

H E R O

a screenplay by

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from a story by

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Please note the following changes:

- A.) INSPECTOR JENSEN
(previously changed to
INSPECTOR BENSON on revised BLUE page 94)
has been changed to
INSPECTOR DAYTON
- B.) THE PERIGORD restaurant
has been changed to
THE BARCELONA restaurant
- C.) TERRY WELLS
has been changed to
TOM WELLER
- D.) CHANNEL 11
has been changed to
CHANNEL 13
- E.) CHANNEL 7
has been changed to
CHANNEL 8

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE GOINES turns to the Jury FOREMAN.

JUDGE GOINES
Mister Foreman, have you arrived
at a verdict?

FOREMAN
We have, your honor. We find the
defendant guilty of all the charges.

TITLES BEGIN OVER THE SCENE

ANGLE ON THE DEFENDANT, BERNIE LAPLANTE

Forty, ruffled, cheap suit, cheap haircut. He reacts, turning
to the jury, indignant.

His attorney, DONNA O'DAY, rises. She's twenty-four, looks
younger.

DONNA
Your honor, may I approach the
bench?

As BERNIE fumes, the JUDGE, DONNA and the youthful clean-cut
PROSECUTOR engage in an earnest, inaudible discussion.

Frustrated, Bernie is watching them when he notices something
that distracts him from his anguish.

Donna's wallet is lying in her open attache case. The open top
of the case screens the wallet from the view of the JURY, THE
JUDGE, COURT REPORTERS, etc.

Bernie looks around, checking the spectators section.

No spectators.

TITLE CONTINUE

Bernie gets the wallet to his lap. In between cautious glances toward the bench where the conference continues inaudibly, he surreptitiously selects some of the twenties and some of the tens from the wallet.

AT THE BENCH

The conference breaks up, DONNA heads back toward the defense table.

The wallet still concealed in his lap under the table, BERNIE is indignant.

BERNIE

What's going on? "Guilty"! What is this?

DONNA

I got your bail continued.

BERNIE

Bail, for Chrissake! I'm innocent!

The JUDGE gavels for order as BERNIE slips DONNA's "lightened" wallet back into her attache case unseen.

JUDGE GOINES

Mister LaPlante, I have been persuaded in view of your continued employment and your lack of prior convictions, to continue your bail under the same conditions heretofore, pending sentencing six days from now. In the meantime you will make an appointment with the probation officer who will make a recommendation to me regarding your sentence. I urge you to use these six days to set your personal affairs in order in anticipation of incarceration.

THE TITLES CONCLUDE

INT. CORRIDOR/HALL OF JUSTICE - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and DONNA are hurrying along the crowded corridor outside the courtroom.

BERNIE

"Anticipation of incarceration"?

DONNA

(upset)
He means prison, Mr. LaPlante.

BERNIE
I know what he means. I'm not a prison kinda guy, Miss O'Day. I'm a goddamn working man for Chrissake! Maybe I "augment" my income a little with some "business deals," maybe summa the guys I sell to are crooks, how would I know, I'm not an investigator. You can't make it on a wage no more, not in this country.

DONNA
I think our best course right now would be to focus on the Probation Officer's report...

BERNIE
He gives a good report and I walk?

DONNA
We can hope.
(consulting her notes)
You still have your job, right?

BERNIE
Yeah, I been calling in sick. They think I got the flu.

DONNA
And a son by your ex-wife? Joseph.

BERNIE
A son, yeah. What about him? Joey.

DONNA
Are you pretty involved in his upbringing?

BERNIE
Involved! Christ! She attached my goddamn paycheck! Child support. Why do you think I can't afford a lawyer?

(then...)
You know what I mean. Why I got a court appointed lawyer instead of a, uh, more experienced...

DONNA
I understand. How often do you see your son?

BERNIE
Often, uh.

DONNA
How recently?

BERNIE
Uh, his birthday, uh, May. I think.

DONNA
It's November.

BERNIE
(beat... beat...
beat...)
She don't like me to see him.
Says I'm a bad influence.

DONNA
I think you should visit your son.
And try and get your boss to write
a note about your performance on
the job. You need to create the
impression of a responsible, decent
citizen with familial
responsibilities who happened to
slip up once.

They have reached the front door. BERNIE nods, about to exit.

DONNA
(with difficulty)
Uh, I know you're having financial
difficulties, Mister LaPlante, but
I wonder if... I mean, the money
I loaned you...

BERNIE
Some of it. Right here. I got some
of it. I'll get the rest as soon
as I can.

BERNIE pulls out the crumpled bills he took from Donna's wallet
and hands them to her.

DONNA
(surprised and touched)
I know things are difficult for you,
Mister LaPlante. I don't want to
take your last dime...

BERNIE is already reaching for a twenty.

BERNIE
Right. I better keep some if I'm
gonna see the kid. For gas and

stuff.

Then, unable to resist the chance, he snatches another.

EXT. LION CAGES/ZOO - ANOTHER DAY

A LION lies glumly in his cage, staring balefully through the bars at BERNIE who stares balefully back, contemplating the iron bars. At BERNIE'S side is a ten year old boy, JOEY, whose neat, scrubbed appearance is in sharp contrast to BERNIE'S rumpled, slightly soiled look.

JOEY

Wow! Look at that one!

JOEY is indicating the next cage where a BLACK PANTHER is pacing restlessly to and fro.

JOEY

If you were in there, he'd kill you, wouldn't he...Dad?

As Bernie looks at the PANTHER, the muscular beast looks right into BERNIE'S eyes with the furious yellow stare as if to say "I'm waiting."

BERNIE

Yeah, yeah, something like that.

INT. FLUKY'S RESTAURANT - AN HOUR LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and JOEY facing each other in a booth, eating burgers.

BERNIE

This guy, this "friend" your mother's seeing, he's a fireman, huh? He ever... spend the night, whatsisname?

JOEY

Sometimes. His name's Elliot. He saved a guy's life one time. In a fire.

BERNIE

Oh yeah? A hero, huh?
(a beat, then...)
Was he in the 'Nam, this guy Elliot?

JOEY

"The Nomm"? What's that?

BERNIE

It was this war. Viet Nam. Doesn't matter.

JOEY
Were you in it? In the war?

BERNIE
You never saw that picture, huh?

JOEY
What picture?

BERNIE
Me in my uniform. Used to be on
the bookcase.

INT. MEN'S ROOM/FLUKY'S - TEN MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Deserted except for BERNIE and JOEY side by side at the urinals.
BERNIE glances at JOEY.

BERNIE
Whatcha gotta do there, buddy, is
ya gotta get in close so ya don't
piss on yer shoes.
It don't matter now cause you're
wearin' them sneakers but the time's
gonna come when you're gonna be
wearin' good shoes, expensive ones,
and you don't wanna piss on them,
you wanna protect 'em. From piss,
from tough guys, from everything.

-- ALTERNATE VERSION --

BERNIE
What I don't like about public
restrooms is how you're always
standing in piss. It don't matter
to you, you got those sneakers but
I'm standing in piss in very
expensive shoes. It's a breakdown
in custodial services.

JOEY steals a glance at BERNIE, sees him "shake it off" and zip
up. JOEY does likewise.

JOEY
Are you gonna take me somewhere next
weekend?

BERNIE
I'm working on that. It's just I
got some business problems and...
whatsa matter?

JOEY is heading for one of the stalls. He reaches underneath
and pulls out a wallet.

JOEY
Somebody lost a wallet.

BERNIE is extremely interested, takes the wallet JOEY holds out and glances inside.

Cash. A couple of fifties.

INT. FLUKY'S - SECONDS LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and JOEY exit the Men's Room and head for the door to the parking lot, BERNIE explaining...

BERNIE
You give it to the manager, he pockets the dough, throws the wallet away. Most people who work in supervisory positions... I'm not saying all... are crooks.

JOEY casts a hasty glance at TEENAGER who's wearing the Manager Badge. The youth could not look more innocent if he wore a halo.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A BAG LADY pushing two shopping carts through the parking lot spots BERNIE and JOEY crossing her path...

BAG LAOY
Excuse me, sir, could you spare...?

BERNIE
No way, lady, not a chance.

BERNIE hurries past her, notices JOEY looking back at the miserable woman.

BERNIE
You gotta resist the urge to be nice to those people, they're con artists, they take advantage of the soft heart. A lot of 'em are financially better off than the rest of us.

Arriving at an ancient, battered Toyota, BERNIE searches for his keys and then fusses with the lock.

BERNIE
What I'm gonna do on this wallet thing is, Monday, day after tomorrow, I'm gonna have my secretary phone this guy up from

the name on his driver's license
Let the guy come and get his wallet
and make sure you get a reward.
You deserve a reward. You want
one, doncha? A reward? Gwan, get
in.

INT. TOYOTA/MOVING/FREEWAY - TWENTY MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE is at the wheel, the car is gasping, struggling.

BERNIE

Whatcha gotta do, you gotta look
out for number one. It sounds
harsh, but it's a goddamn (excuse
the vulgarity) jungle out there,
kid. That's why you gotta keep a
low profile! Right? A low
profile!
It's where you don't give nobody
nothin' to shoot at, stay outta
sight, be parta the woodwork, don't
ever tell 'em your name, they'll
use it against you.

JOEY is looking for the right exit sign. He spots it.

JOEY

Here. Get off here.

BERNIE

(a look at Joey)
Thanks. Thanks, pal.

JOEY looks pleased.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE/INT. TOYOTA - LATER - DAY

BERNIE is turning onto a suburban street, checking the houses.

BERNIE

Listen, buddy, I'm really enjoying
this relationship we got going here.
I been missing out on not knowing
you better. Thing is, I got all
this business stuff...

JOEY

I could go to a movie Thursday
night. 'Cause we don't have
school on Friday.

BERNIE pulls the car up in front of a single story two bedroom
house.

BERNIE

Here we are. Yeah, that's a possibility. A movie. Now you gwan in, tell your mother I got you back on time. Point that out to her. She was always on my case for stuff like that. She's still like that, right?

JOEY

(a little grin, his first)

Yeah.

(getting out)

I'll see ya... dad.

JOEY gets out and runs toward the house. BERNIE watches him go. Then he pulls out the wallet, thumbs the cash, glances at the credit cards.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

The bored, fiftyish bartender, CHICK, is watching the TV mounted over the bar in this unfashionable, nearly-deserted joint. He looks up when the door opens.

CHICK

Bernie! Where ya been, Pal?

Arriving at the bar, BERNIE surveys the dimly lit room, checking the booths and tables for customers. Not many.

BERNIE

Some guys been looking for me, Chick? Spanish kinda guys.

CHICK

Spanish kinda guys!

BERNIE

Business thing. Gimme a seven and seven, willya?

BERNIE checks his watch, takes a seat, puts a twenty on the bar.

CHICK

What is it, five days now I don't see you!

BERNIE

'Cause I'm up to my ass in shit is why. I'm broke, plus I got legal problems... Nobody was asking for me, huh?

BERNIE looks around nervously, peering into the shadowy booths

and rear tables as CHICK puts a drink in front of him.

CHICK

Nope. Legal problems, you gotta have a good attorney.

BERNIE

My attorney, she's just outta law school, about a couple of years older than my kid, for Chrissake.

CHICK

You gotta kid? How old's your kid?

BERNIE

Nine. I think. Maybe ten. Yeah, ten. Nice kid.

CHICK

You got a ten year old attorney, Bernie?

BERNIE

I can't afford no better. My ex, she attached my pay check for child support payments.

(turning)

You looking for Bernie LaPlante by any chance?

A MAN who's just entered the lounge shakes his head no and heads for a table where he's greeted by the COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

CHICK

I didn't even know you had a kid.

BERNIE

(thoughtful)

The thing about kids is, they're so... young! They don't know nothin' yet. When you're a kid, you think you're gonna grow up an' be a "wonderful person" instead of an asshole, like everybody else.

CHICK

We're all assholes, Bernie?

BERNIE

(ignoring him)

When I was a kid, I thought I was gonna be this fantastic wonderful heroic human being.

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S)

You Bernie Planta?

BERNIE turns.

Two Latinos are right behind him, low lifes, ESPINOSA and VARGAS.

BERNIE
LaPlante. Bernie LaPlante. You the
guys Bunny called, huh?

INT. BACK BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Credit cards are being inspected. ESPINOSA, seated between VARGAS and BERNIE, in a booth in the nearly deserted lounge, looks the cards over dubiously.

ESPINOSA
Three hours is old, man. Very old.

BERNIE
Hey, he might not of reported 'em
at all yet. He might not know for
a couple hours.

VARGAS
You pick his pocket?

BERNIE
Yeah, more or less. Trust me, these
are very very fresh.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

JEFFREY BROADMAN is standing against the granite facade of a downtown office building. Three thousand dollar suit, Hermes tie, expensively cut silver grey hair ruffling slightly in the breeze. Charming smile, candid eyes...

BROADMAN
To be honest, I can't make sense
of it either, Ms. Gayley.
Things seem to be on the upswing,
our differences with the SEC have
been favorably resolved. In a
business sense, I believe we've
"turned the corner..."

GALE GAYLEY, a TV reporter, is standing close to BROADMAN, a microphone in her hand. She's thirty, attractive, dignified... We can hear SIRENS in the distance and, closer, the CRACKLE of radios and walkie talkies.

GALE
Mister Broadman, your wife and
children are on their way here as
we speak. Don't you think -- ?

BROADMAN

I feel I've done very well in life: good health, wonderful family, much wealth. I guess what we're talking about here is a kind of despair. I just have the feeling that everything from here on is going to be... downhill... At a time like this, I think I'm entitled, as the saying goes, to "look out for number one" and put my own needs first. That pretty much concludes what I have to say. Thanks for coming out here to let me talk to you and your viewers.

A nice smile as he drops RIGHT OUT THE BOTTOM OF THE FRAME!

ANGLE ON GALE

Looking down, horrified.

GALE

Oh my god! Chucky, tilt down.

Her cameraman, CHUCKY, twenty-five, is already urgently tilting his vidpak as WE REVEAL that he and GALE are standing on a ledge many stories above the street.

GALE

Did you get it?
(then, doubly
horrified)
Jesus, did I say that?

CHUCKY

Yeah, I got it. Sports training. You learn to follow the ball.
(looking up at Gale)
How about you do a wrap-up from up here? I'll pan off that skyscraper over there, find you here, then reveal the drop.

GALE looks shaken.

TV IMAGE (EXT. OFFICE BUILDING LEDGE - DAY)

Later, the CAMERA "finds" GALE in mid-sentence standing on the ledge, "wearing" her broadcast voice and persona...

GALE

(into mike)
Suicide number 137 of this year in this city was neither a destitute nor a lonely man, but

a successful executive with a loving family and forty million dollars in the bank. If there's nameless "despair" in executive offices, what can there be sixty stories below where the hungry and the homeless, the brutalized and the addicted, fight their daily battle for survival.

(beat)

From a ledge sixty stories above the street, I'm Gale Gayley for Channel Four News.

REVEAL: THE TV MONITOR IS IN AN OFFICE

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/CHANNEL 4 - LATE AFTERNOON

DEAKINS, fifty, shirtsleeves, News Director, and WALLACE, sixty, Station Manager, suit and tie, patrician, are watching the monitor while CHUCKY and PARKER, the boyish gofer, hover behind them.

CHUCKY

Whadja think of the fall shot, Chief? The guy drops twenty stories in perfect focus, center frame while I go smoothly from F16 to F5.6.

DEAKINS

Helluva shot, Chucky, beautiful.

(pulling out the video tape)

Parker, run this down to Frazier, tell him we open with it at six, eleven and at seven a.m....

PARKER is already running out the door as Gale enters.

GALE

Hi, Chief. You like the suicide?

WALLACE

Never reach out!

GALE

Hello, Mister Wallace.

DEAKINS

(to Gale)

He's right. It's unprofessional.

WALLACE

(to Gale)

If you reach out, you could get

pulled over yourself.

GALE

What're we talking about? Reach out for what?

CHUCKY

I told them how you were upset we didn't save the guy...

DEAKINS

Saving people is not our job. It's as wrong to step in and save someone as it would be to push someone off.

WALLACE

You wouldn't push the guy, would you?

GALE

I didn't say I thought we should have saved him..

WALLACE

You didn't?

GALE

I said I wished it had at least occurred to me to consider saving him.

DEAKINS

What good would that do?

GALE sits on Deakins' desk.

GALE

It would make me feel like a human being instead of a cynical, hardbitten newswoman. Besides it wouldn't be a bad story, would it, "Newswoman Saves Suicide?"

DEAKINS

Unprofessional.

GALE

You just can't bear the idea of good news.

DEAKINS

You're sitting on your ticket.

GALE finds an envelope on the desk under her butt.

WALLACE

Ticket! What's going on?

DEAKINS

She's flying to New York. She's
been nominated for a Silver Mike...

WALLACE

A Silver Mike! You're covering us
in glory!

GALE

I haven't won it yet.
(studying ticket, to
Deakins)
I notice you've got me scheduled
on a flight back an hour after the
ceremony.

WALLACE

An hour after...! Deak, for
Heaven's sake! Let's give her a
night in New York City. We'll put
her and her boyfriend up at a good
hotel...

DEAKINS

She broke up with her boyfriend.
(to Gale)
Listen, babe, we needja back.
You gotta follow up on the jumper,
find the human interest in the
grim, unending tale of woe that
pours from the wounded heart of
the heartless metropolis.

GALE

The story behind the story, the
ugly scandal behind the falling
millionaire, the dirt, you mean.

DEAKINS

That too.

GALE

(to Wallace)
Would the station put me up at a
good hotel...?

WALLACE

(a look toward Deakins)
Absolutely!

GALE gives DEAKINS a big grin and starts out.

DEAKINS

Okay, hell with it. Party hearty...
is that what they say? I'll figure
something out.

(once she's gone)
She's just pretending she's a
person. She's really a reporter.
Fifty bucks she's on the first
flight back.

CHUCKY
You know what I don't get? I don't
get why a guy who's gonna jump asks
to talk to a TV reporter?

DEAKINS
Cause how's he gonna know he's
jumped if it's not on the six
o'clock news.

EXT. STREET/CITY CIVIC CENTER - AFTERNOON

HORNS BLARE as a FORD VAN cuts off a CAB and squirms into a
parking place marked "HANDICAPPED ONLY."

The side of the van reads GUMLEY'S SUPER CARPET CARE and
features a cartoon logo and a phone number.

BERNIE, wearing Gumley overalls, jumps out of the van and
hurries up the steps to an imposing municipal building.

INT. CIVIC BUILDING - TEN MINUTES LATER (AFTERNOON)

A door reads "PROBATION DEPARTMENT." MOVE IN ON THE DOOR.

INT. OFFICE/PROBATION - DAY

Bernie is sitting across the desk from the stone-faced, balding
Probation Officer, PATRICK DUKE.

BERNIE
(agitated)
Hey! Do I have a record? Have I
ever done time? I mean I been
arrested a few times, who hasn't?
Parking tickets for Chrissake!
Suspicion of stuff! Have I ever
been convicted of anything?

DUKE
Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE
Take a look at my employment
record, you got my employment
record there, right? You see any
unemployment there, any welfare?
I'm a taxpayer. They eat me

alive, the tax people, they got taxes on everything, taxes, taxes, taxes, and forms! Taxes and forms so I can pay your goddamn salary, so you can sit there and write stuff, guys like me pay your wages...

DUKE
Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE
Do I hit anybody? You see me shoot anybody? Hey, drugs! Do I sell drugs? Jesus, I don't belong in prison. I'm a family man.

DUKE
Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE
Look, I got this kid. We got a goddamn relationship! I'm takin' him to a movie tonight! He worships me. If I go down what's this do to my son? I'm his goddamn role model for Christ sake!

DUKE looks up at the "family man's" plaintive look. Then... Bernie ruins it.

BERNIE
Listen, if I coulda afforded an experienced attorney, I woulda walked. It was a shitty case, very circumstantial. You gonna send me downstate for having an inexperienced lawyer? How you gonna feel about the system if you do that?

The brief flash of mercy is gone from DUKE'S eyes, replaced with a hard glitter. BERNIE has just shot himself in the foot.

INT. BALLROOM /N.Y. HOTEL - DAY

VIGOROUS APPLAUSE! GALE has just received the Silver Mike Award, a tastefully small, mike-sized replica of a microphone, from the MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Clutching it, she faces the applauding AUDIENCE across a podium, speaking into a real microphone.

GALE
Thank you, very much. I'm grateful for this. Since you're all

colleagues here, you know what kind of a team it takes... to put a story on a screen. I don't have to explain to you how much the cameraman, the editor, the assignment editor and the news director, to mention a few did to get me this award.

GALE pauses. She reaches into her purse and pulls out an onion. She holds it up.

GALE
This is an onion.
(dramatic pause,
then...)
It's a metaphor for a news story. Only a few hours ago I was standing on a ledge sixty stories above a street interviewing a man who subsequently jumped to his death. Forty million dollars in the bank, happily married, good health. Great story!

The AUDIENCE is attentive, mesmerized as they watch her rip off the outer skin of the onion and toss it dramatically aside.

GALE
(continuing)
There's gotta be more. We're pros, right? Some kinda extramarital hanky panky, maybe? Another good story!
(she peels another layer of onion)
Maybe the guy's been accused of child molesting. Terrific story!
(she peels more off the onion)
Then it turns out the accusation was false. Wonderful! More story.

The AUDIENCE watches, captivated as the onion gets smaller.

GALE
(continuing)
Maybe the alleged mistress was lying, setting the guy up. Sensational story!
(the onion is very small)
We keep going, keep digging, keep investigating. We expose the guy's whole life, his family. Why? Because we're pros! Because...

(she pauses
dramatically)
we're looking for the truth!

GALE considers the tiny remains of the onion in her hand.
Then, she peels it down to nothing and lets it fall.

GALE
But what if, after all our
digging, after all our painstaking
investigation, what if it turns out
there wasn't any truth? Just
stories! One story after another,
one layer, then another layer,
until there's nothing left. And
if it's like that, do we have any
obligation to stop at any point?
Or do we just keep going, digging,
digging, digging, peeling,
peeling, peeling, until we've
peeled it all away, until we've
destroyed what we were
investigating in the first place?

ANGLE ON AUDIENCE

attentive, as GALE pauses dramatically, then...

GALE
I'll bet all of you, like me,
yearn for just one story that
isn't about uncovering layer after
layer of human weakness; a story
that reveals with each new layer
of investigation, something finer
and nobler, something even...
inspirational.

GALE gazes soberly across the podium at the AUDIENCE.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. SKID ROW STREETS - DAY)

A BAG LADY addresses the camera, a news interview.

BAG LADY/TV
First rule out here on the streets
is you gotta watch out for number
one. If you go down... break a
bone or something... you're gone!
Nobody's gonna pick you up.'

WINSTON'S VOICE (O.S)
Shitty color! Looka the skin tones.

REVEAL: THE TV SET IS IN BERNIE'S APARTMENT

INT. LIVING ROOM/BERNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (RAIN)

WINSTON, fifty and fat, is scowling at the image on the TV screen in BERNIE'S spartan and tasteless three room apartment. BERNIE grabs the remote from WINSTON'S pudgy hands.

BERNIE

Chrissake! Homeless people are supposed to have shitty skin tones. Look!

BERNIE points the remote at the screen...

ON THE TV SCREEN

CLICK! A gunfight replaces the BAG LADY ON SCREEN, then a sitcom, an old movie, MTV, and finally a slick commercial featuring a sexy bikinied BLONDE.

INT. BERNIE'S APT. - NIGHT

BERNIE

There you go! Skin tones! Listen, you gotta fish or cut bait. I wouldn't even do this if I didn't have these legal problems. Two fifty. That's it. I gotta get outta here, I gotta take my kid to the movies tonight, I'm late.

WINSTON stares at the lithe thighs ON THE SCREEN as BERNIE starts rummaging urgently in his closet.

WINSTON

I'll go two hundred.

BERNIE has just found his good shoes, notices a carton of brand new jackets.

BERNIE

Two hundred! How about a jacket? Wanna buy me a jacket?

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The engines drone as we look into the sparsely populated main cabin of the "baby Boeing". Among the many empty seats, a MR. FLETCHER reads a magazine while his ten year son RICHIE plays a pocket video game.

LESLIE SUGAR, one of the two Flight Attendants, is serving a drink to Mr. Smith, a businessman while FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant, is giving a pillow to an ELDERLY WOMAN.

We DISCOVER GALE, cradling a phone to her ear while she awkwardly fishes in her purse and pulls out the Silver Mike

Award.

GALE

It's very nice actually.
(reading the
inscription)
"For Excellence in the Pursuit of
Truth." Uh, listen, I just wanted
you to know I got a seat back on
the early flight after all so...
What?

Reacting to what she hears on the phone, GALE overturns the
purse in her lap and the contents -- wallet, comb, lipstick,
notepad, etc. -- spill on the floor.

GALE

What do you mean you gave it to
Conklin? Conklin wasn't on that
ledge! Conklin wasn't...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/CHANNEL FOUR - NIGHT

DEAKINS is grinning into his phone, winking at WALLACE who's
standing beside his desk.

DEAKINS

Gale, you were gonna do the town,
remember? Fancy suite at the
station's expense, see a show, get
laid maybe. What was I supposed
to do?

Still grinning, he breaks off and listens to Gale's faintly
audible response while holding out his palm to WALLACE in a
triumphant "pay me" gesture. Then he speaks into the phone...

DEAKINS

Okay, okay, you get back tonight,
doll, and I'll take Conklin off your
suicide. Fly carefully... and
congratulations on the award.

DEAKINS hangs up and smugly pockets the fifty WALLACE has fished
from his wallet, chuckling gleefully...

DEAKINS

What'd I tell ya! They're all like
that, the good ones. They're
junkies for the story. They can't
let go.

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The eight-year-old, KELLY, seated next to GALE is helping GALE

pick up the contents of her purse from the floor.

GALE

Thank you. Very much.

KELLY beams. And GALE gives a look to KELLY'S mother SUSAN who's seated on the other side of KELLY.

SUSAN

There's another credit card on the floor.

GALE reaches down to pick up her Visa card from the floor.

GALE

Thanks.

GALE inserts the Visa Card in her wallet with the other cards.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Rain comes down in curtains as BERNIE'S Toyota chugs and farts through curtains of water.

INT. MOVING CAR/CITY STREET - NIGHT

BERNIE is at the wheel, trying to see through the rain swept windshield. He's talking to himself as he drives...

BERNIE

I know why it's raining. I coulda predicted this. It's raining because my wipers are fucked up. If my wipers were okay, the fucking sun would be shining right now. At night!

INT. COCKPIT/727 - NIGHT

Engines DRONE monotonously. The Flight Engineer is looking at a magazine while the PILOT and CO-PILOT, surrounded by glowing instruments, stare into the blackness ahead... until something catches the bored PILOT'S eye. A red light on the control panel. He frowns and looks closer.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/FREEWAY - NIGHT

Looking for exit signs, BERNIE can barely see through the sheets of rain that his malfunctioning wipers do little to clear.

Suddenly a sign looms into view and disappears before he can read it.

BERNIE

Damn!

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The engines drone. The cabin is peaceful, most PASSENGERS dozing or talking softly as GALE glances up from her magazine, sees SUSAN reading while KELLY sleeps peacefully, her head in SUSAN'S lap.

PING! The electronic tone. Gale looks up, sees the "Fasten Seat Belt" sign illuminated.

GALE looks toward the dark window. No sign of any lights below. No city. No airport. strange.

The P.A. SYSTEM comes to life and the CAPTAIN'S mellifluous VOICE murmurs soothingly...

P.A. SYSTEM

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain. We're experiencing a high reading on one of our indicators. Ten to one, it's a malfunction in a gauge, but just as a precaution I'm going to ask you to fasten your seat belts while the Flight Attendants run through some safety procedures with you. I apologize for the necessity and the inconvenience.

Murmurs in the cabin. What does this mean? SUSAN looks a question at GALE, puzzled as Flight Attendants LESLIE and FREDDY take their positions to demonstrate safety procedures.

LESLIE

First make sure your seat belts are fastened securely. Then brace your arms against the seat ahead at you like this. You can use pillows or blankets...

KELLY

(waking up)
Mommy, what's going on?

SUSAN

Everything's going to be fine, honey.

GALE'S eyes meet SUSAN'S eyes. Fear. Brave smile.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/EXIT/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Pulling off the freeway, BERNIE peers at the signs that greet

him as he slows to a stop at the foot of the exit.

Unable to read them through the windshield he has to open the door and stand in the rain.

Even then, the sign is obscured by torrents of rain.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

All eyes are on LESLIE as she continues her instructions...

LESLIE
-- when you reach the bottom of the chute you should immediately move as far away from the plane as possible in the event of a fire on the aircraft.

Glancing around, GALE glimpses pale, strained FACES.

She sees the ELDERLY WOMAN holding the arm of a man, her SON.

She sees a MRS. BROWN squeezing a MR. BROWN'S hand tightly.

Looking back down the aisle she sees MR. FLETCHER putting his arm around RICHIE'S shoulder, father and son united against fate.

Beside her she sees SUSAN trying to comfort KELLY.

LESLIE
Those of you who can should help others who may be unable to move quickly.

GALE is acutely aware that everyone around her is comforting someone else. Only she is alone.

INT. TOYOTA/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Back at the wheel, BERNIE is turning right onto an unlit highway, his single headlight stabbing weakly at the storm ahead while his useless wipers clatter loudly and the engine chugs... farts... misses.

BERNIE
I'm late already! Don't quit on me now, for Chrissake! This ain't the time!

The engine struggles, continues.

BERNIE
Come on, come on !

The engine surges to life again... then begins to throb with downright vigor.

BERNIE frowns. It's getting louder.

AND LOUDER! AND LOUDER! IT'S ROARING.

BERNIE'S eyes bug with the realization that either he's about to take off... OR THAT ISN'T HIS ENGINE THUNDERING, THUNDERING.

A great shadow blurs in the rain ahead.

BERNIE brakes hard, skidding, sliding wildly.

BAWHOOOOOOOOM! HUGE NOISE. IMPACT! GRINDING!

BERNIE skids to a halt, eyes shut tight to prevent himself from dying.

But he's not dead. He opens his eyes. Stares out the windshield.

A blank wall greets him, bouncing back his headlights in a blur of rain.

BERNIE

Now what?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

BERNIE gets out of his car. Everything is spooky quiet.

The tail section of a huge aircraft blocks the road directly in front of Bernie's car. He skidded to a stop two feet short of ramming the twenty-five foot high vertical fin. The rest of the craft is sprawled off the low bridge and into the water, lost for the most part in the darkness.

Suddenly, a VOICE calls out... from somewhere forward along the fuselage.

VOICE

Hey! Help! Somebody! Help.

BERNIE frowns. Helping is not his instinct. Approaching the edge of the bridge, he peers into the darkness.

The plane is corkscrewed through the bridge at such a freak angle that the tail rear doors are wedged shut by the metal super-structure, the wing exits are blocked by the up-bent wing stubs, and the right forward doors are canted hopelessly toward the sky while the left exit is partially jammed in the mud near the river bank in three feet of water.

VOICE

Please! Help us. We're stuck.

Hello! Anybody!

BERNIE

Whatsa problem, pal?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 AT REST - NIGHT

Engulfed in darkness except for strings of floor lights leading to the exits, the cabin is a confusion of GROANS, COUGHS, CRIES and the piercing WAIL of a screaming BABY. The floor lights seem to be on the walls, high on one side and low on the other, as the cabin is dramatically canted, making movement along aisles nearly impossible.

LESLIE, battered from the impact, her uniform torn, is struggling to open the forward emergency exit. Angled downward, the door will only open six inches before being blocked by mud. Water pours in around her ankles as she shoves furiously.

LESLIE

Somebody give me a hand.

A VOICE

We're on fire.

LESLIE

Let's stay calm, everybody.
Everybody, stay calm, please.
Please stay calm. Everything will
be all right if we stay calm.
Somebody give me a hand with this
door.

Her flashlight stabs the darkness, reveals frightened FACES.

Slumped, motionless forms.

LESLIE

Help the people around you,
everybody. Please help each other.

AAAAAAAHH! SCREAMS as the plane suddenly shifts violently from the interior movement, canting further.

ANGLE ON GALE

Staggering from her seat. WHAM! Hand luggage slams into her from an overhead rack. As GALE goes down, a PASSENGER lands on top of her catching her arm at an angle, breaking it. The PASSENGER climbs off her and struggles down the slope.

GALE realizes she can't get up, her leg is wedged in the framework of a seat. PASSENGERS are climbing past her, heading forward.

SUSAN is fighting her way out of her canted seats, clutching

the terrified KELLY to her.

GALE

I... I can't move. I'm caught.

SUSAN glances at her and their eyes meet. KELLY is screaming.

SUSAN turns away from GALE and half-carries KELLY toward the exit, leaving GALE alone, trapped, in pain and fear.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is climbing cautiously down the undercarriage of the bridge toward the water, as OTHER VOICES callout from the twisted fuselage.

BERNIE

Hold on there, hold on there. Just a minute.

BERNIE is awkward and... very careful... climbing down, not brave or dashing. He doesn't notice that, behind him, where the plane is corkscrewed through the bridge a BOUQUET OF ORANGE FLAMES IS BLOSSOMING IN THE FUSELAGE OF THE JET.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

Thick smoke is oozing through the cabin. PASSENGERS are stumbling over each other, clogging the canted aisles while OTHERS slump in their seats, immobilized.

RICHIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Daddy! Daddy! Daddy, wake up!

LESLIE'S VOICE

Keep calm! Everybody, keep calm.

ANOTHER VOICE

Someone's coming!

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Having reached the riverbank, BERNIE is reluctant to step in the water. He hesitates, then he takes off his shoes, looks in the darkness for a place to leave them.

VOICE

Help us! Help, please.

BERNIE

Hold on, buddy. I got hundred dollar shoes here.

More cries. BERNIE steps cautiously into the water. Up to his

ankles. Deeper.

BERNIE wades along the huge fuselage, toward the VOICES, stumbling, landing on all fours in the water.

BERNIE
Jesus Christ!

Struggling to his feet, hands muddy, he blunders toward the Emergency Exit and finds it canted into the water, jammed into the mud so that it only opens a crack.

MR. BROWN is wedged in the crack, trying to force the door open without success. Glimpsing BERNIE'S hands in the crack, he pleads.

MR. BROWN
Help us, please. We can't get out.

BERNIE makes a tentative attempt to open the door. He has no effect whatsoever.

MR. BROWN
Push it! You gotta push hard.

BERNIE
Whaddaya (grunt) think I'm (grunt)
doing?

Reluctantly BERNIE digs his feet into the mud, puts his shoulder into the door and shoves with all his might. Because he has a better angle on the door and better purchase, he's actually able to move it several inches.

MR. BROWN
Harder. Push it harder.

BERNIE leans back into the door again and pushes with all his might. It gives ever so slightly. Another inch. MR. BROWN is trying to squeeze out.

MR. BROWN
Again! Harder. Come on.

BERNIE
(grunting with effort)
I'm... pushing... it, buddy.

MR. BROWN
Harder!

BERNIE
I'm... pushing... it... asshole!

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

PASSENGERS stumble over each other while a flashlight makes panicky stabs at the darkness, RICHIE cries out for FLETCHER to wake up, the BABY screams.

Someone's trying to get out the overhead exit, others are hammering at an aft exit.

GALE slumped in her seat, fades in and out of consciousness. Above her, across the canted aisle, SUSAN is calling out for help... Then, GALE'S eyes flicker with awareness at the sound of an urgent shout...

VOICE
THERE'S A GUY OPENING THE DOOR.
HE'S OPENING IT!

A sudden shadowy surge of movement in the darkness, PASSENGERS urgently scrambling over seats toward the exit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

BERNIE gives a great heave and goes down in the river face first.

He's opened the door just wide enough for MR. BROWN to squirm through the narrow opening, then pull MRS. BROWN through.

BERNIE, sputtering, is trying to get to his feet when the BROWNS knock him down again in their frantic rush to get as far away from the burning plane as they can.

As BERNIE struggles to his feet yet again, more PASSENGERS are oozing out the door. They brush him aside, splashing toward the river bank, while orange flames are flickering wildly now in the tail section.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

LESLIE is beside the exit, using her flashlight to guide people. Her face is bruised and bloody, her uniform torn, but she is courage itself...

LESLIE
Once you're outside, immediately
move as far away from the aircraft
as you can. If you see someone who
needs help...

Scared PASSENGERS are struggling to get over the seats that are close to where the floor ought to be.

LESLIE
Please, everybody, one at a time.
Please, one at a time.

Just then the young RICHIE, caught in the surge of PASSENGERS, bumps into her.

RICHIE
Please, Miss, my father can't move.
He can't move.

LESLIE grabs him and shoves him bodily out the narrow exit as she speaks urgently...

LESLIE
We'll try and help him, you wait
outside. Get as far away from the
plane as you can.

Just then LESLIE sees the bloody PILOT and CO-PILOT staggering toward her.

She helps them out the narrow opening, half pushing them.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BERNIE'S face is smeared with mud! He staggers out of the water in the flicker of firelight and starts searching for his shoes on the muddy riverbank.

PILOT
Don't stop!

BERNIE
You gonna bUy me a new pair a shoes,
pal?

The sound of approaching SIRENS cuts through the rainy night.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

RICHIE is outside the plane, struggling in chest deep water. He looks back at the plane, sobbing...

RICHIE
Dad! Dad!

He doesn't know what to do.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Muttering curses, BERNIE is floundering around on the riverbank when a hand clutches at his sleeve.

BERNIE whirls, his face a mask of mud. Finds himself facing RICHIE.

RICHIE

Sir! Please, sir. Sir, my father
can't move.

Where? BERNIE looks around.

RICHIE
He's in there! He's hurt!

In the plane? In there? BERNIE looks at the plane, reacts...

BERNIE
In there? Listen, kid, the cops
are coming... and the firemen.
They, uh, they got equipment and
stuff for this kindathing, they're,
uh, experts.

The sound of SIRENS, still. a ways off. RICHIE clutches at
BERNIE.

RICHIE
Please, sir! Please! It's on fire.
He can't move.

BERNIE stares into the desperate face... and suddenly,
recklessly, BERNIE loses it, forgets he's BERNIE, acts like
someone else.

BERNIE
Where is he?

YOUNG BOY
Inside! He's in the plane, he...

BERNIE
I know he's inside. Which way?
What's his name?

INT. NEAR THE EXIT/MAIN CABIN/727 - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Chaos and confusion. The smoke is thicker, LESLIE is upset...

LESLIE
Sir, you can't go back in. Sir,
you're blocking passengers. Sir,
no...

BERNIE, his muddy face unrecognizable, is pushing his way into
the plane, shouldering coughing PASSENGERS aside.

BERNIE finds himself standing in the choking darkness,
PASSENGERS pushing past him. Holy smokes! This is ridiculous!
What's he doing here? Thicker smoke, can barely see anything,
VOICES cry out in pain and fear. Just then he spots something.

A flashlight lies on the floor sending a useless knife of light '

into the smoky darkness. He grabs for it, drops it urgently.

BERNIE
Jesus Christ!

The light is in a hand! He reaches again, snatches the light and points it revealing FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant, lying semiconscious on the floor, bloody, GROANING.

BERNIE hesitates. Then he leans down, still gripping the light and half hauls FREDDY toward the nearby exit where LESLIE is supervising PASSENGERS.

BERNIE
Hey, somebody, grab him, willya?
Help this guy, willya, goddamnit!

A MAN reluctantly turns and, with the help of LESLIE they manage to shove FREDDY out the exit. LESLIE instructs the MAN...

LESLIE
Get him away from the plane, help
him.

LESLIE turns back in time to see BERNIE heading back into the darkness, struggling around the stream of PASSENGERS.

For half a second, LESLIE'S face reveals her amazement at seeing somebody go back into the the nightmare a second time. Then she's helping the next passenger out... SUSAN and KELLY...

SUSAN
There's (cough cough) a woman back
there. She's caught.

LESLIE
Get as far away from the plane as
you can.

Urgently LESLIE shoves them through the door.

INT. "UP THE SLOPE"/MAIN CABIN/707 - NIGHT

BERNIE is struggling aft, up the steep slope of the nose-down plane, coughing and cursing in the dark, calling out...

BERNIE
MISTER FLETCHER! HEY, MISTER
FLETCHER! MISTER FLETCHER, HEY
BUDDY, WHERE ARE YA, GODDAMNIT?

BERNIE pans the flashlight ahead of him. The blade of light only cuts a few feet through the thickening smoke, revealing only empty seats.

BERNIE

FLETCHER! HEY (cough cough) HEY,
FLETCHER, SPEAK UP, WILL YA? DON'T
BE AN ASSHOLE!

No answer.

BERNIE pans the light, turns and...

A SHARP GROAN!

BERNIE stumbles. He stepped on someone.

BERNIE
Fletcher?

Pans the light down.

BERNIE
Shit!

A woman! GALE. Semiconscious, in pain, she opens her eyes.

GALE P.O.V.: BERNIE'S MUDDY FACE

Looking up, all GALE can see is a vague vision of a muddy face
dimly visible in the spill of the flashlight.

BACK TO SCENE

GALE
My leg's caught.

BERNIE points the light toward her leg, overpans the leg, the blade of light discovering her purse. Then he corrects the beam back to reveal her leg wedged between two seats.

GALE
Can you... can you get me out of
here?

BERNIE pans the light back to the purse again.

BERNIE
Yeah, sure. I think.

BERNIE puts down the light and struggles her leg loose while GALE groans in pain. Her head is near the floor lights, her eyes open.

For a moment BERNIE'S face passes through the stationary beam
of the flashlight and GALE gets a glimpse of a smoky, muddy face
leaning close to her...AN OBSCURE VISION!

BERNIE
Okay, lady. You gotta make an
effort here. I don't happen to
be a goddamn bodybuilder.

BERNIE retrieves the flashlight lying near her purse. It's out of her line of vision, behind her head. He only hesitates for half a second before his hand shoots out for the purse, conceals it under his jacket, and gets to his feet.

INT. EXIT/AREA/MAIN CABIN/727 - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT)

LESLIE is helping ANOTHER MAN out the exit.

LESLIE
Get away from the plane quickly.
It may explode.

Now she's alone. Heroically she turns back and probes the smoky interior with her flashlight.

The blade of light is blunted by the smoky darkness. There's nothing.

LESLIE hesitates. Should she run, save her own life or...?

Suddenly BERNIE steps into the beam of her light, emerging from the thick smoke hauling GALE over his shoulder, his face smudged, unrecognizable, AN HEROIC VISION SHE'LL REMEMBER!

BERNIE
Gimme a (cough cough) hand, willya,
honey?

EXT. BRIDGE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

SIRENS scream and lights FLASH as more Emergency Vehicles join the ones already parked close to the bridge at a safe distance from the burning tail of the plane. A FIRE CAPTAIN shouts "Move that piece-a junk" at three FIREMEN who are already pushing BERNIE'S Toyota off the bridge and away from the airplane while a confusion of PARAMEDICS and POLICE hurry to the aid of dazed PASSENGERS in torn and bloody clothing.

FIREMEN train hoses on the fiery tail of the plane while the FIRE CAPTAIN shouts...

FIRE CAPTAIN
GET 'EM BACK! GET 'EM BACK!

ANGLE ON RICHIE

Staring at the smoking plane in horror when a hand grips his shoulder. Turning he finds himself looking up at the MAN whose back we saw LESLIE push out of the plane... FLETCHER!

RICHIE
DAD! OH, DAD!

FLETCHER

Son! Thank God! I couldn't find
you. I was terrified... terrified.

They're hugging.

INT. EXIT AREA/727 CABIN - NIGHT

LESLIE and BERNIE are awkwardly pushing GALE'S limp body out
the exit to a FIREMAN, DENTON in an asbestos suit just outside.

FIREMAN DENTON

(to Leslie)

You too, miss! Right away!

LESLIE turns to BERNIE.

LESLIE

I've lost (cough) lost count. I
think (cough) everybody's out.

But BERNIE isn't there! He's disappeared into the smoke. As
she stares in dismay, she hears him yelling...

BERNIE'S VOICE

HEY, FLETCHER! SPEAK UP, WILL YA?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

Coughing and choking BERNIE struggles through the cabin, his
light nearly useless now.

BERNIE'S VOICE

HEY (cough cough) FLETCHER!

Nothing! Darkness. BERNIE can see orange in the black near
the tail. Fire!

This is crazy! Time to turn back! He's turning toward the exit.
when suddenly...

A VOICE

Here! Over here! Help me, please.

At last! BERNIE waves the light in the direction of the VOICE
and stumbles that way through the smoke.

BERNIE

Where the (cough cough) hell are
ya, buddy?

VOICE

Over here. My leg's broken (cough
cough). I need help.

BERNIE finds an injured MAN crawling along the floor.

BERNIE leans down and grips him under the armpits.

BERNIE
Fletcher, right?

The MAN cries out in pain as BERNIE half drags him over seats.

MAN
Aaaaaaaah! Smith!

BERNIE
You're not Fletcher?

BERNIE lets him go.

SMITH
Please help me. My name's Smith.

BERNIE looks around with the light.

Thick smoke. Flames back toward the tail.

BERNIE
I'm looking for Fletcher! HEY,
FLETCHER!

BERNIE waves the light at the darkness and...it goes out.

BERNIE
Shit!

BANG! BANG! BERNIE bangs the flashlight against a seat.

SMITH
Don't leave me. Please don't leave
me.

BERNIE
Awright, awright.

Angrily BERNIE grabs him and hauls him urgently toward the exit while SMITH cries out in pain.

BERNIE
Don't count yer chickens here,
Smith. I can't see shit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

A dazzling worklight shining down from the bridge illuminates the fuselage and the partially opened exit as TWO FIREMEN in asbestos fire suits splash through the water carrying GALE from the plane.

FIREMAN DENTON stands at the narrow exit, too narrow for him to enter in his bulky asbestos suit and shouts through his helmet.

FIREMAN DENTON
You've gotta come outta there, miss.
Right now! This thing's gonna go.

LESLIE squeezes out of the exit, looks back...

LESLIE
There's another...

FIREMAN DENTON
(grabbing her)
RIGHT GODDAMN NOW! COME ON!

As LESLIE and FIREMAN DENTON splash the ten yards to the riverbank flames eat their way toward the wings where the fuel is stored.

Suddenly BERNIE'S VOICE cuts through the chaos...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
HEY! GIMME A HAND HERE. HEY YOU!
IN THE BUNNY SUIT.

LESLIE looks back and sees BERNIE awkwardly pulling SMITH out of the narrow exit.

FIREMAN DENTON slogs back to BERNIE.

FIREMAN DENTON
I'll help him, buddy, you run for
it.

FIREMAN DENTON tries to grab SMITH but BERNIE won't let go.

BERNIE
I gat this guy, you go get the guy
who's still in there.

FIREMAN DENTON is lifting SMITH bodily.

FIREMAN DENTON
Get out of here, pal, she's gonna
blow.

BERNIE
You're not goin' in? There's a guy
in there! You got a fucking suit.

FIREMAN DENTON
SHE'S GONNA EXPLODE, YOU DUMB SHIT.

FIREMAN DENTON starts to stagger away from the plane, carrying SMITH.

BERNIE looks back at the plane, sees the fury of flames and suddenly he splashes through the water after FIREMAN DENTON.

EXT. RIVERBANK - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT)

FIREMAN DENTON is staggering up the slope carrying SMITH when he glances back.

He sees BERNIE poking around at the edge of the riverbank.

FIREMAN DENTON
HURRY 'UP, BUDDY!

In the orange glow of the fire, BERNIE gives a delighted grunt as he finds half of what he's looking for... a single shoe.

FIREMAN DENTON
COME ON, YOU STUPID SHIT!

BERNIE
I LOST MY GODDAMN SHOE!

BERNIE is looking around frantically when...

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BOOOOOOOOOOM! BERNIE is knocked backward by a tremendous explosion. Suddenly he's sitting in the mud, the night around him bright with flames.

BERNIE
Holy shit!

Then he's running, clutching one shoe, no longer worried at all about the other...

BAAAAAAAAAAAAA-DOOOOOOOOOOM! A SECOND BLAST! MUCH BIGGER!

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

From the relative safety of the road, CHUCKY's pointing his vidpak with the Channel Four logo at the exploding plane. Panning the camera from the furious mountain of flames he picks up a marvelous image.

CHUCKY
(excited, under his
breath)
Tight on fire, yes, yes, pulling
back, flame everywhere, find
survivors backlit in orange glow,
yes, yes, yes, awesome, major award,
cameraman of the year, go Chucky, go,

baby, how you shoot it.

A Flight Attendant (LESLIE) in a torn uniform is staggering up the slope followed by an heroic FIREMAN (DENTON) carrying a Crash Victim (SMITH) on his brave shoulders. What a shot!

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BERNIE stands on the riverbank in the pouring rain and looks back at the burning plane. He shakes his head sadly, imagines FLETCHER in the inferno.

BERNIE

Sorry, pal. Woooo! What a way to go!

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

TWO PARAMEDICS are struggling with GALE who's trying to get off the stretcher they're putting into an ambulance.

GALE

I'm okay. Please, I'm okay, I'm a reporter, I...OW!

PARAMEDIC

Lady, you're not okay.

GALE gets off the stretcher in spite of their efforts and staggers a few feet, grabs one of them for support.

PARAMEDIC

Miss, please, you've got a broken arm.

GALE

It's my leg. My leg hurts...
(suddenly shouting)
CHUCKY! OVER HERE, CHUCKY! CHUCKY!

ANGLE ON CHUCKY

Taping SURVIVORS, when he hears GALE'S voice and looks around for her.

CONKLIN, the reporter with him, spots her first.

CONKLIN

Holy shit! It's Gayley!

ANGLE ON THE AMBULANCE

Where GALE is half on the stretcher as CHUCKY and CONKLIN rush up to her.

CONKLIN
Gayley! You were on the plane?

GALE
This is my story, Conk. I did the
research.

PARAMEDIC
Please, she's injured, she's gotta
go to the hospital...

CHUCKY is already pointing the vidcam at her, taping as the
PARAMEDICS shove her onto the stretcher and into the ambulance
with her talking all the way.

GALE
Get the Flight Attendant, the one
who manned the door. Also some guy,
a passenger, pulled me out. Talk
to him. Then get down to the
hospital and I'll do an interview
and an intro and close. Make
sure...

BANG! The PARAMEDICS slam the door behind her.

CONKLIN shakes his head as CHUCKY lowers his camera and the
ambulance pulls away.

CONKLIN
She's a real piece of work!
Unbelievable! "It's 'my story, I
did the research."

CHUCKY
You're not going to believe the shot
I got back there. Major Awards!

ANGLE ON BERNIE

wearing only one shoe he limps right past CHUCKY and CONKLIN,
unnoticed in the confusion of FIREMEN, PARAMEDICS, and
SURVIVORS.

ANGLE ON RICHIE AND FLETCHER

Standing between an ambulance and a firetruck, father and son
are hugging each other warmly. They don't notice Bernie
trudging past them and he doesn't notice them.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

reacting with sudden horror at something he sees.

ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE

The spot where BERNIE left his car. FIREMEN are spraying

retardant on the firey fuselage of the plane. No sign of the car!

BERNIE

Christ! My car! Where's my car?

BERNIE moans mournfully and suddenly a STATE POLICE OFFICER is at his side.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

Where are you hurt, sir?

BERNIE

Huh? Hurt? What?

BERNIE is urgently concerned with the purse poorly concealed under his jacket.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

How about coming over to the ambulance, sir, let the medical people check you out.

The STATE POLICE OFFICER has a hand on the arm BERNIE is using to keep the purse under his jacket.

BERNIE

(pulling away)

Hey, I don't need no ambulance. I'm just looking for my car... It musta burned up or something.

The purse is visible though the OFFICER hasn't yet noticed it. He's patronizing BERNIE, insisting.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

You weren't in your car, sir, you were in an airplane crash. But everything's going to be okay, we'll just go see the doctor and...

Just then MRS. BROWN rushes up and clutches the OFFICER, grabbing his arm.

MRS. BROWN

Please, please, my husband's been waiting for medical attention...

As she pulls the OFFICER away, BERNIE hides the purse deeper under his coat, breathes a sigh of relief... and notices something!

BERNIE'S POV OF HIS CAR

Virtually unrecognizable, moved to the side of the bridge, buried under a mountain of fire retardant foam.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Limping up to his car, wiping the foam off the windshield.

BERNIE
This shit has gotta be great for
the paint job!

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM/EVEYLYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark except for the eerie flicker of the TV set.

JOEY is in bed, surreptitiously watching the TV, turned very low.

BANG! CRACK! Gunshots? Not from the TV, from outside.

JOEY scrambles out of bed and heads for the window.

JOEY'S P.O.V.: EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BERNIE is getting out of his Toyota in the glow of a streetlight. It's still raining. BERNIE is soaking wet, wiping off his face. He trudges toward the house wearing only one shoe.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

The door swings open violently, revealing EVELYN standing in the doorway looking furious. She's thirty-five, tough, plain, not ugly.

EVELYN
He waited for you three hours!

BERNIE
You are not gonna believe this,
Evelyn! Absolutely fantastic! I'm
on my way --

EVELYN
I am so tired of your bullshit,
Bernie.

BERNIE
Ev, it's not my fault! I'm trying
to tell you this incredible --

EVELYN
It's never your fault, Bernie!
Never ever! You screwed up my life,
now you're gonna screw up Joey's
life, but you're never gonna accept
responsibility for anyth--

BERNIE

Is he here, your friend. The fireman?

EVELYN

He had an emergency call... a real emergency.

BERNIE

Why doncha let me in so we don't wake everybody in the neighborhood?

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Suburban. Inexpensive furniture. EVELYN and BERNIE ranting...

BERNIE

Willya lemme talk for Chrissake? I'm trying to tell you what happened. What happened is...

EVELYN

The same thing that always happens! You blew it! And this time you broke your son's heart instead of mine! He was so proud, looking forward to going to a movie with his father... and you let him down! Like you let everybody down, always! What did you do, take a mudbath?

ANGLE ON JOEY

eyes wide, crouched at the top of the staircase in his pyjamas, spying on his parents in the living room below.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

That's what I'm trying to... to... okay, nevermind. Just lemme talk to Joey to... to apologize.

EVELYN

He's in bed! You're not gonna wake him and make him crazy, do you understand? He comes home from the zoo, he wants to know if Elliot's a "war hero" like you... he wants to know how many people you killed...

BERNIE

"Elliot"? The heroic goddamn

fireman?

EVELYN

I had to explain your tendency to "exaggerate", How you were actually "in country" all of two weeks and how you killed about as many people as the other clerk-typists in your outfit, no more, no less...

BERNIE

Three weeks, Ev. I didn't tell him I killed anybody...

EVELYN

Maybe not,... but you let him believe it! And then I gotta explain about the homeless...

BERNIE

The homeless!

EVELYN

How not all of them own apartment complexes, how not all of them play the stock market, how not all of them rent babies when they're panhandling. He's ten years old, Bernie! Impressionable!

ANGLE ON JOEY

Watching from the staircase.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

Listen, it's important, Ev, I gotta see him, I got my reasons, very goddamn important...

EVELYN

Use the phone, Bernie, call him tomorrow, he'd like to hear from you. Where's your other shoe? Never mind! I don't want to know. Some fantastic adventure, right? Something really crazy.

BERNIE

I was giving him some advice is all. Preparing him for life. You don't want him to grow up soft, Ev, it's tough out there, it's a goddamn jungle.

EVELYN

(firmly, opening the
door)
Back to the jungle, Bernie. Good
night.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BERNIE steps out and the door slams hard behind him. He pauses,
sighs, starts toward his car...

EXT./INT. BERNIE'S TOYOTA/PARKED - A MOMENT LATER (NIGHT)

As BERNIE gets in the car he notices the purse sticking out from
under the passenger seat where he hid it. He reaches down,
takes the purse, rummages in it, pulls out the Silver Mike,
glances at it, might be worth something, pockets it moves on
to the wallet, the credit cards, the cash... some hundreds,
fifties', twenties...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

EVELYN is shutting off the last of the lights and starting up
the stairs when the doorbell rings. EVELYN scowls. She's
furious.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens and EVELYN stands there scowling.

BERNIE holds out a twenty dollar bill.

BERNIE
Sorry, Ev, to bother you again.
This is for Joey, his reward... for
this wallet he found. When I, uh ,
returned it I told the guy he hadda
give my kid something for finding
it, for the honesty. So the kid
would learn how honestly pays.

Eyes meet. She doesn't believe it for a moment and he knows
it.

BERNIE
Just give it to him, okay, Ev?

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER (NIGHT)

An AIRHORN BLARES, a truck thunders past BERNIE, who's pushing
his Toyota to the side of the road, steering one-handed from
outside.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER YET (NIGHT)

A blonde GIRL tosses an empty beer can from the window of a speeding car full of laughing TEENAGERS.

The can clatters to the road beside BERNIE who lowers his "hitch-hiking thumb" as the car speeds off leaving him alone.

EXT. HEAVY TRAFFIC/FREEWAY - DAWN (HOURS LATER)

Rush hour! Bumper to bumper TRAFFIC oozing toward the city. We HEAR A VOICE!

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)
You actually went into it? A
burning airplane?

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
"Into it"! "Into it", for
Chrissake! I was practically living
in the goddamn thing... every time
I turned around, some other person
wants me to save 'em.

Looking for the VOICES, we MOVE IN on a single lane of crawling traffic and finally FOCUS ON a battered, rusted 76 Chevy with a crumpled fender, a trunk tied closed and cracked windows...

INT. CHEVY/MOVING/FREEWAY - DAWN

BERNIE is sitting on bare springs and tatters of upholstery in the passenger seat, muddy, rumpled, weary...

BERNIE
(continuing)
Couldn't see a fucking foot in front
of me, smoke... then boooooom! It
explodes! I could be dead!

JOHN BUBBER is at the wheel, a shabbily dressed, tired, haunted man. He gives BERNIE a look. Should he believe?

BUBBER
And you pulled people out?
You're... a hero.

BERNIE
Nah, I fucked it up. I was tryin'
to impress this kid, don't ask me
why. I was gonna rescue his old
man, but I couldn't find the poor
bastard. He musta blew up.
(then...)
I got the hell outta there. I

didn't have the nerve to face the kid.

BUBBER

(thoughtful, serious)

A lotta people wouldn't have tried.
It was pretty brave even trying...

BERNIE

Try stupid.

BUBBER brakes for traffic and a cardboard box from the back seat hits BERNIE and cascades crushed cans all over him.

BUBBER

Sorry about that. Just toss them in back.

(very serious)

A lot of people would say that's what heroism is... stupidity. Doing something that if you thought about it, you wouldn't do it, it's not in your... interest.

BERNIE indicates the clutter of cans.

BERNIE

You got a drinking problem or what?

BUBBER

I sell them at the recycling center. Gives me a little for gas and food.

BERNIE

(considering the back seat)

Looks like you live in here, for Chrissake!

BUBBER

In bad weather, yeah. Mostly I camp out in the woods. I thought maybe you were down on your luck too when I picked you up.

BUBBER indicates BERNIE'S muddy, torn clothes, stocking foot.

BERNIE

Down on my luck! Hey, I toldja, a goddamn plane fell on me outta the sky. In America, for Chrissake! See this shoe! Hundred dollar pair of shoes. One shoe!

BUBBER glances at the shoe BERNIE'S waving.

BUBBER

You should give it to someone with only one leg.

BERNIE

One leg! Like the Red Cross or something?

BUBBER

I know a guy who only has one leg.

BERNIE drops the shoe on the floor, shakes his head, disgusted.

BERNIE

Sell it to him. You get a couple bucks, it pays for the ride.

(a beat, then...)

I got a job, nice apartment. I do okay.

BUBBER

They interview you or anything? At the plane crash?

BERNIE

Hey, do I look crazy? I don't go for that shit... interviews, media. They're manipulators. "Keep a low profile," that's my motto.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAWN

The Chevy inches forward as the traffic moves again, heading slowly toward the city.

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

(continuing, grandly)

Besides, I got these legal problems. My attorney don't want me giving statements to the press.

Traffic is still crawling.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

GALE sits up in bed in spite of an I.V. in one arm and a cast on the other. There's a big bandage across the bridge of her nose and her left leg is also heavily bandaged...

GALE.

I don't understand. You can't find him?

She stares incredulously at her trio of visitors, CONKLIN, CHUCKY, and DEAKINS. DEAKINS, uncomfortable outside his office, is awkwardly trying to vase a bouquet of flowers.

DEAKINS

There's a lot of confusion around what went on last night, it's not clear...

GALE

You said all the passengers were accounted for...

DEAKINS

Apparently the guy who pulled you out wasn't a passenger...

A NURSE gracefully relieves DEAKINS of the flowers he's destroying and skillfully vases them while GALE questions...

GALE

A paramedic? A fireman? He didn't have a uniform...

CONKLIN

From what we could get, there's a kind of... sort of... "mystery guy"... involved.

DEAKINS

We're piecing together different accounts and...

GALE

A "mystery guy!" "Not a passenger." Who?

CONKLIN

We don't know who he is, he...

DEAKINS

He disappeared.

GALE

(incredulous)

A non-passenger, non-rescue-worker went into a burning plane and pulled me out and... disappeared?

GALE starts to get up, struggling with covers, I.V., etc.

CONKLIN

Not just you. Apparently this guy is the one who opened the emergency exit from the outside...

DEAKINS

Everybody! He saved everybody on the plane! Because of him, no fatalities! I don't think you're

supposed to move around like that,
Gale. You're attached there...

GALE is getting out of bed, the I.V. still inserted in her arm.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

LESLIE looks directly into the camera as CHUCKY tapes her over
GALE'S shoulder.

LESLIE
And all of a sudden, this...
"civilian"... rushed into the
plane. Next thing you know he's
hauling Freddy... he's the other
flight attendant... out and then he
goes back in.
(a beat, a tear,
then...)
That's what gave me the courage to
hang in there even though I knew
the plane could blow any minute...

GALE
What did he look like?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

MR. SMITH is being interviewed in his bed. He's emotional...

MR. SMITH
It was just this face, all dirty,
it just appeared. I really thought
I was going to die.

GALE
Did he say anything to you?

MR. SMITH
He... asked if I was "Fletcher."

INT. OFFICE/CARPET CARE - DAY

A man named ROBINSON, fifty, sloppy, screams apoplectically...

ROBINSON
ONE WORD! ONE WORD, LAPLANTE, AND
YOU'RE FIRED! GOT THAT? ONE WORD!

Exhausted, shoeless BERNIE follows ROBINSON in the cluttered
Carpet Care Office...

BERNIE
Bill, I...

ROBINSON
DON'T SAY "BILL," BERNIE! DON'T
SAY ONE WORD! DIDN'T I SAY "ONE
WORD AND YOU'RE FIRED?"

BERNIE
I...

ROBINSON
YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE IT'LL BE AN
EXCUSE! IT'LL BE "BERNIE LAPLANTE
EXCUSE NUMBER FOUR THOUSAND ONE
HUNDRED AND SIX." NO, FOUR THOUSAND
ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE. THAT'S HOW
MANY EXCUSES YOU HAVE GIVEN ME, I
KEEP TRACK OF THEM ELECTRONICALLY.
I HEARD THEM ALL, BERNIE.

BERNIE
Bill, I got some legal problems and
I...

ROBINSON
THAT'S IT! YOU TALKED! YOU'RE
FIRED! OUTTA HERE! GET OUTTA HERE!

BERNIE
Bill, listen...

ROBINSON
OUT! I TOLDJA. JESUS CHRIST, I
GOT CUSTOMERS WAITING! AN' YOU WERE
GONNA GO OUT LIKE THAT? AN' MEET
THE PUBLIC IN STOCKING-FUCKING-FEET?

BERNIE
Bill, I got financial problems
and...

ROBINSON
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS,
I'M GONNA THINK ABOUT MY PROBLEMS.
YOU'RE ONE A MY PROBLEMS. GET OUT!
OUT! OUT!

EXT. CITY STREET - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE is trudging wearily up the busy sidewalk, dirty, tattered
and shoeless, BERNIE doesn't notice BUBBER staring in the window
of an electronics store where dozens of television screens show
the burning fuselage of Flight 104.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - DAY

CHUCKY shoots over GALE'S shoulder as she interviews FLETCHER in his living room.

GALE

He was asking for Mr. Fletcher...

FLETCHER

My son and I got separated in the confusion and smoke. The very courageous stewardess at the exit told me my boy had got out so I got out too. But my son had already told this... man that I was still in there.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE/CITY STREET - DAY

Disheveled, in stocking feet, BERNIE trudges wearily up the front steps of the shabby apartment house where he lives, enters.

INT. RICHIE'S ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Posters, youthy icons. CHUCKY shooting GALE interviewing RICHIE.

RICHIE

I thought my dad was still... still in there. So I asked the man to save my father.

GALE

What did the man say, Richie?

RICHIE

He said... uh... he said...
(not sure, thinking,
then...)
"I'll save him." He said, "I'll save your father."

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens and BERNIE enters. He pulls the contents of GALE'S wallet from his pocket and tosses them on a table... the plastic windows full of credit cards and cash. Then he pulls off his jacket, ruefully inspecting a tear in the muddy sleeve. He's about to toss it on the ratty sofa when he notices it felt funny. He reaches in another pocket and pulls out the Silver Mike Award, considers it for a moment. What's it worth?

Sitting on the sofa, he leans back... and starts to doze off.

VIDEO IMAGE/EXT. "EXPLODING" PLANE - NIGHT

FRAME BY FRAME the image inches forward, sweeping off the fire that fills the screen to the riverbank... frame by frame... fire ... fire... fire... then faster as the riverbank is darkening the frame and then LESLIE and the THIRD FIREMAN sweep into the foreground as the camera discovers them... the dramatic shot we remember of them coming up the riverbank.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Back. Go back. You missed it.

Zip zip zip the image highspeeds back to the exploding plane.

Again the screen is filled with fire...

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Now. Go forward again.

Frame by frame the blossom of fire blooms consuming the plane.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Keep going.

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

REVEAL: GALE in an editing bay at Channel Four, peering intently at the fiery scene on the video monitor while the young tape editor, JOAN, operates the controls.

CONKLIN, DEAKINS, PARKER, CHUCKY flank GALE.

GALE
There! Right there.

ON THE SCREEN (EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT)

A tiny silhouetted FIGURE appears in the far right corner of the frame. Then, as one more frame clicks off, the FIGURE appears near the center of the next frame of the pan.

The picture freezes there, a startling dramatic image of an UNRECOGNIZABLE FIGURE (BERNIE) in silhouette, dwarfed by the gigantic explosion. IT'S AN AWESOME IMAGE. NO ARTIST OR AD MAN COULD DO BETTER... A TINY, ANONYMOUS FIGURE, ALONE, AGAINST A GIGANTIC MOUNTAIN OF PURE FIRE. AND FROM NOW ON IT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "THE IMAGE."

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

DEAKINS
That's him?

GALE
Who else? We've accounted for everyone else. That's our hero!

She stares at "The Image." It's powerful, stirring.

CHUCKY

I didn't see the guy when I shot it. I thought I was getting the last survivors when I panned over.

DEAKINS

Any chance we could do some kind of electronic enhancement, you think? Get a clear picture, identify him?

JOAN

(peering closely at the screen)

There's no face really, nothing to work with. Big dots, that's all you'll get.

GALE

Look at the guy! He just saved fifty people. Now he's going to disappear. Who is he?

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

UUUUHHHHOOOOOOOW! BERNIE snores loudly, asleep on his sofa, still in his rumpled, torn clothes. He SNORES again.

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREENS IN CARS, HOMES, TV STORES

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

ON THE SCREEN, RICHIE is talking directly at the CAMERA, the interview in his room on videotape...

RICHIE/TV

He said... uh, he said... "I'll save your father."

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

LESLIE appears ON SCREEN, her interview...

LESLIE/TV

-- all of a sudden, this... civilian... He rushed into the plane.

VIDEO IMAGE: FREDDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Freddy appears talking directly at the CAMERA...

FREDDY/TV

I woke up in an ambulance. Leslie, the other flight attendant, told

me the guy dragged me to the exit.

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Leslie appears ON THE SCREEN again...

LESLIE/TV

"Here, give this guy a hand," he said. The next thing I knew, he was going back in there, into all that smoke...

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

MR. SMITH appears ON THE SCREEN...

MR. SMITH/TV

I was crawling around on the floor. I thought I was a goner!

OFF THE SCREEN/MONTAGE

YOUNG PEOPLE, OLD PEOPLE, RICH PEOPLE, POOR PEOPLE, CONVICTS, DENTISTS, BLACK PEOPLE, BROWN PEOPLE, WHITE PEOPLE, CHINESE PEOPLE are watching the report in...

-HOME

-BARBERSHOP

-ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM

-JAIL CELL

-SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY

-SHADOW LOUNGE

CHICK watching the report.

-CLASSROOM

JOEY watching the report in a classroom.

-EVELYN'S KITCHEN

EVELYN watching the report in her kitchen.

-ALLEY

BUBBER is listening to the report on a radio in an alley.

ON THE SCREEN

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

GALE, bandaged, casted, stands in front of a BLUE SCREEN.

GALE/TV

-- out of the darkness... out of the smoke and the fear... came a man with no name... no uniform... but an abundance of courage.

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY on GALE and simultaneously DISSOLVES SLOWLY TO... "THE IMAGE". It fills the screen as GALE narrates VOICEOVER...

GALE'S VOICEOVER/TV

A man who was thinking not about himself but about others, risking his own life for ours...

(a beat then...)

He's out there now somewhere... and... whoever you are, I, and the other survivors of Flight 104, say, "Thank you! God bless!"

MUSIC SWELLS as the CAMERA ZOOMS IN on "THE IMAGE" emphasizing the tiny FIGURE alone in the frame surrounded by fire...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

Flanked by GALE and CHUCKY, DEAKINS is watching the preceding material on the monitor.

DEAKINS

Not bad. But if you gotta wear a cast, you oughtta feature it more it's parta the story.

(seeing Wallace enter the room)

Network's taking everything we give 'em. They wanta feed off our six o'clock whether we find the mystery guy or not. We're very big nationally.

WALLACE

It's a wonderful piece. Emotional. I love it.

DEAKINS

We're gonna feature Gale's cast more. The trick is gonna be keeping the upper hand on this piece. As long as we have Gale and there's no mystery guy, we're the center of the story. But if he shows up and somebody else gets him first or exclusive...

WALLACE

What about a reward for coming forward?

DEAKINS answers a RINGING phone. GALE frowns, frets.

GALE

There could be problems with something like that Mister Wallace. What if...?

DEAKINS

(into phone)

WHAT? THEY FOUND WHAT?

Everybody looks at DEAKINS.

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ignoring the open schoolbook on the floor in front of him, JOEY is sprawled on the floor, eyes on the TV screen.

ON THE SCREEN: EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

A CLOSE-UP of a muddy shoe WIDENS to REVEAL the shoe nestled in GALE'S sling on top of her cast. She addresses the camera from a spot directly in front of the crash site while behind her WORKMEN comb the wreckage under bright halogen lights.

GALE/VOICEOVER/TV

A phone check with survivors has confirmed that the shoe does not belong to any of the crew or passengers of Flight 104. Several witnesses recall the mysterious man who saved fifty-four people referring to his missing shoe. The conclusion; the unknown hero, know to many as "The Angel of Flight 104," wears a size 10B shoe.

EVELYN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Joey! Dinner! Now! Turn that thing off.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ELLIOT is at the table with EVELYN as JOEY joins them.

JOEY

He lost a shoe!

EVELYN

Who lost a shoe? Wash your hands.

JOEY

The "unknown hero." They found his shoe right beside the plane crash.

ELLIOT

Superman, you mean? Lost a shoe! What next?

EVELYN

Elliot! The man saved hundreds of people!

ELLIOT

Fifty-four! I was there, remember? You know why I didn't rush into that plane? Because I'm a trained fireman, that's why! Part of a team! A disciplined team. We take risks all the time, save people. But we don't take crazy chances. This guy does something really dumb and he lucks out. So the media go crazy about his shoe for god's sake! What kind of message are they giving to youth?

EVELYN

(indicating Joey)

What kind of message are you giving to youth? Sneering at someone for sticking his neck out. You sound like my ex for heaven's sake... Mister Cynicism.

ELLIOT gets up, shrugs.

ELLIOT

So what can I say? Give your ex credit for being smart enough not to do something stupid. Maybe the man's not all bad. I'm gonna watch TV, hoping it's not all this "Superman stuff."

ELLIOT walks over to the TV and turns it on, leaving JOEY and EVELYN alone. JOEY is excited.

JOEY

My father didn't have his shoes on when he... when he came here.

EVELYN

(surprised)

You were in bed. Weren't you?

JOEY

I... I saw him out the window.

EVELYN frowns, hesitates a moment. Was the kid listening? Then...

EVELYN

You think your father would do something like that? Rescue people?
(sadly)
Your father is Bernie LaPlante, Joey. It's against his religion to stick his neck out.

ANGLE ON THE TV (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

Where an ANCHORPERSON speaks from a news set.

CHANNEL 4 ANCHORPERSON/TV
-- where the leader of a religious
group claimed today that the
mysterious hero is, in fact, an
angel who is anticipated in
scripture.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

Washing glasses behind the bar, CHICK is watching the same show
on the TV over the bar when he turns to see BERNIE enter
(wearing a brand new pair of cheap running shoes.)

CHICK
Bernie, how'sa kid?

BERNIE
You don't wanna know, Chick, you
don't wanna know. Those guys been
in here?

CHICK
(pouring a 7&7)
You in business with those guys or
what? I wouldn't want a problem
for the establishment, Bern.

BERNIE
You couldn't have a problem, Chick,
because I personally have got them
all. I cornered the whole goddamn
market. You wouldn't believe...
Oh, how ya doin'...?

ESPINOSA and VARGAS have entered the bar. They have another guy
with them, MENDOZA.

ESPINOSA
We bring our frenn this time, okay?

Something about MENDOZA spells trouble. it's almost palpable.
BERNIE doesn't notice, but CHICK does. He looks worried.

BERNIE
Excuse me here, Chick, I gotta do
these guys a little favor.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

As BERNIE, MENDOZA and ESPINOSA slide into a booth intent on
business, ESPINOSA looks around for VARGAS and spots him
lingering back at the bar watching the TV.

ESPINOSA
(calling out to Vargas)
Hey, vato! Vamos.

ANGLE ON THE BAR

Where VARGAS and CHICK are staring at the screen.

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN: INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT

Where the ANCHORPERSON is introducing WALLACE who stands there in a suit and tie looking ill at ease...

CHANNEL 4 ANCHORPERSON/TV
-- bring you a special announcement
from Channel Four station Manager,
James Wallace.

Framed alone now, WALLACE smiles awkwardly at the camera.

WALLACE
Good evening. We at Channel Four,
like you, have been stirred by the
courage and...

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hombre! Por aqui!

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON VARGAS

Eyes lingering on the TV, backing toward the booth.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

BERNIE has spread GALE'S credit cards on the table in front of ESPINOSA and MENDOZA. ESPINOSA examines them, questions BERNIE...

ESPINOSA
How many you got there? Eight?
Ten?

VARGAS slides into the booth before BERNIE can answer.

VARGAS
They offer him a million dollars
reward.

MENDOZA
Who?

VARGAS
The "plane crash guy".

ESPINOSA

(to Bernie)
Is that all of them? Eight?

BERNIE
(distracted)
What "plane crash guy"?

VARGAS
The one-shoe dude who saved all those people, man. Channel Four gonna give him a million for an interview.

ESPINOSA tries to turn BERNIE'S attention back to "business."

ESPINOSA
Come. on, hombre, we doin' business here. You got more or not?

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching the TV

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

Where WALLACE is concluding...

WALLACE/TV
The offer is absolutely unconditional. All he has to do, is satisfy our reporter, Gale Gayley, and the other passengers who had contact with him that he is indeed the brave man who...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
(yelling)
HEY! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON CHICK

Turning, seeing a commotion at the booth.

ANGLE ON THE BOOTH

Where MENDOZA is handcuffing the outraged BERNIE while ESPINOSA reads him his rights...

ESPINOSA
You have the right to remain silent, you have the right to --

BERNIE
Hey, this is bullshit! Do you guys

know who I am? You know where I
got the goddamn plastic? I got a
million bucks coming. I'm the guy
who...

ESPINOSA
(continuing)
You have the right to the counsel
of an attorney...

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching BERNIE being hustled out of the bar, handcuffed,
protesting loudly.

BERNIE
CHICK, CALL MY ATTORNEY! THIS IS
BULLSHIT! ENTRAPMENT! I GOT A
MILLION BUCKS COMING, FOR CHRISAKE!

MONTAGE: PRINTING PRESSES - DAY

Newspapers roll off the presses one after another.

THE TIMES features "The Image" with a headline over the firey
scene trumpeting "AN ANGEL FOR FLIGHT 104?"

THE MIRROR is tighter on the image featuring an enlargement of
the silhouette of Bernie with a headline asking "WHO IS HE?"

THE HERALD features a full page photo of the single muddy shoe
with a headline supered over it announcing "SEARCH FOR MR.
CINDERELLA!"

and finally THE TRIBUNE screams in massive black letters "ONE
MILLION DOLLAR REWARD!"

EXT. STREET CORNER/CITY - DAY

A NEWS VENDOR is waving a paper and shouting...

NEWS VENDOR
ONE MILLION DOLLAR REWARD TO THE
UNANIMOUS HERO! ONE MILLION BUCKS
FOR THE "ANGEL" WHO SAVED FIFTY
PEOPLE AND TOOK OFF!

A WOMAN walks by with a tee-shirt featuring "The Image." The
spectacular picture looks great on the contours of her chest!

EXT. TV STATION - DAY

PARKER, the youthful Channel Four gofer/runner, moves along a
seemingly endless line of WANNABE HEROES that stretches along
the sidewalk outside Channel Four and disappears around the

corner. He's addressing them at the top of his lungs...

PARKER
PLEASE, IF YOUR FOOT ISN'T A SIZE
10-B, DON'T REMAIN IN LINE. WE'RE
ONLY SEEING SIZE 10-B "HEROES."

GROANS and CATCALLS from the WANNABES, as we MOVE ALONG the line,
eavesdropping on various WANNABES...

AFRICAN AMERICAN
Thass a racist perspective, assuming
that because something heroic was
done that a white man done it. A
man with mud on his face could be
a man of any color, most likely was,
which is true in this case cause
it was me! With mud all over me.

Two other WANNABES are squaring off to fight...

1ST FIGHTER
You call me a liar, I'm gonna kick
your ass.

2ND FIGHTER
Hey, it's not just me sayin' you
ain't no hero. Everybody in the
goddamn line says you ain't the
hero.

ANOTHER WANNABE
Can you believe this? Must be more
than a thousand phonies after my
reward.

A WANNABE with mud smeared on his face spots GALE approaching
the front door of the station, a look of amazement on her face
at the length of the line.

MUD-FACE WANNABE
HEY, MISS GAYLEY! HEY, GALE!
REMEMBER ME? I'M THE GUY! I SAVED
YOUR LIFE! REMEMBER --

Rolling her eyes good naturedly, GALE walks briskly up the steps
to the front door of the station, passing PARKER who's measuring
a TALL WANNABE'S feet. The TALL WANNABE calls out to her.

TALL WANNABE
My foot's only eight and a half but
I wear a ten B for the comfort.
I swear!
(she keeps walking)
Hey, Miss Gayley, I saved your life!

Just as GALE is about to enter the TV station, PARKER catches

up to her.

PARKER

Hey, Miss Gayley, there's a cop
looking for you. From Robbery
Detail, Inspector Dayton. He wants
you to call him.

GALE

What about?

PARKER

I didn't ask him.

GALE

Call him back. Ask him.
(indicating the line)
I'm a little...busy.

GALE disappears into the TV Station.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

WALLACE is looking down at the line of WANNABES.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE GOINES is addressing a miserable looking CRIMINAL...

JUDGE GOINES

Bail in this matter will remain
in the sum of five thousand
dollars. Next.

DISCOVER MENDOZA, ESPINOSA AND VARGAS

carrying on a whispered discussion with an African American
detective (DAYTON) in the spectator section (AS THE COURT
PROCEEDINGS CONTINUE IN THE BACKGROUND). MENDOZA indicates
something at the rear of the room to DAYTON who follows his
look.

DAYTON'S P.O.V.

A group of PRISONERS have just been led in the side door from
a holding cell and a BAILIFF is removing the handcuffs that
tied the PRISONERS together. One of the PRISONERS is BERNIE
LAPLANTE. DONNA approaches him as the BAILIFF uncuffs him.
She speaks to him but her words are inaudible to DAYTON.

ANGLE ON DAYTON

as he watches BERNIE from a distance, nods affirmatively to
something MENDOZA whispers in his ear. We realize we'll be
seeing DAYTON again...

ANGLE ON DONNA

astonished, reacting to BERNIE in a sharp whisper...

DONNA
"The Angel of Flight 104!" You're
telling me you're the A...?

BERNIE
(whispering)
"Angel!" I didn't say "angel,"
that's a little strong. Listen,
here's the thing, I gotta get over
there to the TV station to collect
my million bucks.

DONNA
Mister LaPlante, I really want to
help you, but crazy stories are
only going to make it worse. The
D.A. is asking your bail be set
at twenty-five thousand dollars
because you were arrested again
while you were out on bail...

BERNIE
Twenty-five grand is peanuts! All
you gotta do is get me outta here
long enough to collect.

BAILIFF
The People versus Bernard LaPlante.

JUDGE GOINES scowls at the sight of BERNIE moving toward him
talking already.

BERNIE
Your honor, my attorney here says
the prosecutor there wants
twenty-five grand bail...

DONNA looks horrified, the JUDGE furious...

JUDGE
Mister LaPlante, you will be silent
unless the court recognizes you...

BERNIE
(continuing grandly)
--which is fine by me. I got no
problem with that at all.
In fact, your honor, I'd be proud
to double it. Fifty grand! A tip
for "the people," your honor, if
I could just...

GOINES is banging his gavel angrily, glaring at BERNIE, not noticing a SECOND BAILIFF hurry into the courtroom.

JUDGE GOINES
Mister LaPlante, unless you stop
chattering immediately, I am going
to ask the Bailiff to...

JUDGE GOINES breaks off, eyes furious, as he spots BAILIFF CLAY, the Court Reporter, DE TAGLIO and the SECOND BAILIFF engaged in urgent whispering.

JUDGE GOINES
DAMNIT! I SAID I WANTED ORDER!

CLAY
Sorry, your honor...

SECOND BAILIFF
We got carried away.

DETAGLIO
They found him.

JUDGE GOINES
Found who?

CLAY
The "Angel of Flight 104".

SECOND BAILIFF
It was on the news! Just now! He's
gonna be on Channel Four at noon!

BERNIE reacts, jaw sagging in disbelief. The JUDGE sneaks a hasty look at his watch.

JUDGE GOINES
We'll sustain bail at twenty-five
thousand dollars. That ought to
keep Mister LaPlante out of trouble
for a minute or two...

DONNA
But your honor, my client is a
responsible family man with limited
resources who...

[PAGE 66 IS MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT]

GALE
But finally you did come forward.
Why?

BUBBER looks her right in the eyes, gives a sheepish grin.

BUBBER/TV
The money, Gale. I wouldn't have
come forward at all if it wasn't
for the reward.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Cut right there, right on that look!

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

REVEAL GALE in an editing room looking over editor JOAN'S
shoulder as JOAN freezes the image and makes a note.

JOAN
You didn't mention he was cute.

GALE is staring intently at BUBBER'S modest, humble face frozen
on the screen.

GALE
He saved my life.

VIDEO IMAGE (INT. TV STUDIO)

The humble, honest face of BUBBER, freeze framed as GALE'S
VOICE narrates...

GALE/TV VOICE OVER
--were shocked to learn that the
hero who appeared out of the smoke
and the fire and pulled them to
safety was indigent and tragically
hadn't slept in a bed in more than
three years.

INT. DAY ROOM/JAIL - DAY

Seeing BUBBER'S honest face on the TV screen in the day room enrages BERNIE...

BERNIE

The guy's a fake, for Chrissake!
He's a goddamn homeless bum. He
ain't no here, trust me on this,
buddy.

PRISONERS, standing in a group under the TV turn from the screen to BERNIE, like "who's this asshole?" A BIG PRISONER glares at BERNIE ominously...

BIG PRISONER

"Trust you"!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

The office has become command-central. REPORTERS hurry in and out, tearing off faxes, answering the phones, chattering at each other, GALE among them. WALLACE is fretting to DEAKINS...

WALLACE

I thought they'd all go "It's him!
It's him!" and hug the guy or
something.

DEAKINS

Relax, Wally. He had the shoe and
the shoe checks out.

WALLACE

Does this mean I can stop worrying?
Where'd we put him?

DEAKINS

Drake Hotel, Penthouse Suite. Never
stop worrying. I figure we'll do
a sidebar on what it's like to go
from sleeping in your car and
collecting cans to sleeping in the
poshest suite in town. Also Gale's
onto something, digging into his
background.

PARKER rushes up to GALE...

PARKER

Excuse me, Ms. Gayley. That guy
Inspector Dayton... he's recovered
a bunch of your credit cards and
he wants...

GALE

Who?

PARKER

Inspector Dayton, the cop from Robbery Detail who was looking for you. They caught the guy who stole your credit cards trying to sell them and he wants...

GALE

Nobody stole my credit cards. They burned up in the crash. Which reminds me, did you get me cash? And what about the reservations?

[PAGES 69-71 ARE MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT]

INT. COMMON ROOM/JAIL - NIGHT

Surrounded by the jailhouse cacophony, BERNIE stares glumly at a plate of shit on a shingle in front of him while close at hand a TOUGH PRISONER snarls at ANOTHER PRISONER...

TOUGH PRISONER #1

You mess with me, I'm gonna cut yer heart out and eat it.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The CAPTAIN finishes scribbling and seizes the menus.

CAPTAIN

Very good, sir. It's a special privilege to serve you.

BUBBER smiles uneasily as the haughty CAPTAIN glides away.

BUBBER

Uh, er... I...

GALE

(amused and charmed)

You were saying you don't want a million dollars.

BUBBER

(blurting)

Well, I'm not entitled to a million dollars. I... I... didn't expect... I didn't expect...

GALE

All the adulation? It makes you feel like a fake, doesn't it?

BUBBER

Uh, actually... yes... I... should never have come forward and presented myself as --

Just then a distinguished MILLIONAIRE on the way to his table barks gruffly at BUBBER...

MILLIONAIRE

You're a credit to the goddamn human race. Coulda been me in that plane. Or my family.

BUBBER

Uh, thank you.

GALE

Instant celebrity is overwhelming to anybody. You've known John Bubber all your life, you're used to him, you know you're the same human being you were before all the excitement. So you feel like a fraud...

BUBBER

Yes.

GALE

...unworthy of the adoration. We all do.

A bluehaired MATRON, extravagantly bejeweled, pauses to loom over BUBBER on her way out.

MATRON

I'm going to donate a half million
to charity in your name. Would
small animals be all right?

BUBBER
(startled)
Uh, "small animals"?

MATRON
(delighted)
I knew a man like you would adore
small animals. God bless you,
Mister Bubber.
(to Gale)
And you, my dear, you do so much
for women.

And then she's gone in a swish of silk, leaving BUBBER stunned.

BUBBER
Is she... serious? A half a million
dollars? In my behalf?

GALE
You're a celebrity, John. People
are going to want to please you...
or use you... or both.

Bubber hears this, digests it, considers it. He takes a bite
of food, thinking.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As the door to the restaurant opens, BUBBER finds himself
blinded by winking electronic flashes and sun guns. A CROWD
OF FANS and MEDIA engulf him and GALE. It's overwhelming. WE
SEE EAGER FACES and BLINDING FLASHES from BUBBER'S P.O.V. and
HEAR the CACOPHONY OF QUESTIONS.

GALE too is adrift in a churning sea of MEDIA and ONLOOKERS.

POLICE OFFICERS move close to help guide GALE and BUBBER to a
waiting limo.

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S P.O.V.

Again we see the chaos from BUBBER'S P.O.V., A POLICEMAN is
reaching to help him. Just then BUBBER glimpses something
else... beyond the CROWD in the fringes... HOMELESS PEOPLE in
the shadows, some applauding him, too shy to come forward. In
particular, BUBBER'S eyes fall on an ungainly MAN, his own age,
dressed in rags and carrying a big garbage bag and another net
sack full of cans. IT'S A STUNNING IMAGE! It's as though
BUBBER is looking at himself!

The door to the limo is open. GALE and several POLICEMEN are

trying to get BUBBER into the limo and out of the clutches of the enthusiastic CROWD.

GALE
Come on, John.

But BUBBER isn't paying attention to her. He's turning to face the eager CROWD, raising his arms.

BUBBER
Hey, hey, uh, take it easy.

ANGLE ON GALE

looking alarmed, then amazed.

The CROWD is still alive and buzzing, but they're respecting BUBBER'S space as he accepts an autograph book from a young woman, SYLVIA, and speaks shyly.

BUBBER
You, uh, want me to sign this? Uh, what's your name?

SYLVIA
(weak in the knees,
smitten)
S-sylvia.

BUBBER
(almost shy)
Hey, if I sign this, will you do me a favor?

Her COMPANIONS are already teasing her as they thrust pieces of paper, magazines at him to sign.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching in disbelief.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

signing one after another as he addresses all those close to him.

BUBBER
What I'd like is...
(addressing the group)
-- maybe some of the rest of you could help Sylvia here -- what I'd like is if you'd scrounge up some blankets -- used ones, fifty maybe -- and take 'em to the folks down at the corner of Fifth and Grand. Pass 'em out.

Cameras are rolling, GALE watches, amazed.

FAT KID
Fifth and Grand!

SKINNY KID
He means the homeless people. The
bums.

BUBBER
It gets cold down there at night.
And you'll feel warmer for every
person you give a blanket to.

GALE'S knits her brow, trying to reconcile this performance with
the apparent yokel she had dinner with a short time ago.

INT. LIMO/MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

BUBBER looks back at the CROWD as the limo pulls away.

BUBBER
I'll bet they do it. I'll bet they
get some blankets.

GALE looks at BUBBER, reevaluating him.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER - NIGHT

As BUBBER and GALE cross the luxurious lobby, again the center
of attention, a GORGEOUS BLONDE, very leggy, practically
plasters her plunging neckline against BUBBER.

GORGEOUS BLONDE
Uplifting! What you did was so
uplifting! You're a saint, John
Bubber!

BUBBER has trouble untangling his eyes from her tits.

BUBBER
Uh, no. But I, uh, wonder if you
could up support... support a
program to help the needy and...

GALE
(hackles raised)
John, I'm sure she could support
just about anything.
(steering him away)
I think I'll see you to your room.
A sort of bodyguard. Make sure no
harm comes to you.

GALE ushers the dazed BUBBER toward a bank of elevators and

prevents others from joining them in the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

GALE'S mood changes to amusement as she and BUBBER ascend alone. Giggling, she "points" her chest at BUBBER.

GALE
Uh, if you could, just, uh, support,
uh, a small airfield...

BUBBER
(embarrassed)
It's been sometime since, uh, I
received any, uh, of that kind of,
uh... attention. A couple of...
years.

GALE stops giggling. Their eyes meet. A charged moment.

GALE
Years?
(then...)
There are going to be lots of...
opportunities.

BUBBER
Gale... you're a very nice person.
I wouldn't want to hurt you... in
any way...

They're struggling against an embrace that seems inevitable...

GALE
I... I know that, John...

BUBBER
You... you think I saved your...
life. I can't take advantage....

GALE
You did save my life! And it's me!
I'd be taking advantage of you! I'm
a reporter, John, an experienced
professional... I...

Inevitably they embrace, KISS, can't help themselves.

BUBBER disengages suddenly, distraught.

BUBBER
I... no... I don't have the right...
I...

GALE
No, I don't have the right. You're

a news story!

BUBBER

Uh, right. A... news story.

She pushes him out the elevator door.

GALE

I know the truth, John. I'm flying in some guys from your unit in Vietnam tomorrow. Interviewing them live on network hookup!

BUBBER

(stunned)

Vietnam!

GALE

Goodnight, John.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE

BUBBER wanders into the bedroom of the fabulous suite... in a daze. He stares at BERNIE'S shoes on the floor. He shakes his head as if to clear it.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A fortyish black man, TOM WELLER, appears on the screen...

TOM/TV

Next thing I know, I'm in this medical unit an' I see the other dude, the one who was with me when we got jumped, the one who I thought was dead. There he is in the next bed. I says "How'd we get here, brother? We dead or what?" He says, "That crazy white brother, Johnny Bubber, he come back for us, hauled us out." He shoulda been wrote up, got a medal, but it was fate. Wasn't no officers around to observe it or nothing.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A fortyish redneck type, CHARLIE BACON, is speaking to camera.

CHARLIE/TV SCREEN

The sonofagun goes out in the paddies, pulling us outta there, one after the other, six guys. Hey, it don't surprise me one bit it was Johnny Bubber went into that plane!

BERNIE VOICE (O.S.)
Fifty bucks says the asshole was
never even in Vietnam.

INT. DAY ROOM JAIL - DAY

BERNIE is furious, glaring at the TV, surrounded by PRISONERS.

TOUGH PRISONER #2
Shut your face, dirt bag... That
guy's a goddamn hero and you're
nothin' but a cynical little turd.

ON THE SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

BUBBER is embracing WELLER, CHARLIE and several other VETERANS
as GALE narrates...

GALE/VOICE OVER/TV
After an emotional reunion, Bubber's
fellow veterans watched as station
manager James Wallace presented
Bubber with a check for one million
dollars...

Surrounded by applauding MEDIA TYPES, SPECTATORS and VETERANS,
BUBBER is accepting the check...

GALE/TV
As Bubber reacted to his sudden
wealth, word came that the
Secretary of the Army, responding
to an urgent resolution from the
Senate has conferred on John
Bubber the Medal of Honor.
This for his actions in Vietnam more
than 20 years ago, heroism that was
not acknowledged at the time because
it was not witnessed or reported
by a ranking officer. Later I spoke
to him about his sudden change in
circumstances...

BUBBER appears full screen, head and shoulders, interview
footage. He's shy and awkward at first... tentative... then
gaining confidence as he speaks...

BUBBER/TV
Well, I don't feel... right... about
all that money, Miss Gayley. That's
too much money for one person. What
I'm gonna do is donate, uh, most
of it to different organizations
like the Homeless Vets and stuff,
and start up some programs... to
help people. See, when you're out

there in the cold like I was, on
the streets or sleeping under
bridges or in your car, the worst
thing, even worse than the hunger
and the cold, is the... feeling...
that you're just plain... useless.
You don't matter to a single soul
in this world, nobody needs you,
nobody wants you.

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREEN AND VIEWERS

BUBBER'S INTERVIEW appears on screens in...

-HOME

-MOTEL ROOM

-WHITE HOUSE

The PRESIDENT watching.

-CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY

-SHADOW LOUNGE

CHICK watching.

-JAIL

BERNIE watching.

-EVELYN'S LIVING ROOM

JOEY, EVELYN, and ELLIOT watching.

-PRISON

INMATES, their tough faces momentarily solemn, watching.

-WINSTON'S APARTMENT

WINSTON smacks the TV he bought from Bernie to adjust the color.

ON THE SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

BUBBER/TV

I guess when I... did what I
did... I was trying to save my
own life more than anything else.
Trying to connect myself with
people again and be... part of the
whole. You have to help others
to do that, you need a role to,
play... even if it's a very humble
role, it gives you self worth.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE

(NOTE: Bubber dialogue, additional or as above continues
throughout scene)

GALE, her editor, JOAN, DEAKINS, WALLACE, CHUCKY, PARKER, and
CONKLIN are crowded around the monitor staring at the screen.
JOAN catches GALE surreptitiously hiding a tear and whispers
to her...

JOAN

Is he like that in real life? So
gorgeous?

GALE
He's pretty... remarkable.

JOAN
(eyes widening at the
thought)
You didn't... get it on with him?

GALE
Don't be ridiculous. I'm a reporter.

JOAN
Reporters don't have hormones?

GALE
Reporters... have to... rise above
their hormones.

ANGLE ON DEAKINS, WALLACE

reacting to BUBBER on TV. WALLACE is impressed.

WALLACE
The guy's... a natural.

DEAKINS rolls his eyes, a cynical, hardened newsman.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

GALE/TV/VOICE OVER
I asked John Bubber about the
Medal of Honor.

BUBBER/TV
As far as the medal goes, well...
that medal's for something me and
my buddies did almost twenty years
ago in Viet Nam. So if I'm a war
hero today then I was a war hero
last week when I was selling cans
and sleeping in my car... when I
didn't have a medal. I don't think
a medal makes a hero. You don't
need machinegun fire or burning
planes to be... brave. People do
heroic acts every day only there's
nobody around to take their picture
or decorate them. Little things
can be heroic. Helping someone
day in and day out, giving up your
life a little every day instead
of all at once... to help.
Maybe... maybe we're all heroes.

MONTAGE - DAY

Across the nation solemn FACES reflect the glow of the TV screen.
YOUNG FACES, OLD FACES, BLACK, WHITE, BROWN, YELLOW...

-HOME
-BARBERSHOP
-ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM
-BAR
-JAIL CELL
-SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY

INT. DAY ROOM - JAIL - DAY

...And BERNIE LAPLANTE'S FACE. He's glaring at the screen in
the Day Room of the Jail, sputtering helplessly...

BERNIE
We're all heroes, huh? Asshole!

Just then a GUARD enters the Day Room and belows...

GUARD
LAPLANTE, BERNARD. LAPLANTE?

BERNIE
Me?

GUARD
Ya made bail, Ace. C'mon, let's
go.

BERNIE looks startled.

WELLESIAN VIDEO - TV SCREEN

News coverage of the crash and photos of Bubber are ZOOMED,
DISSOLVED, WHIRLED and SPUN into a glittering promo while a
stentorian WELLESIAN VOICE brays excitedly...

WELLESIAN VOICE/TV
John Bubber himself! Along with
twenty of the real survivors of
flight 104! See the real life
participants re-enact the
terrifying drama inside the
burning plane.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE HOTEL - DAY

BUBBER is staring at the TV screen wide-eyed with amazement
as the promo continues on the screen

ON SCREEN (WELLESIAN VIDEO)

WELLESIAN VOICE/TV
Out of the darkness, out of the
fire, out of a nightmare of

fear... came The Angel of Flight 104. John Bubber saved fifty-four people. This is his story and theirs. A drama featuring the actual people who actually lived those moments of terror. No make-up, no music, no actors. This is the real thing. Thursday night. Channel-Four. Be there!

On Screen the Channel Four logo blends exotically with "The Image".

INT. SUITE/DRAKE HOTEL - DAY

A dismayed BUBBER dials the telephone.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

DEAKINS and WALLACE walk, deep in conversation, WALLACE upset.

WALLACE

Upset! What's he upset about?

DEAKINS

Said he's not an actor.

WALLACE

He's not supposed to be an actor, that's the whole point. He's a real life hero, all he has to do is act like a real life hero. That's the beauty of the concept, the whole freshness of it. Did she call him back?

DEAKINS

She's talking to him now.

WALLACE

We paid him a million dollars. You'd think he'd want to cooperate a little, help our ratings.

DEAKINS responds eagerly to GALE entering the office.

DEAKINS

How'd it go?

GALE

He'll do it.

(to Wallace)

You really-should have talked to him first.

WALLACE
He might have said no.

INT. CORRIDOR/HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

BERNIE charging through the crowded Waiting Room having just been released on bail. He doesn't actually shove the WOMEN and CHILDREN waiting to visit inmates out of the way, but he doesn't slow down either as he weaves rapidly among them with DONNA on his heels, barely able to keep pace. He doesn't look back as he speaks rapid-fire. He's really pissed.

BERNIE
Whaddaya mean they didn't reduce the bail? If they didn't reduce it, how'dja spring me?

DONNA
(a deep breath,
embarrassed)
I took a loan on my car and my computer.

BERNIE
(actually stops, faces her)
You whaaaaaat? You paid it? You gave a bondsman ten percent?

DONNA
I was inspired by the hero, how he stuck his neck out for others, how he took a chance...

BERNIE
(apoplectic)
That fake inspired you to loan a guy who's been fired off his job twenty-five hundred goddamn dollars? A guy you say is probably gonna do time! You're s'posed to be an attorney for Chrissake! You're s'posed to have good judgment!

DONNA
(fighting tears)
Well, as you like to point out, Mister LaPlante, I'm relatively inexperienced. My naivete may have worked to your benefit in this instance.

BERNIE frowns at that, starts walking again.

BERNIE
Well, you're right, I'm glad you

got me out, I appreciate that.

BERNIE charges out the door, exiting the building with DONNA right behind him.

EXT. HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

Hurrying down the steps, BERNIE barks over his shoulder at DONNA.

BERNIE

Listen, now that I owe you
twenty-five hundred bucks plus, how
about loaning me twenty for cab
fare?

DONNA

So you can call me "naive," Mister
LaPlante.

BERNIE

Hey, you could call me "Bernie,"
forget the "Mister LaPlante" stuff.
(seeing Donna open her
wallet)
You are naive.

DONNA

I read the probation report. It's
not good. I think you're going...
going to prison, Mister... Bernie.
I know that scares you but..

BERNIE

TAXI! HEY, TAXI!
(turning on her)
Well, at least I'm gonna get my
goddamn million bucks.
(screaming at a cab)
TAXI FOR CHRISAKE!

A cab pulls to the curb and BERNIE jumps in, talking.

BERNIE

I seen on the TV where that
do-gooder asshole's gonna go visit
sick kids at three-thirty.
(to the Cabbie)
Children's Hospital, on the double.

DONNA

(alarmed)
You mean John Bubber?

BERNIE speaks out the window of the cab as it pulls away.

BERNIE

(then, through the
window)

That bozo don't just owe me a
million bucks for my shoe, he's a
goddamn menace! Look what he done
to you! He's makin' people insane.
He's a whacko, he' gotta be stopped.

Stunned, DONNA watches the cab disappear in traffic with BERNIE
raving from the open window.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - LATER (DAY)

Limos are parked out front of the hospital and there is a
gathering of TV vans as BERNIE exits a cab and charges toward
the entrance of the hospital, a tiny figure dwarfed by the huge
building. He disappears inside.

INT. CORRIDOR/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

We discover BERNIE wandering around, lost. A NURSE gives him
a glance in passing and BERNIE suddenly is aware that his
appearance is unusual. Disheveled. Unshaven. He tries to
smooth his hair a little as he turns into a doorway.

INT. SPECIAL CHILDREN'S WARD/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Stepping through the door BERNIE is immediately horror stricken.

Rows of beds. A room full of seriously SICK CHILDREN. Palsied.
Eyes out of sync. Motor disorders, spasms. Terrifying
paraphenalia... tubes, machines, monitors, bags of fluid. A
place of suffering. To BERNIE it's a vision of a leper colony!

A SEVEN YEAR OLD spots him, clutches at him with clawlike hands,
jerky movements.

BERNIE recoils in horror, backing away.

A FIVE YEAR OLD, "blinded" by the gauze wrapped around his face
"looks" toward BERNIE and speaks.

"BLIND" CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Is that him? Is he here yet, Miss
Roberts?

An EIGHT YEAR OLD with a bandaged arm responds, looking at
BERNIE.

EIGHT YEAR OLD

Naw, it's just some guy.

A nurse MISS ROBERTS, appears from behind a curtain suddenly

and restrains the SEVEN YEAR OLD as she addresses BERNIE...

MISS ROBERTS
Excuse me, sir. Can I help you?

BERNIE
Uh, well I... what I...

Looks "wrong," acts "wrong." Looks like a child molester!

MISS ROBERTS
You'll have to leave, ,sir. This
ward is off limits. If you want
to arrange a visit...

Just then a couple of CAMERAMEN back through the door shooting.
It's the head end of an entourage of REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN,
HOSPITAL PERSONNEL and a couple of SECURITY GUYS that are
traveling with BUBBER.

BERNIE is bumped backward by a CAMERAMAN just as he sees BUBBER
enter surrounded by MEDIA PEOPLE.

BERNIE'S P.O.V.

seeing BUBBER unhesitatingly reach out to the grotesque SEVEN
YEAR OLD and lift him into is arms, eyes shining with warmth,
smiling genuinely like he likes picking up hideous looking kids.

ANGLE ON MISS ROBERTS

tapping one of the SECURITY OFFICERS on the shoulder and
indicating BERNIE to him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

remembering why he's here. It's not going to be as easy as he
thought. He starts to move through the entourage looking very
out of place.

BERNIE
Excuse me, pal. Uh, couldja lemme
through here? Thanks I...

THE SECURITY OFFICER is suddenly between BERNIE and his
destination.

SECURITY OFFICER
You gotta press pass, sir?

BERNIE
Press pass? Uh, hey, I lost it.
Listen...

ANGLE ON BUBBER

holding the SEVEN YEAR OLD. Smiling broadly, the child radiates

joy in the warmth of BUBBER'S embrace, his grotesqueness miraculously minimized by his mood.

BERNIE
(O.S., diminishing)
GETCHER GODDAMN HANDS OFFA ME. ALL
I WANNA DO IS TALK TO THE GUY.

BUBBER and everybody turn toward the sound of the commotion.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.

of an unidentified MAN (BERNIE), obscured by the bodies of the two SECURITY OFFICERS who are hurriedly hustling him off the ward.

BERNIE (O.S.)
HEY, HOLD ON, BUDDY. THIS IS
AMERICA FOR CHRISSAKE! I GOT
RIGHTS!

BUBBER

is frowning when a DOCTOR reassures him...

DOCTOR
All under control. An unfortunate
man. Security will look after him.

BUBBER nods and turns back to SICK KIDS who seem transfigured from BERNIE'S gruesome vision to children radiant with hope. Much of their appearance, at least, was attitude, despair.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

A solitary figure.

INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY

A 14 year old ALLEN lies comatose in an intensive care room, tubes in his nose, arms, and chest, monitors all around him, his arms and legs in casts and traction.

BUBBER leans over the unconscious boy speaking intensely while a DOCTOR hovers next to him and REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN jockey for position at the foot of the bed.

BUBBER
Listen, kid, you gotta hang on.
I know you're scared, we all get
scared, but that's when you have
to fight...

DOCTOR.
I'm afraid he can't hear you. He...

BUBBER
He can hear me...

As he leans closer to ALLEN, BUBBER puts a hand out without turning away from the boy, and waves away CHUCKY who has oozed in close with his camera. This is private. Understanding, GALE puts a hand on the lens and pushes the camera aside.

BUBBER
Listen...
(eyes flicking to
Allen's I.D. bracelet)
Allen, you're in the darkness there
and it's scary. The doctors are
working on you but the tough part
is for you. You can't quit!

GALE can't hear what BUBBER is saying as he leans even closer to ALLEN and grips the boy's hand.

CLOSE ON BUBBER AND ALLEN

BUBBER
I know you don't know it, but
you're a hero. Sometimes you
don't know how brave you are...
and sometimes you don't know...
you can do something... until
you... until you surprise yourself
and... do it. But I know you've
got the stuff, I know it in my
heart. I want you to struggle
kid... for yourself, for all of
us.
(vulnerable)
For me. I... I really need you
to do this for me. I need you to
get well, Allen.

Did an eyelid flicker? Did the boy hear?

GALE'S eyes glisten with emotion as BUBBER rises, shaken.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A CROWD is waiting for BUBBER, MEDIA PERSONNEL among them.

BERNIE comes up behind a TV CAMERAMAN and taps his shoulder.

BERNIE
Hey, buddy, you're with the media,
right? I got a story for you.
Something fantastic. That guy
Bubber, he's a fake, he...

THE CAMERAMAN is turning to consider BERNIE when there's a

sudden EXCITEMENT. The CROWD surges toward the hospital entrance. VOICES cry out "He's coming! Here he comes!"

THE CAMERAMAN turns toward the doors leaving BERNIE helpless, caught in a surging tide of people.

BERNIE
HEY! WATCH OUT! HOLD ON! FOR
CHRISAKE!

INT. LOBBY/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

BUBBER and his entourage of DOCTORS, MEDIA PEOPLE and SECURITY GUARDS are surging toward the front door of the hospital like an excited amoeba. GALE is close to BUBBER in the crush.

GALE
(emotional)
You were... very... inspiring.

BUBBER
(alarmed)
A script! I thought we just walked
through everything...

GALE
Read it. It'll be fine.

They're being swept through the front door of the hospital, the whole amoeba. A CHEER GOES UP.

EXT. FRONT STEPS/HOSPITAL - DAY

BERNIE is being tossed about like a cork in stormy seas. Buffeted about by happy ONLOOKERS full of good will, only BERNIE is surly, obnoxious.

BERNIE
Quit shovin', lady. Hey, watch yer
elbow. YOU'RE ALL NUTS FOR CRYING
OUT LOUD! WHATSA MATTER WITH YOU?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

being jostled as his BODYGUARDS are shoved back into him, CAMERAS push toward his face, HANDS reach out desperately for him. But, in a dramatic contrast to BERNIE, BUBBER thrives on the energy, laughing, reaching out to touch the hands that reach for him, thriving on the vibe.

TEENAGE GIRL
I LOVE YOU, JOHN BUBBER!

BUBBER
HEY, WE ALL LOVE EACH OTHER, DON'T

WE?

OLD WOMAN ONE
GOD BLESS YOU, JOHN! GOD BLESS YOU!

BUBBER
GOD BLESS US ALL!

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
YA GODDAMN PHONY!

BUBBER stiffens imperceptibly. Did he hear that right? Was there a discordant note in the cacophony' of VOICES singing his praises from every direction?

BUBBER'S POV

A sea of shining faces filled with love and admiration surges in front of him. And yet, that VOICE again, a sour note of contraction...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
BUBBER, YA GODDAMN FRAUD! THAT'S
MY SHOE AND MY MONEY!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Hearing it, looking around urgently, but all he sees are ADMIRERS thrusting at him as he's borne, as if on a tide, toward his limo. Nobody else seems to have noticed BERNIE'S VOICE.

INT. WAITING LIMO

As the door slams shut, the cheering is suddenly faint. BUBBER sinks back in the opulent seats while FACES distort themselves against the smoked glass, trying to peer into the sanctuary.

Then, as the limo pulls away, BUBBER hears the VOICE again muffled by the thick glass. He turns, looks out the rear window. He sees the CROWD receding behind him, a confusion of SPECTATORS and... is that that hitchhiker (BERNIE) being restrained by a COP?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Shaken and frowning with concern, he turns away from the scene now out of view behind the moving limo.

Alone in the luxurious leathered sanctuary, he realizes his hands are shaking as he reaches for the manila envelope GALE gave; him and tears it open.

He stares at the script titled THE ANGEL OF FLIGHT 104.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

As the happy CROWD disperses, an enraged BERNIE is facing a COP.

BERNIE.

Don't tell me what I can and can't
say. This is America.

COP

(laughing)

Hey, suit yourself, buddy. If it
makes you feel better to insult a
man who's worth about a thousand
of you, go ahead. Like he says,
"We're all heroes," pal. Even you.

BERNIE

Bullshit! What a lotta bullshit!

COP

Okay, have it your own way: you're
not a hero.

[PAGE 92 IS MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT.]

ANGLE ON BERNIE

blinking, as the T-shirts magically feature BUBBER again,
smiling, heroic. BERNIE wonders if this is hell.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

Behind the deserted bar, CHICK looks from the TV set as BERNIE
enters, weary and bedraggled, the strut gone. Bernie holds up
his hands defensively.

BERNIE

Hey, I don't blame you for bein'
sore. I know I screwed up gettin'
busted in here. You got a right
to throw me out.

CHICK

I'm not gonna throw you out, Bernie.

CHICK is fixing a seven and seven. He puts it on the bar.
BERNIE hesitates, then steps to the bar, takes a drink.

BERNIE

Thanks, Chick. I appreciate it.

REPORTER/TV (O.S., VOICEOVER)

The doctors who had believed the
boy had little or no chance for
survival, now predict a slow but
complete recovery.

CHICK glances up at the TV screen and BERNIE looks too.

ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY)

news footage shows young ALLEN in his hospital bed, still
engulfed in tubes and life support equipment, but conscious now,
smiling bravely for the CAMERA while a REPORTER narrates.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON CHICK

eyes on the TV, shaking his head in wonder.

CHICK

Helluva guy, ain't he? Vietnam,
plane crash, now miracles.

BERNIE stares at the screen lost in thought.

EXT. VIDEO STUDIO - DUSK

A sign over the door says "STAGE ONE/CHANNEL 4." Further down,
on the door itself a sign says "NO ADMITTANCE/ AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY"

UNIFORMED POLICE linger around the door, surrounded by FANS and
BUBBER'S limo waits at the curb, his DRIVER lounging by the
door.

DAYTON (we saw him earlier in the courtroom), is making his way
through the knot of ONLOOKERS and MEDIA PERSONNEL gathered
around the limo and in front of the entrance.

Approaching as if to enter, he is confronted by one of the several UNIFORMED POLICEMEN guarding the doorway.

POLICE OFFICER
Sorry, sir. Closed to the public..
(Dayton is reaching for
his fold)
No media either, sir, they're taping
a show and... Oh, right. Sorry
about that, Inspector.

DAYTON is flashing his badge fold as the POLICEMAN hastily opens the door for him.

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

DAYTON enters the sound stage and sees the mock-up bathed in hot light in the middle of the darkened stage, surrounded by shadowy cameras and TECHNICIANS. The SURVIVORS are visible in the skeletal plane, rehearsing.

DAYTON settles in the shadows, out of earShot, watching.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Approaching GALE who's lying "helplessly" among the seats. He looms over her, his face obscured by "mud" make-up, hesitates. She whispers helpfully...

GALE
Now you lean down and free me from
the seat. I was caught and...
that's it. Good.

BUBBER bends down, starts to "free" her, a troubled look on his face. He is struggling with something emotionally.

GALE
Now you help me up. Boy, you
seem... taller. It must be
psychological... now that I know
you saved my life...

BUBBER
(lifting her)
Gale! I can't go through with this!
It's... it's all wrong!'

GALE
You're doing fine. You didn't
actually lift me though. It was
more like you supported me.

BUBBER
(supporting her)

That's not what I mean...

GALE

There, like that. Kind of, uh,
sexy.

(with meaning)

You can support me anytime, John.

BUBBER

Gale...

GALE

(giggle)

I just remembered. You were
talking about bodybuilding and
swearing.

BUBBER

Bodybuilding!

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE booms over the speaker from the booth.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)

WE DON'T WANT ACTING, AS I SAID.
BUT WHEN WE DO A TAKE, GUYS, PLEASE
DON'T LAUGH, OKAY? IT HAS TO PLAY
SERIOUS. IT WAS A VERY SERIOUS
THING...

(a beat, then...)

UH, ALSO, JOHN, MAYBE YOU COULD LIFT
HER MORE, SORT OF CARRY HER. I KNOW
THAT MAY BE BENDING REALITY JUST
A TEENSY BIT, BUT IF YOUR
JOURNALIST'S INTEGRITY CAN HANDLE
IT, GALE, I THINK IT WOULD "PLAY
BETTER" ON THE SCREEN.

(then, to all of
them...)

OKAY, GANG, LET'S RUN THROUGH IT
FROM THE TOP ONE MORE TIME, THEN
WE'LL DO A TAKE.

ANGLE ON DAYTON

Watching, impassive.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Lifting GALE, uncomfortable.

BUBBER

It's not right, Gale...

GALE

(misunderstanding again)

It's no big deal, it just looks
better carrying me. Oh, you mean

because I wasn't carrying my purse
at the time.

GALE has a purse under one arm.

GALE
(suddenly serious, eye
contact)
You're an inspiration, John. You're
making us better human beings. Less
cynical. More open, more giving.
Do you realize that?

BUBBER starts to say something again, but the moment for
confession has passed, they're approaching LESLIE who is
applauding along with the other SURVIVORS, tears in her eyes.

LESLIE
You leave her here... and you (sob)
go back in again.

BUBBER nods and starts grimly back up the slope, trapped in his
heroic role.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is sitting moodily at the bar while CHICK washes glasses
and the TV DRONES. BERNIE is wrestling with a thought. He
breaks the, silence finally.

BERNIE
What wouldja say if I toldja I ran
into a burning plane an' saved a
buncha people, Chick, an' risked
my goddamnlife?

CHICK
You mean like Bubber? The hero?

BERNIE
Yeah, like that. Same thing.

CHICK
Well... I mean... what am I supposed
to say here, Bern? Is this a riddle
or what?

BERNIE
I mean, if I said it, wouldja
believe me?
(then...)
Ya wouldn't, would ya?

CHICK
It's a character thing, Bernie.
I mean, you wouldn't do it. No

offense. Me neither. I mean, a guy like Bubber, he's a certain kinda guy. Heroic. You and me, we're not... heroic. It's not our nature. It don't mean we're bad or nothing. We're just not so inclined. What about it?

BERNIE

Nothin'.

CHICK

I wouldn't be depressed about it, Bern. A guy don't have to be heroic to be a human being.

BERNIE

The thing is, Chick. I'm goin' down.

CHICK

Down. You mean jail? For that credit card stuff? For Chrissake, Bernie, your lawyer...

BERNIE,

Not jail. Prison. And not that credit card bullshit, that's nothin'. I got a conviction. Sentencing tomorrow. Some cases of paint I got involved with. Latex. I see this parole officer, he writes a report to the judge says I'm "anti-social."

CHICK

"Anti-social." Jesus, Bernie. How much paint are we talking about?

BERNIE

(grimly)

A lot.

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

DAYTON unnoticed among the shadows, as the YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR addresses the assembled SURVIVORS. DAYTON focuses on GALE.

YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR

That's a wrap, guys. I want to thank you all. I think we did something very important here this evening.

BUBBER is looking for GALE, spots her fifteen yards away.

BUBBER'S P.O.V. - A BLACK MAN

is showing GALE something, a badge fold, saying something to her.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

reacting. A frown. he starts to move toward them but a MAKE-UP ARTIST approaches him insistently...

MAKE-UP ARTIST
Just let me get that gunk off your
face, Mister Bubber.

BUBBER
Uh, it can wait, I...

His eyes on GALE and DAYTON, BUBBER is disengaging from the MAKE-UP ARTIST when SUSAN suddenly blocks his way, holding up a DOLL, a shy KELLY in tow.

SUSAN
Mister Bubber... uh, John... Kelly
wants you to sign an autograph for
John Jr.

BUBBER finds himself facing a JOHN BUBBER DOLL, sees KELLY peering up at him hopefully. What can he do? He's a patsy.

ANGLE ON GALE

as DAYTON speaks to her.

DAYTON
Won't take more than ten minutes.
Fifteen at the most. I'll buy you,
a cuppa coffee down the street.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Handing the autograph to KELLY and looking toward the spot where GALE was.

BUBBER'S P.O.V. - DAYTON AND GALE

walking toward the exit.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

calling out, starting after them.

BUBBER
Gale!

Just then SMITH rushes up to him, blocking his way.

SMITH

I breathe, I see the sun, I thank
you. God bless you. I'm alive
because of you, every moment of life
I owe to you.

BUBBER looks at his grateful face. What can he say? He looks
toward the exit.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.

GALE and DAYTON have disappeared.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

eyes full of despair as other grateful PASSENGERS engulf him...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER (EVENING)

Credit Cards are spread out on the formica table top in the
booth where GALE and DAYTON face each other.

GALE

How... how does this, whatsisname,
the "sleazebag," say he got my
cards?

DAYTON

LaPlante? Ha! Which version? This
bozo has more stories than a
newspaper. In one of them, he's
"the angel of Flight 104!" He pulls
you off the plane, saves your purse
for you, but forgets to return it.
That's Version 63. In Version 64,
he kept it to pay for his "hundred
dollar shoes." The guy's a bullshit
artist, he's already got a sentence
pending for dealing stolen goods.

(leaning forward,
whispering)

Listen, I know. this is pretty off
the wall... that guy, the hero,
Bubber... he was a homeless guy,
right? Down on his luck? He
couldn't have swiped the wallet,
could he? While he was rescuing
you? And sold it to this guy
LaPlante?

GALE

(raised eyebrows)

John Bubber risks his life to save
me and fifty-four other people
and... swipes my purse?

DAYTON

Too far-fetched? I mean, I'm not trying to make problems for John Bubber, I just want to make sure this creep LaPlante does some meaningful time. If we can't figure out how he got the cards, it makes it more difficult.

GALE

Tell me more about him.

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

JOEY is sprawled on the living room floor, surrounded by homework, his eyes on the TV set.

EVELYN, on the sofa, looks up from her book and catches JOEY watching the TV.

EVELYN

Homework. You're doing homework, remember?

The phone rings and EVELYN gets up and goes for it.

EVELYN

(to Joey)

Homework, homework, homework! No homework, no zoo trips, no movies.

(into phone)

Hello.

(then, very cold...)

He's doing his homework.

JOEY looks up from his homework.

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is talking into the phone urgently...

BERNIE

Look, I'm going away, I just wanna say goodbye to... never mind where. I just wanna say... He can't call me back later, my phone's disconnected...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN covers the mouthpiece and turns to JOEY...

EVELYN

It's your father. If you don't talk to him, he's going to call all

night.

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE

Hey, Joey, how ya doin', pal, it's me. Your old man. You get the twenty dollars? What?

(listens...)

Well, she's right on that, Joey, that's the best place for it, a college fund. I was gonna tell ya that myself. Look, about how I didn't show up the other night I... what?

(he listens)

You seen me out the window....

(listens)

One shoe, yeah and the mud... So you thought I mighta been the heroic guy, huh?

(a beat, then...)

An' what'd she say when you...?

"Against my religion," huh?

(he struggles, then...
decisive)

Well, you know Joey, this kinda stuff, we gotta talk about it some time, man to man. But I gotta go off on this -- this damn business trip now... for a while. So... so I won't be seein' you. What you gotta do, you gotta listen to your mother, she's smart, very smart, knows what's best for you and...

(reacting)

No, no, no, it ain't 'cause I don't like you, Christ! I mean, not "Christ," you know... I mean I don't wanna go on this business thing, I love you Joey, but I gotta! That's part of growing older, all these goddamn (pardon the vulgarity) business things you have to do. Which reminds me, this "hero" business... one of the things you learn as you get older is that life gets very complicated... weird actually... people aren't exactly like they seem... nothing is... life gets unbelievable... this is normal as you grow older and... huh? I was talking to Joey.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN

Your son actually wants to spend time with you. If you let him down this time after popping back into his life...

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE

Ev, you gotta understand, it's this... this goddamn business trip, no wait, don't hang up, Ev, just a sec, listen, I just wanna say one thing, okay? One thing!

(with some effort)

I know I kinda act like an asshole sometimes. I know that. I know you were a good wife. I know I fucked it up. I had a good thing an' I blew it. I just want you to know I know that, okay? I gotta go now. Business trip. It's gonna be a while.

BERNIE hangs up.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN stares at the phone as though it had changed into a piece of fruit before her eyes! Bernie said that?

INT. HALLWAY/APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

WINSTON (who bought Bernie's TV) has opened his door just a crack to address GALE and CHUCKY. It says "Manager" on the door.

WINSTON

LaPlante! That asshole! I don't... Hey, is that you, from the tee vee? In person?

GALE

We're from Channel Four, yes. We'd like to find --

WINSTON

"This is Gale Gayley for Channel Four News!" Incredible. Unbelievable! For Bernie LaPlante! He's a celebrity now? 'Cause he stole paint?

GALE

We couldn't find his name on the
buzzer or on the mailbox, but...

WINSTON pushes past them out the door and into the corridor.

WINSTON
"Low profile." That's his big
motto! He don't put his name on
anything. Come on, we'll go look.

GALE sees WINSTON trundling down the corridor toward the
stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

WINSTON waddles up the stairs with GALE and CHUCKY on his heels.

GALE
Shouldn't we have buzzed him to let
him know --

WINSTON
Half the time he don't answer even
if he's home. Know why? 'Cause
he don't want no bill collectors
to find him. I don't mean to be
judgmental, but he's a scumbag.
He don't have no friends. Who's
gonna like a creep like LaPlante?
I was doin' him a favor on the TV
outta kindness, and he screwed me.
You know what color skin you get
on my set, Miss Gayley? Purple!
That's what color skin you got on
the tee vee LaPlante sells me!

During the climb, GALE'S BEEPER goes off. She shuts it off.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR/APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

BANG! BANG! BANG! WINSTON pounds on the door to 5A while GALE
and CHUCKY hover behind him anxiously.

WINSTON
Bernard! Bernard! Hey, LaPlante,
open the door. Television
Interview! Fame and fortune. Open
up, Bernard.

WINSTON pulls a ring of keys from his belt and unlocks the door.

WINSTON
Hope the silly bastard didn't kill
himself. He's all upset about this
sentence he got. He's going to

prison.

(to Chucky)

That a camera you're carrying? If he killed himself, you could take pictures.

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT

WINSTON, GALE and CHUCKY enter the tiny charmless living room. As WINSTON disappears into the bedroom; GALE glances around, notices something.

A cheap commercial photo of BERNIE with JOEY at the zoo.

Studying it, she considers BERNIE'S face.

WINSTON re-enters from the bedroom.

WINSTON

No dead body. Too bad. Not too often you guys get pictures of a body even before the cops get there. Exclusive!

GALE

I wonder if you'd mind if we waited for him here, Mister Winston...

Surprised, CHUCKY gives her a sharp look, like "what's up?"

WINSTON

What's he gonna do, sue? You people, you're the media.

WINSTON exits, closing the door behind him.

CHUCKY

We're gonna wait here? The guy could be hours.

GALE

Maybe, maybe not. I have a feeling this guy is important somehow.

CHUCKY

Hey, listen, great that you're a career-fiend, I got a wife and family, I...

GALE

You're lucky, Chucky, you... OW!

GALE has flopped down on BERNIE'S ratty sofa.

CHUCKY

What's the matter?

GALE

This sofa is a lethal weapon. The springs... are... the springs... what...?

GALE is digging behind her on the sofa. She pulls out The silver Mike Award and stares at it, dumbfounded.

CHUCKY

What is it?

GALE

(stunned)

The...Silver...Mike...Award!

CHUCKY

This guy LaPlante won an award?

GALE

(staring at the inscription)

"For Excellence in the Pursuit of Truth."

CHUCKY

(amazed)

LaPlante!

BERNIE

Who the hell are you? What's goin' on here?

BERNIE is standing in the doorway, scowling at CHUCKY. But before the astonished CHUCKY can respond, GALE turns, revealing her face.

BERNIE

You!

GALE

Camera, Chucky. Are you Bernard LaPlante, sir? What is your relationship with John Bubber?

BERNIE

(indicating chucky)

Turn that thing off.

GALE

(holding up the Silver Mike)

How did you acquire this, Mister LaPlante?

BERNIE

How do ya think I got it, for
Chrissake?

(to Chucky, indicating
the vidpak)

Hey, put that thing down. This is
my goddamn apartment, you can't
just...

GALE

What's your scheme, Mister LaPlante?
What are you forcing John Bubber
to do? What are you -- ?

The door bursts open and WINSTON rushes in hysterically.

WINSTON

HE'S GONNA JUMP! BUBBER'S GONNA
JUMP! IT'S ON CHANNEL THIRTEEN!

CHUCKY

Thirteen!

TV IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - P.O.V. OF LEDGE - NIGHT)

Weirdly distorted colors. A shaky long lens shot (news camera)
reveals a bright green BUBBER standing on a ledge fifteen
stories up while a REPORTER narrates urgently...

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER (V.O.)

-- say that they cannot rig a net
below him because they are afraid
it will trigger his decision to
jump. Bubber has said repeatedly
he will only talk with Gale Gayley
a local television reporter.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh my God!

REVEAL: INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Where GALE, flanked by BERNIE, CHUCKY, and WINSTON, is staring
in horror at the lurid color image on the TV BERNIE sold to
WINSTON.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER/TV

(continuing)

So far, attempts to reach Ms. Gayley
have not succeeded.

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

GALE
(to Winston)
Your phone! Quick.

As WINSTON shows her the phone, BERNIE scowls at the TV.

BERNIE
He's green for Chrissake!

As GALE punches digits on the phone, WINSTON turns back to BERNIE.

WINSTON
No shit! You took advantage of me,
LaPlante. It's a piece of shit.

BERNIE
You gotta tune it, ya bozo. You
gotta adjust it.

BERNIE is adjusting the television color.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER/TV
Meanwhile, as you can see, a crowd
has gathered here at the hotel, many
of them in tears, pleading aloud
with John Bubber not to jump.

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

speaking urgently and privately into the phone.

GALE
For God's sake, tell him I'm on my
way.
(she slams down the
phone)
Let's go, Chucky. A police escort
is gonna pick us up en route. You
too, LaPlante.

BERNIE
Me!

GALE
If you're not in the car in ten
seconds, I'll have the cops pick
you up.

BERNIE
The cops! What kinda bullshit is
this? Is this America or -- ?

GALE
(urgent, inspiration)
Here! Here... ten, thirty, fifty
bucks. How much have you got,
Chucky? Give Mister LaPlante your
money.

GALE shoves cash into BERNIE'S hands as CHUCKY obediently
reaches for his wallet.

GALE
Come on! Let's go! John's in
danger.

Confused, BERNIE looks at the cash, then follows them out the
door.

BERNIE
(pocketing the cash)
Christ, you media people think you
can just buy people. Cheap.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

SIRENS SCREAM. An escort of POLICE MOTORCYCLES precedes the
speeding Channel Four van through the dark streets.

INT. SPEEDING CHANNEL 4 VAN - NIGHT

CHUCKY is at the wheel of the van, GALE beside him. BERNIE sits
back in the confusion of equipment and monitors that show the
news coverage of Bubber on the ledge. BERNIE is addressing GALE
indignantly, trying to be heard over the SCREAMING of the
SIRENS.

BERNIE
My fault! My fault! This nut case
goes out on a ledge and it's my
fault?

GALE
If anything happens to John BUbber,
Mister LaPlante I'm going to see
you prosecuted to the full extent
of the law.

BERNIE
What, is everybody in love with
this, bozo? I don't get this. What
about...?

GALE
Yes, everybody is in love with John
Bubber. The whole country, in fact.

And they're not going to be happy
if he jumps to his death because
he was harassed by a lousy little
money-grubbing low-life fence...

BERNIE
"Harassed." Cause I yelled at him
when he's riding in his limo? The
guy's a thief, he took my...

GALE
(erupting)
He had one tiny, uncharacteristic
moment of weakness. That's not the
same thing as a lifetime of petty
crime...

BERNIE
(stung)
Hey, lady, I got faults, I know I'm
not perfect but I don't get this
at all, your attitude. I saved
your...

GALE
(interrupting)
A lifetime of petty crime climaxed
by your sleaziest accomplishment
yet... blackmailing a national
hero...

BERNIE
-- saved your... whaaaaaaat? What?
Blackmailing...?

GALE
You think I haven't figured it out?
Just because the cops aren't on to
you yet doesn't mean you're home
free. I'm a veteran reporter. I've
seen your kind before, the
underbelly of crime.

BERNIE
Underbelly!

GALE
In all that smoke and fire, John
had a moment of weakness. He'd been
down and out, destitute, living in
his car. It was just an impulse,
stealing my purse.

BERNIE looks thunderstruck. CHUCKY too.

CHUCKY
Swiped your purse! While he was

saving you? You gotta be kidding!

GALE

(a triumphant 190k at
Bernie)

And sold it to Mister LaPlante, the
fence, who's now trying to blackmail
poor John.

BERNIE is too stunned to speak.

CHUCKY

He's gotta be a nut! He saves all
those people and swipes a purse?

GALE

(emotional)

Because he was a real hero, Chucky.
He was acting out of a deep
instinctive decency, not out of some
ego thing. He didn't expect the
media to lionize him. He didn't
expect a million dollar reward.
He saved fifty-four people because
something inside him, some
fundamental love for his fellow man,
made him rush into that plane when
"good sense" told him otherwise.
He was willing to settle for some
credit cards he sold to LaPlante....

(to Bernie)

For how much, LaPlante? A couple
of bucks? Did you give him enough
for a decent meal?

BERNIE, who's been listening to the description of his own deeds
with slack-jawed amazement, is too taken aback to answer.

The van zips past dark city streets populated by DERELICTS and
HOMELESS PEOPLE as GALE continues her emotional outpouring.

GALE

All this is off the record, Chucky,
because if John Bubber lives, Mister
LaPlante is going to give him his
assurance that there will be no more
"misbehavior" on his part. What's
more he's going to apologize.

BERNIE

I'm going to apologize to Bubber?

GALE

I could deny I had those credit
cards on the plane with me,
LaPlante...

BERNIE
(amazed)
Lie, you mean...

GALE
Well, maybe I wouldn't lie...but
I could tell the story the way I
did just now, so that people could
understand that John is even more
of a hero, and that you...
you're the lowest thing that ever
crawled. Your name will be
synonymous with cynical opportunism
and blackmail. You won't get a
cent.

BERNIE
(alarmed)
I got a kid, you know. I'm a
person, for Chrissake.

GALE
Well, for your child's sake, show
some decency then, rise above your
sleazy instincts.
(a sob)
You may have already killed him!

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

POLICE buck the tide of the excited CROWD, making a wedge to
get GALE, CHUCKY, and BERNIE to the hotel entrance. A COP grabs
BERNIE, thinking him a spectator.

GALE
No! He's with us, Officer.

REPORTERS, on the fringe of the crowd, address their cameras.

CHANNEL 8/CHANNEL 13/CONKLIN
Police are escorting Reporter Gale
Gayley to the fifteenth floor where
she will be able to talk to Bubber.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - CROWD'S POV OF BUBBER ON LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BUBBER

A tiny figure on a narrow ledge fifteen floors up.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

GALE rushes into the suite now jammed with POLICE, FIREMEN, and
DIGNITARIES and heads straight for the open window, dragging

BERNIE with her. CHUCKY follows, Vidcam raised.

At the window she encounters the POLICE CHIEF and a PRIEST.

POLICE CHIEF
He'll only talk to you, Ms Gayley.
Just lean out and we'll hold you
from behind.

EXT. LEDGE/FIFTEENTH STORY/DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Alone on the ledge twenty feet from the open window, BUBBER is looking down at the CROWD below. They're chanting...

EXT. LEDGE - BUBBER'S P.O.V. OF CROWD - NIGHT

CROWD
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

EXT. LEDGE - DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

GALE
John! Don't do it! Everything's
okay.

BUBBER has tears in his eyes. He turns at the sound of GALE'S voice and sees her leaning out the window, calling to him.

Pulling an envelope from his pocket, BUBBER moves a couple of steps toward GALE and bends down to place the envelope on the ledge.

BUBBER
Gale! This is for you. I want you
to know I never meant to hurt you.
This will explain everything.

GALE
John, I know all about it.

BUBBER
(horrified)
You do?

Straightening up, he... LOSES HIS BALANCE!

CROWD
NNNOOOOOOOOOOOO!

GALE
It's all right, John! It's nothing!
A little mistake. Everybody will
understand!

BUBBER
"A little mistake"!

GALE
No, John, you're too hard on
yourself. I've got the creep here,
the guy who's...

GALE breaks off as BERNIE suddenly shoulders his way to the
window...

BERNIE
Hold on! Hold on! Lemme talk to
him for Chrissake!

INT. SUITE/DRAKE

BERNIE pushes past the astonished GALE and scrambles awkwardly
out onto' the ledge, kicking back at the FIREMEN who grab at his
ankles until...

ANGLE ON FIREMEN

exchanging a look, the FIREMEN realize their efforts are more
likely to knock BERNIE off than save him.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

BUBBER stares in amazement as BERNIE emerges onto the ledge on
all fours, yelling toward him.

BERNIE
Hey, Bubber, c'mere! I gotta talk
to you, buddy.

BUBBER
LaPlante!

BERNIE
Come on, John, don't be an asshole.
I don't like heights.

Hastily, BUBBER backs further from the window (and the envelope
lying on the ledge).

BUBBER
Listen, LaPlante, I'm really sorry.
It's all in my letter to Ga... uh,
Miss Gayley. I was all wrong.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

CHUCKY is wedged beside GALE in the window, pointing his vidpak
at BERNIE'S ass. Suddenly BERNIE sees BUBBER looking past him

at the cameras and, turning awkwardly, he snaps at GALE...

BERNIE

Turn that thing off! You want him
to jump?

GALE and the OTHERS step back from the window hastily.

EXT. LEDGE/DRAKE - NIGHT

BERNIE turns back to BUBBER.

BERNIE

I just wanna talk with you for a
minute. Then you can jump. You
can jump twice for all I care.

BUBBER

Talk from there. You can talk from
there.

BERNIE

In private. They got cameras and
alla that crap in there.
Microphones.

INT. HOTEL SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

Rather than leaning out the window, GALE and OTHERS in the suite
are following the drama on the TV monitor.

GALE'S P.O.V.: TV IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - FROM BELOW - NIGHT)

CONKLIN narrates while the SHAKY CAMERA FOCUSES on BERNIE and
BUBBER who are continuing to argue on the ledge, BERNIE
motioning for BUBBER to come closer, BUBBER resisting.

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

It looks like someone is out on the
ledge with John Bubber. We can only
presume this is a rescue specialist
of some kind from the police or fire
department.

(excited)

He... he's moving toward Bubber,
crawling. He does not appear to
have a safety rope tied to him and,
as we've explained, the fire
department has been unable to rig
a net.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

BACK TO GALE

Ironically, she's "seeing the events" happening fifteen feet from her on a monitor showing...

ON THE TV SCREEN (EXT. HOTEL - P.O.V. OF LEDGE - NIGHT)

a camera angle fifteen stories below, a SHAKY ZOOM attempting to isolate BERNIE on the ledge.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

Her face shows surprise at BERNIE'S courage. Did she misjudge?

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

Inching forward, BERNIE is just reaching the letter BUBBER left on the ledge.

BUBBER
(indicating the letter)
That's for Ga... Ms. Gayley.

BERNIE
What am I, a goddamn postman? I'm way the fuck up here, I'm scared a heights, and you want me to deliver a letter? Put a stamp on it for Chrissake!

BUBBER
That's close enough. It's a confession. The truth. Jesus, I'm sorry, LaPlante. I had the shoe, you said you didn't want, publicity because of your legal problems.

BERNIE
I don't recall saying I didn't want a million bucks...

BUBBER
I never really thought they'd go for it. And then... you didn't come forward, they investigated my war record... I kept expecting you to show up and expose me...

BERNIE
I was in the can, for Chrissake.

BUBBER
The bathroom! For two days?

BERNIE
Jail! Listen, Bubber...
(looks down, fifteen

stories)
This is crazy. We could fall off
of here.

BUBBER
You should go in. You're risking
your life again...

BERNIE
(sweating, trembling)
I'm beginning to... be aware of
that, John. Listen, I'm not gonna
do nothing heroic here, you can
trust me on that, buddy. Whaddaya
say we just sit down for a while.
I don't have no tricks, I'm not that
smart. You could, like, rest up for
the jump.

BUBBER considers the situation, relaxes, lowers himself till
he's sitting beside BERNIE. Then he helps BERNIE off his knees
into a sitting position so they're sitting side by side on the
ledge. BUBBER shakes his head sadly.

BUBBER
What have I done? I was dirt poor
and useless... but I was honest.

BERNIE
Lighten up, John. You think you
got problems for Chrissake?

BERNIE wipes the sweat from his forehead, unaware that he's
smearing his face with black soot from the ledge.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL

In front of the hotel in the midst of the confusion of emergency
vehicles, POLICE, and ONLOOKERS, a cherry-picker has arrived
and a TV CAMERAMAN from Channel 4 is riding in the rising
pulpit.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL P.O.V. - NIGHT)

A shaky long lens shot from fifteen stories below shows BERNIE
sitting beside BUBBER on the ledge while the REPORTER narrates
urgently...

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)
-- still don't know why John BUbber,
hero to the nation, stepped out onto
the ledge fifteen stories above
the street more than an hour ago.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOEY, wearing pajamas and headphones, is staring breathlessly at the TV from the bed in his darkened bedroom.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

(continuing)

But we now have the identity of the man who has been talking to him for the last fifteen minutes at great personal risk. He has been identified as Bernard LaPlante, former employee of Gumley's Carpet Care.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JOEY

JOEY'S jaw sags and he sits up in bed as the REPORTER continues on the TV.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. LEDGE FROM BELOW - NIGHT)

the lens ZOOMS TIGHTER, and therefore SHAKIER, offering a jerky image in which BUBBER and BERNIE are semi-identifiable as they sit on the ledge.

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

There is speculation that LaPlante is an old friend of Bubber's, perhaps a war buddy.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOEY has already sprinted out of the room, leaving the TV playing to his empty bedroom.

JOEY'S VOICE (O.S.)

MOM! MOM! IT'S MY FATHER! MOM!

INT. DRAKE/PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

GALE is giving way at the window to CHUCKY who's leaning out to try and get a shot. Jammed in by the CROWD, her view blocked, she glimpses a TV monitor nearby.

GALE'S POV - TV MONITOR/VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT)

The SHAKY CLOSE-UP of BERNIE'S face, smeared with soot, fills the screen. The angle is very reminiscent of the glimpse GALE got of BERNIE in the crashed plane!

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

An arc light is switched on, lighting up BERNIE'S face.

INT. DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

BACK TO GALE,

stunned. Just then CHUCKY taps her on his way out of the room.

CHUCKY
I'm gonna grab the high ground, get
a hot overhead angle.

EXT. LEDGE/FIFTEENTH FLOOR/DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Spotlights illuminate BERNIE and BUBBER as they sit on the ledge and converse, like a couple of guys on a park bench somewhere, oblivious to the CROWD below.

BUBBER
(flabbergasted)
You stole her purse! While you were
saving her?

BERNIE
What's the big deal? You decided
to pretend you were me. A little
moment of weakness, right? So I
sorta swiped her purse. I got feet
of clay too, bUddy.

BUBBER
And she thinks you're blackmailing
me?

BERNIE
Right.

BUBBER actually sees humor in this, but BERNIE is thinking...

BERNIE
Which don't sound like such a bad
goddamn idea, John.

BUBBER
Huh? Whadda you mean?

BERNIE
Well, we gotta work this thing out,
John. It's a goddamn mess an' I'm
halfway to doing serious time in
the joint an' the TV lady's so stuck
on you she don't want it to come

out you stole her purse because it
might break the heart of millions.

(indicating the chanting
crowd below)

Looka those maniacs, willya? They
love you, for Chrissake!

BUBBER

I don't need to be a hero, LaPlante,
but I can't face people... the looks
in their eyes... after the trust
they gave me!

BERNIE

Great! You make this big goddamn
mess, then ya jump. Beautiful!
Listen, John, I was there at the
hospital today, I seen you with
those little bastards (pardon my
vulgarity).

BUBBER

It was you! I thought I heard...

BERNIE

I'm not saying I hate sick people
or anything but I hate being around
them if you know what I mean. There
you go, you inspire this kid to
live. I probably woulda vomited
on him.

BUBBER

(stunned)

Allen? He... he's okay?

BUBBER is visibly affected by the news about ALLEN but BERNIE
doesn't notice, rattles on...

BERNIE

See what I mean? You remember his
name for Chrissake! I mean, I
remember my own kid's name... but
I'm always forgetting his birthday.
Plus when they stick cameras in your
face and ask all these stupid
questions, you smile at them. You
got a kinda... a kinda... "gift,"
there, John, if ya know what I mean.
People wanna be saved by you. Even
me! If I was gonna be saved I
wouldn't wanna see Bernie LaPlante
comin' outta the goddamn smoke an'
darkness an' fear an' stuff. I'd
wanna see John God Damn Bubber!

BUBBER is moved... but still has doubts.

BUBBER

You got those people out of the plane, LaPlante, not me.

BERNIE

You woulda gone in there, you wouldn'ta thought twice... Trust me on that, that's the kinda guy you are. For a guy like me, it's a momentary loss of sanity. I wasn't thinking clearly. Listen, I'm no hero, John. I just want some dough and maybe a little favor. How much didja spend already on all that do-gooder bullshit? You didn't spend it all didja?

BUBBER

Well, I donated a lot to different causes, uh... La...

BERNIE

Bernie. Call me Bernie.

BUBBER

--but there's a lot of it still left, uh, Bernie. Almost half.

BERNIE'S eyes glitter with interest.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/TV STATION

Several monitors show a variety of coverage of the drama on the ledge on their screens while, nearby, WALLACE hovers anxiously over DEAKINS' shoulder as DEAKINS rants into the phone...

DEAKINS

Whaddaya mean what do I wanna know? I wanna know everything. Who's this screwball LaPlante for Pete's sake, what the hell's he doing out there, auditioning for the priesthood? You're supposed to be on top of this, Gale, don't...

(he stops, listens,
explodes)

"Quit!" You can't quit! It's unprofessional!

WALLACE

(alarmed)
Quit? She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

(ignoring Wallace)

Listen, Gale, I know you're emotionally involved. Don't be emotionally involved, be professional.

(listens, then...)

No, Gale, you are not a hardbitten, cynical hard-ass, you just think you are. You are a goddamn cream puff! Try and be a hard-ass!

DEAKINS hangs up the phone angrily and faces WALLACE...

WALLACE

She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

She can't quit.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

EVELYN is staring dumbfounded at the TV screen, the volume full now, no longer coming through the headphones.

EVELYN

My God! It... it is him!

JOEY

Wh-why's he... why's he up there, mom?

EVELYN looks pale and stricken. Instead of answering, she makes a decision...

EVELYN

Where's your coat? Get your coat!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

DEAKINS and WALLACE are watching a CHANNEL EIGHT REPORTER on one of the monitors.

TV IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 8 REPORTER/TV

-- just learned that LaPlante is a convicted felon due to be sentenced tomorrow for trafficking in stolen goods. According to our sources, LaPlante knowingly purchased twelve cases of stolen latex paint which he subsequently sold to...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON DEAKINS AND WALLACE

DEAKINS

Gale shoulda aired that bit first,
she's the one who found this clown
LaPlante! She let Channel Eight
get a beat on us.

WALLACE

(worried)

Listen, Deak, what if Bubber has
got something to hide? What if he's
the wrong guy, not really the
hero...?

DEAKINS

Helluva story!

WALLACE

(suddenly firm)

No, Deak, not a great story. We
backed this guy, he's our boy! We
gave him a vote of confidence, we
gave him a million dollars.

DEAKINS is chastened. He "gets it." Just then, excitement from
the Channel Four monitor.

DEAKINS

Now what?

CONKLIN'S VOICE/TV

(excited)

Something's going on, Bubber is
communicating something. Both men
are...

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Excitement in the CROWD, looking up, yelling. Something's
happening. CONKLIN is speaking into his mike even as the surge
of the CROWD engulfs him...

CONKLIN

-- still sitting on the ledge but
Bubber is motioning to someone in
the window, he seems to be calling
out to them and now... now he's
holding up two fingers. He's
signalling something, holding up
two fingers.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A Ford station wagon speeds toward the city.

INT. MOVING FORD/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

EVELYN is at the wheel, JOEY beside her, the RADIO on...

EVELYN

If I gave you the impression I hated him I didn't mean to. I... I hate the way he behaves... he's selfish and self-centered and cynical...

JOEY

What's "cynical"?

EVELYN

It's when you say, "Everybody else cheats why shouldn't I?"

(emotional)

But I don't -- I don't hate -- him. I... loved him once, Joey. Very much. I just got... tired. Maybe it wasn't all his fault. He... What's happening? Oh, my God...

EVELYN is reacting to the live radio broadcast, a sudden urgency in the REPORTER'S VOICE, CROWD SOUNDS...

RADIO

-- FIREMEN LEANING OUT THE WINDOW!
THEY HAVE WHAT APPEAR TO BE LONG
POLES AND THEY'RE REACHING THE POLES
TOWARD THE TWO MEN ON THE LEDGE,
JOHN BUBBER AND HIS COMPANION,
BERNARD LAPLANTE!

EVELYN

What's happening? What are they doing...?

RADIO

(continuing)

LAPLANTE AND BUBBER ARE REACHING
FOR THE POLES! THERE'S SOMETHING
AT THE TIP OF THE POLES. THEY'RE
TAKING SOMETHING FROM THE POLES!
IT LOOKS LIKE -- IT LOOKS LIKE...
I THINK IT'S... WAIT A MINUTE, I
HAVE A REPORT HERE...

EVELYN and JOEY are breathless, mesmerized, waiting to hear...

RADIO

COFFEE! IT'S COFFEE! WE'RE TOLD
THAT BUBBER AND LAPLANTE ASKED FOR
TWO CUPS OF COFFEE.

EVELYN

(relief)

Coffee! Just like your father to request something totally inappropriate. Thousands of people watching and he wants a cup of coffee.

(remembering)

I remember when you were in the hospital, when you had the appendicitis, your father stayed all night by your bed... and he hates hospitals, always thinks he's going to catch something... and then that time when your Uncle Howard got hurt... It seems like your father is at his best in a crisis... when things go really wrong or there's some kind of emergency, your father forgets to be Bernie LaPlante and acts sort of like... a human being.

There are tears in her eyes as she drives. The RADIO continues.

RADIO

We've learned that the devices the firemen used to "deliver" the coffee... I described them as "poles"... are, in fact, oversized tongs used by the hotel staff to change difficult-to-reach lightbulbs...

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

BERNIE and BUBBER are distant figures sitting on a ledge as if it was a park bench, sipping coffee and visibly negotiating as in a pantomime.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

Closer now, we can hear BERNIE and BUBBER wrapping up the deal.

BERNIE

You got it? Four year scholarship to a top college, plus Medical School or Law School or whatever Joey wants; pay off the \$2,500 to my attorney, plus pay her fee in full, plus my annual consulting fee...

BUBBER

And give a deposition to the jUdge.

BERNIE

(sudden thought)

Listen, John, you better double my attorney's fee. She's very inexperienced, but she done a great job for me. And give her your autograph. She thinks you're some kinda holy man.

BUBBER

On the deposition for the jUdge, Bernie... I mean there's no way I can promise anything. I can't tell him what we're up to...

BERNIE

You'll tell him I talked you out of jumping, right? Just keep me outta prison.

BUBBER

I... I'll do the best I can, Bernie.

BERNIE

That's good enough for me. You better take that "letter" there and get rid of it.

BERNIE indicates the envelope on the ledge and BUBBER slides the envelope into his pocket surreptitiously.

BERNIE and BUBBER are shaking hands. Then they start to get cautiously to their feet.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

GALE is watching the action on a TV monitor, trying to figure out what's going on.

GALE'S P.O.V./TV MONITOR (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT)

BERNIE and BUBBER are shaking hands. Then they start to get cautiously to their feet.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The CROWD reacts to the action on the ledge while TV REPORTERS including CONKLIN chatter into their mikes...

REPORTERS

They're getting to their feet.
They're standing up!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is on his feet, unsteady, terrified of the drop.

BUBBER, much more graceful, not as wobbly, is speaking to him.

BUBBER
After what I did, how do you know
I'll come through? How do you know
you can trust me?

Shakily, BERNIE indicates the CROWD far below...

BERNIE
Cause, bottom line, John, I ain't
no different than all those dumb
assholes down there. We all trust
you for Chrissake! We...

ANGLE ON THE DROP/BERNIE'S P.O.V.

Straight down, fifteen floors. A CROWD of "ants." Firetrucks,
Police cars, TV vans.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Suddenly BERNIE starts shaking like a leaf, trying to smear his
body against the side of the building as he inches along the
narrow ledge toward the window with BUBBER right behind him.

BERNIE
Th-this was really dumb, coming out
here.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

As the CROWD looks up breathlessly, WE DISCOVER EVELYN pulling
JOEY through the CROWD toward the hotel steps, their eyes on
BERNIE and BUBBER.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

CHUCKY is cautiously moving under the neon sign on the roof,
first on all fours, then on his belly, moving toward the edge.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BUBBER is steering BERNIE toward the window.

BUBBER
Slow and easy, Bernie.

BERNIE takes a cautious step. BUBBER tries to distract BERNIE from the drop by talking to him.

BUBBER

What made you do it, Bernie? Go in the plane?

Another cautious step.

BERNIE

I dunno. It was... an impulse. Me, wearing my good shoes.

BUBBER

Same with me, pretending I was you. An impulse. Why not? I had this shoe.

BERNIE

There was this kid there saying, "Go in there and save my father, mister." And I'm thinking about my boy Joey and this goddamn fireman my wife's seeing. It was like I was supposed to save myself.

BUBBER

Yeah, and with me it was like I was supposed to pretend the shoe was mine.

BERNIE

So now you gotta wear it, you poor bastard. Everyday you gotta be everybody's hero. People watching you all the time. Waiting for you to make... a slip. Slip up.

BERNIE glances down to indicate the CROWD and... takes a misstep.

EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

A single audible gasp from the CROWD below as BERNIE, fifteen stories up, staggers.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE struggles to regain his balance.

BUBBER reaches out to help him.

BUBBER

Easy does it, partner. It's gonna be fine.

BUBBER'S hand remains on BERNIE'S shoulder.

ANGLE ON GALE

Watching from the window, holding her breath. Is it possible he's going to push BERNIE? What an opportunity!

GALE'S P.O.V.:

BUBBER'S hand on BERNIE'S shoulder.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Sweating, pushing his foot cautiously forward.

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)
Don't look down. Keep your eyes...

BERNIE looks down!

BERNIE'S P.O.V. (EXT. P.O.V. OF CROWD - NIGHT)

AHHHHHHHHH! He sees the tiny PEOPLE below and he STARTS TO FALL.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Wobbling unsteadily, arms flailing, falling.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

His eyes! He's looking down.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.:

He sees BERNIE clutching the ledge with one hand, looking up at him with pleading eyes as he dangles fifteen stories above the ground.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

It's slipping! He can't hold!

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S EYES!

staring at BERNIE'S hand. It must occur to him that life would be better without BERNIE.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching from the window, terrified.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

EVELYN and JOEY are looking up, love and fear in their eyes.

EVELYN
Oh my God! Bernie!

JOEY
Dad!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

A FIREMAN is leaning out the window, reaching for BUBBER.

FIREMAN
Get in here, buddy. You can't help
him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

Slipping.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

BUBBER is looking into BERNIE'S eyes as BERNIE'S hand slips.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

Leaning out the window, holding a rescue noose toward BUBBER.

FIREMAN
Don't reach out. He'll pull you
over!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

BUBBER ignores the FIREMAN, his hand reaching out toward
BERNIE.

CLOSE UP: HAND

reaching out to grab BERNIE.

INT. DEAKINS OFFICE - NIGHT

WALLACE screams at the TV set.

WALLACE
NO! NEVER REACH OUT!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

reacting, head out the window...

ANGLE ON FIREMAN

Reaching a NOOSE-DEVICE toward BUBBER.

FIREMAN
Grab this! Now! Save yourself,
you can't help him, he'll pull you
over!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The CROWD reacts.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BUBBER is sitting, bracing himself.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

His hand slipping, his eyes full of fear.

ANGLE ON GALE

reacting.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

losing his grip... when BUBBER'S HAND suddenly grabs his wrist.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Looking up into BUBBER'S eyes. Their eyes lock.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Holding BERNIE with great effort.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

rescue noose in hand, crawling out the window.

FIREMAN
I'm gonna put this line around you.

BUBBER
(straining, indicates
BERNIE)
Put...the...line...on...him.

BUBBER leans back against the building, struggling to keep
BERNIE from plummeting fifteen stories.

FIREMAN

You can't hold him, he's gonna pull
you off.

BUBBER
If he doesn't make it... I...
don't... make it. Got it?

FIREMAN
(impressed)
Yessir! I got it! Loud and clear!

EXT. ROOF/DRAKE - NIGHT

CHUCKY has bellied out on the roof under the big neon sign and
he's pointing his camera straight down at the drama below while
he mutters under his breath...

CHUCKY
(his narrator voice)
Zooming in tighter yet, he captures
the stark drama at great personal
risk.
(humbly responding to
an imaginary
interviewer)
"Was I afraid? Well, you don't
think about yourself at moments like
that. You think about the f-stop,
you think about focus, you think
about the 11 o'clock news, everybody
counting on you."

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. HOTEL/STRAIGHT DOWN FROM ROOF - NIGHT)

"CHUCKY'S SHOT" is a CLOSE UP of BERNIE'S desperate face looking
straight up, the enormous drop in the background.

A MONTAGE of different locations and TV sets featuring Chucky's
CLOSE-UP of BERNIE.

INT. THE SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

CHICK stares at the screen incredulously...

CHICK
Bernie? Bernie?

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The television set shows the drama in garish otherworldly colors
as WINSTON mutters...

WINSTON
LaPlante, you crazy bastard!

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A stunned DONNA is in bed with her BOYFRIEND, stares at the TV.

BOYFRIEND
He's one of your clients?

INT. JUDGE GOINES BEDROOM - NIGHT

JUDGE GOINES frowns at the TV set, tries to place that name...

JUDGE GOINES
LaPlante. Mmmmmmm. LaPlante.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. HOTEL/LOW ANGLE LOOKING UP AT BUBBER)

On the TV screen, a low shot looking up at BUBBER straining to hold on to BERNIE replaces "CHUCKY'S ANGLE."

MONTAGE

A SERIES OF TV SETS AND WATCHING FACES ALL OVER AMERICA, YOUNG, OLD, BLACK, WHITE, EVERYBODY IN AMERICA IS STARING AT THE SCREEN, MESMERIZED...

-HOME
-MOTEL ROOM
-CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY
-BAR
-JAIL CELL

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL - NIGHT

TWO FIREMEN have almost secured a rope around BERNIE while BUBBER continues to hang on to BERNIE, speaking to him through gritted teeth.

BUBBER
Looking... good, partner. Hang in there.

BERNIE
(eye contact)
Y-you're a g-god damn saint, John.

INT. LIVING ROOM/DRAKE SUITE - LATER (NIGHT)

The suite is jammed with MEDIA PERSONNEL, many standing on sofas, tables, and chairs, all of them (and their cameras) focussed on JOHN BUBBER who's standing behind a bank of mikes making a "statement" that sounds sincere (perhaps because it is halting, awkward, painful...)

BUBBER

It was a moment of terrible weakness. I was feeling... I guess you'd call it "overwhelmed" by all the pressures and... the expectations of... fame... celebrity. I just didn't feel... adequate... to everybody's image of me... so... I took my despair out on that ledge with the intention of... jumping...

ANGLES ON REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN

a collective reaction, breathless silence.

ANGLE ON GALE

jammed among REPORTERS near the bedroom door, her eyes on BUBBER, frowning...

BUBBER

(continuing)

In doing that I endangered the lives of hardworking policemen and firemen who attempted to rescue me, not to mention the life of my dear friend, Bernard LaPlante...

BUBBER pauses and the room erupts in a chorus of REPORTERS' VOICES...

REPORTERS

Who is Bernard LaPlante? Did you know that LaPlante is a convicted criminal? What is your relationship with Bernard LaPlante...?

ANGLE ON GALE

glancing at the bedroom door guarded by a UNIFORMED COP.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

taking a deep breath, answering...

BUBBER

Bernard LaPlante is a close friend who came to me in a time of need... at considerable risk to himself.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

BUBBER is continuing on the TV set in the bedroom while BERNIE, all alone in the huge bedroom, stares at the TV.

ON THE TV (INT. SUITE/HOTEL - NIGHT)

BUBBER/TV

(continuing)

I guess Bernie's made some mistakes. I know I've made plenty myself. In fact I don't know anyone who hasn't. I think Bernie wants to be a private person and I I'm going to respect that.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

glances idly at the TV remote control... and pockets it almost automatically, still watching TV.

ON THE TV (INT. SUITE/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTERS erupt again in a CACOPHONY of QUESTIONS.

REPORTERS/TV

What'd he say to you? What'd you talk about?

BUBBER/TV

Well, what he said to me was private. But he gave me confidence in myself. He told me I had a special opportunity, the chance to do some good in the world.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

He raises his eyebrows. I said that? On impulse, he pulls the remote from his pocket to return it. He's setting it down when he turns suddenly to find he's not alone.

BERNIE

Hey! How'd you get in? Nobody's supposed to come in here!

GALE has just entered the room. Did she see his action?

GALE

I snuck in.

BERNIE

You media people, you think you can just go anywhere you want, spy on people.

GALE
Listen, Mister LaPlante... uh,
Bernie... Who... are... you?

BERNIE
Who am I? You're asking me? You're
the big expert for Chrissake! I'm
what? The "Scumbag," right? The
sleazebag something or other, the
blackmailer, the...

GALE
(very intense)
Was it you? In the plane? Who
saved my life?

BERNIE
(rattled)
Me? Listen, I don't give no
interviews. That was John Bubber.
You wanna ask me questions, you
could talk to my attorney, Miss
O'Day.

GALE
(imploring)
Mister LaPlante... Bernie... I...
just for a few moments... I want
to be a human being, not a reporter.
I'm somebody who was going to die
in a burning plane and I looked up,
and some man came out of the smoke,
his face smeared with mud, and soot
and... and he... saved my... life.
Off the record. Was it you? Why
would you deny it if it was?
Because you took my purse? Why?

BERNIE looks at GALE. She looks very human, very real, the
reporter's veneer completely gone! He hesitates. How can he
not tell the truth at a moment like this? He takes a deep
breath...

BERNIE
Lady, do I look dumb enough to run
into a burning plane and save a
bunch of strangers? I ain't the
type.

GALE stares at him. BERNIE tries to hold her look, daring her
to doubt him. But he can't. His eyes "run." He's not a good
liar this time. But just then CONKLIN'S VOICE on the TV saying
Evelyn's name distracts BERNIE.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN is hovering over EVELYN and JOEY who are standing in a pool of TV lights while a CROWD presses close around them...

CONKLIN/TV

-- standing here in the lobby of the hotel with Evelyn LaPlante who says she is the wife of the mysterious Bernie LaPlante who was rescued from a fifteenth story ledge twenty minutes ago by John Bubber.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND GALE

BERNIE

Oh shit! Ev! Joey! For Chrissake!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

(continuing)

Mrs. LaPlante just told me that Bernard LaPlante spoke to her earlier today about "going away on a long trip" and wanting to say "goodbye" to his ten-year-old son, Joey.

EVELYN/TV

I didn't know Bernie'd try and jump off a building. I didn't understand. I just thought he was up to his old... I mean, I didn't even know...

BACK TO SCENE (INT. BEDROOM/HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

TV! Christ Almighty! You cannot believe one word on TV! Not one goddamn word!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

What kind of man is your ex-husband Mrs. LaPlante?

EVELYN/TV

(bursting into sobs)

Bernie LaPlante is a wonderful decent human being. Deep down. You just have to know him...

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE
It's all bullshit! I swear to God!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV
I guess you love your father too,
Joey?

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE
LEAVE MY BOY ALONE, YOU ASSHOLE!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

JOEY
Yeah, my dad's great. He took me
to the zoo.

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE
(big love)
JOEY!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV
How did you feel, Joey, seeing your
father up there on that ledge?

JOEY/TV
I was scared but... but... but...

CONKLIN/TV
But what, son?

JOEY/TV
But I knew John Bubber would save
him!

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Chaos. BUBBER is trying to get to the bedroom door, the news conference over, but he's being mobbed by MEDIA PERSONNEL who are SCREAMING questions, scrambling over furniture, blocking his path, jamming CAMERAS and MIKES in his face...

VOICES
Were you afraid? Look this way,
John. John, over here. Mister
Bubber, do you believe in God?

BUBBER is struggling toward the bedroom door when he HEARS a VOICE cutting through the other VOICES.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Mister Bubber! Mister Bubber!
JOHN!

BUBBER turns, sees GALE through a "forest" of heads. Their eyes meet, she shouts a question.

GALE
John Bubber... how does a person
know when he's a hero... and when
he's not.

Their eyes are locked, as if they're the only two in this very crowded room. A private question in a public place. The room becomes quiet as everyone realizes BUBBER is going to respond. BUBBER speaks soberly, directly to GALE.

BUBBER
Well, like. I said, Miss... uh,
Gale, I think we're all heroes.
If you catch us at the right
moment. We all have something
noble and decent in us trying to
get out... and we all have moments
of weakness.

GALE'S eyes are locked with his as he continues...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

DEAKINS and WALLACE are watching BUBBER continue on their monitor.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT)

BUBBER continues to CAMERA, GALE off screen.

BUBBER
It's the media that notices one
moment and one person and not
another. I'm just another human
being like the next person, full
of frailty with some courage and
decency mixed in.

ANGLE ON DEAKINS (INT. DEAKINS OFFICE - NIGHT)

DEAKINS
What a crock of shit! Have you
ever heard more bullshit and
drivel from somebody who wasn't
President?

WALLACE
It's not unthinkable.

DEAKINS
What?

WALLACE
The Presidency. The public loves him.

DEAKINS
For ten more minutes they love him, Wally. I'm sick of him and I'm always about ten minutes ahead of the public.

INT. MONKEY CAGE/ZOO - DAY

A "public" of MONKEYS clap hands, applauding a MONKEY who's making a "speech."

EXT. MONKEY CAGE/ZOO - DAY

BERNIE and JOEY appear, passing in front of the monkey cage, deep in conversation...

BERNIE
You remember where I said how I was gonna explain about life, buddy? Well, the thing about life is... it gets weird. See people are always gonna be talking to you about "truth." Everybody always knows what the truth is, like it was toilet paper or something and they got a supply in the closet. But what you learn as you get older is, there ain't no truth. All there is is bullshit (pardon my vulgarity here). Layers of it. One layer of bullshit on top of another. So what you do in life, like when you get older, is you pick the layer of bullshit you prefer and that's your bullshit, so to speak. You got that?

JOEY
(totally confounded)
Uh, no.

BERNIE
Mmmmm. Well, it's complicated. Maybe when you're older. Anyhow, what I'm gonna tell you here is in

strict confidence, okay? It don't
go no further. What happened is,
you remember that night I was gonna
take you to the movies an' it was
raining like a sonofabitch,
(there's gonna be some
vulgarities)..?

BERNIE puts an affectionate arm around JOEY'S shoulder as we
NOTICE that BERNIE is wearing brand new shiny shoes very much
like his former good shoes, but different colors. As he and
JOEY walk off, BERNIE still talking, JOEY puts an arm around
his father and an audience of MONKEYS fills the foreground.
MONKEYS.

THE END