

BENEATH PERFECTION

Written by

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WD6

6/21/88

1 EXT. DESERT VALLEY - DAY 1

The high desert -- absolutely silent -- a vast, hard landscape stretching away to distant mountains. The silence is broken by hoof-beats.

2 EXT. EDGAR'S PLACE - DAY 2

It's a simple cabin dwarfed by a big, ramshackle barn. EDGAR DEEMS (60s), a weathered desert rat of a hermit, is walking his donkey around in circles.

Now, rattling toward them down an endless dirt road, comes an old, sun-bleached Buick. It stops and out leans OLD FRED (70s) wearing a sweat-stained fedora. The two friends nod.

OLD FRED

How's she doing?

EDGAR

She wants to lay down. I'm a little worried.

Old Fred climbs out with a bushel basket of carrots.

OLD FRED

Well, I brung her something I know she likes.

EDGAR

Damn, Fred, you can't give away all those.

OLD FRED

Forget it. I got vegetables coming out my ears. Usually the varmints eat up half my crop, but lately I ain't so much as seen a gopher or a jack-rabbit nowheres.

EDGAR

If that ain't the truth. And I count on them for a little bit of stew meat...Thank you, Fred.

Edgar takes the carrots and feeds one to the donkey.

EDGAR (cont'd)

Here you go, Justine. Look what Fred brought you.

OLD FRED

We playing cards tonight?

EDGAR

I think I'm gonna be sitting up with her.

OLD FRED

I'd do the same. Well, catch you Thursday.

EDGAR

You bet.

The men nod, and Old Fred drives off.

CLOSE-UP of the donkey's hooves thumping along as Edgar leads her to the barn.

EDGAR (cont'd)

Let's get you out of the sun for a spell.

EDGAR (cont'd)

I'll get you some fresh water.

But, suddenly, we hear the donkey restlessly stomping its hooves and braying. Edgar turns, concerned. Now we hear an odd sound. Distant thunder? The wind? The donkey gets more and more frantic.

The barn shudders violently. Frightened birds explode from the eaves. Dust puffs from every old seam. Roof shingles rain down. Edgar stares in amazement.

EDGAR (cont'd)
...some kind of earthquake!?

Then another sound -- the donkey starts screeching in wild panic.

EDGAR (cont'd)
Justine, hang on! I'm coming!

Edgar races back to the barn and flings open the doors.

3 INT. EDGAR'S BARN - DAY 3

Dust swirls through the air. But -- the barn is empty. No donkey. Now Edgar is hit by a ghastly stench. He staggers back, and covers his nose with a handkerchief. Then he sees, splattered across the walls -- blood!

EDGAR
What in the name of Jehovah...?

He raises his arms above the door frame. When he lowers them he's holding a 12 gauge shotgun. He races outside, ready to shoot, but there's nothing -- as far as the eye can see.

4 EXT. CLIFFS - DAWN 4

The sun lights up spectacular sheer cliffs which plunge 1000 feet from a ruggedly beautiful high-desert plateau. At the top of the cliffs, silhouetted against the dawn, a lone cowboy seems to gaze in deep contemplation at the sunrise. As we MOVE IN, we realize he's actually peeing over the cliff.

This is VALENTINE MCKEE (25). Smart and good looking, Val has nevertheless managed to underachieve brilliantly. He coasts through life, following the path of least resistance -- which has brought him to this dubious rustic existence on the edge of civilization. But lately he's beginning to wonder why he hasn't accomplished more in his 25 years.

As a few sleepy cows gaze at him, sleepy Val shuffles over to his battered old pickup truck. A hand-painted sign on the door reads: "V & E -- All Type's of Job's." Indeed, the pick-up bed is jumbled with tools and supplies for every

conceivable odd job -- and the noisily snoring form of his partner huddled in a dirty sleeping bag. Val raps on the side of the truck.

VAL

(softly)

Good morning, Mr. Bassett, this is your wake-up call. Please move your fat ass.

No response from the sleeping bag. Val stares at the cows chewing their cud -- and perks up as he gets an idea. He gently steps onto the truck's running board, then suddenly starts jumping up and down as hard as he can, rocking the truck violently.

VAL (cont'd)

STAMPEDE! EARL, GET OUT OF THE WAY!

The sleeping bag tries to get up and run for it. It tumbles out of the back of the pickup. While Val laughs uproariously, EARL BASSETT (43) claws his way out of the bag, looks around wildly, and finds himself staring at three motionless cows.

EARL

You dumb shit.

Earl is a good-ol' boy who has lived his life just like Val, drifting from job to job. He knows why he hasn't accomplished anything, and often tries to impart his hard-won wisdom to Val, but the last thing the younger man wants is advice.

Earl stretches. The men begin a silent ritual: Earl gropes through his pockets for a cigarette, but only finds a lighter. Meanwhile, Val digs in his pockets, coming up with cigarettes, but no lighter. Typical of these two, each guy always has half of what he needs. Eventually they sort it out, trading the necessary implements.

Earl reaches for a coffee-pot on a battered Coleman stove on the tailgate. But it's cold.

EARL

You didn't cook breakfast?

VAL

Did it yesterday. Franks and beans.

EARL

(tries to recall)

No...it was eggs. I did eggs.

VAL

Hell you did. Your turn.

Earl raises his fist. This is The Challenge, and it instantly triggers the partners' conflict-resolution technique. They solve all disputes using the children's game of "scissors, rock, paper." Earl raises his fist in response. The game is played swiftly and silently -- one, two, three. On three, Val mimes "paper" (open hand. Earl mimes "scissors" (two extended fingers). Scissors cuts paper. Val has lost. He shrugs and starts pumping up the stove fuel tank.

VAL (cont'd)

Well, when I'm your age I'll probably forget what I eat, too.

4A EXT. DESERT VALLEY - FENCE - DAY

4A

Val and Earl are restringing a dilapidated, and seemingly endless, barbed wire fence. A few bored cows watch them.

VAL

How many cows does it take to make a stampede? Is it like three or more? Is there a minimum speed?

EARL

(shakes his head)

I was in one. A bolt of lightning blew up cottonwood tree. Three hundred head going hell-bent for the horizon. Wasn't so damn funny, I can tell you.

Earl's hand slips and the fence snags him right through his thick glove.

EARL (cont'd)

Ow! God damn! Is this a job for intelligent men?!

VAL

If there was one nearby I'd probably ask him.

EARL

I keep thinking, if we were but half serious about money, we should quit being hired hands and...

VAL

(mock serious)

Handymen, Earl. We're handymen.

EARL

Whatever the hell we are, we should quit and go get ourselves some real

employment.

Val gestures to the vastness around them.

VAL

What, and give up all this personal
freedom?

5 EXT. JEEP TRAIL - DAY

5

Val guides the truck down a tortuous, rocky, almost impassable trail. It takes full concentration as he fights the steering wheel, shifts, rides the brake and leans out trying to pick a decent route. Earl braces his feet on the dash and munches breakfast, a raw hot dog right out of the package.

VAL

Goddamn jeep trail gets worse every
year.

EARL

(shrugs)

Has a lot of rain.

Earl pulls a box of Hershey bars from under the seat. There's only one bar left. He sets the box down between them. Val glances at it -- and raises his fist: The Challenge. One, two, three. Val mimes "paper;" Earl mimes "rock." Earl loses. Val takes the bar.

EARL

(pointing ahead)

You're gonna get us hung up.

VAL

Do not talk to the driver.

THWONK! The truck lurches to a stop, its frame caught on a big rock. Val glares at Earl.

6 EXT. DESERT INTERSECTION - PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

6

The pick-up turns from a dirt road onto an old paved road.

VAL (V.O.)

What do we have next?

7 INT. PICK-UP - MOVING - DAY

7

Earl consults a crumpled list pulled from inside his hat.

EARL

Uh...Digging that waterhole for
Nestor.

VAL

Burt and Heather's place is closer.
Let's do their kitchen today. Do
Nestor tomorrow.

EARL

Nestor's out of town tomorrow. We
don't dig today. We don't get paid
today. Damn it, Valentine, you
never plan ahead. You never take
the long view. Hell, here it is
Monday and I'm already working on
Wednesday.

(squints dubiously at
his schedule)

It is Monday, right?

But Val is peering at the desert up ahead. Off the road a
ways is a small Toyota pick-up truck and, beside it, a lone
figure trying to flag them down.

VAL

Who the hell's that? That's not
what's his name...the grad student?

EARL

Nah, it's September. Must be the
new one.

VAL

The new one! That's supposed to be
a girl!

Earl braces himself, knowing what Val will do. Val swerves
the truck wildly off the road, barreling across the desert.

VAL (cont'd)

(almost praying)

You will have long blonde hair, big
green eyes, nice full breasts that
stand up and say hello, ass that
won't quit. And legs, legs that go
all the way up!

Earl shakes his head, mildly bemused as they slide to a stop
in a cloud of dust.

8

EXT. DESERT - RHONDA'S TRUCK - DAY

8

Val looks out hopefully. The dust clears. He sees her --
RHONDA LeBECK, (25). Val's eyes do an expert vertical scan:
short brown hair, small brown eyes, so-so chest, legs hidden
in baggy dungarees.

Laden with a portable computer, notebooks, and some

seismograph printouts, she stares at him through tilted glasses. Her little pick-up truck is loaded with geology field equipment. She shakes Val's hand firmly.

RHONDA

(brightly)

Hi, I'm Rhonda. Rhonda LeBeck.
I'm up here for the semester...

VAL

Yeah, geography.

RHONDA

Right, geology. And you have to be Val and Earl. I've heard all about you.

EARL

We deny everything.

Rhonda smiles.

RHONDA

Listen, got a question for you. Do you know if anybody is doing any blasting or drilling or anything like that?

VAL

Around here? Why would they?

RHONDA

Well, I'm supposed monitor these seismographs. You know, they measure vibrations...

VAL

Yeah, vibrations in the ground.

RHONDA

Yeah, well, I'm getting what I refer to scientifically as "weird vibes." every sensor I've got is giving me strange readings. I mean, the school has had these machines up here three years and they've never recorded anything like this.

EARL

Well, we'll ask around. Let you know if we hear of anything.

RHONDA

Thanks. God, I hope they're not screwed up. I might have to bag the whole semester. Anyway, sorry

to bother you.

EARL

No problem. Nice meeting you.
Hope you get it sorted out.

Rhonda unhappily turns back to her equipment as Val and Earl drive off.

9

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

9

Earl glances over at Val with a gleam in his eye.

EARL

You know, if you wanted, we could take a look at those seismographs for her.

VAL

What the hell do we know about seismographs?

EARL

Nothing. But it sure might be a nice way of getting to know her.

VAL

Why?

EARL

Goddamnit, Valentine, you won't go for any gal unless she fits that damn list of yours A to Z...

VAL

Well, sure.

EARL

...And is dumber than my hind end.
Like that Bobby Lynn Dexter...

Val flips down the truck's sunvisor. Tapes to it are snapshots of nearly identical blonde bimbos. Val points to one.

VAL

(defensively)

Tammy Lynn Baxter.

EARL

Don't matter. They're all the same: dead weight. Can't make a decision, can't walk because of their shoes, can't work because of their fingernails. Make my skin

crawl!

VAL

Well, I'm a victim of circumstance.

EARL

I thought you called it your pecker. Look, don't make the mistake I made. Twenty years of looking for a woman exactly like Miss October 1968, and where'd it get me? Here with you.

Val rolls his eyes -- "Give me a break."

10 10 EXT. PERFECTION - ESTABLISH - DAY

The pick-up rattles toward a tiny, utterly isolated high desert hamlet -- a few dozen houses and mobile homes fighting for shade in the vast landscape. Its most prominent feature is an aging wood-frame water tower, perhaps 25 feet high, near the center of town. A sign PANS into view -- "PERFECTION -- Pop. 14."

11 11 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Val and Earl head past the water tower for Pham Van's General Store, Perfection's main gossip stop and only business. The store's sign, in English and Vietnamese, reads: "Groceries, Haircuts, Post Office, Town Hall, VIDEOS!" Val and Earl park next to a camouflage-painted, large-tired Blazer.

Just then they spot MELVIN, the town's surly teen-aged pain-in-the-ass, coming toward them, mindlessly bouncing a basketball off the hoods of parked cars. As he nears their truck:

EARL

Melvin, touch that truck and die.

MELVIN

Oh, man, I'm really shaking.

But he steers clear of their truck.

12 12 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Inside, the energetic Vietnamese owner, PHAM VAN, presides over his all-purpose establishment: part general store, part barber shop, part saloon.

At the bar are BURT GUMMER and his wife HEATHER, two no-

nonsense survivalists who have settled in Perfection to await the coming apocalypse -- a nice enough couple, but there's a hint of paranoia around the edges. Burt is shoving a box of cartridges across to Pham.

BURT

No, Pham, they're not hollow points. I ordered hollow points and that's what I want.

When Val and Earl enter, Pham automatically pops the tops on two cold beers and has them in place before the cowboys reach the bar. Everyone exchanged nods.

HEATHER

Hi, guys, what you been up to?

VAL

Ran into the new college student, Rona.

EARL

Rhonda. Rhonda LeBeck. She's getting some kind of strange readings on her things.

BURT

Damn, you know, those kids turn up oil or uranium or something out there...next thing the Feds will be at our door. "Sorry, time to move. Eminent domain."

HEATHER

Down, honey, down.

VAL

Yeah, Burt. The way you worry, you're gonna have a heart attack before you get to survive World War III.

Heather and Pham laugh. Burt smiles patiently. Just then the compressor in Pham's ice cream freezer comes on. It's a loud chug-chug-chug sound mixed with a high-pitched squeal.

PHAM VAN

Hey Val, listen. Bearing going out, you think?

VAL

Could be.

He starts toward the compressor, but Earl heads him off.

EARL

Catch it later, Pham. Gotta get

over to Nestor's.

VAL

Right. We plan ahead. That way we don't do anything right now. Earl explained it to me.

As they turn to go, Val does a take, amazed, as he spots a decorative bleached-out cattle skull displayed on the counter -- with a \$29.95 price tag.

VAL (cont'd)

Hey, Pham Van, what the hell is this?

BURT

A beauty, isn't it? We bought three of them for the rec room.

VAL

(whispers to Pham Van)

We sell 'em to you for three bucks a piece!

PHAM VAN

(deadpan)

And I appreciate it.

VAL

(playfully)

You don't get it, Pham. The idea was: we were ripping you off.

Suddenly a car alarm blares from outside. Burt's out the door in a flash. The others follow.

13 13 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Burt races out and shouts at Melvin who back guiltily away from Burt's camouflage Blazer.

BURT

Melvin, you little pain-in-the-ass!

MELVIN

It wasn't me, man! Your truck's just screwed up, that's all.

Burt angrily switches off the alarm. Val and Earl laugh as they climb into their truck.

VAL

Why don't his parents ever take him to Vegas with them?

EARL
You gotta ask that?

14
14 EXT. PIT - DAY

At one end of town, Earl maneuvers a huge bulldozer with a scoop-loader blade through a choking cloud of dust, scouring out a shallow pit to serve as a watering hole. Val sights down a row of stakes which mark one end of the pit. The job is done. He signals Earl to cut the engine. Both men have kerchiefs covering their faces and are totally encrusted with dust.

15
15 ANGLE - TRUCK TRAILER - DAY

Nearby is an old battered truck trailer -- the massive, solid steel kind used for heavy rock hauling. Tires flat, mired in dried mud and weeds, it hasn't been used in years. Now it provides welcome shade as the men sit sipping some coffee.

NESTOR CUNNINGHAM drives up, surveying the pit with approval.

NESTOR
It came out great, boys. Should
fill up just fine come the next
rain. Lemme have your bill.

Earl and Val start fishing in their pockets for pen and paper. Earl comes up with various pieces of paper, Val with three or four pens. It's a moment before they realize each has the other needed implement. Earl writes out the bill during:

NESTOR (cont'd)
I'll have to send it to you the
first of the month, boys.

Val and Earl exchange pained looks.

NESTOR (cont'd)
Now, you know I'm good for it.

VAL
Yeah, Nestor, we know. Don't worry
about it. Catch us when you can.

They amble over to their truck. Earl takes the driver's side -- and starts fishing in his pockets for the key.

VAL (cont'd)
Are we too easy-going?

EARL

No, we're not too easy-going. This area is economically depressed.

Val realizes he has the key and hands it over.

VAL

So what if we just did it...today. Pack up. Drive straight down to Bixby. Get serious.

EARL

We could. We could. But we'd have to get really serious. It's gonna cost twice as much to rent a place.

VAL

So? That car wash pays good, and they're always looking.

EARL

Car wash?! That's got no future. If we're gonna take the plunge we oughta have a better plan than that.

VAL

Yeah, sure. Go ahead and plan it...for a year or two.

16 EXT. VIOLA'S PLACE - DAY

CLOSE ON a stencilled sign: PHAM VAN'S U-RENT -- CESSPOOL, SEPTIC TANKS. PULL OUT to see Val and Earl have rented a portable septic pump (perhaps trailer mounted). The aged machine reeks of and drips with its ignoble cargo. The intake hose has been repaired so often it looks to be more tape than hose. Grimacing Val threads the slimy hose down through the open top of Viola's cesspool.

Beside them is Viola's well-kept mobile home on a low hill not far from Pham Van's store. Well-kept flower gardens surround the place. VIOLA, a sweet little old lady, watches the men work while straining to hold the leash of her tiny but ferocious dog. The dog yaps continuously, lunging at Val and Earl.

VIOLA

Stop it! Stop it, you horrid animal!

(to Val and Earl)

I'm going to give her back to my son. I swear it.

VAL

Hey, Viola, you've got my

permission.

EARL

God almighty, my mama sure didn't raise me for this.

Val gets up and starts the pump's gas engine.

VAL

Well, you're the one won't work in the car wash. You're the one's gotta have a plan.

EARL

Damn it, Val! Not having a plan is what keeps us doing jobs like this!

Earl angrily throws the pump valve and starts the pump mechanism. He and Val on stand either side of the intake hose as it gurgles happily.

VAL

What keeps us doing jobs like this is you dragging your feet. I was up for going to Bixby. I was getting excited.

EARL

In the past year I must've said a hundred times "We gotta get out of Perfection. We gotta better ourselves." You gonna stand there in broad daylight and tell me you think I'm the reason we're still here? You want to know how close I am to going to Bixby right now?

VAL

I'll call that little bluff. How close?

POW! GOOOOSH! The gurgling intake hose ruptures, showering them with -- well you know. They react as if they'd been shot; gagging, staggering, screaming obscenities.

17 EXT. VAL AND EARL'S TRAILER - DAY

17

Val and Earl's beat-up mobile home is just down the street from Pham Van's store. Val and Earl, now in cleaner clothes, march out resolutely. Val has a portable TV in one hand and a framed COORS beer sign in the other. Earl unhooks the clothes line and dumps it, clothes and all, into the back of their truck, on top of the rest of their belongings.

They stare at each other for a moment. This is it. No going

back. They leap into the truck. As they drive off, Val leans out and yanks their wooden nameplate ("E. Basset -- V. McKee") off the mailbox.

18 18 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

They haven't gone fifty yards when they spot NANCY STERNGOOD (40s) working in front of her house. The guys pull their hats low over their faces. Earl swerves to the far side of the street.

EARL

Uh oh, it's Nancy. She wants another load of firewood.

VAL

Forget it, man. It's not worth it.

Nancy spots them and beckons excitedly.

EARL

She's got us. Now, listen, the plan is: we have done our last job in Perfection.

VAL

That's the plan.

They stop beside Nancy. While they talk, Nancy's daughter, MINDY (9), comes bouncing along on her pogo-stick, listening to her Walkman and slowly circling the truck.

NANCY

Mindy, honey, don't pogo in the street. Hey, guys, I've got a job for you...

EARL

Sorry, Nancy. We ain't doing odd jobs anymore. We're headed for Bixby permanent.

NANCY

(skeptical)

Oh, sure...

(sees stuff in back of truck)

...My God, you really are!

VAL

Yep, we're relocating to an area with a greater economic base.

(to Mindy, over her music)

Hey, Mindy, what's the count?

MINDY
Six hundred three, six hundred
four, six hundred five...

VAL
Go for it!

NANCY
Gee, guys. I made the big
decision. I'm putting in that
satellite dish. I was going to
offer you five hundred dollars.

Val and Earl glance at each other -- five hundred dollars!

19 EXT. DESERT ROAD - PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

The truck roars toward the "Leaving Perfection" sign. Val
and Earl are elated, downright giddy.

EARL
We did it! We faced temptation and
we did not bend!

VAL
Damn straight! Now there's nothing
between us and Bixby but nothing!

They zoom past the sign.

VAL (cont'd)
Last time we'll see that sign!

They laugh, then are thrown half out of their seats as Earl
accidentally hits a big pothole.

EARL
Last time we hit that goddamn
pothole!

20 EXT. DESERT - WIDE - DAY

As the truck streaks across the landscape. Val and Earl
merrily continue their good-byes to whatever is visible.

VAL (V.O.)
So long, cactus!

EARL (V.O.)
Adios, bridge!

21

21 EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

On its way down from the high desert, the lonely road now winds through a twisting, narrow canyon. A county highway maintenance truck is parked to one side and two road workers, CARMINE and HOWARD, repair a slide-damaged section of the road, Carmine breaking up asphalt with a jackhammer. Val and Earl pull up, hand them each a beer, and speed away, shouting:

VAL

Last time down this damn twisty road!

22

22 EXT. SHACK - DAY

The pick-up speeds past a small shack. Val and Earl automatically roll up their windows. In a moment we see why: a monster, ferocious dog comes galloping out to chase their truck. Earl gives the dog the finger.

EARL

Last chance, asshole. Run, run...!

23

23 EXT. OLD FRED'S PLACE - DAY

Old Fred latches the gate on his corral filled with sheep. He looks up as Val and Earl's truck speeds past. Val and Earl honk their horn and wave happily. Old Fred waves back.

24

24 EXT. ROAD - ELECTRICAL TOWERS - DAY

The pick-up zooms along, the road now paralleling a line of tall high-tension electrical towers.

25

25 INT./EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

The guys have calmed down, but each is still dreaming of a new life.

EARL

Okay, here's the plan. We bust our tails in the car wash six months... well, maybe nine...and we don't spend a dime, you know? And then we go for it...down payment on a tow-truck or a back-hoe or something, right? Start a real business. We can start looking for

something today, tonight!

Val points up ahead -- a man is sitting near the top of a distant electrical tower.

VAL
Jeez, look at that guy.

EARL
(shakes his head)
One job I'd never take is working around electricity.

VAL
Especially when it's two hundred feet off the ground.

But as they pass the tower:

VAL (cont'd)
Hey, hold up...That's Edgar Deems!

EARL
You're full of shit.

VAL
He's only got one damn jacket. That's him, I'm telling you.

26 EXT. ELECTRICAL TOWER - DAY

Earl pulls over. They climb out and peer up at the tower. Edgar is hard to see through the criss-crossing girders.

EARL
(impressed)
Man, oh, man. He must've really been drunk this time.
(shouts)
Edgar! What the hell you doing? Get on down from there!

Edgar doesn't move. Val and Earl shift about uncomfortably.

VAL
Well, shit, we can't leave him up there.

They stare at each other. Someone's got to climb up. Val raises his fist in The Challenge. Their fingers fly. Rock breaks scissors. Val loses.

Valentine unhappily climbs the tall tower while Earl watches from below.

VAL (cont'd)
Hey, Edgar, don't you move. I'm
coming to get you...You damn fool,
you owe me on this one...

Higher and higher Val climbs. He tries not to look down.

He's approaching Edgar from below and behind. As he gets nearer he begins to notice forboding details: one of Edgar's shoes is missing, half the trouser led is torn off.. Edgar is strapped to a girder by his belt, his shotgun gripped in his hands. A swarm of flies buzzes away.

VAL (cont'd)
What the hell...

He edges around to where he can see Edgar's face -- the eyes are wide open, staring. He's dead.

27 EXT. OLD FRED'S PLACE - DAY

Old Fred is now hoeing his garden. He glances up as Val and Earl's pick-up roars back toward Perfection.

28 EXT. JIM AND MEGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

A big station wagon is parked between a small mobile home and a half-finished house being built by JIM and MEGAN WALLACE, an out-going, energetic older couple. Lumber, cinder blocks, and tools are scattered around the yard.

Jim examines Edgar's body in the bed of Val and Earl's pick-up truck. Val, Earl and Megan talk in subdued tones.

VAL
Real sorry to bother you, Megan,
but we figured since Jim's a doctor...

MEGAN
No, it's fine. You did the right
thing. When Jim is done we'll call
the Coroner's office in Bixby.
We'll take care of it.
(shakes her head)
Poor Edgar.

EARL
(tries to break the mood)
Well, I see you got all the
wallboard up.

MEGAN
That was easy. You two did the

hard part. Sure sorry you're leaving.

Jim climbs out of the pick-up.

EARL
Was is a heart attack?

JIM
(shaking his head)
He died of dehydration. Thirst.

VAL
But that doesn't make sense. That takes a couple of days, doesn't it?

JIM
Three or four even.

EARL
You mean he sat up there three or four days? Just sat there till he died of thirst?

Jim shrugs. Everyone is mystified.

29 29 EXT. OLD FRED'S PLACE - DAY

Fred is still hoeing. In the nearby pen his sheep start acting restless. He eyes them. What's up? We hear a strange muffled sound. Unseen, behind him, at the far end of the garden, his scarecrow mysteriously tilts.

Old Fred keeps hoeing. He stops, his foot is caught in the dirt. Suddenly he is yanked knee-deep into the ground!

30 30 EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

Val and Earl's truck, again headed for Bixby, and going way too fast, zooms past the two workers still repairing the road. The workers glance up, annoyed.

31 31 EXT. SHACK - DAY

Val and Earl, sobered and deep in thought, drive past the shack where the ferocious dog lives. They automatically roll up their windows during:

EARL
Reckon he hated Perfection more than us? You suppose he wanted to

kill himself?

VAL

If he did, why didn't he use his damn shotgun?

EARL

Maybe he just couldn't pull the trigger...

VAL

Oh sure, he figured it was easier to die of thirst? Come on, somebody must've chased him up there.

EARL

Oh, you mean somebody who ain't scared of a twelve gauge shotgun. And then what did they do? Camp out down below and just wait for him to die?

Val has no answer. It's too weird.

VAL

Well, whatever the hell happened it's just one more goddamn good reason to haul ass out of this place.

EARL

You got that right.

They are passing the shack. Earl suddenly realizes:

EARL (cont'd)

Hey, where the hell's that asshole dog?

VAL

(looking around)

Probably up a pole starving itself to death.

EARL

Okay, the plan is: pedal to the metal the whole way. We don't stop till we hit the carwash, not even to pee.

VAL

I'll go with that plan.

CLOSE ON the pick-up's tires skidding to a stop. PULL OUT to see we're back at Old Fred's.

VAL
What are you doing?

Earl is staring wide-eyed. Val follows Earl's gaze and is aghast when he sees --

The sheep pen -- it's a ghastly, bloody mess. Scattered on the churned up ground a few dismembered sheep legs and heads are all that remain of the flock.

VAL
(whispers)
What the hell...?

Val and Earl leap out of the truck to investigate.

VAL
Hey, Old Fred! Fred! Where are you?!

Earl dashes into Fred's house. Val checks around outside. Earl comes back out.

EARL
Not here.

Then they spot something lying in the middle of the garden -- Old Fred's hat.

Still looking all around, Val squats distractedly to pick up the hat. He and Earl stumble backward in shock.

OLD FRED IS STILL WEARING HIS HAT!! His mangled face stares up at them, eyes and mouth frozen open in a death grimace.

EARL
Oh, Jesus!!

VAL
What the hell is going on? I mean
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!!

33 EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

Carmine and Howard continue repairing the road, Carmine still using the noisy jackhammer. Val and Earl drive up.

EARL
You guys better get the hell outta here! We got a killer on the loose!

HOWARD

What?

Carmine stops jackhammering to listen.

EARL

A murderer, man! A real psycho.
He's cutting people's heads off!
I'm serious! I'd high-tail for
town if I was you!

Val and Earl speed away.

CARMINE

They're drunk.

HOWARD

Yeah...

But he edges over to the truck and takes out a heavy steel pry-bar to keep within easy reach.

Carmine goes back to work, pounding the asphalt with the jackhammer. Suddenly the blade strikes something beneath the road, something soft. We hear a strange, unearthly shriek from underground. A weird orange goo gushes up around the blade. Then the jackhammer takes off by itself like a harpoon stuck in a whale! Carmine gets tangled in the jackhammer's air-hose and is dragged along, shouting for help.

Howard chases him down the embankment and into the scrub-brush. He hears Carmine screaming.

HOWARD

Carmine! What the hell is it?!
Where are you?

But now there is only silence. Howard crashes through the brush. All he finds is the torn end of the air-hose -- which suddenly sucks down into the ground. He's momentarily staggered by an awful smell, but forces himself to keep looking. He lets the pry-bar drag on the ground. Then something -- it looks like a mouth or a horrid beak -- shoots out of the ground and grips the pry-bar with uncanny strength! Howard drops his weapon and scrambles madly away.

He clammers back onto the road. But almost immediately cracks form in the pavement around him. More beak-things break through the asphalt between him and his truck.

He dashes across the road, scrambling up the embankment. He clings precariously to a tree root, looking down -- where'd they go? Suddenly the dirt around him begins to "bubble." Several hungry beaks break through and grab him, yanking him head first into the embankment. Then the embankment gives way, crashing down onto the road, taking with it a nearby telephone pole and snapping the lines.

34 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Pham Van is talking to MIGUEL, a local rancher. They both jump as the doors burst open. Val and Earl race in, trailed by Nestor and Melvin. Val heads for the payphone during:

NESTOR

His head? You mean just his head?

Val grabs the phone and digs in his pocket for change.

VAL

Yeah, really sick, man. Sweet Old Fred.

Earl comes up with change and hands it to Val, who dials.

PHAM VAN

Something happen to Fred?

MELVIN

(ignoring Pham)

Are you serious, man? They killed him just to take his sheep?

EARL

He didn't have nothing else to steal. Neither did Edgar.

MIGUEL

What happened to Edgar?

Val stares at the phone.

VAL

I don't believe this. The phone is out! Pham, your phone is out!

PHAM VAN

I didn't do it! What's going on?

Val and Earl rush out.

35 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Trailed by the others Val and Earl march out and leap into their truck, Val driving now. He searches for the key.

NESTOR

We've gotta get the police up here. You guys gotta step on it to Bixby.

Earl hands Val the key.

VAL

Consider it stepped on.

36 EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

Again the pick-up barrels through the canyon.

VAL

Brother, we decided to leave this place just one day too late, you know?

EARL

(grimly)

Well, there's sure as hell nothing to stop us now. Everybody we know between here and Bixby is already dead.

Earl points ahead and screams:

EARL

LOOK OUT!!

Val brings the truck to a squealing stop. Ahead: the collapsed embankment completely blocks the road. It's totally impassable. The cowboys are dumbfounded.

EARL

Is some higher force at work, here?
Are we asking too much of life?

But Val is in no mood for philosophy. He leaps out and peers into the highway maintenance truck which sits undisturbed, emergency lights still flashing. There's nobody in it. He starts looking around.

VAL

Those assholes are supposed to be fixing the goddamn road!

(shouts)

Hey! Where are you guys? People gotta use this road, you know!
You on a booze break or what?!

EARL

(whispers; urgently pointing)

Val! Val!

Val looks where he's pointing -- Howard's bloodstained hardhat lies at the edge of the landslide. Val gets the point. Looking around for the unknown assailant, he eases back into the truck. Earl already has a pistol in his lap

and is digging through the glove compartment.

EARL (cont'd)

Where are the bullets? Don't we have any goddamn bullets?

Val quickly jockeys the truck to turn it around on the narrow road. But as he backs into the hillside, we hear a strange grating clunk from underneath. When he tries to pull forward, the truck won't move. The engine stalls.

VAL

Jesus! I don't believe this!

EARL

You're hung up again.

VAL

I am not!

They both lean out. The rear tires are clear. Val restarts the truck and tries to pull forward, rocking the truck against some unseen pull. Smoke wells up from the clutch.

EARL

You're hung up I tell you. You're gonna burn the clutch.

Val slams the truck into low-range four-wheel-drive and revs it. The tires dig in, fighting for traction -- and suddenly the truck lurches free. We hear an eerie shriek mingled with gear and engine noise as Val angrily roars away.

EARL (cont'd)

Jesus, you can break an axle like that.

VAL

Fuck you!

EARL

Hey, I don't want spend the night out here!

37 EXT. PHAN VAM'S STORE - DAY

The word has spread. Everybody in town is gathered at Pham Van's. They rush out to meet Val and Earl as they drive up.

BURT

What the hell you doing back already?

VAL

You're never going to believe this,

but the canyon road...we were on it
not two hours ago...well, it's
completely...

But he stops because they're all staring wide-eyed at the
rear of the truck.

NANCY

My God...!

Val and Earl jump out and look where everyone else is
looking. Their jaws drop. REVEAL: hanging from the rear
axle of their truck and trailing out behind like a nightmare
wedding decoration -- a sex foot long, grotesque, fleshy,
tentacle. The end gripping the axle looks like a vicious,
razor-sharp beak or hook. The trailing end is mutilated,
oozing orange goo -- as though the creature was torn in half.

MELVIN

Unreal! Where'd you get it?

VAL

Uh...didn't know we had it...

NANCY

It's disgusting.

VIOLA

Looks like...and eel.

NESTOR

Naw...eels live in water.

VAL

So...it's some kind of snake?

EARL

Or a big mother slug maybe?

BURT

Some kind of mutation...?

Burt, more daring than the others, pries the thing off the
axle with a shovel.

PHAM VAN

Don't touch, don't touch.

BURT

It's dead all right. Tore the damn
thing in half.

EARL

It must've grabbed us. That's why
the truck stalled-out.

VAL
(suddenly indignant)
Yeah! Next time I tell you I'm not
hung up...!

BURT
Stalled out your truck? Have to be
one strong son of a bitch.

Pham Van leaps over them.

PHAM VAN
I give you boys five dollars for
it.

Val and Earl square their shoulders. This time they're ready
for him.

VAL
Twenty.

PHAM VAN
Okay, ten dollars.

EARL
Fifteen.

PHAM VAN
Okay, fifteen.

VAL
Damn right fifteen.

Burt is deep in thought.

BURT
Just one of these couldn't eat up
off a whole flock of sheep.
There's gotta be more out there, a
lot more.

A cold chill spreads through the group. They stare out at
the vast, forbidding desert. They suddenly feel alone --
very alone.

38 EXT. DESERT - DAY

38

CLOSE on Rhonda's hat lying on the ground. We think the
worst. Then she reaches in, picks it up and puts it on.
REVEAL she's in a lonely corner of the valley working with a
seismograph. She pounds a marking stake into the dirt.

39 39 INSERT - CLOSE ON SEISMOGRAPH

The needle responds to each blow on the stake. We hear Rhonda stop pounding. The needle stops. All is silent -- but the needle starts moving again!"

40 40 BACK TO SCENE

LOW CAMERA is MOVING in Rhonda's general direction. She starts to pound another stake. CAMERA REACTS so it is moving straight toward her. As it passes a burrow, a rabbit suddenly scouts out. CAMERA WHIP PANS to watch the rabbit scamper into the distance, then TURNS BACK to move toward Rhonda, who still pounding her stake.

CAMERA passes Rhonda's seismograph. The machine tilts slightly as the ground bulges up beneath it.

Rhonda finishes pounding. She heads for her truck, noisily tossing in her tools and slamming the tailgate. CAMERA CLOSES IN on her, faster and faster. It is right on her heels as she climbs into the cab!

41 41 ANGLE - RHONDA'S TRUCK

A beak-thing thrusts out of the ground, groping where Rhonda's boot just was. Rhonda drives off, unknowingly running right over the thing. We hear a shriek of pain as the tentacle writhes and sucks back under the ground.

42 42 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - NIGHT

Mindy Sterngood poses cautiously with the bizarre hook tentacle. A camera FLASHES and we REVEAL Pham Van taking her photo beside a sign: "Photographs -- You and the Snake Monster -- \$2.00." Viola and Miguel, wait in line.

We now see the store is crowded with concerned townsfolk debating what to do, and how to protect themselves. Val and Earl sit on the sidelines, sipping beer, gazing in awe at enterprising Phan Vam:

EARL
Slick as snot and I'm not lying.

VAL
Fifteen lousy bucks.

EARL
A man who plans ahead.

Dominating the discussion are Burt and Heather now armed with scoped, magnum hunting rifles. Heather stands guard at a window, peering out into the night.

BURT

(to group)

...Look, we organize, we arm ourselves. We go out, we find those damn snake things, we make 'em extinct.

NESTOR

Come on, Burt, we don't even know what they are.

VIOLA

Might be aliens. Who knows?

MIGUEL

Why go looking for trouble?

BURT

Miguel, the trouble's come to us. If we're not ready...

HEATHER

Phone's out. Road's out. We're on our own.

NANCY

(sarcastic)

And you two just love it, don't you?

HEATHER

Come on, Nancy, don't let's get personal. We need to do something.

Burt steps over to a faded topographic map on the wall and points out details during:

BURT

Damn right. You folks gotta analyze the situation. With that road out we're completely cut off. Got the cliffs to the north, mountains east and west. That's why Heather and me settled here in the first place, geographic isolation.

NANCY

Well...there must be some way to get help.

VIOLA

Yes, that's what I say.

BURT
How, for chrissake? You gonna walk
thirty-eight miles to Bixby?

MIGUEL
Hey, what about Pham Van's saddle
horses?

All heads turn toward Pham Van.

PHAM VAN
You're welcome to them. Does
anybody know how to ride?

All heads turn toward Val and Earl.

43 43 EXT. JIM AND MEGANS'S HOUSE - ESTABLISH - NIGHT

In the vast desert night a single floodlight illuminates Jim and Megan's partially finished house. Their station wagon is parked out front. A country and western tune drifts to us from it's radio.

As we MOVE CLOSER, we see the floodlight is powered by a small, softly purring generator set maybe fifty feet away.

Jim and Megan, both exhausted, unload a big stack of roofing shingles from their station wagon. Jim starts to lift a package of shingles but gives up and sits on the tailgate.

JIM
I'm dead. Let's finish in the
morning.

MEGAN
We have to go into Bixby in the
morning.
(grins devilishly)
The concrete blocks are in.

JIM
The con...! Oh my God.

MEGAN
Just keep looking at that beautiful
sky.

JIM
What?

MEGAN
That's the sky that's going to be
over our roof every night, when
we're done.

JIM
(joking)
Ah, but consider this, if we don't
finish the roof, we can look at
that sky all the time.

Just then the whirring of the generator becomes strangely
muffled. The floodlight flickers. Now the generator dies.
Darkness engulfs them. The car radio music drones on
incongruously.

JIM (cont'd)
Damn that thing!

MEGAN
(sarcastic)
We could always buy a new
generator.

Jim digs out a powerful flashlight and heads over toward the
generator. Megan lies back, taking a welcome breather.
After a moment:

MEGAN
Well, what's wrong with it?

JIM (V.O.)
It's...gone...!

44 ANGLE - JIM

Baffled, he sweeps the whole area with the flashlight. Megan
joins him.

MEGAN
You sure this is where it was?

JIM
Am I sure?!
(points with flashlight)
It was right there. There's the
cord.

The severed electric cable stops at the edge of a cone-shaped
depression in the dirt where the generator sat. He hands her
the flashlight and kneels. We watch tensely as he probes the
loose earth with his hands.

JIM (cont'd)
Maybe the ground caved in. There's
a lot of old mines and stuff around
here.

Megan grabs his shirt, trying to pull him back.

MEGAN

Well don't then! You don't want to
fall in.

Suddenly, about ten feet away -- WHOOMP!! The generator shoots up out of the ground! Jim and Megan dive for cover as it sails through the air, and crashes to earth. They stare, transfixed. The generator is dented and bent almost beyond recognition -- and covered with oozing slime.

JIM

What the...?

But Megan is all action. She yanks him back.

MEGAN

Come on. Get away from it!

JIM

God, what a stink!

We again hear that mysterious rumbling sound. Jim stops, sweeping the flashlight around them.

JIM (cont'd)

Hear that?

MEGAN

Never mind! Let's go! Let's just
go into town or something! Jim,
please!

She hustles him bodily toward the car during:

JIM

You know, I bet it's geological or
something, like natural gas, or a
geyser. They stink like that.
Remember in Yellowstone...?

Suddenly he drops knee-deep into ground! Megan is thrown off balance and tumbles to one side. The flashlight falls, lighting them at an eerie low angle.

JIM (cont'd)

Something's got me!!

We hear sickening CRUNCHES from below the earth. He SCREAMS in excruciating agony.

JIM (cont'd)

Oh, God! Get me Out!! GET ME OUT!!

He struggles wildly, but just sinks further down! Megan slides a 2X4 over to Jim. He grabs it like a drowning man, trying to keep himself from being pulled down. But he's

pulled with suck power the 2X4 snaps!

His head is going under. Megan desperately tries to dig the smothering earth away, but she's losing. Now only his arms are above ground. She pulls with all her might, but he sinks inexorably down, down. She's pulled flat on the ground. He's gone.

The next instant, a vicious hook-tentacle erupts through the earth, missing Megan's face by inches. She scrambles back frantically.

45 ANGLE - STATION WAGON

LOW CAMERA pursues Megan toward the car, just missing her as she dives in through the open tailgate. She slams it after her. The talons rake across the car, scratching the glass.

Megan tumbles into the front seat. Thank God the keys are in the ignition. She starts the engine. But outside the "snake things" attack the car in a frenzy, slashing blindly. A rear tire is totally shredded just as:

Megan floors it. The car lurches forward but the mutilated tire falls apart. The wheel rim digs into the loose earth and the car is stuck. With no other recourse, Megan locks the door, rolls up the windows and cowers in the middle of the car, panting, sobbing. The radio is still playing a happy cowboy tune. She peeks out. They gave up? She's safe? Nothing happens for a moment, then --

The car starts to shake and shudder! Dust wells up around the windows.

Outside we see a bizarre sight. The earth around the rear of the car is "boiling," dirt flying in all directions -- and the car starts to sink into the ground!!

Megan wildly honks the horn! The car looks just like a ship going down by the stern, hood tilting up gracefully. The back windows shatter, dirt pouring in! Megan smashes the windshield with a small fire extinguisher and scrambles out on the hood. But there's no hope. The car keeps sinking, titling now almost ninety degrees, forcing her onto a precarious perch on the grille -- sinking, sinking.

Out of her mind with terror, she keeps softly murmuring the same hopeless phrases:

MEGAN
Stop it! Stop it! Somebody stop it...!

46 EXT. DESERT - JIM AND MEGAN'S HOUSE - VERY WIDE - NIGHT

The headlights are two ironic beacons sending their beams skyward through the roiling dust into the night sky. The sound of the radio becomes muffled. The headlights sink from view -- and then Megan's scream floats across the desert.

47

EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAWN

Out front of Pham Van's, nervous Val and Earl saddle up the horses while Pham loads their saddle bags with food. Everyone has gathered to see them off. There's an air of tension.

VAL

(eyeing the horses)

Pham, we don't want to be stuck on a couple of canners. They better be fast.

EARL

Relax. A snake thing like that couldn't move too quick.

VAL

Screw you. For all you know they could fly.

Earl pulls their old Smith and Wesson revolver and battered Winchester rifle out of the pick-up truck.

EARL

You want the rifle or the Smith?

VAL

(definite)

The rifle.

So does Earl. He raises his hand. They swiftly do a round of scissors-rock-paper. Earl loses. He hands Val the rifle. Just then, Burt and Heather pull up in their Blazer, climbing out with their hunting rifles.

BURT

You guys all set?

EARL

Ready as we'll ever be.

BURT

Heather and I are going to drive around a little, see if we can find that college girl and tell her to get her ass back into town.

VAL

Good idea. And we'll swing by the

doctor's place. They were going to go into Bixby but we don't know if they left before the road was out.

Val and Earl mount up.

HEATHER

Hold on. You guys oughta take something that packs more punch than that thirty-thirty. Take one of our Browning autos, or even my model seventy...

(offers her hunting rifle)

It's three-seventy-five H and H mag.

Earl takes the awesome-looking gun with a smug glance at Val.

EARL

Gee...thanks, Heather. Hope we don't need it.

Heather unhooks a box of cartridges from her belt and hands it to Earl. Suddenly there's a blood-curdling SCREAM! The door to Pham Van's flies open. Out staggers Melvin, wrapped in Pham Van's hook-tentacle, writhing in apparent agony.

MELVIN

IT'S GOT ME! IT'S GOT ME! AAAAHGH!

People scatter like sheep. Burt and Heather have guns trained on him in an instant. Then everyone realizes it's a sick joke. Melvin collapses with laughter. Burt is livid. He almost shot Melvin. He charges over and yanks the kid to his feet, screaming:

BURT

You stupid punk! You came that close, that close!!

EARL

One of these days, Melvin, somebody's gonna kick your ass.

Pham rushes over and grabs his precious tentacle. As people calm down, Val and Earl gaze nervously at the vast desert before them.

BURT

Well...you fellas watch yourselves.

NANCY

Come back with the Sheriff.

NESTOR

Sheriff, like hell. Come back with the National Guard.

They ride out to an adlib chorus: "Keep your heads down;" "Go careful, boys;" "Keep a sharp lookout;" etc.

48 EXT. DESERT - DAY

Val and Earl ride along, very tiny in the vast, lonely landscape, and very on edge. Constantly looking all around.

EARL
You know, we can't possibly make
Bixby by nightfall.

Val doesn't want to hear it.

EARL
That means we're gonna be out here,
like, in the dark.

VAL
(resentfully)
Great. Thank you.

Faint Country and Western radio music drifts to them. They're nearing Jim and Megan's house.

49 EXT. JIM AND MEGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Val knocks on the door to the mobile home.

VAL
Hey, doctor, anybody here?

No answer. He opens the door and peers inside. Behind him Earl steps out of the half-finished house and shrugs. Nobody around. Wind rustles the plastic sheeting over the windows. Strangely they can still hear the muffled radio clearly.

VAL
(spooked)
Oh, man, I hate this shit.

They walk briskly to their horses. Earl snatches Heather's rifle from its saddle scabbard. Val pulls out the Winchester. Earl tries to reassure himself.

EARL
Car's gone. We just missed them,
that's all.

VAL
Then where's the goddamn Conway
Twitty coming from?

They focus on the sound and walk gingerly toward it, keeping constant watch in every direction. The ground here is all torn up like the sheep pen -- and the music is coming from underneath! What the hell is going on?

Val scrapes at the dirt with his boot -- and finds the headlight of Jim and Megan's station wagon, still on, glaring up at him. He drops down and wildly sweeps away more dirt, revealing more of the car's grille and hood -- and blood - soaked dirt which sticks to his hand. He leaps away, frantically rubbing the blood off on his pants.

VAL (cont'd)

Oh, man...oh, man...

50 EXT. DESERT - CONCRETE DITCH - DAY

Val and Earl are riding at full gallop. They race alongside a concrete-lined flood-control ditch and veer off to follow a barbed wire fence which crosses the ditch.

51 EXT. DESERT - BARBED WIRE FENCE - DAY

They ride along the fence during:

EARL

Here's the plan...We don't even stop. Ride like hell. Tonight we keep right on going. We'll walk the horses.

VAL

That is the plan...I mean, goddamn it! What the hell are those things? How could they bury an entire Plymouth station wagon?

EARL

Why would they do it?

Suddenly the horses stop short. In a frenzy they wheel around, rear up, refusing to go on. The cowboys fight to control them.

VAL

I knew it! Pham Van wouldn't know a decent horse if...!

But Earl's already drawing his rifle.

EARL

Shut up! They got wind of

something they don't like!

VAL

Oh shit!

He draws his rifle. They look wildly in all directions at once -- but there's nothing, only empty desert.

VAL (cont'd)

But I don't see anything!

They keep staring. The horses keep pacing nervously. Then -- Earl's horse rears wildly and falls! Earl goes flying. Val wheels around wildly, dismounts and runs to Earl, who's bruised and winded but basically unhurt. They think Earl's horse just tripped.

VAL (cont'd)

Hey, you okay? You okay?

EARL

Yeah...yeah.

(turning to the horse)

What about the hor...?

Their eyes bulge. Several "snake things" have engulfed the horse's head, sucking, crushing, slurping. Val's horse goes berserk and gallops for the horizon.

EARL (cont'd)

What in the name...?

VAL

That's how they get you! They're under the goddamn ground!

Suddenly they realize what that means -- the thing could come up under them!! The cowboys scramble frantically away. But nothing pursues them. They pause, glancing back nervously.

EARL

What the hell are they?

VAL

Sons of bitches!

Val raises his rifle and takes a well-aimed shot, hitting one of them. Orange goo spurts out. We hear a deafening shriek as all the "snake things" instantly zip back underground.

Then -- A HUGE MOUND OF EARTH RISES UP UNDER VAL AND EARL!! The cowboys tumble down its side, Val losing his rifle. They roll over and stare dumbfounded at the mound.

VAL (cont'd)

(gasps)

There must be a million of them!!

The mound of earth turns toward them. The ground splits open and out rises -- a huge head!

EARL

(awestruck)

Nope...just one.

The monster is a horrendous thirty-foot long eating machine! Its head is eyeless, utterly alien, covered with tough boney plates which close together to form a cork-screw point.

The cowboys stumble back toward the fence in speechless terror. The creature slides toward them, pushing through the earth like a whale through water. Now it opens its mouth -- but it's like a grotesque flower, boney plates spreading open like petals, revealing a huge, slimy, fleshy, oozing orifice! And inside the mouth, a ghastly multi-tentacled tongue! These are the "snake things," not snakes at all but actually the horrid hook-tentacles that can shoot out six feet to snag their prey!

The monster snorts and snuffs, throwing up plumes of dust, sounding like a horrendous pig. It sinks into the earth and charges! We see the hump of earth move toward them faster and faster but then it disappears as the creature goes deeper.

Val and Earl leap sideways and run along the fence. The creature goes straight and slams into a fencepost from below. All we see is the fencepost knocked at a crazy angle.

The cowboys keep running. The creature regroups and charges after them, hitting each fencepost in turn, sending weird sinuous shock waves along the barbed wire, making almost musical twanging sounds. Val looks back.

VAL

It's gaining on us!!

And as if that weren't enough, Earl points to more trouble ahead.

52 EXT. CONCRETE DITCH - DAY

The fence runs straight to the edge of the ditch, an eight foot wide gap yawning dead ahead. The creature churns like a locomotive from behind. They'll have to try to jump! They strain desperately for every last fraction of speed.

EARL

We can do it, we can do it!

They leap and -- they don't do it!! They smack into the opposite side of the ditch, clawing frantically at the lip,

only to tumble to its sloping bottom. A split second later the charging creature slams like a wrecking ball into the foot-thick concrete wall! The wall CRACKS AND BULGES OUT! A hook-tentacle flops out through one of the cracks! Terrified Val and Earl scramble away. But the wall holds together.

And then, strangely, all is quiet. The tentacle lays dead still. Eventually, the cowering cowboys dare to creep back a little closer, still panting, exhausted, jumpy.

EARL

Stupid son of a bitch...knocked
itself cold.

And now orange slime begins to ooze through the cracks in the concrete.

VAL

Cold, my ass! It's dead! We
killed the bastard!

He suddenly shakes his fist at the dead beast.

VAL (cont'd)

You FUCKER!!

They allow themselves a small wheeze of nervous laughter, only to jump like rabbits as some pebbles rattle loudly down the concrete wall behind them. They whirl to see Rhonda, up on the opposite side of the ditch, staring down at them. She's lugging a bunch of her equipment, including a small folding shovel.

RHONDA

Hi, guys, how're you doing? Look,
can I ask you something? Did you
just notice something weird?
Vibrations? You know, some kind of
earth tremor?

Val and Earl look at each other, then burst out laughing. Rhonda spots the cracked wall.

RHONDA (cont'd)

What's that?

53 EXT. CONCRETE DITCH - DAY

The shattered concrete has been pulled away to fully reveal the creature's horrendous head. Start CLOSE on it: oozing blood, slavering mouth plates hanging open, hook-tentacles lolling out. WIDEN to see Earl and Rhonda, sweating, dusty and tired, staring in awe and cringing at the stench.

EARL

Jesus Christ...think it smells like that 'cause it's dead?

RHONDA

I don't see any eyes...must be totally subterranean...and those tentacles...

EARL

I think they shoot right outta its mouth, hook you, and pull you right in. Good thing we stopped it before it killed anybody else.

RHONDA

(shudders)

Yeah, I'm lucky it didn't find me.

(overwhelmed)

This is important, you know. This is like, well, let's say it, it's probably the biggest zoological discovery of the century. The century? Forget it. History.

We can hear a shovel digging up above, and now Val shouts:

VAL (V.O.)

I got it! Here's the other end!
Just look at what we caught here!

Earl and Rhonda climb up. CRANE UP with them to REVEAL the whole animal! Val, digging excitedly with Rhonda's shovel, is just scraping away the last loose dirt from the creature's tail. The whole length of the immense thirty foot beast is partially uncovered, in king-sized bas-relief.

EARL

(hushed)

This is one big mother!

VAL

So this is the guy that had your seismos working overtime?

She nods, stepping down to study the creature. The body is stream-lined, cigar-shaped, maybe eight feet in diameter at its thickest. It's covered with hundreds of short, rear-pointing, retractable spikes. Rhonda gingerly jiggles one. It can be pushed in and out of its socket like a plunger.

RHONDA (cont'd)

It must push itself along with these. Hundreds of them pushing at once. That's how it can move so fast. I mean this thing was tripping sensors all over the valley. No wonder I couldn't...

A chilling thought stops her in mid-sentence. She springs down into the drainage ditch to get her backpack, pulling out her seismograph printouts. She studies them frantically during:

EARL

Hey, Rhonda, you ever heard of anything like this before?

VAL

(elbows Earl)

Sure, Earl, everybody knows about them. We just didn't tell you. Come on, nobody's ever seen one of these! We're really in on something here!

The guys look at each other. One thought immediately springs to their minds.

EARL

Pham Van don't get his mitts on this for no measly fifteen bucks!

VAL

You got that right!

While they bask in their fame-to-be, Rhonda continues to study the print-outs, coming to a terrifying conclusion.

EARL

Here's the plan: we'll get a...a flatbed, I guess, with a big winch, figure a five ton anyway.

VAL

Naw, don't want to winch it. That'd tear it all up. Want to lift it. Some kind of crane with lifting straps.

But Rhonda interrupts -- now really scared.

RHONDA

Hey, hey, shut up! The way I figure it. There are five more of these things!

Val and Earl shut right up. Earl edges up a fencepost. Val sidles up onto a rock during:

EARL

Five more?

Rhonda paws through her unwieldy printouts, pointing out jagged ink lines on the graphs, comparing different ones.

RHONDA

Yeah, darn it, look. I've got seismographs all over the valley. If you compare the different readings, there have to be five. Here's one at two o'clock yesterday, but here's another one three miles away at the same time. So that's two. Now, here...

The men leap from their perches and hustle her in the direction she came from.

VAL

We'll take your word for it.

EARL

Yeah. Where's your truck?

RHONDA

The other side of that dome.

She indicates what to most of us would be a hill, dotted with huge boulders thrusting out of the sandy desert soil like big mushrooms. The trio jogs toward the hill.

54 54 EXT. DESERT - SEISMOGRAPH - DAY

En route to the truck, they pass near one of Rhonda's seismographs. Suddenly Earl stumbles as one leg drops knee-deep into the ground! He screams. Val wheels and bodily yanks him up. They back away from the small hole in the ground, calming a little as they realize:

EARL

Prairie dog burrow...

VAL

Little sons of bitches.

Rhonda tenses as she hears a sound she knows well -- the soft scratching of the seismograph needle across its paper cylinder. She whacks Val on the shoulder and points speechlessly at it.

55 55 INSERT - SEISMOGRAPH

The needle is going wild!!

56 56 BACK TO SCENE

She doesn't have to explain. All three of them dash dash for:

57 EXT. BOULDER FIELD - DAY

The remains of an old rail fence lay beside one of the boulders. Val, Earl, and Rhonda scramble over the wood, up onto the rock and stand there tensely.

In a moment, the creature gently rustles the earth at the base of the rock. The monster's slimy hook-tentacles slither out, searching the rock base. Shuddering, the humans move as high as they can, well out of reach. The tentacles slip back beneath the earth. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

EARL

Well, at least the bastard can't climb. Pardon my French.

RHONDA

Probably couldn't move too easily on the surface.

VAL

God, the live ones smell worse than the dead ones.

EARL

Okay, now, how far's your truck?

Rhonda points. They can see the roof of her truck, maybe a hundred yards away through the boulders. Val and Earl think about it.

VAL

I don't know. If this one's any faster than that other one...

EARL

(nods)

I think we wait right here.

DISSOLVE TO:

58 EXT. BOULDER FIELD - SUNSET

It's hours later. Stiff and uncomfortable, they have nothing to do but theorize.

RHONDA

There's nothing like them in the fossil record, I'm sure...Okay, so they predate the fossil record...

(not buying it herself)
That'd make them a couple of
billion years old...and we've just
never seen one till now. Right.

EARL
I'd vote for outer space. No way
those are local boys.

VAL
(joking)
Atomic testing. Or, no, bio-
engineering! The government built
them, a big surprise in the next
war.

There's a long pause. Earl stares at the dirt around the
rock.

EARL
Well...haven't seen a sign for
hours. Maybe it's long gone.

VAL
Maybe it is. Why don't you take a
little stroll and see?

EARL
Fuck you, too. Pardon my French.

RHONDA
Well, we've got to do something.

Val gets an idea. He grabs a post from the dilapidated fence
and cautiously slips down near the boulder's edge.

EARL
Watch yourself! It's got a good
six foot reach.

Val nods. Dead silence as he reaches way out with the post
and scrapes it on the ground. Almost instantly the creature
roars up, grabbing the post in a flurry of flying dirt and
lashing tentacles, nearly hooking Val's hand. Val
practically falls over himself scrambling back to safety.

VAL
Son of a bitch!

EARL
Son of a goddamned bitch! Been
waiting there all this time. How
the hell's it even know we're still
here?

VAL
It's been listening to us. It's

got no eyes. It sure as hell can't
smell anything underground, so I
figure...

Rhonda stares at Val, impressed.

RHONDA
Of course! It can sense the
slightest seismic vibration...hear
every move we make. Especially on
this rock. It's a perfect
conductor.

They all settle back, having no idea what to do next. Rhonda
gazes out at the desert that surrounds them like an ocean.

RHONDA (cont'd)
I always wanted to be stuck on a
desert island. But somehow I
always imagined, you know, water.

DISSOLVE TO:

58A 58A EXT. BOULDER FIELD - NIGHT

Our heroes are silhouetted against a huge, spectacular,
desert night sky. After a very long pause:

EARL
You know, I hate to be crude, but
I'm gonna have to take care of some
business here.

VAL
(emphatic)
Me, too.

RHONDA
(just as emphatic)
Same here.

The silhouettes shift, Val and Earl moving down one side of
the rock, and Rhonda down the other. We can no longer see
them. We just head zippers zipping down -- then soft sighs
of relief from Val and Earl. Then:

RHONDA (V.O.)
(softly)
Darn it!

VAL (V.O.)
You okay?

RHONDA (V.O.)
Yeah. But I'll tell you, if you
ever wanted proof God is a man,

this is it.

DISSOLVE TO:

59

EXT. BOULDER FIELD - DAWN

Rich orange sunlight creeps silently across the deathly still desert. Earl is already awake. Val is curled up without his jacket, shivering. He wakes with a start. Where the hell's his jacket?

Rhonda wakes slowly. She's surprised to find herself wrapped in Val's jacket. Touched by his chivalry, she embarrassedly hands it to baffled Val.

RHONDA

Thanks.

Val glances at Earl, who looks away. Who, me?

VAL

(to Rhonda)

No problem. Anytime.

Earl gropes through his pockets, coming up with only cigarettes. Val fishes in his own pockets, finding only their lighter. They exchange items and light up during:

EARL

Well, folks, what's the plan?

VAL

First let's see if Stumpy's still out there.

This time he tosses a piece of wood out onto the sand. With soft rustling, a bulge forms in the earth, moves over to the wood, then subsides. Rhonda starts looking around during:

EARL

Don't he have a home to go to?

VAL

(grim)

Well, that's why Edgar never got down off that tower.

RHONDA

I might have an idea...

EARL

(ignoring her)

We're gonna have to come up with some kind of plan or it's just gonna wait us to death.

RHONDA

Well, I was wondering if we could...

VAL

Well, let's just run for it. We outran that one yesterday, at least on a sprint.

Rhonda gives up on them. She goes over and pulls a long cross rail from the fence during:

EARL

Run for it? Running's not a plan. Running is what you do when the plan fails. You're not even trying to come up with a plan!

VAL

Well, it's not like we've got a hell of a lot of options...

RHONDA

(interrupting)

You guys know how to pole vault?

They watch in surprise as she hefts her pole, checks the balance, eyeballs the distance to the nearest boulder. Then she charges between them, plants her pole and vaults smoothly over to the next boulder, maybe fifteen feet away. The creature surfaces where her pole touched down, but too late -- a hook tentacle vainly sweeps the area, the disappears into the ground. Val and Earl glance at each other, impressed.

RHONDA (cont'd)

We just stay where it can't get us...on these residual boulders. My truck's parked right next to one.

Earl rushes to grab a couple more fence rails.

EARL

Stay on those residual boulders!

Val just stands staring across at Rhonda -- his horizons are broadening. Earl stuffs a fence rail into his hands.

EARL (cont'd)

(pointedly)

Tammy Lynn Baxter, she do a lot of pole-vaulting?

Earl takes a deep breath and goes for it, vaulting across to Rhonda. Val follows.

60 EXT. BOULDER FIELD - WIDE SHOT - DAY

60

Through the shimmering heat in the distance we see the strange sight of the three figures vaulting from boulder to boulder.

61 EXT. BOULDER FIELD - RHONDA'S TRUCK - DAY

61

Val, Earl and Rhonda pole-vault their way toward the truck. Finally they're at the nearest boulder, but the truck is still ten feet away.

VAL

Think it's still following us?

RHONDA

Let's assume that it is.

EARL

And once we hit that truck we gotta go fast. I say we all jump together.

Rhonda and Val nod. Rhonda grips her car keys in her teeth.

RHONDA

(through clenched teeth)

Ready?

VAL

Yeah. One, two, three...

They all vault in unison, landing in the truck bed. Rhonda scrambles up, slides open the cab's rear window, and begins wriggling through headfirst.

EARL

(whispers)

Come on, girl, it ain't gonna give us much time...

Dust explodes around the rear of the truck! Hook-tentacles snake up on all sides, narrowly missing Val. He and Earl grab whatever's handy, pounding at the tentacles with expensive instruments.

VAL

GO! GO! GO!

Rhonda's only half way through the cab window, still hanging headfirst into the cab. She frantically starts the truck, dives down and punches the accelerator with her fist.

As the truck roars away, one tentacles manages to tear off the the muffler. The engine thunders like a tank. Val and Earl sit back, sighing in relief, then react when they see Rhonda is driving upside down and blind.

62

EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Rhonda skids her noisy truck to a halt in front of Pham Van's.

VAL

We better get everybody together.

Val leaps out and jumps into his pick-up truck. He searches for the key.

EARL

You go north, I'll go south.

VAL

Right.

Val holds out his hand for the key. Earl tosses it to him. Val drives off. We FOLLOW Rhonda and Earl as they drive the other way, toward Viola's.

EARL

I'll bet you're sorry the college ever sent you up here.

RHONDA

Well, I'm scared, but I'm not sorry.

EARL

You know, Val went to that college, too. For a whole year. Couldn't quite sit still for it, though. Had too much vinegar in his system. But once he settles down, forgets this cowboy stuff, he'll be one in a million.

Rhonda sees straight through Earl's clumsy attempt at match-making. She can't help but smile. Earl grins sheepishly.

EARL (cont'd)

All right, I'm about as subtle as a donkey's ass. Pardon my French. I'm just saying the boy's got potential, that's all.

MOVE IN on Rhonda -- her and Val?

Nestor, Viola, Nancy, and Miguel nervously crowd around Val, Earl, and Rhonda. Viola holds her yappy dog which periodically snarls and snaps at people. Pham Van is on his CB radio trying to contact Burt and Heather.

MIGUEL

You serious, Val? You think we're not even safe here in town?

VAL

Ask me that after you meet one. I think we should all get the hell out while the getting's good.

NESTOR

Why not just take a Number Ten pick axe and give it one good whack...?

VAL

Nestor, damn it, these things are bigger than an Airstream trailer!

NANCY

God, I've got to find Mindy.

Nancy rushes out.

EARL

Hey, Pham, where's Burt and Heather?

PHAM VAN

(hangs up CB)

Can't raise them. I guess they're still out there somewhere.

RHONDA

If you've got a radio, why aren't you calling somebody in Bixby? The police or...

PHAM VAN

Can't reach outside the valley. You know, because of the mountains.

MIGUEL

Hey, Rhonda, what's the name you call those things, huh?

PHAM VAN

Where'd they come from?

RHONDA

Huh? I don't know.

PHAM VAN
You're a scientist, right?

VIOLA
You should have a theory at least.

RHONDA
Look, these things are absolutely unprecedented!

NESTOR
Yeah, but where'd they come from?

RHONDA
(exasperated)
Where'd they come from? Okay, worms, probably in the Jurassic period. Cosmic radiation was much higher then...so they mutated...and they got so big they just sank right into the ground and fell asleep... But now continental drift has brought them to the surface, ready to be harvested by the ancient alien meat growers who planted them here.

Everybody stares at her, then they smile, realizing she's pulling their legs.

EARL
You're right, don't matter where they come from.

VAL
Right. We need to be talking about what we're gonna do.

VIOLA
My goodness, Valentine, once they see the road is out and the phone lines are down, someone will be along to look in on us. Don't you think?

64 EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

We see the utility truck still parked near the landslide blocking the road. REVEAL, on the far side, a telephone maintenance truck is now parked, emergency lights flashing -- and nearby, amid phoneworkers' climbing and repair gear, two more hard hats lying on blood-soaked ground.

The crowd is still jabbering away. Rhonda speak over them:

RHONDA

No no no, they listen! They can sense the slightest vibration through the ground. That's how they see! That's how they hunt!

MIGUEL

So, like we don't vibrate, right? Maybe they won't even come to here, huh? Maybe they leave us alone.

Val shakes his head, and marches over to the topographic map on the wall.

VAL

They caught up with Edgar here. They grabbed Old Fred here. They nailed the asshole dog here. And the doctor's place is here...

The spots he indicates describe a line leading along the valley straight toward town.

VAL (cont'd)

This valley's just one long smorgasbord and if we don't haul ass outta here we're the next course.

We hear an a eerie SHRIEK from outside. Something shoots in through the window, striking Earl in the chest!! Earl flails frantically at it -- but it's only Melvin's basketball. We glimpse Melvin outside, doubled over with laughter. Earl grabs the ball and hurls it viciously back, but Melvin easily dodges it.

EARL

You little ass wipe! You knock that off or you're gonna be shitting that basketball! Pardon my French.

NESTOR

(to Val)

Now, Val, let's assume they're as dangerous as you say. Where are we going to go that's safer than right here?

VAL

Rhonda's got an idea about that.

RHONDA

Yes, see, they move very easily
through the Pleistocene Alluvials...
(off their blank looks)
...the dirt...the loose soil that
makes up the valley floor. But
they can't move through solid rock.
I think we should travel west to
the mountains.

EARL

You know, up the jeep trail.

RHONDA

The mountains are solid granite.
We'd be safe there, and we could
hike along them...all the way to
Bixby if we have to.

66 66 EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

Nancy rushes back toward Pham Van's, still looking.

NANCY

Mindy! Mindy!

67 67 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

We're CLOSE on Melvin as he circles around the back of Pham
Van's, bouncing his basketball, mischief in his eyes. We can
hear the townsfolk inside.

VIOLA (V.O.)

No, Valentine, I'm not leaving my
place.

VAL (V.O.)

Well, it's gonna take us days to
get back with help.

EARL (V.O.)

Doggone it, Viola, it's just plain
crazy to stay.

Then, to Melvin's astonishment, the steady rhythm of his
bouncing basketball suddenly stops. The ball just goes flup
and doesn't bounce back up to him. He looks down. No ball!
Just swirling dust at his feet.

68 68 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Everyone jumps as we once more hear an ear-shattering SHRIEK from Melvin. Earl snarls and heads for the door, Val right behind them.

EARL
I'm gonna kick his ass!

VAL
I'm gonna help you.

69 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Val and Earl are well ahead of the other townsfolk as they march around to the side of Pham Van's. But where's Melvin? Nothing out here but the oppressive, hot desert silence. Then they hear a soft shuddering whimper -- from above. There's terrified Melvin, halfway up a telephone pole, clinging to it desperately.

Val and Earl freeze in their tracks and glance at each other, realizing instantly what's up. Without a word they leap desperately in opposite directions. Like a breaching whale, a creature roars up through the earth right where they were standing, great mouth gaping open, slimy tentacles lashing in all directions.

The townsfolk scatter, some heading for their homes, including Viola and Nestor. Others scramble over each other as they pile back into Pham Van's. The telephone pole shudders. Melvin falls and scampers for the nearest hiding place, a corrugated tin storage shed near Pham Van's.

70 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Val, Earl, Rhonda, Miguel, and Pham Van rush in.

MIGUEL
Jesus Christ! Man, you got a gun?!

PHAM VAN
Big as a house! What are we gonna do...?!

RHONDA
Quiet! QUIET!!

Miguel and Pham shut up. Then we hear something new -- the building itself creaking and groaning like a ship. The liquor bottles behind Pham Van's bar vibrate and clink. The creature is moving beneath the building. The people freeze like mannequins. Now we can hear its pig-like snorting. Pham Van and Miguel react as the awful smell percolates up through the floorboards. Val signals them to keep quiet.

Finally, the creaking stops.

Rhonda addresses the group in an intense whisper:

RHONDA

Remember...no noise. No vibration.

Everyone stands stock still -- and sweats. But, then, slowly we become aware of a faint, yet oddly familiar sound. Squeak, squeak, squeak -- Mindy on her pogo stick! They all scramble to the windows.

71 71 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

There she is, alone in the vacant street, Walkman blaring in her ears, merrily bouncing along to a rock 'n' roll beat.

72 72 ANGLE - PHAM VAN'S STORE

Thoughts of personal safety vanish as the horrified people lean way out the doors and windows and shout with one voice:

CROWD

(ad lib)

MINDY!

Get off your pogo stick!

Get in here, girl!

Run, Mindy!

73 73 ANGLE - MINDY

She can't hear them over her Walkman. A tell-tale puff of dust spurts up not fifty feet from her!

74 74 ANGLE - PHAM VAN'S STORE

Val sees Mindy has only seconds left! He vaults straight out the window and charges toward her! Right behind him comes Earl and Rhonda.

75 75 ANGLE - NANCY

As she rounds a corner at the opposite end of town. She spots Mindy, then sees Val running. She starts running.

NANCY

Mindy! Mindy!

She's lazily bouncing in circles -- squeak, squeak, squeak. She goes wide-eyed as she rotates to see Val coming at her like a mad bull, arms outstretched. The asphalt under her pogo stick cracks and --

Val tackles her, both of them tumbling head over heels. She scrambles up, rubbing her skinned elbow and yelling:

MINDY

Oww! Val, you hurt me...!

Val claps his hand over her mouth. She goes wide eyed as she sees: her pogo stick standing straight up in the cracked asphalt! Then it is sucked down like so much spaghetti!

Nancy rushes into frame, hugging Mindy. Val signals her to be quiet. They sit uneasily. Where's the creature? Suddenly the pogo stick erupts out of the earth right in their midst!

Val runs one way, Nancy and Mindy the other, heading up the street toward their house. Val scrambles up onto his pick-up truck! The creature rams the truck, rupturing a tire. As it shakes the truck violently, Val spots Rhonda and Earl, now standing uncertainly halfway between him and Pham Van's.

VAL

Go back, for chrissake!

Rhonda and Earl hesitate.

EARL

We gotta get him off there. It'll suck that truck down!

But Earl now hears something behind them! Down the street, a little wall of cinder blocks framing Viola's driveway suddenly topples over.

EARL

Oh, Jesus. Rhonda, another one!

CAMERA charges toward them. Earl swerves toward Pham Van's, but Rhonda is cut off! She heads toward the next nearest haven:

78

78 EXT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

The storage shed where Melvin is hiding. It sits in a vacant, weed-choked lot. Crashing through the weeds, Rhonda has almost reached the shed when she is suddenly brought up short and slams face down in a cloud of dust!

She can't get up!! Something's got her! She's caught in an old rusted barbed wire fence, lying almost flat, hidden in the weeds. Some strands have come loose and are curled up like vicious concertina wire.

Barely has she taken this in when -- the ground caves in under her! She rolls wildly to one side as hook-tentacles snake up, missing her by inches! She keeps rolling-crawling-scrambling -- anything to get away from the awful maw -- but gets her legs hopelessly tangled in the barbed wire. She freezes. The creature feels around where she was.

She calms herself, pulling gingerly at the wire, working tensely to free herself but --

The creature's mouth slams shut on the fence. Like a spider sensing something caught in its web, the monster knows it's on to something. Its hook-tentacles shoot forward to snare three feet of fence, then the creature lunges up and out, swallowing that three feet in a big "gulp" and yanking Rhonda violently toward it! She screams, pants ripped, legs slashed and bleeding! GULP! She's dragged even closer.

79

79 EXT. MAIN STREET - THE PICK-UP - DAY

The truck shakes and shimmies as Val's creature tries to pull it down. Val sees that Rhonda's in trouble. He searches frantically for a weapon -- and finds one -- a CHAIN SAW! He leaps as far from the truck as he can and hits the ground running, yanking furiously on the saw's starter cord.

80

80 EXT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

Rhonda is in a dead panic, thrashing helplessly in the barbed wire. The beast takes another gulp of fence, wrenching her within inches of a probing hook-tentacle! Suddenly we hear a nasty ROAR as Val's chain saw swings in, slicing the squirming tentacle in half, spraying gore everywhere! The creature unleashes an unearthly shriek, and the other tentacles recoil. The severed one writhes like a beheaded snake.

Val yanks off Rhonda's boots.

VAL
Come on! Outta your pants!

She frantically claws at her belt. But in mere seconds:

RHONDA
(pointing)
LOOK OUT!

Tentacles snake out to regain their grip on the fence. Val grabs the saw and starts slashing wildly, but this time the hook-tentacles snag it and wrench it from his grasp. It slams to the ground, motor dying. The monster readies itself for the lunge that will suck Rhonda in. Val grabs her under the arms and pulls. Rhonda wriggles wildly to get out of her wire enmeshed pants.

The creature lunges! Rhonda pulls free! She and Val tumble backward. The creature gets only a mouthful of Rhonda's jeans.

The next instant the second creature explodes up through the ground right next to fallen Val and Rhonda! They roll sideways, come up running, and sprint for Pham Van's along an old wooden sidewalk.

81 81 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Earl flings open the front door. Val and Rhonda race toward the porch. Right on their heels the creature ripples the boards like an ocean wave!

EARL
Come on! Come on! Don't look back!
Just run! Run like screaming fuck!

They dive through the open door of Pham Van's. The rippling boards zoom on past it. Earl quickly eases the door shut.

82 82 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Earl turns to breathless Rhonda.

EARL
(whispers)
Pardon my French.

DISSOLVE TO:

83 83 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - LATER

It's a tense, edgy group. Every movement made is in slow motion, every word is a whisper. They gaze grimly out the

windows at the silent, deserted, heat-shimmering main street.

Val gingerly dabs iodine onto the cuts on Rhonda's legs. She doesn't even wince.

VAL

You paying attention? This oughta hurt like hell.

RHONDA

It does.

She smiles at him.

RHONDA (cont'd)

So, is that one of your usual jobs, saving peoples' lives?

VAL

(embarrassed)

First time for me.

She gazes at him. He looks away. Over at the bar, Pham holds up a new pair of pants for Rhonda.

RHONDA

Oh, thank you.

Grateful for something to do, Val eases over to get the pants. Rhonda looks after him. Then she becomes aware of someone staring at her. It's Earl, giving her a big Cheshire cat grin that says "What did I tell you?"

Pham hands the pants to Val. Then Pham and Miguel reach simultaneously for a sods bottle and -- knock it over! It rolls all the way down the bar as a flurry of desperate hands try to stop it. No good. It rolls off the end and -- CRASH!

Everyone freezes. Sure enough the building shudders. Floor boards creak and bend as searching tentacles thump and scrape along under the floor. People close their eyes, not even breathing. Finally the noise subsides. Everyone relaxes -- a little.

MIGUEL

So what are we gonna do, you know?
How long till they go away?

EARL

(shakes his head)

They got the patience of Job. They just sit and goddamn wait til they hear something that sounds like lunch. We need a plan.

PHAM VAN

I've got a plan. You and Val take

your truck, get to the mountains.
Hike to Bixby. Get us some help.

VAL

Those scumsuckers are my radials,
Pham!

RHONDA

Well, we can take my truck then.

EARL

No good. You need major four-
wheel-drive just to get up that
jeep trail.

They all shut up when they hear Viola's dog yapping in the
distance.

84 84 EXT. VIOLA'S TRAILER - DAY

Up the hill across from Pham Van's, the old trailer looks
perfectly peaceful. Except Viola's dog keeps yapping. Then
we hear panicked Viola.

VIOLA (V.O.)

Quiet! Quiet you hateful thing...!

85 85 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

EARL

Shut it up! Shut the little
bastard up!

VAL

Chuck him out the door! Like a
little hors d'oeuvre.

INT. VIOLA'S TRAILER - DAY

We hear a loud whap! The dog's bark simply changes to
piercing yelps. It would be funny except --

The trailer suddenly bucks upward, hit from below as though
by a pile driver! Again and again the unseen creatures slam
into the frail structure.

VIOLA (V.O.)

Get away! Get away! Oh God in
heaven, help me!

The trailer is finally knocked right off its foundation! It

tips over and tumbles all the way down the hill! As the dust clears, all is silent. A huge hole is torn in the trailer's floor. Viola's possessions are scattered everywhere.

86 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

Everyone stares in shock.

RHONDA

Oh my God.

EARL

Son of a bitchin' lowlife, putrid, scum...

VAL

Gotta do something. Gotta get the bastards!

MIGUEL

(hopeless)

Man, what the hell can we do to those things?

EARL

Well, we're sure as hell not going to sit here being quiet for God knows how long. Are we?

PHAM VAN

Now wait a minute, Earl. I got enough food here to last us for weeks. Those damn things can't wait around forever.

(pause)

We can do it. I mean, if we have to, right?

Everyone turns away from the windows, gingerly sitting down, glumly pondering this possibility. There is a long silence.

Then suddenly -- ROAR! The silence is shattered as Pham Van's big freezer compressor suddenly comes on.

EARL

Jesus! Shut it off!

Pham runs to the freezer. Its on/off switch is buried behind stacks of soft-drink cases. He tears at them like a madman, toppling them this way and that. Earl and Val join him.

But right behind Pham, the floor BUCKLES UP, a monster's snout BURSTING THROUGH and engulfing one of his legs! The creature starts to back down into the jagged hole, dragging screaming Pham with it. Val, Earl, Rhonda, and Miguel grab

Pham's arms but are no match for the monster. It shakes and spins him like some gigantic dog, effortlessly throwing them off, relentlessly pulling Pham down.

The hole in the floor is too small for Pham to fit through! As one leg goes down, the other is bent hideously backward. Pham screams and screams as jagged wood tears into him, bones snap, ribs crack. The others grab him again but are utterly helpless. With vicious, powerful jerks the creature yanks his man mangled body down. The last thing we see is his foot, now folded back past his head, and he's gone.

Val is wild with helpless anger.

VAL

Son of a bitch! Son of a bitch!

The floor bulges up in another place! A second creature! Then a third, coming RIGHT UP UNDER THEM! Earl sprawls onto the bar. Rhonda springs onto the shelves in the middle of the store, knocking groceries everywhere. Val and Miguel climb up shelves which cover the rear wall of the store.

The whole building shakes and shudders, dust powdering down from the ceiling. Flailing tentacles are everywhere, slashing open food packages; clouds of flour fill the air!

Val spots a hatch in the ceiling.

VAL

Everybody! This way! The roof!

Earl leaps from the bar to the rear shelves. Val and Miguel slide sideways till they're beneath the hatch, then use the shelves as a ladder, climbing up to the hatch. Val pounds on it frantically.

In the middle of the store, Rhonda leaps from shelf to shelf, trying to get closer to where Val is. Soon she reaches the last one, balancing precariously. But a creature tips over the first one! The shelves topple like dominoes, crashing toward Rhonda. She is half catapulted, half jumps right through an open window, ripping through the screen.

Val sees what's happened. With maniacal strength he smashes open the hatch and climbs out onto --

87 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Val rushes to the edge of the roof shouting:

VAL

Rhonda! Keep moving. Don't stop!

He looks down where Rhonda fell. She's not there. He hears

a whistle and is relieved to see:

88 88 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Rhonda is perched as high as she can get on the water tower near Pham Van's. It's maybe twenty-five feet tall, a simple wood frame holding a big galvanized tank. The wooden legs stand on big concrete anchors buried in the ground.

89 89 EXT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

Melvin peers terrified out the shed door, up at the guys on Pham Van's roof.

MELVIN

Hey! What's going on, man?! What the hell you doing up there...?!

MIGUEL

Melvin, shut the hell up!

It's too late. Wham! A creature strikes. The little shed shudders, dust puffing from every old seam. In a split second Melvin has climbed to the shed roof.

90 90 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nancy and Mindy peer to the window, surprised to see the men on Pham Van's roof.

91 91 EXT. PERFECTION - WIDE - DAY

We hear Val's shouting to the remaining townsfolk.

VAL

Nancy! Nestor!

92 92 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

VAL

Get up on your roof! On your roof!
They can come through the floor!

The store shakes and shimmies. We hear the monster's thunderous crashing from below.

EARL

Can't you shout a little quieter?

93 93 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Burt and Heather's place, about a mile from town, is no-nonsense, functional, ugly -- unpainted concrete walls, no yard, chain-link fence. Burt and Heather drive up in their big Blazer and park right beside the house. Hot and tired, they climb out, each carrying a heavy, scoped hunting rifle. Burt peers toward Perfection through binoculars during:

HEATHER

I can't believe it. No tracks, no sign, no spoor.

BURT

Yeah, whatever they are, you'd think after they ate all those sheep they'd have to take a dump someplace...

(reacts to what he sees)

What the hell's going on in town?

94 94 EXT. PERFECTION - TELEPHOTO - BURT'S P.O.V. - DAY

The town is a very strange sight. It's as though an invisible flood were in progress, driving people to high ground. We see: Rhonda perched on the water tower; Val, Earl and Miguel on the store roof; Nancy and Mindy on their roof; Melvin on the storage shed; Nestor on his roof.

95 95 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Val, Earl and Miguel gaze out at the town, trying to concoct a plan. Suddenly Earl perks up. The men speak softly.

EARL

Hey, here's the plan: Nestor's Cadillac. His tires are nine hundred sixteens. We sprint for it, grab the spare, put it on our truck with our spare.

Val stares at him, incredulous.

VAL

How the hell long it take you to change a tire?

EARL

(sighs)

Just about too damn long. Bolt
pattern's probably wrong anyway.

VAL

We need another plan.

Suddenly, down in the store, Pham Van's CB radio squawks
loudly.

BURT (V.O.)

Yo, P.V., Burt here. Come back.

The building shudders as the creatures again smash through
the floor inside, looking for the source of the noise. Val,
Earl and Miguel scramble to the edge of the roof.

96 96 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

The CB radio sits on a shelf near an open window. Tentacles
are feeling along the wall just below it. Val appears out-
side the window -- upside-down. He snatches the radio and is
hauled straight up out of frame.

BURT (V.O.)

Pham? Anybody copy?

97 97 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Miguel and Earl haul Val by the feet back up onto the roof.
Val quickly turns down the CB volume.

VAL

(whispers into mic)

Burt, now listen. We found out
what's been killing people. Over?

98 98 INT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

A peculiar cross between bomb shelter and blue-collar den,
Burt's wood-paneled basement has all the comforts for post-
Apocalypse living. Burt talks on his CB.

BURT

Negative copy on that, Pham, check
your frequency. I'm on forty-nine.

VAL (V.O.)

(a little louder)

Burt, can you hear me now?

BURT

Just barely, Pham. What are you all doing up on your roofs. What the hell's going on? Come back.

A few feet away Heather works at their ammunition reloading bench. She dumps a few hundred empty cartridge cases into a case cleaner and switches it on. It HUMS loudly as it vibrates.

99 INT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - DAY

The groping tentacles swiftly suck back below the floor. TILT UP to see out the window some distance away, a couple of old trash cans topple over as the creature streaks past beneath them, making a bee-line for Burt's.

100 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Miguel points frantically at the trash cans.

MIGUEL

Oh man, they're going, man! I think they're going for Burt!

Val talks a little louder into the mic. INTERCUT as needed.

VAL

Burt! This is Val! Get out of your basement!! Take your radio! You and Heather get up on your roof! Then we'll talk, okay?!

BURT (V.O.)

Val? What the hell you doing back already?

VAL

(shouts)

Burt, get out! Get up on your roof or someplace! We found out what's been killing people! They're under the ground!

BURT (V.O.)

What's under the ground? We're not getting up on the roof. Earth shelter's the best. Known that since I was a kid.

VAL

Listen! Listen! We know what they are! They're big things under the ground! Much bigger than we

thought! They're coming after you!
They're coming right now!

101 INT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Hearing that warning, Burt and Heather go into a well-honed drill. They grab their hunting rifles and take positions at basement windows. Burt scans with the binoculars. He sees nothing. He glances at Heather. She shrugs. Nobody coming.

BURT
(into CB)
We don't see anything, Val. Now
what the hell are you talking
about? Over.

Val is frantic. How do you explain these things?

VAL (V.O.)
They're coming underground! They
...they can dig like a son of a
bitch...Big monsters under the
ground, Burt! Now get the hell
out! Hurry!

Burt and Heather exchange looks. Has Val gone nuts? Then they hear a low RUMBLE, growing louder and louder. Tools hanging over the work bench start to shake; the decorative cow skulls on the wall rattle; the overhead lights sway -- and then -- everything stops. Dead silence, except for the humming of the case cleaner.

THEN THE WALL MOVES!! The wood paneling bulges slightly. Nails pop out. The wall is pushed again; the paneling cracks. A cow skull falls. Burt and Heather level their rifles and --

A huge creature pushes right through the wall! Fully half its bulbous, spiked body writhes into the center of the room, great multi-part jaws drooling open, hook-tentacles lashing out.

102 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

The three men can hear the chaos over the CB.

BURT (V.O.)
Jesus Chri...!

The CB goes dead. The men stare numbly. Then, drifting across the desert, a soft popping sound. The men perk up; they know what it is -- distant gunfire.

103 INT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

The gunfire is DEAFENING as Burt and Heather blast away. Globby blood spurts from a dozen wounds, and the creature pulls back a little. The couple keeps firing until magazines are empty. The creature lunges forward again.

PAN with Burt and Heather to REVEAL a wall of the basement we haven't seen until now -- a wall covered with guns -- hand guns, long guns, riot guns, flare guns, antique guns, military guns, elephant guns.

Heather grabs an HK-91 assault rifle, slams in two magazines, bottoms taped end to end, and opens fire! A hook-tentacle snags her boot, yanking her right off her feet. Burt pumps out eight devastating blasts from a twelve-gauge riot gun, severing the tentacle. Heather is on her feet in an instant. She expertly flops her double magazine over, loading the full one taped upside-down to it, and opens fire again. Burt grabs an AR-15 semi-auto and joins her. They lay down massive fire, virtually disappearing in muzzle flash and smoke. Ejected shell cases clatter and clang all around the room.

The guns are empty. THE CREATURE IS STILL COMING! They back down the wall, desperately grabbing weapons one after another: a lever-action, a magnum handgun, even a flare gun which Heather fires right into the creature's mouth. Shrieking in pain, the horrid thing thing KEEPS WRIGGLING TOWARD THEM!

Burt and Heather scramble up over a desk to keep something between them and it. Burt smashes open a fancy glass case holding a huge four-gauge elephant gun. He slams in two gigantic cartridges nearly an inch in diameter. He fires. The concussion literally shakes the building. The recoil slams Burt back against the wall.

The monster bullets tear monster holes in the monster. Great gouts of curdles blood spew from it -- Burt hit an artery or something. The beast convulses grotesquely, then collapses, deflating like a beached whale. Burt and Heather stagger together and hug each other fervently. They stare dumbfounded at the massive dead horror. Burt suddenly shouts vehemently:

BURT

Broke into the wrong goddamn rec room, didn't you, you BASTARD!

104 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Val, Earl and Miguel listen to the silence hoping for some sign that their friends are alive. Suddenly:

BURT (V.O. filter)
We killed it! You got that? We
killed that motherfucker! Come
back!

It takes a moment for this to sink in, then the men CHEER --
as quietly as possible.

VAL
Uh...roger that, Burt. Uh,
congratulations. Uh, be advised,
however, there are four more,
repeat, four more motherfuckers.
Come back.

105 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY
105

Burt and Heather dash out onto the roof, laden with weapons,
ammo boxes and their CB radio. They hit the deck, assorted
rifles and the elephant gun the ready.

106 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY
106

Val shouts to everyone:

VAL
They got one! They killed one of
the sons of bitches!

107 EXT. STORAGE SHED - ROOF - DAY
107

Melvin pumps his fist in the air.

MELVIN
Way to go, dudes!

108 EXT. THE STERNGOOD HOUSE - ROOF - DAY
108

Nancy and Mindy hug each other.

109 EXT. NESTOR'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY
109

Perched on his Spanish tile roof, Nestor pours coffee from
his thermos and raises his cup in a toast.

110 110 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Rhonda lets out a WHOOP.

111 111 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

The men sit, temporarily jubilant.

EARL

Well, I guess we don't get to make
fun of Burt's lifestyle anymore,
huh?

Val grabs the CB mic.

VAL

Burt, any chance you can get the
rest of them?

112 112 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Burt and Heather peer from their fortress-like roof. Burt
spots earth bulging up near the foundation of his house.

BURT

(into CB)

One second, Val.

He grabs the elephant gun and takes two well-aimed shots --
two deafening BOOMS which echo off the distant mountains.
But the bullets bury themselves harmlessly in the dirt. The
bulge in the dirt moves calmly away and sinks from view.
Heather shakes her head.

HEATHER

You're not getting any penetration,
even with the elephant gun.

BURT

Damn!

(into CB)

Val, we can't get them. Never
figured on having to shoot through
dirt! Best goddamn bullet stop
there is. Come back.

113 113 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

The men are disappointed. That's not what they wanted to
hear from Burt. Then Earl perks up and grab the CB mic.

EARL

(into CB)

Okay, Burt, listen. Forget shooting them. Tell me this: can you get to your truck?

BURT (V.O.)

No problem.

EARL

Good. You've got the only truck in the valley that can make it up that damn jeep trail. So, here's the plan: You and Heather go for help. Get to the mountains...

But Rhonda interrupts, pointing urgently from the water tower.

RHONDA

Hey, guys! They're up to something.

Val, Earl and Miguel rush to the edge of the roof and look down where she's pointing --

A creature is running its tentacles along the building's foundation. It's a strange, more studied movement than we've seen before.

VAL

(to Rhonda)

What's it doing?

RHONDA

Why do you all keep asking me?

They all stare nervously down as the tentacles feel their way along the wall, moving toward a corner of the building. Suddenly Miguel spots something down the next wall.

MIGUEL

Hey, there's another one coming!

Another set of tentacles is feeling along the adjacent wall. The two creatures meet at the corner, their tentacles touching rather like ants' antennae. They they submerge; tentacles zipping into the earth. Nothing happens for a moment.

Then the corner of the building suddenly heaves up a couple of feet. Clapboard siding splits. A warped window shatters. (We don't see the creatures, only the effect of their shoving from below). The men nearly lose their balance. Then the corner sinks back down.

EARL

What the hell was that all about?

114 114 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nancy and Mindy are still huddled on the roof. They don't make a sound. They're startled when the house suddenly groans and tilts as creatures give it a tentative shove. Nancy and Mindy frantically cling to the peak of the smooth roof. The picture windows shatters. We hear beams POP and CRACK, dishes CRASH off shelves. The front screen door swings open. At last the house slowly settles back down.

115 115 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

The men are watching Nancy's house tensely.

MIGUEL

They weren't making no noise.
Why they bothering them for?

VAL

(mind racing)

They're studying the buildings...
trying to figure them out.

Rhonda chimes in from the water tower.

RHONDA

Yeah, they're confused. They can
feel our vibrations, but they can't
find us.

VAL

They're working together, too.

EARL

Yeah, like they got a plan...

BURT (V.O.)

Breaker there, Earl. What do you
want us to do?

EARL

(into CB)

Hang on, Burt. The bastards are up
to something.

116 116 EXT. NESTOR'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Straddling the peak of his steeply sloping roof. Nestor grabs on in panic as the creatures lift the place up slowly!

The roof warps, Spanish tiles shatter and rain down on the ground.

This causes a flurry of activity. Tentacles snake around where the tiles fell. We hear creatures crash through inside, snorting and huffing. They attack the house in earnest, shaking it violently, pushing the front wall out till it falls flat. The roof collapses on that side! Nestor can't hang on! He slides all the way down, landing across a window on the flattened wall. The next instant he's grabbed and pulled through the window, right into the ground. He SCREAMS!

DOLLY along the ground, heading toward the storage shed where Melvin is. All we can see is dirt, but we can still hear Nestor screaming UNDERGROUND! His screams get more and more faint as DOLLY ENDS on:

117 117 EXT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

CLOSE ON horrified Melvin as he rocks back and forth autistically.

MELVIN
Oh, wow, man! No way! No fucking
way, man...!

118 118 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Nancy comforts Mindy.

119 119 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Rhonda turns away.

120 120 EXT. PHAM CAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Val, Earl and Miguel stare in horror and disbelief. Miguel crosses himself. They're in worse trouble than they thought.

VAL
They knocked his place down on
purpose, man. They're gonna tear
this whole town out from under us!

121 121 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Burt and Heather's truck is parked in foreground. The couple is up on the roof in background. Burt prowls along the edge of the roof with the elephant gun. Heather mans the C.B.

VAL (V.O.)

Burt! Heather!

HEATHER

Yeah, Val.

VAL (V.O.)

We're in deep shit over here.
Let's change that plan.

A hump of dirt raises near the base of the house. Burt jerks the rifle to his shoulder and squeezes off a shot. The hump moves away from the house.

HEATHER

Knock it off, Burt!

BURT

I think I scared it!

VAL (V.O.)

Forget going for help. We'll all
be dead long before you get back.

Still moving away, the hump of dirt passes under the sidewalk, rippling the flagstones gently.

HEATHER

(into CB)

We're here, Val. Just tell us what
you need. Come back.

VAL (V.O.)

They're tearing down the houses
here! We all gotta get outta here
together! Now!

The hump of dirt passes under Burt and Heather's truck, rocking the vehicle slightly.

HEATHER

We're with you, Val. We'll come
get everybody. Just hang on tight.

The truck's security alarm starts BOOPING! Burt and Heather stare down helplessly as the noisy truck is furiously attacked by the frenzied creatures. Dust flies as metal rips and tires shred.

Val Earl and Miguel listen in disbelief to the distant truck alarm. It finally sputters and dies.

HEATHER (V.O.)

Val, we're going to have to forget about the truck...

VAL

(into CB)

Yeah, Heather, we got you.

They've hit rock-bottom. They sit in helpless, desperate silence.

Over on the storage shed roof, Melvin is losing it:

MELVIN

Hey, you better think of something, man! You gotta do something!

EARL

Who?

MELVIN

You and Val, man!

Miguel nods in agreement. Val and Earl stare at him, incredulous.

VAL

What?!! Since when the hell's every goddamn thing up to us?!

RHONDA

(flatly)

You guys do all the odd jobs.

Val just stares at her.

Then -- CRASH! The store shudders, creaks, and groans. The creatures are back. One corner of the store lifts up, beams splintering. Then another corner lifts up! The roof tilts like the deck of a storm-tossed ship. From now on the monsters shake and ram the building almost constantly. Hanging on tight, the men peer over the edge.

EARL

We don't have a hell of a lot of time here.

Meanwhile, Rhonda tries her desperate best to be logical:

RHONDA

Look, the situation hasn't changed. We still have to get to solid rock. There must be some way!

VAL
(shouts, angry)
Like what?! There's nothing left
that'll make it to the mountains!

MIGUEL
Hey, Val, quiet, man!

VAL
We need a helicopter is what we
need, or a goddamn tank...

EARL
Wait a minute...the Cat. Could we
take the Cat?

VAL
(dubious)
Jesus. It's slower than hell.

EARL
Yeah, but it weighs better than
thirty tons. No way they could
stop it.

MIGUEL
We can't all fit on that bulldozer.

But Val is warming to the idea.

VAL
But...we could pull something! We
could, I don't know, drag a car
behind it!

EARL
A car, huh? Like a big armored
car? Need something bigger,
tougher...our truck maybe...or,
hell, that old semi trailer!

VAL
Its tires are flat...

EARL
Doesn't matter. The cat can pull
anything.

VAL
Well...all right! We just roll on
out of here!

EARL
We got a plan!

They squint at the bulldozer -- 'way in the distance.

EARL (cont'd)
'Course, that's one helluva long
walk.

They stare grimly, momentarily stuck for an idea. Then:

RHONDA
Listen, they only respond to
vibration, right? Couldn't we...
distract them somehow?

VAL
Yeah, good! Something to keep them
busy. We need a decoy.

EARL
Hey, Melvin, you wanna make a buck?

MELVIN
Fuck you!

Miguel grabs Earl and points down at little garden tractor in
a jumble of Pham Van's equipment and tools near the side of
the store.

MIGUEL
Hey, how about the tractor? Start
him up. Let him go by itself. Let
those things chase it all over is
they like that noise.

EARL
(nodding)
Not bad.
(to Val)
What do you think?

The store takes a heavy hit. The front porch collapses with
a terrific crash.

VAL
I think the ground's getting
closer. I think we do it. We're
gonna save our asses here!

RHONDA
Wait! How are you going to know
they're all following it?

VAL
Good point.

EARL
We got two right here.

Val scrambles to the highest point of the sagging roof and
shouts to Nancy.

VAL (cont'd)
Nancy, we gotta find all four of
them. How many you got over there?

123 123 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

The house shuddering and shaking.

NANCY
There's one. I think one.

124 124 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Earl grabs the CB mic.

EARL
(into CB)
Burt, Heather, we got a little sort
of a plan going here, maybe. Can
you tell if you've still got any of
those things out at your place?
Come back.

125 125 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

BURT
(into CB)
Yeah, still got one poking around.

EARL (V.O.)
That's four. Let us know if it
starts moving, Burt.

BURT
Roger that.

126 126 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - TRACTOR - DAY

Val and Earl have lowered Miguel down to a window sill right
above the garden tractor. He has used his kerchief to tie
the steering wheel to keep the front wheels straight. He
jams the throttle open and signals thumbs-up to Val and Earl
above.

127 127 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Val and Earl stride purposefully toward the opposite end of the roof. Realizing they have the same idea, each one tries to edge ahead of the other.

VAL
I'm making the run to the Cat.

EARL
Like hell you are.

VAL
Get real. I'm faster than you.

EARL
I'm best at driving the Cat.

VAL
Only if something happens to me.

EARL (cont'd)
Look, you'd better listen. I'm older and wiser.

VAL
Yeah, well, you're half right.

Earl raises a fist: The Challenge. They do scissors-rock-paper. One, two, three. Val loses.

VAL (cont'd)
Damn. Guess I have to do it.

EARL
(shakes his head)
I won. I pick who does it.

Val glares at him. Earl's obviously determined.

EARL (cont'd)
Ready when you are, Miguel!

Earl positions himself, nervous as hell, ready to leap at the right moment.

128 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - TRACTOR - DAY

Miguel leans out precariously and pulls the tractor's starter cord. Nothing. On the second try it starts. He slams it into gear and sends it out toward open desert. The store shakes under Miguel, almost knocking him off the window sill, as two humps of dirt pursue the noisy tractor.

MIGUEL
There they go! They're chasing it!

129
129 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

A "spout" of dust erupts near the foundation as the creature beneath zooms away toward the new sound. Nancy whispers:

NANCY
It's going...
(then shouts)
There goes this one! It's going!

130
130 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

The CB radio squawks:

BURT (V.O.)
Hey, this guy just took off like a
shot. What'd you people do?

Earl is poised to leap. Val steps up and slaps him on the back.

VAL
Watch your ass, shithead.

EARL
Don't worry about me, jerkoff.

Val instantly elbows Earl hard in the stomach. As Earl doubles over, Val springs off the edge of the roof.

EARL (cont'd)
You goddamn suicidal son of a
bitch!

We see Val running for all he's worth -- and there's the bulldozer at the edge of town a long way away.

131
131 EXT. DESERT - DAY

LOW CAMERA pursues the garden tractor as it bounces along.

132
132 EXT. PERFECTION - DAY

Val charges across the vast open area that separates him from the bulldozer. We can hear the tractor droning along in the background.

133

133 EXT. DESERT - DAY

The tractor suddenly takes a bad bounce and flips over! The engine dies. Total silence.

134

134 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Earl, Rhonda and Miguel have seen the tractor take a header.

EARL

Oh my God!

135

135 EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - VAL - DAY

Val's crunching boots seem incredibly loud in the sudden silence. He hesitates, glancing over his shoulder. He's totally out in the open, halfway to the bulldozer. Should he run back or go forward? He decides to go for the bulldozer.

136

136 EXT. DESERT - DAY

All four creatures are now heading for Val. INTERCUT four slightly different LOW CAMERA ANGLES speeding over the ground, racing after him. He strains to the limit, breaths coming in painful rasps -- but the creatures are closing in on him with chilling ease.

137

137 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

Everyone watches in horror.

EARL

He'll never make it! They're gonna get him!

RHONDA

(yells)

VAL, STOP! THEY'RE COMING! DON'T MOVE!

138

138 EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - VAL - DAY

Val hears her and stops dead. So do the creatures. Maybe twenty feet away, their giant snouts poke up out of the ground: one, two, three, four. Val stands trembling. The creatures softly shuffle back and forth, searching blindly

for him, hook-tentacles feeling everywhere. One tentacle sweeps toward Val's boot. He manages to lift his foot just in time, letting the tentacle pass beneath it. He balances precariously like a flamingo.

139 139 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

EARL
It worked! They can't find him!
(pause)
Okay, okay...uh...we gotta make
some noise...a lot of noise! HEY,
YOU SORRY SONS OF BITCHES, COME AND
GET ME...!!!!

He starts jumping noisily up and down. Miguel joins in, cursing the monsters in Spanish.

139A 139A EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Rhonda kicks and shouts. But it's obvious they need something louder. She spots the aging outlet pipe coming from the water tank. Bracing herself, she kicks at it with both feet. It finally gives way at a rusted joint. A torrent of water blasts out, thundering into the dirt.

140 140 EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - VAL - DAY

All the creatures wheel about in the dirt and zoom off toward town. Val breathes a big sigh of relief and sprints to the bulldozer.

141 141 EXT. PHAM VAN'S STORE - ROOF - DAY

EARL
That did it, girl! Goddamn good
thinking!

142 142 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

A mass of tentacles and snouts swirl through the big puddle where the water is falling. The creatures' breathing throws up spouts of muddy water. Rhonda looks down nervously. Earl calls reassuringly from Pham Van's:

EARL

Don't worry. No way they can lift
that tower. I mean it's really
heavy.

143 143 INSERT - CONCRETE FOOTING

The dirt begins to cave in around the tower's footing. The
creatures are digging the dirt away!

144 144 BACK TO SCENE

The water tower tilts ever so slightly, creaking and
groaning! Rhonda frantically grabs a handhold.

RHONDA
They're not trying to lift it!

145 145 EXT. BULLDOZER - DAY

Val lands in the driver's seat and turns the engine over --
it doesn't start!

VAL
NO FUCKING WAY!

The old machine starts. Val slams it into reverse and backs
up toward the semi trailer.

146 146 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

The water tower is starting to tilt seriously. Water spills
over the top edge of the tank, drenching Rhonda.

147 147 EXT. BULLDOZER - DAY

Val has used heavy chains on the back of the bulldozer to
jerry-rig a hitch to the semi trailer. Now he scrambles
back into the driver's seat. He guns the engine, wrenching
the old semi trailer from years of dried mud and tumbleweeds.
Ancient tires disintegrate. Rusted wheels screech and
complain -- but it moves. Val lets out a whoop and heads
full-tilt for town. He's suddenly shocked as he sees:

148 148 EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Rhonda's in big trouble. She scrambles to the high side of the tower platform. The tower's going to tip over at any moment! It's roof slides off and crashes into the street!

On Pham Van's, Miguel and Earl are tearing apart the swamp cooler, throwing pieces of it off the roof, trying to distract the creatures, but they can't compete with the noise from the water.

In BG the bulldozer rumbles toward the tower at top speed -- an excruciatingly slow eight miles per hour.

The tremendously heavy water tank suddenly tears loose, sliding off its platform, nearly carrying Rhonda with it. She ends up hanging from a cross beam as the water tank splatters like an enormous egg below, sending a small tidal wave down the street.

The remains of the tower tilt crazily nearly forty-five degrees. The bulldozer grinds closer and closer. Rhonda tries to climb up, but the jostling and shuddering of the tower keeps her dangling precariously. Suddenly she falls!

And lands in the dirt. The creatures zero in on her! She turns wildly and leaps for the blade of the approaching bulldozer. The blade is only inches off the ground but Val swiftly raises it, lifting Rhonda high into the air just above the grasping tentacles!

149 EXT. PERFECTION - MAIN STREET - DAY

As Rhonda climbs down into the cab, Val heads the bulldozer over to Pham Van's and stops. Almost as soon as he does, creatures attack, a frenzy of tentacles grabbing at all sides of the massive earth-moving machine, slithering into the treads. Val and Rhonda watch this nervously as Earl and Miguel quickly clamber from the roof down into the protective steel belly of the semi trailer.

Val mentally crosses his fingers and sends the bulldozer roaring forward. It effortlessly tears loose from the tentacles, grinding one to pulp in its treads. The creature shrieks in pain. The humans cheer! At last they've got the upper hand!

150 EXT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

Melvin dances merrily, and noisily, on the metal rooftop.

MELVIN

Way to go! Dumb fucking worms!
Now haul ass over here, man! Me
next! Get me off of here...!

The flimsy shed seems almost to explode as a furious creature roars up inside. The walls buckle out. The whole structure sags. Melvin scrambles to peak of the roof.

MELVIN

Oh shit! Oh, God! Help!

As the unseen creature thrashes around inside the shed, the walls topple outward and the roof drops to the ground like a pancake. Melvin has lost all self control and just keeps screaming. Val pulls along side, jumps down onto the tread, and reaches out to Melvin. But just as they join hands, the creature hits the roof from beneath, dragging it several feet. Val is yanked off the bulldozer and lands with Melvin on the roof!

The creature slams into the roof repeatedly, but the corrugated metal is both light and resilient. It bends, but the frustrated monster can't get enough "bite" to tear through it. Val and Melvin straddle the peak of the roof, trying desperately to hang on as it heaves up, buckling like a bronco.

Earl scrambles into the bulldozer driver's seat and heads after them at full throttle, the big diesel roaring.

Melvin and Val prepare to jump onto the bulldozer, but just before it reaches them the roof suddenly starts to slide like some mad flying carpet, carried from beneath by a creature! Val hangs on like a rodeo rider, struggling to keep fear-crazed Melvin from tumbling off.

151 151 EXT. DIRT DITCH - DAY

The roof zigs and zags, spins and twists. Melvin and Val won't be shaken loose. Earl does his best to head it off, but it's hard to predict which way the roof will scoot next.

The rood careens alongside the edge of a dirt-walled drainage ditch, then suddenly skitters sideways and plunges over the edge. Melvin and Val tumble to the bottom. As they jump to their feet:

VAL

We got about three seconds!

Val sees, almost right above them, an exposed pipe which spans the ditch. He shoves Melvin toward it. They leap up and grab the pipe, pulling their legs up as high as they can. An instant later, the creature blasts through one wall of the ditch, roars past beneath them and burrows into the opposite wall!

Earl brings the bulldozer to a thundering stop next to them.

EARL

Well, come on!

152 EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nancy and Mindy huddle together on their roof. The upraised scoop blade of the bulldozer comes INTO SHOT with Val riding it. He helps them step across into it.

153 EXT. BURT & HEATHER'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Burt is using a hacksaw to cut lengths from a heavy vertical pipe to which his TV antenna was anchored. Heather works with the sections Burt has already cut off. She is filling them with gunpowder from reloading cannisters and hammering the ends shut -- they're making bombs.

Then they hear rumbling. What is it, more creatures? They're surprised by the odd sight of the strange contraption approaching.

BURT

(impressed)

God damn! Armored transport!

Val climbs up on the bulldozer roll cage so he's about even with Heather and Burt. A creature occasionally slams into the underside of the bulldozer of the semi trailer, rocking them slightly, throwing up clouds of dust.

VAL

Let's go you two. We're headed for the mountains.

BURT

In a minute.

He grabs a coil of blackpowder cannon fuse. He cuts off a length and stuffs it in the end of one of the pipe bombs during:

VAL

Come on, Burt, we can't hold still long. They're damn smart and getting smarter by the minute.

Burt hefts the finished bomb.

BURT

That's fine. We've got some new things to teach them.

VAL

Damn it! They'll sink this rig
just like a boat!

Just then the bulldozer starts to tilt sideways, creatures digging dirt away beneath it. Earl guns it forward out of the depression they're making.

EARL

See that? They're doing it now!
They try it every time we hold
still.

Burt and Heather are impressed. They rush around the rooftop, gathering food, ammo, guns, the finished bombs, handing them to impatient Val who hands them down to people in the semi trailer during:

VAL

Jesus Christ, we're only going nine
miles. Be there in two hours, tops!

BURT

Yeah, well those things are gonna
be on our ass every foot of the
way, right?

He holds up to rifles to Heather, the HK91 assault rifle and another elephant gun.

BURT

What do you think? Max firepower
or...?

HEATHER

I'd go for penetration. The 458
shooting solids -- less ammo to
carry anyway.

Burt nods. Everyone on the bulldozer and semi trailer shouts:

TOWNSFOLK

(adlib)

Come on!
Who cares!
Forget it!
Let's go!

Dust flies up. The bulldozer tilts. Earl guns it forward again. Heather and Burt grab a few more things and leap down into the semi trailer.

MELVIN

Give me a gun! I'll take one!

BURT

I wouldn't give you a gun if it was

World War Three.

Earl pilots the strange looking contraption out into the desert. Burt and Heather watch their fortress-home recede.

BURT

Food for five years. A thousand gallons of gas. Air filtration. Water filtration. Geiger counter. Bomb shelter...

(looks heavenward)

...underground goddamn monsters?!

Heather puts a consoling arm around him.

154 EXT. JEEP TRAIL - DAY
154

The bulldozer easily lumbers along the really rough road we saw Val and Earl's truck struggle over the other morning.

As they come closer we see Burt and Heather riding "shotgun," he sitting out in the bulldozer's scoop, she on the rear of the semi trailer, elephant guns at the ready. Val, Earl and Rhonda are in the cab.

155 EXT. CLIFFS - DAY
155

It's late afternoon, sun casting dramatic shadows across the beautiful desert. We are WIDE on the bizarre vehicle, resolutely grinding along not far from the cliffs, nearing the mountains ahead.

156 EXT. DESERT - BULLDOZER - DAY
156

As they scan the desert, the people are feeling like they may get out of this after all. Earl calls back to the people in the semi trailer.

EARL

Any sign of 'em?

MIGUEL

Maybe they just gave up, you know.

MELVIN

Yeah, the bulldozer's too much for them, man.

As they top a gentle rise, Burt excitedly points ahead.

BURT

There we go, solid rock!

Everyone cheers. But then Heather points up ahead to one side.

HEATHER

What's that?

157 P.O.V. - THE GROUP - DUST CLOUD - DAY
157

Perhaps two hundred yards from them, a huge cloud of dust wells up from behind big boulders.

158 BACK TO SCENE
158

Everyone stares uneasily at the billowing cloud.

NANCY

Is it them?

MIGUEL

What else could it be?

MINDY

What're they doing?

MELVIN

Maybe they're taking a dump.

RHONDA

We're not going over there, right?

EARL

No. We go straight.

VAL

Damn it. What the hell are they doing? They're up to something.

EARL

I don't care what they're doing as long as they're doing it way over there.

Earl shoves the throttle all the way. The engine screams.

159 EXT. DESERT - DUSTCLOUD - DAY
159

We MOVE IN through the cloud of dust. Dirt is flying by the ton out of an eight foot diameter hole in the ground. A huge mound of the tunneled-out dirt is already piled high. The

creatures are digging a tunnel -- but why?

160 EXT. DESERT - BULLDOZER - DAY

We watch the bulldozer rumbling along. It seems unstoppable. The mountains and safety are barely a mile away --

when the EARTH CAVES IN!! THE BULLDOZER PLUNGES NOSE FIRST INTO AN UNSEEN PIT DUG JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE!

The machine ends up half-buried at a steep angle. The semi trailer is right on the edge of the pit. Everyone is shaken, bruised, bloodied. Val, Earl and Rhonda look frantically for Burt, who was riding out front in the scoop. They're relieved to see him clawing his way out of pit. Val hauls him up and all four of them now leap into the semi trailer. As they come to rest, Val slowly realizes what's happened.

VAL

They...they dug a trap! I can't believe this!

The idling bulldozer engine coughs and dies. There is a moment's crushing silence.

Then the dreaded digging begins. Dust boils up around the semi trailer -- creatures digging from below! The semi trailer shakes and shudders, slowly sinking. The people huddle together in sheer panic. Val and Earl grab the nearest of Burt and Heather's guns and fire wildly, hopelessly, down at the dirt. Ricochets whine into the distance.

Burt grimly digs an overloaded knapsack for one of his pipe bombs. He leaps up between Val and Earl and lights the fuse, looking for a target.

BURT

Hungry?! Eat this!!

He tosses the bomb at some churning earth and dives back into the semi trailer.

BURT (cont'd)

Keep your heads down!

KABOOM! The explosion throws up a big plume of dust and rocks. We hear a new, very strange sound of pain from the creatures. The semi trailer instantly stops shaking. The creatures have stopped digging. All is quiet.

The people peer up over the edge of the semi trailer, looking all around. Then:

RHONDA

There they are!

161 161 P.O.V. THE GROUP - DISTANT CREATURES

Numerous spurts of dust mark their paths as they race madly away, fanning out from the semi trailer.

162 162 BACK TO SCENE

MIGUEL

Hey, Burt...did you get one...!

RHONDA

No, there's still four of them.
See...there's like four different
dust trails.

VAL

Sure got their attention, though.
Nice going, Burt.

(to Earl)

Earl, what about the Cat?

Earl's already staring down at the bulldozer.

EARL

No way. It's down for the count.

Val looks around.

163 163 P.O.V. VAL - ROCK OUTCROP

Toward the cliffs he sees a big rock outcrop.

164 164 BACK TO SCENE

Rhonda points in the opposite direction from where Val is looking.

RHONDA

Here they come! They're coming
back!

Heather unexpectedly fire two deafening blasts from her elephant gun at the approaching creatures, then shakes her head, frustrated. They're still coming.

VAL

Come on, everybody! We gotta run
for those rocks over there!

EARL

Jesus, Val, it's pretty far.

MELVIN

Yeah, man! They'll get us!

VAL

There sure as hell get us if we stay here!

RHONDA

Wait, wait, listen. Burt do you have any more of those things?

BURT

The bombs? Damn right I do.

RHONDA

Well, what is you throw one that way, the way we want to go...

(points toward rocks)

Then, when the explosion happens... if it drives them away again...we all run like goddamn bastards!

(to Earl)

Pardon my French.

Wham! With a jolt the semi trailer begins shaking and shuddering again -- sinking, smiling.

MELVIN

What if it doesn't scare them?
What if they don't run?

RHONDA

I don't think it does scare them!
It hurts them! They're so sensitive to sound, they have to run! It hurts too much!

Glances all around.

BURT

She's got my vote.

VAL

Right. We're gonna run. Get ready.

Val squats in front of tear-streaked Mindy.

VAL (cont'd)

Mindy, you understand what we're going to do?

(off her nod)

And don't worry, they can't get us

once we're on those rocks.

MELVIN

I don't know, man. They're too fast! You can't outrun them, no way!

As Burt readies another bomb, he pauses to hand bug-eyed Melvin a huge Ruger Super Redhawk 44 magnum handgun.

BURT

Here, kid. This'll make'em think twice.

Melvin's eyes bug out further. Burt lights his bomb.

BURT (cont'd)

Heads down!!

He hurls the bomb. Wait. Wait. WHOOOM! Again we hear the creatures' unearthly shriek of pain. Rhonda's on her feet before the rocks stop falling. She spots the creatures.

RHONDA

It worked! There they go!

VAL

LET'S DO IT!

Earl lets out a war wild WHOOP. It's infectious. CRANE UP with them as everyone piles out of the semi trailer like soldiers out of a trench -- they charge across no-man's-land.

Melvin runs like a demon. He tries to shoot at the first thing he sees but the gun just clicks over and over -- empty.

MELVIN

Burt, you bastard!

Enraged, he doubles his speed, trying to overtake Burt.

Mindy can't keep up. Nancy tries to pull her along. Val and Earl swoop in, grab Mindy under either arm, and carry her between them.

165 ANGLE - THE CREATURES
165

The ground heaves violently as the retreating monsters angrily wheel about and charge back after the humans.

166 EXT. DESERT - ROCK OUTCROP - DAY
166

Big slabs jutting this way and that -- a rock iceberg in a

sand ocean. The people scramble onto it amid whoops of joy and relief. Melvin charges up to Burt:

MELVIN

You asshole! There's no bullets in this gun!

BURT

Got you moving, didn't it?

Burt's line gets a laugh from people, but then tentacles burst up on all sides of the rock, probing, feeling. The effect is instantly sobering. Burt swiftly grabs out his remaining bombs -- six of them -- and holds one ready. But they're in no immediate danger.

EARL

So...now what?

RHONDA

Could we make it to the mountains?

VAL

(gestures to Burt's bombs)

No way. We'd need fifty of those things.

The hopelessness of the situation suddenly hits Val, Earl, and Rhonda. After a moment:

EARL

Well...that's it. We're not getting off this rock...

VAL

Not going to pole vault anywhere. That's for sure.

HEATHER

What's the matter with you? What are you talking about?!

RHONDA

They'll just wait out there till we're dead. That's what they do.

As this sinks in, Burt loses his cool, igniting an argument.

BURT

What? Well, for chrissake, we could have made a stand at our place! We had food, water...

EARL

You can't fight'em that way...

BURT

You two jackasses hauled us way the hell out here...!?

VAL
BACK OFF, BURT...!

BURT
Well, who put you two in charge?

NANCY
(shouts)
Burt! Those animals would have killed you!

Everyone stares in surprise at normally quiet Nancy.

NANCY (cont'd)
(softly)
You haven't seen what they can do.

VAL
(calmer)
They'd have dug your place out from under you in half an hour!

There's a long, grim silence. Everyone sits glumly. Finally, Burt picks up a bomb and contemplates it:

BURT
(losing it)
If it comes to starvation, I know what I'm doing. Take one of these. Walk right out there with the fuse lit. Stuff it down my pants and let 'em take me down. BOOOOM!

Heather puts a soothing hand on his shoulder.

HEATHER
Jesus, honey!

But now Earl brightens a little.

EARL
You know, that's not a bad idea!

The others react. Is Earl nuts?

EARL
No, I mean, it gives me an idea... going fishing like...

167 EXT. DESERT - ROCK OUTCROP - LATER

In the open desert, a rock lands. Then another. Val and

Rhonda are throwing them from the rock outcrop.

Val, Earl, Rhonda, and Burt have moved away from the main group to another section of the rock outcrop where intervening boulders will protect everyone from an explosion.

Earl has tied a bomb to some nylon rope from one of Burt's knapsacks. Burt places the other bombs safely out of the way behind a ledge. Meanwhile, Val and Rhonda keep throwing rocks. Soon, the ground shifts.

VAL

There! Right straight out in front of you.

Burt has his coil of fuse.

BURT

How much you think?

EARL

I don't know... They're pretty quick...fifteen seconds?

Burt nods, expertly eyeballing a fifteen second length and snipping it off. As he stuffs it into the bomb:

EARL

What the hell is that, anyway?

BURT

Cannon fuse.

EARL

What do you use it for?

BURT

(matter of fact)

My cannon.

The bomb is ready -- it's moment of truth. Earl digs in his pocket for the lighter -- but Val has it. Val nervously leans over to light the fuse, but then frowns as he sees how Earl is holding the rope.

VAL

Come on, you're not going to do your lasso thing...?

EARL

Hey, just 'cause you're no good with a rope...

Val shakes his head and lights the fuse. Earl whirls the bomb on the end of its rope like a lasso, and lets it fly out as far as he can. Then he starts pulling it back in along the ground like a fishing lure. Rhonda stares at her watch

as they all sink down behind the protective boulder.

RHONDA

Come on...come on...

BURT

Take it...take the bait...

Suddenly a snout subtly surfaces and gulps down the bomb. A tense two seconds later -- KABOOOM! Bullseye! It's a volcano of gory creature parts. They splatter all over! The remaining creatures shriek and race away again. The people cheer wildly.

CUT TO:

168 EXT. DESERT - ROCK OUTCROP - LATER

Val, Earl, Rhonda, and Burt prepare to try again. This time Val has the rope and a new bomb. Rhonda stands by him, ready with the lighter. Earl lobs rocks out into the desert.

EARL

Where the hell are they? Hope they didn't wise up.

RHONDA

(pointing)

Nope, there! That's one.

Rhonda shakily lights the fuse. Val heaves the bomb out and starts trolling. The creature swallows it. Everyone drops down behind the boulder, Val impulsively grabbing a second bomb. They tense with anticipatory glee -- but the creature suddenly spits its bomb back out! It sails back right over their heads. It strikes the rocks above them, skittering down a crevice and landing in -- BURT'S PILE OF BOMBS!

Val, Earl, and Rhonda scatter. Burt dives backward over a rock ledge.

BABABAMMM!! All the bombs explode, throwing rocks everywhere. The creatures streak away. Val, Earl and Rhonda sprawl into the dirt, half stunned.

When the panic is over, Val and Earl realize where they are -- fifty yards out in open desert! So is Rhonda, off at an angle from them! Only Burt is safe on the rock outcrop.

And the creatures are coming back fast!

The stranded trio starts back for the outcrop, but the creatures burst up ahead of them -- one blocking Rhonda's path, the other two cutting Val and Earl off! The creatures roar toward their easy prey!

Val and Earl freeze. The ground bulges as the creatures "skid" to a halt not ten feet from them. Rhonda stands stock still some fifty feet away, eyeing her own creature.

Over on the outcrop with the main group of people Heather sizes up the situation.

HEATHER

Make noise. Everybody! COME ON!

Everyone starts hopping up and down, yelling, screaming, and clapping. Burt even runs a few feet out from the rocks, firing a pistol into the dirt.

BURT

COME ON, YOU SLIMEBAGS! OVER HERE!
FRESH MEAT...!

The crowd keeps up the ruckus. The creatures are distracted by the noise, but this time they don't automatically go after it. Their big snouts turn uncertainly this way and that. But they just stay where they are. Their hook-tentacles slide out, feeling all around. Earl whispers:

EARL

They're not falling for it!

Heather takes careful aim with her elephant gun.

HEATHER

I'll make'em pay attention
goddamnit...

But before she can fire, the creatures mysteriously sink from view. Val, Rhonda, and Earl remain frozen. What the hell is going on? Nothing happens -- then --

A HUGE HUMP OF EARTH suddenly wells up near Rhonda. It sinks back down as fast as it appeared. It's like the creature suddenly lifted its whole body almost to the surface then submerged again. Another hump rises and falls right near Val and Earl. There's a pause as the men whisper:

VAL

They're...they're trying to make us
move!

EARL

Or just knock us over. Look, use
the bomb!

VAL

It's out last one. We can't kill
them all.

The creatures try another random "barrage" of humps, some

coming perilously close. They know they'll eventually topple their prey. One comes so close to Val and Earl that pebbles roll down its sides into their boots!

EARL

Use the fucking bomb!

VAL

So, we get back on that rock and in three days we're dead anyway.

EARL

(slowly; terrified)

I want to live for the three days.

More humps rise and fall. Val gives in. He signals Rhonda, gesturing with the bomb. She understands. He'll set it off, driving away the creatures, and they'll all run back to the outcrop.

Val digs for the lighter. Doesn't have it. Earl digs for it, too. But he doesn't have it either! They go dead pale. How can that be? They look across fifty feet of deadly open ground -- trembling Rhonda holds up the lighter!

Over on the outcrop, Burt shouts:

BURT

What's wrong? Use the bomb, for
Godsake!

Val signals to Rhonda to throw the lighter. She nods. But just before she does, A HUMP STARTS RISING DIRECTLY UNDER HER! She fights to keep her balance -- struggling to keep from taking that single step which will instantly tell the creatures where she is.

But there's no hope. The hump jerks higher. Her boots slip down the gravelly side! Instantly the creature twists toward her, its hungry mouth erupting out of the dirt. She screams and dashes for Val and Earl. They run to meet her. The other creatures surface. The trio is cut off from the rock outcrop!

Val and Earl link up with Rhonda and they all run madly while Rhonda tries to light Val's bomb fuse. But suddenly Val yanks the bomb away.

VAL

No wait! This way!

He veers off in a new direction. Startled Earl and Rhonda have no choice but to follow. As they desperately try to catch up to Val:

EARL

(gasping)

What the hell are you doing?!!

VAL

I GOT A GODDAMN PLAN!!

Earl looks up ahead. They're headed right for --

169 EXT. THE CLIFFS - DAY

The massive cliffs. Earl's eyes bug out. In seconds they'll be right at the brink with nowhere to run.

EARL

This better be one great plan!

As they skid to a stop at the very brink, Val breaks off the bomb fuse, leaving only one inch of it. He whirls to check the progress of the advancing creatures.

VAL

Get ready!

He holds the bomb out to Rhonda. She instantly tries to light it. He grabs her wrist so hard it hurts.

EARL

Light it, man! LIGHT IT!!

VAL

Not yet, not yet...

The charging creatures are almost underfoot. Finally Val pulls Rhonda's hand over to light the fuse. Instantly he hurls the bomb as far as he can, behind the creatures.

EARL

Too far! You threw it behind them!

The ground opens under their feet! Tentacles snake toward Val and Earl. A horrid mouth clamps onto Rhonda's boot. She screams as it starts to pull her down.

WHOOOM!! The bomb explodes! The creatures shriek in pain, instantly releasing their prey and racing away from the painful shock wave in the only direction they can --

170 EXT. CLIFFS - WIDE LOW ANGLE - DAY

Right out through the face of the cliffs!! The huge, shrieking creatures seem to hang in mid-air for a moment, their grotesque bodies undulating in pain. And then they fall! And fall and fall -- a thousand feet!

171 171 EXT. BOTTOM OF CLIFFS - DAY

The creatures land on massive jagged rocks, exploding like immense, horrid watermelons. Multi-colored gore festoons the whole cliff face.

TILT UP to see three tiny figures standing at the top of the cliff.

172 172 EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

Val peers down at the distant creatures for a long time. Then he notices Earl and Rhonda are staring at him. Where the hell did he get an idea like that? After a moment:

 VAL

 Well, it just suddenly hit me, you know? Stampede?

They turn and head back toward the others. They laugh as they realize how stealthily they are walking. Val starts taking big, exaggerated stomping steps. Rhonda and Earl follow suit. The trio goes off arm in arm, stomping merrily.

 DISSOLVE TO:

173 173 EXT. PERFECTION - MAIN STREET - DAY

Val and Earl roll two scavenged truck wheels down the street toward their own truck; which is up on jacks, two wheels missing.

Mindy races past excitedly.

 MINDY

 Look!

A highway maintenance truck is rolling into town followed by a police car. The townsfolk happily swarm around the MAINTENANCE MEN and POLICE OFFICER who gape at the destroyed town.

Val and Earl eagerly start bolting on one of their new wheels.

 EARL

 Road's in!

 VAL

 Road's in! Now, soon as we hit Bixby we start making phone calls. We could make some real money off

this whole thing, get in People magazine...

EARL

People? Hell, National Geographic.

VAL

Sell the movie rights. We're going straight from blue-collar to white-collar.

EARL

Yeah...but no ties.

VAL

No ties.

Rhonda pulls up in her truck, leans out and snaps their picture with a top-of-the-line Nikon.

RHONDA

Hi, guys. Burt loaned me his camera.

EARL

Howdy, Rhonda.

RHONDA

You're really leaving, huh?

EARL

You bet. You gonna be staying up here?

RHONDA

Well, yeah! There's going to be major research up here. First thing is to get some pictures of that one we dug up.

An awkward pause. Finally she extends her hand to them. Val just gives it a quick shake.

RHONDA (cont'd)

Uh...well, maybe I'll see you two sometime...

(to Val)

And thanks for everything, you know, saving my life and stuff.

VAL

(awkwardly)

Well...you're welcome.

She gazes at him, just a hint of something in her eyes. Earl springs to attention. Is the boy blind? Then Rhonda snaps out of it.

RHONDA

Well...see ya.

They nod. She drives off. Earl stares at Val who starts putting the second wheel on the truck.

EARL

Christ, Val, maybe she's not your type, but you could, at least, be civil.

VAL

Civil? I'm civil.

EARL

You're not civil, you're glum. We got the world by the tail with a downhill pull and all of a sudden you go glum on me.

Earl freezes as a bell goes off in his head.

EARL (cont'd)

Oh my God. She got to you. You do like her!

VAL

Somebody paying you to do this?

EARL

She just practically asked you for a date. What the hell is wrong?!

Val glares at Earl for a moment.

VAL

Earl, get real. What does she need with a guy like me?

Earl is dumbfounded.

EARL

What was that? All this time she's not good enough for you. Now, suddenly, you're not good enough for her? God, my work is never done. You don't decide is you're worthless, she does. But you gotta give her a chance!

Val lowers the jack letting the truck down.

VAL

Earl, I'm not gonna make a fool of myself! You got that covered.

Earl stands there fuming, mind racing. A last ditch idea hits home -- we see a devilish glint in his eye.

EARL

Fine, make the mistakes I did.
I think I'll just be playing this hand myself.

VAL

What?

EARL

She likes both of us. We both helped her out.

VAL

You are so full of shit...

EARL

Oh yeah? Think about this: She ain't as narrow-minded as you. I'll lay odds she's looking for character in a man. For my part, I'd be proud to have her. I'd goddamn worship her.

Earl hops into the truck.

EARL (cont'd)

I'm going out there right now, help her take those pictures...set up her seismo-jiggers. Whatever she wants. Who the hell knows what'll happen?

Earl starts to drive off. Val springs into the passenger seat. Through the truck's rear window we see Val raise his hand in The Challenge. They do a round of scissors-rock-paper -- but it's a tie. They go again. Another tie. They keep playing and tying as they drive off into the distance and we --

FADE OUT

THE END