you?

LARRY
You bet. Listen...

94 INT. A DISCO INFERNO IN LOS ANGELES

94

SARAH'S

pretty, about twenty-four, wearing a sassy red vest.
Behind her, a couple of disco honeys gyrate listlessly on
their pedestals. The place is almost deserted.

[During the conversation which follows, the director will cut
back and forth between LARRY and SARAH as he/she likes.]

SARAH
I have some good news for you.

LARRY
You do?

SARAH
Your album is going up nine spots on
the album charts this week, the single's
number three on the Billboard chart, and
you're number one on MTV. Knocked out
Boyz 2 Men.

LARRY is all but flattened with shock...but it's happy shock.

SARAH
So the good news is you're rich,
famous, and out of debt. The bad
news...

LARRY
The bad news...?

SARAH
Wayne Stukey paid off the guys you
owed, I told him you'd take care of
him when you got back, so...gee,
Larry...I guess there isn't any bad
news. Okay by you?

LARRY gives out a LOUD SCREAM OF TRIUMPH. On her end, SARAH
winces back from the phone, but with a smile.

CONTINUES

94 CONTINUES

SARAH
I take it that's a yes.

LARRY
Sarah, I love you!

SARAH (wistful)
Don't I wish.

LARRY (voice)
I'm gonna try to get an afternoon flight back. You put on your prettiest black dress, 'cause I'm taking you to dinner. Dancing after. Someplace totally tacky. Zooty's ought to do it.

SARAH glances around at the nearly empty bar. When she speaks again, her voice is more confidential.

SARAH
You might want to consider delaying your trip back a few days. I'll still fit into the black dress. What there is of it.

LARRY
What do you mean, Sarah?

SARAH
Things are weird. ██████████ People are scared about this Captain Trips thing. You could shoot deer in this place, I'll tell you.

LARRY
The radio here says it's a myth.

SARAH
Yeah? The radio out here says the hospitals are filling up with sick people...and some of them are dying.

LARRY
Dying of the flu?

SARAH
And there's a lot of soldiers around. L.A.'s suddenly a very creepy place to be, Larry.

CONTINUES

94 CONTINUES (2)

LARRY (thoughtful)
 Maybe I will hang out in New York a
 few more days.

SARAH (voice)
 Just don't forget what you promised when
 you get back here. Dinner, dancing, and
 all the papparazzi I can smile at.

LARRY
 Count on it.

He makes a KISS SOUND at her and hangs up. On her end, SARAH
 looks at the phone wistfully for a moment before racking it.

SARAH
 Don't I wish.

She begins to COUGH.

95 INT. THE VIDEO ARCADE, WITH LARRY

95

LARRY starts out, bopping along, all but walking on air. He
 bumps into the black guy in the flu mask he noticed before. This
 is one spooky dude--tall, topped with an outrageous fade 'do,
 and clearly unfriendly. He's got a piratical sash around his
 waist, an extravagant gold hoop in one ear, and a t-shirt which
 features a sycthe-wielding skeleton on a black stallion. DON'T
 FEAR THE REAPER, the shirt advises. This is the RAT-MAN--bold,
 black, and beautiful. His white friend is his equal in menace,
 if not in colorful garb.

The RAT-MAN hisses at LARRY from behind his flu-mask, and LARRY
 comes back down to earth in a hurry, remembering he's in Times
 Square, where the pirhanas sometimes look like human beings.

LARRY
 Uh...sorry man. Wasn't lookin where
 I was goin.

RAT-MAN
 The Rat-Man forgive you...this time.

LARRY slides by with a charming grin (it doesn't work on guys
 like RATTY, but LARRY doesn't know it), and books for the door.

96 EXT. OUTSIDE THE VIDEO ARCADE

96

SOUND: RINGING BELL

LARRY comes out and stands on the bustling sidewalk, resplendent
 in his happiness. Suddenly he hears:

MONSTER-SHOUTER (voice)
Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!

97 EXT. THE MONSTER-SHOUTER, LARRY'S POV

97

Just another New York crazy, maybe, but a very unsettling one. He wears a white robe, plastic flip-flops, horn-rimmed glasses, and a tie-dyed flu-mask. His dirty hair hangs to his shoulders. He's ringing a bell and carrying a sign crammed with Biblical quotes. We can't read them, but the big print at the top of the sign should give us a clue: THE TIME OF THE PLAGUE HAS COME! THE EVIL DAYS ARE NIGH!

MONSTER-SHOUTER

Bring out your dead! For the love of God, bring out your dead!

YOUNG MAN (frightened)

Shut up that crap!

He hits the poor old MONSTER-SHOUTER, knocking him back against a light-post, then hurries on. The MONSTER-SHOUTER leans there for a moment or two, stunned and bloody-mouthed, then slowly regains his upright posture and begins to ring his bell again.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

Bring out your dead! The days have grown short, so for the love of God bring out your dead!

98 EXT. LARRY, IN FRONT OF THE VIDEO ARCADE

98

He sees the MONSTER-SHOUTER as a bad omen, and although he's trying to hold onto his happiness and his relief, his joyful euphoria has evaporated. Slowly he turns and heads off down the sidewalk. But as he attempts to pass the MONSTER-SHOUTER, the man grabs him, and for a moment their faces are almost pressed together.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

He's coming for you, Larry! The man with no face!

LARRY is terrified--how could this freak possibly know his name? And ~~this~~ close up, the MONSTER-SHOUTER is very scary. LARRY remains frozen for a moment, like the wedding guest grabbed by the Ancient Mariner. Then he pulls free and hurries off, throwing frightened glances back over his shoulder at the MONSTER-SHOUTER who has begun to RING HIS BELL AGAIN.

99 INT. THE LIGHT OVER STU REDMAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM DOOR

99

TITLE CARD: UNITED STATES DISEASE CONTROL FACILITY,
STOVINGTON, VERMONT JUNE 22

SOUND: The PUMP CYCLES.

CONTINUES

The light goes from RED to GREEN. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK to show us the hatch-style door. The wheel spins, air HISSES, and the door opens. DEITZ, clad in white suit and nose-filter, steps through. He's carrying a cage. In the cage is a guinea-pig.

On the TV bolted to the wall, we see a press-conference going on. The speaker is GENERAL STARKEY. He looks relaxed and confident... a lot better than when we last saw him, in other words.

DEITZ

Good afternoon, Mr. Redman. I'd like you to meet a friend of mine. Geraldo.

STARKEY (TV voice)

I don't know how many different ways I can say this...the damned flu doesn't exist!

REPORTERS LAUGH and APPLAUD in b.g.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO WIDEN OUT, and now we see STU getting up from his chair, where he was sitting to watch the press conference. He's got a pretty good beard-stubble going. He uses the REMOTE CONTROL to shut off the television.

STU

Geraldo, huh?

DEITZ

The disease your fellow townspeople contracted passes easily from guinea pigs to humans and vice-versa. But Geraldo's been breathing your air via convector for three days, and Geraldo's fine and frisky...as you see. I'd call that pretty comforting, wouldn't you?

STU

But you're still not taking any chances, I see.

STU **points** at the nose-filter. DEITZ smiles cynically and sets GERALDO'S cage on the table.

DEITZ

That's not in my contract. However, it does appear that there's absolutely nothing wrong with you, Mr. Redman-- or may I call you Stu?

STU

Just don't call me Geraldo.

99 CONTINUES (2)

DEITZ (laughs good-naturedly)
 Good. I like that. In fact, I like you. ^(with)
 So let's try to get through this ~~as~~ ^{as}
 little pain and strain as possible, what
 do you say?

STU
 Nothing--for now. You're the one doing
 the talking.

DEITZ
 All right, fine. Then hear this, Stu:
 The testing schedule we began earlier
 this week is going to resume...with your
 cooperation or without it. We've got a
 nasty situation developing in this country,
 thanks to that idiot Campion. Don't get
 the idea that you're a volunteer; you've
 been drafted.

STU
 What about the people I came with?

DEITZ
 The people from Arnette, do you mean?
 All dead. And that's exactly why we
 can't afford to--

STU has ~~been~~ been standing by the foot of his bed. Now he
 moves across to DEITZ with the speed and ease of a good
 linebacker and grabs him by the front of the white suit.
 An expression of almost comic surprise comes over DEITZ'S face.

100 THE CONTROL ROOM, WITH DENNINGER 100

The other TECHNICIANS are watching with stunned fascination as
 STU grabs DEITZ; DENNINGER reacts by grabbing a mike and flip-
 ping a toggle.

DENNINGER
 Security, please! Security to Clean
 Room 4! Right away!

101 INT. STU'S ROOM, WITH STU AND DEITZ 101

STU
 What did you do? What in Christ's
 name did you people do?

DEITZ
 Please...Stu....

CONTINUES

101 CONTINUES

There's a HISS as the hatch door opens. Three big men wearing army uniforms and nose-filters, all toting guns, crowd through.

DEITZ (to SOLDIERS)

Stand clear!

They do, looking at each other uneasily. DEITZ turns back to STU and peels STU'S hands off him. Then he readjusts his nose-filter, which has come askew. He's getting himself back under control, but STU has scared him badly, and DEITZ resents it.

DEITZ

Listen, Stu--I'm not responsible for you being here, or for all the dead people in your home town. Neither is Denninger, or the nurses that show up to take your blood-pressure.

STU

Then who is?

DEITZ

No one--not even Campion. He ran, yes... but under the same circumstances, we probably would have done the same thing. Meantime, Stu, just resign yourself to a few more pokes and pricks.

STU

What if I--

He's suddenly overcome by a fit of DRY COUGHING that is powerful enough to double him over. The SOLDIERS shrink back into the air-lock between STU'S room and the corridor. The effect on DEITZ is even more electric. His self-possession vanishes and he bolts for the doorway, transformed in the wink of an eye from oily bureaucrat to shit-scared common man.

STU (looks up, smiling)

Calm down, Deitz. I was faking.

DEITZ (turns)

You...were...what?

STU (his smile broadens)

Faking.

DEITZ comes back a step or two, his fists opening and closing.

DEITZ

Why? Why in God's name would you do a thing like that?

CONTINUES

101 CONTINUES (2)

STU'S smile vanishes. He steps to DEITZ, looks him in the eye. DEITZ tries to hold onto his rage and can't. He can't hold STU'S quietly angry gaze, either. His eyes first waver...then drop.

STU

You talk easy about what a nasty situation we got here, but you don't have the slightest idea what it's like to be inside it. [Pause] Now maybe you do. Get out of here. And take your guinea-pig with you.

He turns away, leaving DEITZ to gape at him.

102 INT. THE CONTROL ROOM, WITH DENNINGER

102

He's leafing through a thick computer print-out, worry writ large on his face. Through the window, we can see the last of the soldiers leaving STU'S room. The door to the control room opens and DEITZ comes in. He's still furious.

DEITZ (to the TECHS)

Out! Out of here! All of you!

They flee. DEITZ stares balefully through the window at STU, who has picked up a book and begun calmly to read. DENNINGER looks up from the computer print-out. His eyes are sick with fear.

DENNINGER

This came in from Carsleigh at Blue Base two hours ago. Have you seen it?

DEITZ

No.

He's gone to the window and is staring in at STU. His face is ~~sick~~ sick with fury.

DENNINGER

The superflu is popping up everywhere. Houston...Los Angeles...Detroit...New York...Boston...even coastal Maine. No one's talking about containment anymore, just keeping their asses covered.

DEITZ (ignores him)

When the time comes, I'm taking that rube out myself.

DENNINGER (bleats)

It's out of control!

CONTINUES

102 CONTINUES

DEITZ turns from the window and gives his partner a grin which is both cynical and contemptuous.

DEITZ

Calm down, Richard--this is the safest place in the whole world. Quiet...off the beaten track... Disneyland for cows. And as far as the flu jumping the containment in this place if it does get as far as Vermont...no way, Jose.

DENNINGER (slyly)

You didn't look so sure a few minutes ago. In there.

DEITZ gives him a look. DENNINGER starts shuffling papers in a hurry.

DEITZ

It was reflex, that's all. Just reflex. We're perfectly safe.

103 INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE INSTALLATION

103

People dressed in white hurry here and there. Some are pushing rolling trays of meds or hospital-type food. Everyone is dressed in white. BELLS CHIME SOFTLY. Coming toward us is the pretty NURSE who failed to take STU's blood pressure. She's still wearing her white coverall, but her cap and the nose-filter are gone.

She's hurrying and trying not to show it. Her body language is that of a person trying to suppress a sneeze. Or a cough. Ah! The Ladies Room, dead ahead. The NURSE looks around, makes sure no one's looking, and hooks a sharp right through the door.

104 INT. THE LADIES ROOM, WITH THE PRETTY NURSE

104

She runs across to the stalls, COUGHING HARD, goes into one and drops to her knees as if to vomit. Instead, she only COUGHS. Finally her COUGHING FIT EASES.

NURSE

I'm fine. I am. Just a little cold-- that's all it is.

She begins to COUGH again, HARDER this time, and a FINE SPRAY OF BLOOD comes from her mouth.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 4.

ACT 5

105 EXT. HIGH ANGLE ON A GENERAL STORE IN THE DESERT DAY 105

In the extreme f.g.: a telephone pole with wide cross-arms. The building below is battered and swaybacked, the paint mostly scoured off by desert winds. A couple of old gas-pumps stand in front. There's just enough color in the roof-sign for us to be able to read BURRACK GENERAL STORE BEER GROCERIES HARDWARE.

TITLE CARD: BURRACK, ARIZONA JUNE 23

There's a Subaru parked in the lot. A dusty pick-up pulls in beside it. A COWPOKE in jeans and a battered old straw hat gets out and goes in.

Our old friend the CROW flaps down and roosts on the phone pole.

106 EXT ARIZONA ROUTE 180, WITH WHITE CONTINENTAL 106

The car roars toward us at high speed, looping back and forth across the center-line.

POKE (v-o)

Whoop! Whoop!

LLOYD (v-o)

Ride em, cowboy! Whoop!

107 INT. THE CONTINENTAL, WITH LLOYD AND POKE 107

POKE is driving. LLOYD, a skinny, hard-faced man who looks like Lance Henriksen, rides shotgun. One look should be enough to tell us we're looking at Wayne and Garth from hell. The Continental is a full of road-food wrappers, discarded beer-cans, and guns. Lots of guns. LLOYD is trying to roll a joint out of the plastic Baggie in his lap.

POKE swings the wheel. ██████████

108 EXT. THE CONTINENTAL 108

It DIVES WILDLY across the highway; a crash into the ditch, followed by a rollover, seems inevitable. Then, at the last moment, the big car swings back toward the center of the patched tar, TIRES WAILING.

109 INT. THE CONTINENTAL, WITH LLOYD AND POKE 109
The joint LLOYD has been trying to roll goes all over the place.

POKE
Whoop! Whoop!

LLOYD
Look what you made me do!

POKE
Plenty more where that came from,
good buddy! Whoop! Whoop!

110 EXT. THE CONTINENTAL 110
It goes roaring on up the road, AWAY FROM THE CAMERA.

111 INT. THE CONNIE, WITH LLOYD AND POKE 111
LLOYD has succeeded in making another joint--croggled and weird,
but it will probably do the trick. He lights it, inhales, and
holds it, letting it out in little puffs as he speaks.

LLOYD
Hey, Poke! Have a smoke!

This always cracks POKE up. He takes the joint, tokes, passes it
back. Then he picks up the .45 that has been lying on the seat
between them and waves it in LLOYD'S suddenly uneasy face.

POKE
Gotta make a little cash withdrawal,
buddy! And if anyone gives us any
trouble--

LLOYD (more uneasy than ever)
--Pokerize em.

POKE
That's right! Whoop! Whoop!

He **begins** to swing the wheel back and forth again, looping
the **Connie** from side to side. For LLOYD, some of the fun has
gone out of the day. Every now and then even his dim intellect
cannot avoid the simple fact that his partner is a human rattle!

112 HIGH ANGLE ON THE BURRACK GENERAL STORE 112
The CROW still has its ringside seat as the Continental pulls
in and parks in line with the pick-up and the Subaru.

113 INT. THE CONNIE, WITH LLOYD AND POKE

113

POKE has still got the .45, also known as the Pokerizer. LLOYD reaches into the back and comes up with an automatic assault rifle. He looks more nervous than ever. Not POKE. POKE'S pumped.

LLOYD

If we're gonna do it, let's do it fast.

POKE (gravely)

I know what you mean, jellybean.

They look at each other, then break up, laughing wildly. The fact is, LLOYD is a little saner than POKE, but not much.

POKE

Come on, Lloyd--let's make a withdrawal.

114 HIGH ANGLE ON THE BURRACK GENERAL STORE

114

The CROW watches POKE and LLOYD cross the lot and enter the General Store. And now it starts to BLUR and CHANGE--to MORPH.

115 INT. THE BURRACK GENERAL STORE

115

There's an OLD MAN behind the cash register. A YOUNG WOMAN is in the center aisle, examining canned goods. The COWPOKE is at the back, and back to us, getting beer.

LLOYD (shouts)

Hold still and won't nobody get--

POKE shoots the WOMAN. She flies backward, knocking cans from the shelves as she falls. LLOYD looks at POKE, stunned.

POKE

Couldn't help it, good buddy! Whoop!
Whoop! I didn't like the way she--

The OLD MAN, seeing their attention has moved away from him, ~~reaches~~ reaches under the counter and comes up with a shotgun that ~~looks~~ looks like it was manufactured around the time of the ~~Polloponesian~~ Polloponesian Wars.

LLOYD

Look out, Poke!

He shoves POKE backward as the OLD MAN fires between them. LLOYD raises his auto and fires off a long burst, shattering everything on the counter and hammering the poor OLD MAN right out through the remains of his fly-specked window.

POKE (stunned)

He tried to shoot me! Did you see that,
Lloyd? That old bugger tried to shoot me!

CONTINUES

115 CONTINUES

LLOYD has no time to sympathize with POKE, however. Motion has caught his eye and he turns toward:

116 INT. THE CENTER AISLE, WITH THE COWBOY IN THE STRAW HAT 116

He's walking calmly down the aisle, holding a six-pack in one hand and a pistol in the other. We can now see a detail our previous angle didn't allow us: he's wearing a Deputy Sheriff's star on his chest.

LLOYD (screams)
Poke! Look out! Poke!

The DEPUTY fires and plugs POKE in the chest. POKE touches the hole in his shirt, looks at his bloody fingers, and holds them out to LLOYD.

The DEPUTY shoots him again. POKE staggers backward, then tries to raise his gun. He's looking at the DEPUTY, shocked. The DEPUTY shoots him a third time and POKE goes down for keeps. LLOYD raises his auto, points it at the DEPUTY, and pulls the trigger. Nothing. He's out of ammo. The DEPUTY swings in LLOYD'S direction and LLOYD slings his weapon at him. It hits the DEPUTY'S gun-hand (pure luck, probably), and the DEPUTY'S next shot goes into the floor next to LLOYD'S shoe. LLOYD turns and flees.

117 EXT. HIGH ANGLE ON THE BURRACK GENERAL STORE 117

As LLOYD bursts out onto the porch, a State Police cruiser pulls in, flashers blazing. Two TROOPERS fling themselves out almost before their car has stopped moving. They train their guns on the hapless LLOYD.

TROOPER #1
Hold it, hold it! Hands up!

On the cross-arm of the telephone pole in the f.g. of this shot, a man (well...a creature that looks like a man) is perched where the CROW was before. We only see his back of his old denim jacket. This, of course, is RANDALL FLAGG, aka the dark man.

On the porch, LLOYD hikes his hands.

118 EXT. A CLOSER SHOT, FEATURING LLOYD 118

He stands with his hands up, looking stunned and afraid.

COWPOKE/DEPUTY (voice)
Deputy Sheriff Owen Kinsolving, officers!
Coming out!

CONTINUES

118 CONTINUES

OWEN KINSOLVING, the COWPOKE/DEPUTY, comes out behind LLOYD.

SOUND: A HARSH CAW, LIKE LAUGHTER.

LLOYD looks up at:

119 EXT. FLAGG, LLOYD'S POV

119

Crouched on the cross-arm of the telephone pole. It's our first look at him in human form, but we can only see an outline; the desert sun is behind him, and he's really nothing but a black, man-shaped cut-out.

He starts to MORPH back into a CROW.

120 EXT. THE PORCH, WITH LLOYD

120

His jaw drops. He's hardly aware of the TROOPERS converging on him, or DEPUTY KINSOLVING pinning his hands behind him and cuffing them.

LLOYD (awed)
Who's he? What's he doing up there?

KINSOLVING and the TROOPERS follow his gaze and see:

121 EXT. THE TELEPHONE POLE, PORCH POV

121

The very end of the MORPH, followed by the CROW flying away.

122 EXT. THE PORCH

122

KINSOLVING
This happened when you went running
out of the store.

He shoves LLOYD down the porch steps. He lands in the dust.

TROOPER #2
That's enough! You want to taint the bust?

OWEN ~~goes~~ down the steps, hauls the stunned LLOYD to his feet, and hustles him toward the back of one of the cars.

KINSOLVING
Pop Jones out here, and Betty Diamond
lying dead inside. It ain't never gonna
be enough. Not for this bastard.

LLOYD ignores KINSOLVING'S harsh words and treatment. He's in shock...and not just because of the shoot-out. He knows what he saw. And as KINSOLVING herds him along, he stares at:

123 EXT. THE CROW, LLOYD'S POV 123

Just a black speck dwindling into the bright desert sky. Faintly we hear the SOUND OF ITS HARSH, AMUSED CAWS.

DISSOLVES TO:

124 THE CONTINENTAL U.S. MAP IN THE COMMAND CENTER, CU 124

It's the same map we saw back in Act 1, only now it has a sinister rash of red blotches spreading across it. We know about the principal sites from DENNINGER, but there are even more now; they cover the midwest and midsouth like acne.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show us the Blue Base Command Center. The urgency we noted in Act 1 has been replaced by barely controlled panic. People work in their shirt-sleeves, and everyone is sweating too much; even Ban 5000 won't keep up with this. Messengers sprint between workstations with computer print-outs in their arms and panic in their eyes.

CARSLEIGH (voice-over)

We have a...well, a rather large problem in Arkansas, Billy.

125 INT. MONITOR IN STARKEY'S OFFICE, ECU 125

This is the one showing the woman face-down in the Hungarian goulash. The words FATAL INCURSION are still flashing. THE CAMERA DRAWS BACK to show us STARKEY, standing in front of this monitor. He's unshaven and not tracking very well. CARSLEIGH looks only marginally better. There's a feeling of Berlin about this place--Berlin in the spring of 1945.

STARKEY (takes a pill)

What large problem is that, Len?

CARSLEIGH

An ABC news team got out of Pine Bluff with potentially damaging videotape.

STARKEY

Flu victims? Body dumps?

CARSLEIGH

Both. And our ops, I'm afraid.

That last one gets through. STARKEY wheels around.

STARKEY

We can't allow that!

CARSLEIGH

No, sir--I know.

CONTINUES

125 CONTINUES

STARKEY

Showing footage like that would be unpatriotic!

CARSLEIGH

Yes, sir.

STARKEY

Where are these newspeople now? Have you located them?

CARSLEIGH

Yes sir, we have.

BILL STARKEY seizes on the Arkansas incident with the fierce concentration of a man who is disintegrating.

STARKEY

Get that videotape, Len.

CARSLEIGH

Yes, sir.

126 EXT. AN ARMY ROADBLOCK ON ARKANSAS ROUTE 97 DAY

126

STARKEY (voice-over)

Whatever it takes.

CARSLEIGH (v-o)

Yes, sir--whatever it takes.

Two army convoy trucks are blocking the road. SOLDIERS wearing white-suits and FULL FACE-MASKS cluster around a TV newsvan. Other cars and trucks are backed up behind it. All are piled high with the belongings of people who are trying to get away as fast as they can. On the side of the van are the call-letters WARK/13 and ABC-TV logo.

TITLE CARD: NEAR SIPE SPRINGS, ARKANSAS JUNE 23

MAJOR JALBERT

Ma'am, you'll have to surrender your video camera, and any footage you may have shot.

127 INT. THE TV VAN, HANDHELD VIDEOCAM SHOT

127

In the extreme f.g. (and a bit out of focus) is pretty, dark-haired LISA HULL. Beyond her is the van's DRIVER--another member of the crew. Beyond him, leaning in the window and looking very scary in his mask and protective suit, is MAJOR JALBERT. Other SOLDIERS cluster behind him.

CONTINUES

127 CONTINUES

LISA
Mike, you getting all this?

VIDEOCAM focuses on LISA, and JALBERT goes fuzzy.

MIKE (voice)
Every golden moment.

JALBERT pulls back and looks at the SERGEANT directly behind him

JALBERT
Sergeant, pull them out of there.

SARGE
Yessir, Major.

Alarm fills LISA'S face as the SERGEANT moves forward. Things like this aren't supposed to happen in America...but it's happening, all right. The DRIVER slams down the door-lock button. The SERGEANT reaches through the open window to pull the button back up. The DRIVER grabs his hand. The SERGEANT closes his hand into a fist and hammers it into the DRIVER'S face.

THE CAMERA TRACKS ALL THIS JERKILY.

LISA (screams)
Go! Go! Go!

128 EXT. THE ROADBLOCK WITH THE TV NEWS VAN 128

The van roars forward, cutting hard right to go around the roadblock on the shoulder.

JALBERT (voice)
Fire! Fire! Don't let them through!

The SOLDIERS open fire, hitting the newsvan again and again. It slows, cants, and starts to overturn.

129 INT. ~~EXT.~~ LOOKING OUT THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, VIDEO 129

The ground and the sky swap places. We hear SCREAMS, CURSES.

130 EXT. THE VAN 130

It flips over, lands in a field beside the road, and EXPLODES.

131 EXT. THE TRAFFIC BACK-UP AT THE ROADBLOCK 131

People stand by their cars, staring at the SOLDIERS with shocked horror. JALBERT wheels toward his command vehicle.

CONTINUES

131 CONTINUES

JALBERT

Get these people moving!

The SOLDIERS start to do as he says...and with the remains of the last dissenters still smoldering in the nearby field, there is not much protest from the evacuees.

132 INT. STARKEY'S OFFICE, WITH STARKEY AND CARSLAIGH 132

They're sitting at the long conference table. Behind them, all the monitors are on. There's a KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

STARKEY

Come.

A MESSENGER enters, gives STARKEY a print-out, SALUTES and LEAVES. STARKEY glances at the paper and nods.

STARKEY

Major Jalbert has taken care of our problem in Arkansas.

CARSLAIGH

Thank God.

STARKEY gets up, goes to the paper-shredder in the corner, and uses it on the message he has just received.

STARKEY

Of course it doesn't change the basic facts; this is just a holding action now.

CARSLAIGH

Billy--

STARKEY walks from the shredder to the monitors, where he resumes his fascinated contemplation of the woman with her face in the Hungarian goulash.

STARKEY

"Things fall apart. The center does not hold." A man named Yeets said that. I didn't understand that poem when I read it in college, Len, but I must be getting smarter in my old age, because I think I understand it now. And another line, from that same poem. "What rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" I think maybe the beast has gotten out of its cage, Len...what do you think?

CONTINUES

132 CONTINUES

CARSLEIGH gets up from the table and joins him at the monitor. They look at the dead woman together.

STARKEY

Is that Hungarian goulash?

CARSLEIGH

It might be, sir; I can't say for sure.

STARKEY (turns to him)

Yeets was right: things fall apart.
And when they start to go, they go fast.

CARSLEIGH

Yes, sir.

DISSOLVE TO:

133 EXT. MAIN STREET OF A SMALL TOWN NIGHT

133

TITLE CARD: SHOYO, ARKANSAS JUNE 23

Old-fashioned streetlamps throw orderly pools of light along the business section, but little is moving. Most folks are staying in tonight; I think most of them don't feel very well.

SOUND: METAL ON METAL--TINK-TINK-TINK-TINK!

RAY HOGAN (voice)

Hey, dummy! Who made you Sheriff's deputy? Huh?

134 INT. RAY'S RIGHT HAND, ECU

134

We're looking at that big purple ring. It's hitting the bars of a jail cell and making that METAL ON METAL SOUND.

135 INT. THE SHOYO COUNTY JAIL

135

NICK ANDROS, still bandaged and bruised but looking a lot better than when last we saw him, is pulling burgers and fries out of a picnic basket and setting them down on SHERIFF BAKER'S desk. Sure enough, there's a Deputy badge pinned to his shirt.

Beyond him, the drunk-tank stands open and empty. Opposite it are three smaller cells. They are now occupied by VINCE HOGAN, MIKE CHILDRESS, and RAY BOOTH. RAY stands at the bars of his cell, watching NICK malevolently. VINCE is lying down, either sleeping or pretending to sleep. And MIKE is sitting on his bunk, head down, HACKING FURIOUSLY. He's got the flu.

RAY

I hope you don't think we're gonna eat that! You coulda poisoned it! You--

136 INT. THE THREE PRISONERS, FEATURING RAY NICK'S POV 136

His mouth is moving but now no SOUND comes out. In a way, it must be restful to be NICK.

137 INT. THE CELL AREA OF THE COUNTY JAIL 137

NICK gets a broom out of the corner and uses it to push one of the dinners into MIKE'S cell through the small pass-through at the bottom of the bars. MIKE looks at it, then begins to COUGH again.

MIKE

Sorry, mutie. Can't. Sick.

RAY

We ain't gonna eat it, dummy! None of us! We're on a hunger strike!

He looks at VINCE for corroboration, but when NICK pushes food into VINCE'S cell, VINCE gives RAY and apologetic look and then starts to eat.

VINCE

I'm awful hungry, Ray.

RAY looks disgusted with VINCE, and with his own failure to start the revolution. NICK stands in front of RAY'S cell with the last dinner, asking with his eyes if RAY wants it. RAY turns sullenly away, and NICK shoves it carefully into the cell with the tip of the broom.

The door opens behind him, and a grim-faced DR. SOAMES enters. NICK, who has started to turn around, sees SOAMES. His face lights up. RAY, meanwhile, has picked up his milkshake and draws it back like a pitcher about to deliver a fastball.

RAY

Hey mutie! Want a drink?

NICK sees the shadow of RAY'S arm on the wall and ducks just as RAY throws the shake. The cup hits the wall, splattering strawberry curds of ice cream everywhere.

RAY

I'm on a hunger strike! You hear me?
I'm on a hunger strike until you let
us OUTTA here!

He throws the burgers and fries. NICK ducks these as well and backs warily over to the desk, where SOAMES is standing.

RAY

Hey! Come back here! I ain't done with
you, mutie!

138 INT. THE COUNTY JAIL OFFICE AREA, WITH NICK AND SOAMES 138

SOAMES

They been givin you much trouble, Nick?

NICK shakes his head, then scribbles rapidly on his pad.

139 PAD, INSERT 139

I make a lousy deputy. Where's Sheriff Baker?

140 INT. THE CELL AREA 140

SOAMES

You don't know, do you? Johnny's--

He has swung away from NICK a little. NICK reaches out, turns his back by the shoulder. Points at SOAMES'S lips. SOAMES nods.

SOAMES

Sorry. Both John and his wife are dead. A lot of people in Shoyo are dead--maybe as many as half. The ones still alive are too sick or too scared to show their faces. You and I may be the last two healthy people in western Arkansas, my mute friend.

VINCE (almost gibbering)

What's he talking about, Ray?

RAY

Shut up and listen!

SOAMES

The government is still denying it, but the radio says it's a pandemic. Hospitals filling up. Army squads burning bodies in waste treatment facilities.

[He laughs bitterly]

The ultimate recycling program, Nick!

MIKE isn't following the conversation, but RAY and VINCE are terrified. All at once VINCE has a sneezing fit. RAY looks at him...and then sidles away from him as far as his small cell will allow. This terrifies VINCE even more.

VINCE (wildly)

It's...it's just an allergy! I get em all the time!

RAY (not convinced)

Doc! Doc Soames! You gotta let me out! They're both sick! Keepin me in here with em is cruel n unusual punishment!

CONTINUES

140 CONTINUES

SOAMES (to NICK)
I've got a cabin up in the hills.
Supplies. I'm gonna try to wait
this out.

NICK points to SOAMES'S black bag. SOAMES looks at him with weary understanding. He holds it up. Things RATTLE inside.

SOAMES
What? My responsibility as a doctor? Don't
make me laugh. The Hippocratic Oath requires
me to treat my patients as well as I can...
but not, thank God, to die with them. I'm
going. I suggest you emulate my example.

NICK points toward the cells...to himself...to the cells again.

SOAMES
John got sick and made you responsible
for em, yeah. But that doesn't mean you
can't let em out now that he's gone.

NICK looks doubtful. SOAMES goes around him, toward the cells.

SOAMES
Ray--if he does let you out, are you
gonna mess with im?

RAY (eager)
No! I swear!

VINCE (coughs)
Me neither!

SOAMES turns to NICK. NICK thinks about it, then goes to BAKER'S desk. He takes two items from the drawers: a key-ring and a .45. He returns to the cells and sweeps the pathetic VINCE and the watchful RAY with his gaze. MIKE is too sick to care much about what's going on.

NICK opens the cells one at a time, RAY last. MIKE remains on his ~~bank~~ bench. VINCE sidles past NICK, grinning nervously. As he passes SOAMES, VINCE starts to COUGH again. SOAMES immediately pulls a handkerchief from his coat pocket and covers his nose and mouth with it.

VINCE (wildly)
It's just an allergy, I tell you!

SOAMES
For your sake I certainly hope so, Mr. Hogan.

CONTINUES

140 CONTINUES (2)

VINCE hurries across the bullpen and out the door. He lurks there like a rejected, unhappy ghost. RAY, meanwhile, swaggers out of his cell and walks up to NICK until they're nose to nose.

RAY

Got something for you, mutie. Been saving it up, you might say.

He COUGHS HARD, spraying spit into NICK'S face. NICK shoves the pistol into RAY'S gut. RAY looks momentarily afraid, then smiles. NICK smiles back...thumbs back the hammer and shoves the muzzle deeper into RAY'S gut. RAY'S smile freezes. All at once he's not so sure of himself.

SOAMES (to RAY)

Things have changed, Ray--maybe forever. You might do well to remember that.

RAY backs off. VINCE is lurking outside the door, waiting for him. When RAY reaches the door, he turns back to NICK.

RAY

Maybe you'll see me again, mutie.

He ducks into the dark, COUGHING. VINCE throws NICK a final look, complex with fear, remorse, and denial, then follows him.

SOAMES

You want a lift to the edge of town, Nick?

NICK shakes his head and points toward the semi-conscious MIKE.

SOAMES

You're nuts. He's as good as dead.

NICK shrugs. SOAMES starts to say something else, but a SUDDEN FIT OF COUGHING doubles him over.

SOAMES

I seem to have caught Vince's allergy.
(Pause) If you're not sneezing and coughing by morning, I advise you to find yourself an empty holler and lay up for awhile.
Good luck.

SOAMES heads for the door. NICK goes with him, writing on his pad as he does, and THE CAMERA TRACKS ALONG. As they reach the door, NICK holds out the pad for SOAMES to read.

141 PAD, INSERT

14

You too, Dr. Soames.

142 INT. NICK AND SOAMES, AT THE DOORWAY 142

SOAMES

I don't think so, Nick. I think this
is a house spin--everybody loses.

He starts down toward the Cadillac parked in front.

143 INT. NICK, IN THE OFFICE 143

He closes the door, his face troubled and thoughtful. and crosses
into the jail area. Looks at:

144 INT. MIKE CHILDRESS 144

He looks worse than ever, his skin puffed and sweaty and shiny,
his lips starting to crack with fever-blisters.

MIKE

Drink of water...please...thirsty...

145 INT. NICK, IN THE BULLPEN AREA 145

He goes to the water-cooler, draws a cup of water, and carries
it into MIKE'S cell. He sits on the bunk, puts his arms beneath
MIKE'S shoulders, and helps him to sit up. He feeds him water.
MIKE CHOKES, GURGLES, then drinks. He turns a face filled with
inarticulate, miserable gratitude up to NICK'S. NICK nods down
at him, and starts giving him a little more water.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 5.

ACT 6

146 EXT. LOOKING DOWN ON THE LINCOLN TUNNEL RAMP DAY 146

It's jammed with cars. Faint SOUNDS of SHOUTS, HONKING HORNS, DISTANT GUNFIRE.

TITLE CARD: NEW YORK CITY JUNE 24

RADIO TRAFFIC ANNOUNCER

"I want to repeat that all points of egress from the city are blocked. They are blocked by people trying to flee the city, and although the government continues to deny this..."

147 EXT. LOOKING AT ONE OF NEW YORK'S BRIDGES DAY 147

It is also jammed with honking bumper-to-bumper traffic.

RADIO TRAFFIC ANNOUNCER (continues)

"...WINS has learned from very reliable sources that the city's major exit-points are also being blocked by army units which have already..."

148 EXT. EXIT FROM THE LINCOLN TUNNEL, NEW JERSEY SIDE 148

A SCREAMING GROUP OF PEOPLE bolt from the jammed tunnel and run up the ramp. The toll-booths have been blocked by army trucks and light armored vehicles. Soldiers behind these now open fire on the charging mob.

RADIO TRAFFIC ANNOUNCER (continues)

"...used deadly force on unarmed civilians trying to breach their barricades. WINS advises you to stay off the streets and..."

149 EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET IN QUEENS DAY 149

It's LARRY'S street, but what a change. Clutter and shabbiness have become wrack and ruin. The house next to ALICE'S has been partly gutted by fire. Two dead bodies, the first we've seen in Fun City, lie crumpled in the garbage-littered street, which is blocked by two cars which have crashed and burned.

FAINT SOUNDS of HORNS, YELLS, GUNFIRE. CLOSER: THE SOUND of a HIGH-POWERED ENGINE APPROACHING.

RADIO TRAFFIC ANNOUNCER (concludes)

"...stay tuned to WINS. You give us twenty-two minutes, and we'll give you..."

CONTINUES

149 CONTINUES

Before it can finish the famous slogan, the voice dissolves into a COUGHING FIT and FADES OUT. LARRY'S Z rounds the corner. There's a SQUALL OF BRAKES as he sees the two crashed cars. He stops just in time to avoid hitting them. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as he gets out of his car, rubbernecks the dead bodies, then tears his gaze away and goes pelting up the steps to his mother's house. In one hand he's got a BAG with the words BIG APPLE PHARMACY printed on it in large red letters.

SOUND: RIFLE FIRE...A SCREAM...MORE RIFLE FIRE...SILENCE.

LARRY ducks, looks around wildly, then unlocks the door. It opens a little way, then hits some obstruction and stops.

LARRY

Mom? Ma? I got the stuff at the drugstore! The guy didn't want to let me in, but--

There's a LOW GROAN. LARRY looks down and sees a pink flowered object in the crack of the door, and realizes with shock that it's his mother's nightgown-clad leg. It's her blocking the door.

LARRY

Mom!

150 INT. THE LIVING ROOM OF ALICE'S HOUSE

15

LARRY carries his mother across it. He's still got the pharmacy bag in one hand.

ALICE

Larry? I'm so hot...

LARRY

You'll be okay, Mom. I'm going to put you to bed.

ALICE (delirious)

Larry! Go get your father! He's in the bar!
He's in the bar with that photographer!

151 INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM

15

SOUNDS FROM OUTSIDE: A CHATTER OF AUTOMATIC RIFLE FIRE, followed by a LONG, TORTURED SHRIEK and CRAZY LAUGHTER. LARRY cringes, then puts his mother down on the bed. He opens the pharmacy bag and takes out a large box. From the box he removes a bottle of brooding green liquid. It's Flu-Buddy, of course. LARRY is frantic; all his hopes are pinned on this patent medicine elixer.

CONTINUES

151 CONTINUES

LARRY

The doctor says this stuff is really good, Mom--

He gets the plastic dosage cap off the top, fills it to the brim, and holds her up so she can drink it. She manages about half of it, then has a HEAVY COUGHING FIT, spilling the rest. He starts to pour some more. He knows she's beyond help of this or any kind, but refuses to admit it.

GUNFIRE outside, and an EXPLOSION. In here, ALICE'S COUGHING FIT turns to HARSH RETCHING and she vomits a thin gruel of colorless bile on LARRY. He spills the Flu-Buddy on her nightgown. He looks toward the bottle, obviously thinking about trying again, and then puts the dosage cap aside. This unwilling act of acceptance is the most adult thing we've seen him do so far, and the expression on his face matches it. He takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and begins to WIPE HER FACE gently with it.

ALICE (choking)

Watch out for him, Larry...the dark man...coming for you...

LARRY pauses, wide-eyed. It's probably just the fever talking, but it's still too much like the crazy guy in Times Square for comfort.

LARRY

What, Mom? What did you say?

She COUGHS HARD, then turns her head on the pillow, PANTING FOR BREATH. LARRY looks at her a moment longer, then gets up and leaves the room, almost running.

152 INT. THE LIVING ROOM, WITH LARRY

152

Outside, the noises of approaching anarchy continue--SHOUTS, SCREAMS, LAUGHTER, GUNFIRE, EXPLOSIONS. LARRY picks up the phone-book, looks through numbers, then dials quickly.

SOUND: The DAH-DAH-DAH of a BUSY SIGNAL.

LARRY (incredulous)

How can the hospital be busy?

But he's already hitting the cut-off buttons and consulting the phone book for the next one, receiver cocked on his shoulder.

LARRY

St. Joseph's...Queens Boulevard...

CONTINUES

152 CONTINUES

He punches in the number.

RECORDED VOICE

Thank you for calling St. Joseph's Hospital.
This is a recording. Please don't hang up--

LARRY looks at the phone incredulously.

ALICE (horrible choked voice)

--Larry--

RECORDED VOICE

--all calls will be answered as soon as
possible.

LARRY drops the phone and runs for the bedroom.

153 INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM

153

She sits up RIGHT INTO OUR FACES--ECU. Her face is swollen,
black, and horrible.

ALICE (choking)

LARRY!

THE CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS OUT as LARRY races to her, sits on the
bed, and embraces her. ALICE BEGINS TO COUGH AGAIN, then to
CONVULSE. LARRY rocks her back and forth, holding her dying face
against his shoulder. His face filled with horror, disgust,
and doomed love. She's dying and he knows it.

LARRY

Don't worry, Mom...I'm here and every-
thing'll be all right...I'm here and
everything'll be all right...

It's LARRY at his best...doing his best. THE CAMERA MOVES IN
ON him. HOLDS as he kisses the top of her head.

MONSTER-SHOUTER (faint voice)

Monsters! Monsters coming! They're in
the suburbs, so bring out your dead!

154 EXT. THE MONSTER-SHOUTER, IN TIMES SQUARE

154

Times Square is total chaos--scores, maybe hundreds of people run
aimlessly about. Vehicles are wrecked on the sidewalks; the
arcade where LARRY made his call is in flames. A bunch of HOMIES
in gang colors shoot up a movie marquee...and the people cowering
under it. There is, in other words, all the madness and anarchy
our budget will stand.

CONTINUES

154 CONTINUES

Walking through it all and miraculously untouched (at least for the time being) is the MONSTER-SHOUTER in his robe, horn-rims, and tie-dyed flu-mask. He rings his bell monotonously.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

Bring out your dead! The monsters are coming! HE'S coming! So for the love of God, BRING OUT YOUR DEAD!

He approaches, eyes flaring wildly behind his mended spectacles.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

Monsters coming! Bring out your dead! Monsters coming...

DISSOLVE TO:

155 INT. MONITOR 5 IN STARKEY'S OFFICE, ECU 155

Faintly, we hear the SOUND of the MONSTER-SHOUTER'S BELL.

The woman is still face-down in the Hungarian goulash.

STARKEY (voice)

"What rough beast/Its hour come round at last/Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?"

KA-POW! A GUNSHOT. And blood splatters all over the monitor.

156 INT. THE DOOR OF STARKEY'S OFFICE 156

It bursts open. CARSLAIGH comes in, eyes wild and panicky. The faces crowding in behind him look equally scared. They stare at the body lying on the floor beneath the monitors with silent amazement.

CARSLAIGH shakes off his shock, crosses the room, and turns STARKEY'S body over. The General has dressed in full ceremonial uniform for the occasion. Pinned to his jacket is a sheet of paper with the Project Blue letterhead on it. One word is printed there in big scrawled letters: GUILTY.

SOUND: COUGHING.

CARSLAIGH looks up at:

157 INT. THE DOORWAY, CARSLAIGH'S POV 157

It's a YOUNG WOMAN. The others draw away from her, terrified. One of them is the MESSENGER we saw in #132.

CONTINUES

157 CONTINUES

MESSENGER

It's the flu. It's loose in here,
the superflu's loose in here--

WOMAN (shrieks)

No, it's just a cold--

But she begins to cough again and can't finish. The others continue to draw back from her, horrified and close to panic.

158 INT. CARSLEIGH, HOLDING STARKEY'S BODY

158

He takes no notice of the others. Just rocks STARKEY back and forth like a big baby.

CARSLEIGH (whispers)

You were right, Billy. The center doesn't
hold. It sure doesn't.

SOUND, FAINT: THE MONSTER-SHOUTER'S BELL.

MONSTER-SHOUTER (distant voice)

They're coming...

159 INT. THE CELLS IN THE SHOYO COUNTY JAIL EARLY MORNING

159

SOUND, FAINT: THE MONSTER-SHOUTER'S BELL.

MONSTER-SHOUTER (distant voice)

...he's coming...

MIKE CHILDRESS lies dead on his bunk, his neck swelled, his glazed eyes barely visible in their puffy sockets.

160 EXT. SHOYO MAIN STREET EARLY MORNING

160

SOUND: BELL...FAINT...TO NOTHING.

The ~~street~~ street is deserted, but there has been a convulsion here, too. ~~Store~~ Store-windows are broken, the burned hulk of an army convoy truck lies on its side at the town's only major intersection, and in the f.g., staring into THE CAMERA with an expression of terminal surprise, is VINCE HOGAN. He appears to have been shot.

TITLE CARD: JUNE 25

MONSTER-SHOUTER (faint voice)

...the dark man...the man with no face...

161 EXT. DR. SOAMES'S CADILLAC EARLY MORNING

161

It's in the ditch beside Route 27, the body riddled with bullets and the windshield smashed in. Hanging out the driver's-side door is DR. SOAMES, his clothes spattered with drying blood. In the end it was the army that got him, not the flu. There's an abandoned roadblock further up the road. One soldier remains, lying beside a truck. His face is swelled with the flu. Our old pal the CROW stands on his chest and pecks at his buttons.

NICK ANDROS comes riding up on a ten-speed bike he confiscated back in town. He's wearing a pack on his back. He sees the wreck of SOAMES'S car--and SOAMES--and comes to a screeching halt. He dismounts his bike for a closer look. His face is a picture of dismay, shock, and sorrow--he liked SOAMES. He looks around and sees the CROW standing on the dead soldier and pecking at his buttons. NICK bends down, picks up a pebble, and throws it. The rock doesn't hit the crow, but the shot is close enough to send it into clumsy, flapping flight.

NICK goes to the Cadillac, gently pulls SOAMES from his car, and turns him over. NICK looks from the doctor to the roadblock, trying to figure out what happened...and why.

162 EXT. THE ROAD BEHIND NICK

162

RAY BOOTH, looking like shit on toast, steps out of the undergrowth. His clothes are rumpled and dirty, but that isn't the most important thing about him. The important thing is that RAY is exhibiting all the symptoms of the superflu. He looks wary at first. Then he sees it's NICK, and begins to grin.

RAY

Why, it's the mutie!

There's a pistol jammed into the waistband of RAY's pants. As he pulls it free, he starts to COUGH.

RAY

How you doin, mutie? What's shakin?

We ~~can~~ see RAY approaching with his gun out, but NICK is turned in ~~the~~ wrong direction...and he's deaf, of course. He rummages a jacket from the back of SOAMES'S Cadillac and uses it to cover the doctor's face.

RAY continues to approach. There's something he hasn't noticed, however: his shadow is walking ahead of him.

NICK freezes in the act of putting the jacket over SOAMES'S face as he sees the shadow. His eyes widen. RAY BOOTH is almost right behind him now, levelling the gun, meaning to put a bullet in the back of NICK'S head.

CONTINUES

162 CONTINUES

RAY

You're gonna be in hell thirty seconds
before you know you're dead, mutie--

Moving fast, NICK spins around, whipping up the jacket with which he was going to cover SOAMES'S face. [REDACTED] It covers RAY'S gun-hand just as the pistol goes off, and the shot goes wild.

Before RAY can tear the jacket away, NICK kicks him in the belly. RAY falls backward, losing his gun. NICK seizes it, but before he can get the drop on RAY, RAY closes in and grapples with him. The two men struggle. Ordinarily it wouldn't be much of a match--RAY is a lot bigger--but RAY is now one sick camper.

RAY (panting, coughing)

None of this happened until you showed
up! I'm gonna kill you! Damned mutie!

RAY backs into NICK'S ten-speed and loses his balance. The gun goes off. RAY struggles to his knees again, shot in the chest. He looks at NICK with unbelieving eyes, then collapses on the road and dies. NICK draws back from him, horrified. Looks around at the dead soldier...the dead doctor...the dead redneck. It's death everywhere, and he looks down at the pistol in his hand with horrified revulsion. He pulls his arm back, meaning to throw it into the woods. Then he reconsiders. The world has changed; there are monsters are in the streets. He sticks the gun in his belt instead, then kneels over DR. SOAMES, tenderly closing his eyes and covering his face with the jacket. He shrugs into his pack, stands up, and mounts his bike.

163 EXT. A TELEPHONE WIRE BESIDE THE ROAD

163

The CROW flaps down onto it.

SOUND: THE MONSTER-SHOUTER'S BELL.

MONSTER-SHOUTER (faint voice)

Bring out your dead!

THE CAMERA PANS DOWN. We watch NICK swerve around the roadblock and pedal down the centerline of the road, toward whatever await him in this strange new world. The pack bobs bravely on his back

DISSOLVE TO:

164 EXT. TIMES SQUARE DAY

190

The carnage goes on--more fires, more overturned vehicles--and the MONSTER-SHOUTER is still striding back and forth.

CONTINUES

164 CONTINUES

MONSTER-SHOUTER (hoarse)

Monsters coming! HE'S coming! So for the
love of God, BRING OUT YOUR DEAD!

165 EXT. OGUNQUIT, SEEN FROM THE OCEAN DAY 165

TITLE CARD: OGUNQUIT, MAINE JUNE 26

The town looks unnaturally still. Nothing moves on Main Street.

166 EXT. THE GOLDSMITH HOUSE 166

FRANNIE (voice)

Toast and a bowl of Jewish penicillin.
Chicken soup to the great unwashed.

167 INT. PETER GOLDSMITH'S BEDROOM DAY 167

FRAN comes across the room with a tray. She's dressed it up with a flower from the garden, but there's no mistaking her worry. PETER is in bed, flushed with fever, COUGHING. He looks and feels miserable, but we've seen worse...and it's clear he's trying to put up a good front for his daughter.

PETER

That looks good, darlin.

He scrambles up into a sitting position--the effort sets off another COUGHING SPASM--and she sets the tray across his lap.

FRAN

How are you feeling, Dad?

PETER

Better--quite a bit. I think I might
be beatin it.

FRAN

That's great news, because I still
can't raise Dr. Albertson, and that
little Doc-in-the-Box place over
in Wells is closed...all I get is a
recording. This flu is everywhere.
It's scary, Dad.

PETER

You look okay.

FRAN

I feel okay...Great, in fact.

He's eating the soup...but mostly, we feel, because FRAN is watching him closely. He glances at the clock, sees it's noon.

CONTINUES

167 CONTINUES

PETER

Turn on the radio, will you, darlin?
It's time for Ray Flowers.

FRAN

That sarcastic little man.

But she does as he asks. The radio plays recorded THEME MUSIC that ends with a chorus singing "It's time to Speeek...Your... Peeeeece!" FRANNIE wrinkles her nose, but sits down to listen.

RAY FLOWERS (voice)

Hi, y'all; this is Ray Flowers on "Speak Your Piece"... and I guess this morning there's only one topic of conversation.

168 EXT. THE WKLT STUDIOS, IN DOWNTOWN PORTLAND

168

It's on a street that shows signs of a riot having recently passed by--burned-out storefronts, crashed cars, merchandise which has been looted and then dropped--but the call-letters are prominent over the door. As RAY talks, two army trucks pull up in front. A number of soldiers get out. All are wearing white-suits and respirators.

RAY FLOWERS (v-o continues)

You can call it the superflu or by its West Coast name--Captain Trips--but it means the same thing, either way.

The SOLDIERS try to go in, but the door's locked. They blow the lock with their rifles and shove through into the deserted lobby as RAY continues to talk.

RAY FLOWERS (v-o) continues)

There have been some horror stories about the army clamping down on everything...

169 INT. PETER'S BEDROOM, WITH PETER AND FRAN

169

They are both listening, riveted. The toast and the bowl of soup on PETER'S tray has been forgotten.

FRAN

The army--?

PETER makes a shushing gesture, and they go on listening.

170 INT. THE WKLT STUDIO, WITH RAY FLOWERS

170

He's a good-looking, about thirty. He's not ill, but there's a sense of contained rage about him--think Eric Bogosian in Talk Radio. On the soundproofed wall behind him there's a sign in raised chrome letters: WKLT ALL TALK ALL THE TIME. He lights a cigarette as he talks.

RAY

Just be patient with me, and remember I'm running the whole show myself--everyone else called in sick. The numbers are the same as always, through: 555-TALK and 555-CHAT. So let's go.

There are a few blinking lights on RAY'S call-in panel. He punches one of the buttons at random.

RAY

Hello there--this is Ray Flowers and it's time to speak your piece.

LEONORA (filtered voice)

I'm calling from Portsmouth, Ray...

She COUGHS. RAY winces and puffs hard on his cigarette.

RAY

What's your name, my little Portsmouth sweetheart?

FEMALE VOICE

Leonora. [COUGHS] Ray...listen, Ray... I just want everyone to know that there are sojers burnin bodies across the state line in Kittery.

171 INT. PETER'S BEDROOM, WITH PETER AND FRAN

171

More dismayed than ever. PETER starts to COUGH again, and FRAN takes the half-empty bowl of chicken soup before it can spill.

LEONORA (filtered voice)

Also, my little girl...well...my little girl died this morning...I guess she's with Jesus now...

She begins to SOB.

RAY (filter)

I'm sorry as hell, Leonora.

LEONORA (filter)

Ray, I think the sojers did it. I think they made a bug that's, like, killin people.

172 INT. THE STUDIO, WITH RAY

17

RAY

Could be, Leonora...this morning
I'd believe just about anything.
Meantime, you try to hang in there.

LEONORA (filter)

I'm trying, Ray...but it's pretty sad,
isn't it? I mean, have you ever smelled
bodies on fire?

RAY

No, I...can't say that I have.

LEONORA (filter)

And my little girl...

RAY

You just try to hang in there, honey.
[Punches a console button]
This is Ray Flowers, you're on the
air, and it's time to speak your piece.

1st MALE VOICE (with coughs)

Ray?...First of all, I want to tellya
that I love your show, Ray...

173 INT. A STAIRWELL AT THE RADIO STATION

173

A SERGEANT leads his squad of a dozen soldiers up to the land-
ing, where they slam through a door which says WKLT.

174 INT. A RECEPTION AREA, WITH SOLDIERS

174

It's plush and carpeted. No one is at the receptionist's desk,
but the overhead speakers are broadcasting "Speak Your Piece."

2nd MALE VOICE (coughing)

--and there are also roadblocks on U.S.
60, or were last night--

RAY (voice) ^{GI}

And you say you saw these ~~one~~ shooting
unarmed civilians?

2nd MALE VOICE

That's right, Ray.

The SOLDIERS, led by their SERGEANT, go to the door marked STUDIO
NO ADMITTANCE WHEN RED LIGHT IS ON. The red light is on now, but
that doesn't stop SARGE. He tries the door but finds it locked.
He HAMMERS on it with the stock of his gun.

CONTINUES

174 CONTINUES

SARGE

Open up in the name of the United States government!

He breaks into a FIT OF COUGHING, but goes on hammering.

175 INT. THE STUDIO BOOTH, WITH RAY

175

He crushes out his smoke and immediately lights another one. From here, the HAMMERING is faint, but it's clearly there. So is the leather-lunged SERGEANT.

RAY

Tell you what, Portland--it looks like the Marines have landed, and they don't sound happy.

176 INT. PETER'S BEDROOM, WITH PETER AND FRAN

176

Incredulity is turning to horror. FRAN goes to his bed and sits beside her Dad, and although PETER is ill, he is not too ill to put a comforting arm around her.

FRAN

It's a joke, isn't it, Dad? I mean, it's got to be a joke.

PETER

I don't think so, Frannie--I really don't.

177 INT. THE STUDIO, WITH RAY FLOWERS

177

He pushes a button on his phone-panel.

RAY

Hello--you're on the air.

NASAL FEMALE VOICE

Ray?...Are you all right?

RAY

I gotta tell you the truth, honey--right now it don't look real good for the kid.

There is a MUFFLED BLAST OF AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. Through the studio window, we see SOLDIERS, lead by SARGE, come bursting into the control room. In their respirators and white-suits, they look like invaders from space.

RAY speaks rapidly, not taking calls now but reporting.

CONTINUES

177 CONTINUES

RAY

Several soldiers have just broken into the studio. They're fully armed...wearing some sort of protective clothing and respirators on their faces...

SARGE waves angrily, then points his rifle through the glass.

178 INT. PETER'S BEDROOM, WITH PETER AND FRAN

178

They sit in horrified silence on PETER'S bed, with their arms locked around each other.

SARGE (muffled filtered voice)

Shut it down!

RAY (filter)

Hey Bluto, you ever hear of a little number called freedom of speech? Bill of rights? That ring a bell?

[Into the mike, to his listeners]

Folks, I've been ordered by my uninvited fascist guests to shut down, and I've refused. I think--

SOUND OF HEAVY AUTOMATIC RIFLE FIRE, followed by a SHRILL WHINE OF FEEDBACK. FRAN jumps on the bed, then BEGINS TO CRY.

SARGE (filter)

Shut this sucker down.

The SHRILL WHINE is replaced by sudden silence. FRAN looks at her dad with stunned, unbelieving eyes.

FRAN

What's happening, Daddy? What's happening?

PETER (shakes his head)

I don't know, honey.

FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS ACT 6.

ACT 7

179 EXT. 5TH AVENUE, WITH THE MONSTER-SHOUTER, VERY WIDE NIGHT 179

5th stretches away into infinity (courtesy of a good matte artist). The streetlights are on, but the buildings are mostly dark. The only sounds we hear are those being made by the MONSTER-SHOUTER. Tiffany's and the Plaza Hotel are burned-out hulks. The sidewalks are littered with dead bodies. Cars are wrecked everywhere, and a bus hangs halfway through the window of Steuben Glass. It's a scene from hell, and the MONSTER-SHOUTER, still ringing his bell, weaves his way through the silent choke of vehicles in Grand Army Square. Straight ahead is Central Park, where he is apparantly headed.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

He's closer now! The dark man! The
hardcase! He's coming! He's...

During this, THE CAMERA FLOATS IN toward the MONSTER-SHOUTER. As we begin to hear the CLOCKING SOUND of rundown bootheels hammering the composition surface of a desert highway. And although FLAGG is thousands of miles distant, the MONSTER-SHOUTER hears it, too. He slowly stops ringing his bell, and his voice goes from a SHOUT to a WHISPER.

MONSTER-SHOUTER

Oh God...he's really coming.

He listens, head cocked off to one side like Nipper the Dog on the old RCA record-labels, as that CLOCKING SOUND GROWS LOUDER.

180 EXT. THE ARIZONA DESERT NIGHT 180

A stretch of two-lane highway runs through badlands which look as ghostly and weird as the surface of another planet in the powdery moonlight.

SOUND OF CLOCKING BOOTHEELS, LOUD.

TITLE CARD: MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA JUNE 27

181 EXT. U.S. 60 IN ARIZONA, LOW ANGLE NIGHT 181

Coming toward us are those bootheels. As they approach, we see a disquieting thing: the heels are striking SPARKS OF BLUE FIRE from the pavement. They pass to the right and OUT OF FRAME.

THE CAMERA RISES, showing us a road-sign: PHOENIX, 23.

182 EXT. U.S. 60 IN ARIZONA, A NEW ANGLE NIGHT 182

SOUND: HAMMERING BOOTHEELS, APPROACHING.

A scrawny deer walks out of the shadows and pauses on the road, looking into THE CAMERA with wide eyes.

183 EXT. U.S. 60, WITH COWBOY BOOTS 183

They stop.

FLAGG (voice)
Rub-a-dub-dub...

The deer's ears flick. Its eyes are huge and frightened. It would like to run...but it doesn't.

184 EXT. A HAND, ECU NIGHT 184

It raises slowly. One finger points into THE CAMERA like a gun-barrel. I don't know exactly what happens here; maybe a flash of fire; maybe just a CRACKLING ELECTRICAL SOUND. Something, though

FLAGG (voice)
...thanks for the grub!

185 EXT. THE DEER 185

It falls over, dead.

SOUND: BOOTHEELS, APPROACHING. They come into the frame. The CAMERA PANS SLOWLY UP, and we're looking at RANDALL FLAGG'S back. He's wearing faded jeans, a jeans jacket, and a battered old pack, similar to NICK'S.

SOUND: THE MONSTER-SHOUTER'S JANGLING BELL.

FLAGG cocks his head. He hears.

186 EXT. CENTRAL PARK, NEAR 5TH NIGHT 186

Here comes the MONSTER-SHOUTER, running as fast as his robe will allow. He's cast aside his signs but is holding onto his bell; JANGLES ARRHYTHMICALLY as he runs. His eyes are wide and terrified behind his mended glasses. His colorful flu-mask bounces back and forth on his chest. He leaps the low stone wall between the street and the park and runs off along one of the paths.

MONSTER-SHOUTER
He's here! The hardcase! The dark man!
THE MONSTER! THE MONSTER'S HERE!

187 EXT. FLAGG, STANDING OVER THE DEAD DEER ON U.S. 60 18

We're no longer behind him, but we're at an angle which still does not allow us to see his face (if he really has one). He begins to LEVITATE, RISING SLOWLY until the rundown heels of his boots hang six inches over the road.

Delicately, he touches his left breast with the fingertips of his right hand. There is a FLASH OF DIM BLUE FIRE.

188 EXT. A CENTRAL PARK JOGGING PATH, WITH THE MONSTER-SHOUTER 18

He clutches his chest. There's a FLASH OF DIM BLUE FIRE between his fingers, and he collapses to the path, victim of what might be a heart attack. Might be.

He rolls over painfully and looks up. His bell TINKLES FAINTLY.

MONSTER-SHOUTER (whispers)
The monster...here...

189 EXT. FLAGG, FLOATING ABOVE ROUTE 60 18

We're Now looking at him head-on, but we still can't see his face; the collar of his denim jacket frames only a darkness in which TWO RED PITS OF LIGHT GLOW, like the eyes of a rabid dog.

SOUND: A GUITAR, FAINT AND ECHOING. It's playing "Amazing Grace"
SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

190 EXT. A HOUSE IN A CORNFIELD NIGHT 18

The bright moonlight gives this shot a dreamy feel; fitting, since it is a dream. The corn surrounds the house so completely that the little clearing looks like an island in a green sea.

THE GUITAR IS LOUDER NOW, although we can only see the feet of the person on the porch who is playing it. The rest of her is in darkness.

MOTHER ABAGAIL (voice; sings)
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me...

The corn at the edge of the clearing parts, and STU REDMAN, wearing a pair of blue sweatpants and nothing else, comes walking out. He passes an old apple tree with a tire swing hanging from it and approaches the porch. He looks both amazed and confused.

The GUITAR STOPS. MOTHER ABAGAIL leans forward, out of the shadow, and we see her clearly for the first time: an ancient black woman with a thousand wrinkles cutting through her kind face.

CONTINUES

190 CONTINUES

MOTHER ABAGAIL

Hello there, East Texas; what kep you?

STU (looking around dazedly)

I was lost in the corn. Couldn't find my way out. Then I heard the guitar. It's beautiful.

ABBY (laughs, but pleased)

I ain't been able to make a decent F-cord in twenty years. But thank you kindly.

STU

Who are you? Where is this?

ABBY

I'm Abigail Freemantle, and this is Hemingford Home, [REDACTED]

STU

Am I...is this a dream?

ABBY

Yes...and no. You have to be coming along now, Stu. Time's short. Because the cage is open. The beast is slouching toward Bethlehem to be born.

STU

I don't follow you, ma'am. I--

A WIND RISES, blowing STU'S hair back, making the tire-swing pendulum, and sending a SPOOKY RUSTLE through the corn. MOTHER ABAGAIL'S face fills with fear and stern warning.

ABBY

Rats in the corn, Stuart! Watch out!

He whips and looks at:

191 EXT. THE CORN, STU'S POV

191

But it's a lot closer; the tree with the tire swing is gone. In fact, the clearing is gone.

192 EXT. STU, CU

192

Bewildered, he looks back toward the house, but THE CAMERA WIDENS OUT SWIFTLY, showing us nothing but MORE CORN. The house and the clearing is gone. STU is lost in the corn once again.

STU

Ma'am?...Missus Freemantle?

CONTINUES

192 CONTINUES

ABBY (voice)
Folks round these parts just call
me Mother Abigail, East Texas.

He starts walking toward her voice. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM.
CORN RUSTLES.

STU
Ma'am, where are y--

SOUND: A HIDEOUS DOG-LIKE GROWL.

Alarmed, STU swings toward the SOUND. Long, claw-tipped white
hands SHOOT OUT OF THE CORN and grab him.

193 EXT. FLAGG, IN THE CORN, STU'S POV

193

It's our first good look at him, and it only lasts a second--
long enough to scare the hell out of us, hopefully. What we
see is a monstrous version of FLAGG'S human face--red eyes,
redder lips parted by a mouthful of HUGE GRINNING TEETH, a
misshapen head rising above the collar of his jeans jacket.

194 INT. STU, CU

194

HE SITS UP INTO THE CAMERA WITH A GASP. Looks around at:

195 INT. STU'S ROOM IN THE STOVINGTON INSTALLATION, STU'S POV

195

196 INT. STU

196

It's not home, but after the dream he just had, it will do.
Relief replaces his fear and shock. STU throws back the sheet
and swings his legs out of bed. He's wearing the blue sweat-
pants we saw in the dream...and little wispy strands of some-
thing's clinging to them. He pulls a little of it off and
examines it.

STU (low)

Cornsilk?

SOUND of the AIRLOCK PUMP CYCLING. As STU glances toward the
door, the light over it goes from RED to GREEN.

197 INT. WIDE SHOT OF STU IN HIS ROOM

197

We're in the control room we first saw back in Shot 72, looking
through the one-way glass...although we probably won't know
that at first. All SOUNDS ARE FILTERED, piped in via hidden
microphones in STU'S room.

CONTINUES

197 CONTINUES

The airlock door opens, and DEITZ--sans white-suit and nose-filter--steps through. He doesn't look good. His face is stubbly, and he's COUGHING. We may or may not notice that he's got his right hand behind his back.

During this and the dialogue which follows, THE CAMERA PULLS BACK, showing us the control-room. On the left side of the desk facing the one-way glass, DENNINGER lies face-down with flies buzzing around him. He's dead.

On the center of the desk, STU REDMAN'S file lies open. Papers have been scattered across the work-surface. Each sheet--and an eight-by-ten glossy b&w photograph of STU--has been stamped in red with two words: PATIENT DECEASED.

On the right side of the desk is Geraldo's cage. The guinea pig inside is as dead as DENNINGER.

DEITZ (coughing)
How you feeling, Stu?

STU
Fine.

DEITZ
Fine. Always fine. And in all our tests we never found a single immunity vector. Not one.

198 INT. STU'S ROOM, WITH STU AND DEITZ

198

DEITZ
So what do you think it is, Stu?
Were you touched by God?

STU
What have you got behind your back?

DEITZ brings his right hand into view. It's wrapped around an automatic pistol. STU picks up the REMOTE CONTROL for the TV from the little table by his bed and begins to toss it absently from hand to hand.

STU
I see.

DEITZ
Do you? I wonder.

STU
I think so, yeah. How's Denninger?

CONTINUES

198 CONTINUES

DEITZ

Dead. All dead, except for me and thee...and I think you know it.

STU

And you've come to take care of me? In God's name, why? Why do I have to die just because you're gonna?

DEITZ

Maybe because I don't think a stupid hick like you deserves to live when so many good men are dying.

STU

It was those good men who caused this mess...don't you see that?

DEITZ grimaces at this...then starts to raise the gun. As he does, STU pushes the ON button on the REMOTE CONTROL. The TV comes on with a BLARE. It's just snow, but the SOUND of the STATIC is enough to throw DEITZ off. He starts to look around, then realizes it's a ruse.

STU leaps forward before he can recover, throwing the REMOTE CONTROL at DEITZ as he comes. It strikes DEITZ'S forehead, further fucking up an already lousy day. Then STU is on him. It's a helluva fight--even with the flu DEITZ is no pushover--but STU finally clips him on the jaw hard enough to send DEITZ over backward. On the way down, the back of DEITZ'S neck strikes the iron foot of the bed. There is a BITTER CRUNCHING SOUND. He hits the floor with a boneless thud.

STU stands over him for a few moments, PANTING, then kneels and tries to find a pulse. No joy. STU takes DEITZ'S gun and the REMOTE CONTROL. He gets up, goes to the airlock door, looks back at the TV for a moment, then uses the remote control to shut it off. He tosses the CONTROL on the bed and steps out.

199 INT. THE HALL OUTSIDE STU'S ROOM

199

He comes out, looks back at DEITZ once more, then looks down the hall.

200 INT. THE CORRIDOR, STU'S POV

200

It looks like New Year's Eve in hell. Furniture has been tossed out of offices; paper is scattered everywhere; there are two or three bodies in white hospital outfits.

201 INT. STU

201

Amazed and horrified, he starts down the corridor. As he continues to search for a way out of this hospital-become-tomb, we will see him edge closer and closer to panic.

202 INT. AN ELEVATOR LOBBY

202

One of the doors stands open, revealing an elevator car only halfway up in the opening. The chairs in the lobby are overturned. There's a splash of blood on one wall. STU appears, looks around cautiously, then goes to the open car and looks in.

203 INT. THE DARKENED ELEVATOR CAR, STU'S POV

203

A DEAD DOCTOR, his face black with the flu, stares back at him.

204 INT. THE ELEVATOR LOBBY, WITH STU

204

He recoils, sickened. He turns, looking around, unsure where to go next. He sees a door marked STAIRS and starts toward it.

205 INT. A DOOR MARKED FIRST FLOOR

205

ECHOING FOOTFALLS APPROACH. The door bangs open and STU appears--for a moment we see the stairwell behind him. He looks around, draws a deep, steadying breath, then starts walking again. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM.

This hallway is lined with offices: RECORDS AND TRANSCRIPTS, FAX AND PHOTOCOPY, etc. STU opens a few doors, but all he sees behind them is more death and confusion. After checking each door, he walks faster...until he's almost running.

There are dead bodies, too...and one that isn't quite dead. As STU passes a man in a janitor's coverall, the JANITOR grabs his ankle and lets out a LONG, GURGLING RATTLE.

STU's control snaps. He tears free of the clutching hand and sprints down the corridor, chased by his own rattling heels. He trips over something, falls, and comes face to face with a dead ORDERLY. His neck is swelled grotesquely. STU scrambles to his feet and runs again with his dark, bloated shadow chasing him along the wall.

206 INT. EXIT SIGN, CU

206

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS and GASPING BREATH approach. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK to show us a door leading to the outside. It's on a small landing below a short flight of steps coming down from the first-floor corridor. Below the landing, more stairs continue down into the dark--probably the basement is down there someplace. STU appears, bolts down the three or four steps to the landing, collapses against the door, and looks out with silent gratitude.

CONTINUES

206 CONTINUES

A hand wriggles up from the blackness below the landing and clutches his shoe. STU screams, whirls, and looks down at:

207 INT. THE CHICKEN-MAN, STU'S POV 207

A scarecrow of a man with matted hair and mad eyes sparkling out of deep pitted sockets. He's grinning up at THE CAMERA, delirious with the flu.

CHICKEN-MAN (crooning)
Come down and eat chicken with me,
beautiful...it's sooo dark...

208 INT. THE LANDING, WITH STU AND THE CHICKEN-MAN 208

STU tries to pull free. The CHICKEN-MAN holds on. At last STU kicks him in the face. The CHICKEN-MAN disappears with a SHRIEK and a THUD. STU turns and hammers at the crash-bar on the door. At last it depresses.

209 EXT. LOOKING AT A SIDE DOOR OF THE STOVINGTON FACILITY 209

STU spills out into the night, panting and sobbing. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as he pelts across the lawn. He trips over some bit of junk and goes sprawling. He crawls for awhile, then lowers his face and rubs it through the grass, wallowing in the dew.

STU (whispering)
Thank you, God...thank you so much...

He rolls over and looks up at:

210 EXT. THE NIGHT SKY, STU'S POV 210

Mysterious. Filled with stars. And we hear--FAINT at first but SLOWLY GROWING LOUDER--the SOUND of a GUITAR picking out "Amazing Grace."

211 EXT. STU, LYING ON HIS BACK 211

He **looks** up at the night sky, his face full of the simple, uncomplicated joy of being alive.

STU (soft)
Abigail Freemantle. Hemingford Home.

We HOLD ON HIS FACE as the SOUND OF THE GUITAR grows LOUDER, the
FADE TO BLACK. THIS ENDS PART I.