

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

Screenplay By

Paul Golding & Peter Bergman

Based on the Novel by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

This is a tale of a meeting of two lonely men on a planet which was dying fast. One of them was a science-fiction writer named Kilgore Trout. He was a nobody at the time, and he supposed his life was over. He was mistaken... The man he met was an automobile dealer, a Pontiac dealer named Dwayne Hoover. Dwayne Hoover was on the brink of going insane...

Listen...

EXT. CAR LOT - MIDLAND CITY, INDIANA - DAY

DWAYNE HOOVER, in his thirties, wearing an expensively tailored if somewhat garish plaid suit and a bright yellow hard hat, is strolling across the acres and acres of new and used cars that are "Dwayne Hoover's Exit Eleven Pontiac Village." He is speaking directly to CAMERA -- like Cal Worthington doing a tv commercial -- and is unrolling a spool of braided electrical wire as he walks -- casually, seeming to pay little attention to what he's doing.

DWAYNE

Hi friends, I'm Dwayne Hoover, owner of Dwayne Hoover's Exit Eleven Pontiac Village here in wonderful Midland City. As I look out at these MILES and MILES of beautiful American-made cars it makes me want to cry -- I'm so happy. Our forefathers came over to this country to MAKE cars. And here they are. It doesn't matter what color you are -- we've got the color for you. Black, white, red, yellow, two-tones... And they're all American with real American names: Bonneville, Chieftan, Fiero, Gran Tourisimo.

He stops next to a small yellow Toyota Celica that is parked all by itself in the middle of the lot. Dwayne glares at it.

DWAYNE

And that's why it makes me so mad when I find one of these
(MORE)

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 little snipers hiding out here
 on my lot in between these
 beautiful Bonneville bedrooms!
 Why this isn't big enough to
 send two pigs to a party in!

We can see now that the braided wire Dwayne has been
 unspooling is attached to a bundle of dynamite.
 Dwayne offhandedly tosses it into the driver's seat
 of the Celica.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 And look here! Do you see what
 it says here?

Dwayne rips the chrome name-plate off the car,
 frowns at it.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 "Celica"! What's a CELICA??

There's a big dictionary lying open on the hood of
 the Celica. Dwayne picks it up.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 I looked it up in the
 dictionary.
 (scanning the book)
 Centerpiece, celery, celibate,
 circlejerk... It's not here.
 (slams the dictionary
 shut)
 No Celica!

Dwayne strides back along the wire he unspooled.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 I asked my friend, Tommy Tojo,
 down at the stereo store. He
 said Celica doesn't mean jack-
 all in Japanese either. So
 what's going on here, friends?
 Who's fooling who?

Dwayne stops at the other end of the wire -- a
 classic World War II demolition battery complete
 with T-shaped plunger.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 I tell you what. I'm sending
 this sucker back to the land of
 the rising sun right now!

He slams the plunger home and the Celica blows sky-high!

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

That's one for you, Mr.
President!

He surveys his lot. Shrapnel and chrome trim are raining down all around him. He gestures proudly at the cars.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Look at that -- now isn't that
beautiful -- nothing but
American bodies!

(turning to camera
again)

You know, it's getting so you
can't trust half you see and
nothing you hear. But you CAN
trust ME. Because I'm Dwayne
Hoover. So get on the Midwest
Turnpike and drive in the
direction of your choice till
you cross Sugar Creek and see my
head spinning around on a pole
up there and then you'll know
you're at Dwayne Hoover's Exit
Eleven Pontiac Village.

(turning)

Okay, tell them what we've got
left, Harry.

HARRY LeSABRE, 40, dressed in an ultra-conservative gray suit, steps INTO SHOT as Dwayne leaves. And as Harry begins to speak, the image dissolves to Black and White, and TV scan lines wash across the screen.

HARRY

(walking down the
line of cars)

We got a red one -- it's an
'84... A blue one -- it's an '86
-- 434 under the hood, bucket
seats, crybaby leather
dashboard... Here's a black one,
four door stretch sedan... Come
on, whoo! I think I'll buy this
one myself. This one's big
enough to be buried in!...
Here's a yellow one...

The CAMERA HAS BEEN STEADILY PULLING BACK. And we are now...

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The image we've been watching is the screen of a pocket-sized tv in the hands of Dwayne Hoover. Dwayne is wearing a black suit and tie now, standing in front of an open grave, watching the tv and listening to it privately over the speaker wire that leads to his ear.

Only two other people are standing as close to the grave as Dwayne: REVEREND HARDY, who is performing the funeral service, and LOTTIE DAVIS, a black maid. Lottie has corn-silk dreadlocks, and carries a juju bag. She is sobbing openly. Just behind Lottie are two big men in fancy Western garb -- Dwayne's step-brothers: LYLE and KYLE. Their combined IQ easily exceeds 120.

Standing behind Dwayne are Harry LeSabre and his wife GRACE. Grace's hand is discretely on Harry's crotch. Harry is doing his best to conceal it tastefully behind a folded newspaper, but he can't keep the hint of a smile from coloring his otherwise serious expression.

FRANCINE PEFKO -- late 20's, simply and strikingly beautiful -- is also standing behind Dwayne, shifting uncomfortably, hoping for it all to be over as soon as possible.

In the back row, a dozen other CO-WORKERS from Dwayne's car dealership stare somberly at the grave. And standing a little apart from all the others, FRED T. BARRY -- 60 or so, fabulously well-to-do -- is eyeing Francine, while his male secretary, KENNETH BARBY, sexless and silent, averts his eyes.

REVEREND HARDY

...and so we consign the mortal remains of Celia Faye Hoover, beloved wife of Dwayne Hoover, into thy all-loving and all-encompassing hands...

As Reverend Hardy speaks, the CAMERA MOVES IN on Dwayne. A white light sears the screen -- like flash-bulbs exploding -- giving brief, high contrast images of a kitchen, a woman's body lying on the Italian tile floor. Dwayne blinks -- as if the images were exploding inside his head. As the CAMERA COMES IN CLOSE on his eyes, we suddenly

CUT TO:

INT. DWAYNE & CELIA HOOVER'S KITCHEN - DAY

Dwayne, his tie open and suit coat rumpled, is standing in the kitchen doorway, motionless, as if in shock. The CAMERA QUICKLY traverses a tableau of POLICE INVESTIGATORS and a PHOTOGRAPHER, ending on a CLOSE SHOT of the white-taped outline of a woman's hand -- and inches away from it, an overturned bottle of Drano. The photographer's flash burns out the image, returns us to:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

REVEREND HARDY

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
Amen.

Reverend Hardy tosses a handful of dirt onto the expensive coffin in the open grave. Lottie follows him, taking a pinch of grayish powder from her bag and sprinkling it into the grave -- making Reverend Hardy sneeze.

Several of the others follow suit. Fred Barry succeeds in getting a little of the dirt onto Francine's shoe. He gestures a courtly and charming apology. Francine recognizes the ploy for exactly what it is and ignores it totally.

Only Dwayne -- among the principals -- hasn't followed suit. The others all turn to him. Confused, understanding that something is expected of him but not knowing what it is, Dwayne throws his pocket tv into the grave.

IN CLOSE-UP: On the tiny screen, Dwayne's head on top of a fifty-foot pole rotates above his car lot. Dirt covers the image.

INT. DWAYNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dwayne is sitting alone at the dining room table in his suburban dream house. He is still wearing his black suit. There's a place set at the table opposite him, but the seat is empty. Lottie serves Dwayne's dinner, singing quietly under her breath -- a reggae Rasta song:

LOTTIE

(singing)

Talkin' 'bout Babylon...

When the Tower fall out of the
sky, mon,

It's gonna fall on you not me.

'Cause I'm safe in the arms of
Jah.

She starts to serve food for the empty place at the table, then suddenly realizes what she's doing.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Mr. Hoover, I've been
serving two places for so long
now...

Dwayne just nods, understanding Lottie, but lost in thought. Lottie starts picking up the other place setting, going back to her singing -- but more stoutly now, as if to keep herself from crying.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

(singing)

No road to run,

No place to hide,

No rock to shelter the Babylon
bride.

Talkin' 'bout Babylon!

DWAYNE

Lottie... Can you give it a rest
tonight...

LOTTIE

Oh, don't you worry, Mr. Dwayne.
Don't you worry. When Jah comes
with his old steam-roller to
crunch up the bones of the
wicked--

DWAYNE

Lottie...!

LOTTIE

It's all right, Mr. Hoover, even
if Miss Celia did go over to the
other side by drinkin' that
king-size can of Drano, Jah
gonna pluck her up outta da
crunch, 'cause I put a pinch of
the Garvey's powder on her--

Dwayne buries his face in his hands. Lottie goes off
toward the kitchen, singing proudly.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Babylon! Talkin' 'bout Babylon!

Dwayne shoves his chair back, gets up, and leaves
the room.

EXT. DWAYNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dwayne is playing basketball by himself now on the
floodlit blacktop apron outside his five-car garage.
The back door opens and Lottie comes out, wearing
her coat, leaving for the night, carrying her copies
of "Police Crimes" and "Reggae Revolution." She
pauses for a second to watch him.

Dwayne is talking as he plays -- but not to himself.
He is talking to his Labrador retriever, SPARKY.
Sparky is lumpy with scars. His ears are in tatters.

Lottie shakes her head at the pair of them, and
exits quietly.

DWAYNE
 (missing one basket
 after another)
 Why'd she do it, Sparky? If
 something was wrong, why didn't
 she tell me? Was it my fault?
 (stopping for a
 minute)
 Come on, Sparky, level with me.
 Man to man. If it was my fault,
 just tell me.

Sparky continues to watch silently. Dwayne goes back
 to shooting baskets.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 We could have talked about it.
 Whatever it was. We used to
 talk. Like you're supposed to.
 We used to communicate. I mean
 you've got to communicate, or
 you're in big trouble. Like you:
 After your auto accident, you
 can't wag your tail. So you
 can't signal to other dogs that
 you're friendly. So they beat
 the shit out of you... Well, it
 beats the shit out of me!
 (laughs)
 You and me, Sparky. You and me.

IN CLOSE UP: The basketball arcs high into the air.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

The Fred T. Barry American Arts Center is a bright
 white globe -- a perfect sphere -- like a giant
 concrete harvest moon permanently installed above
 Midland City. Its huge parking lot is mostly empty -
 - a few trucks and a black limousine, its engine
 idling.

INT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Inside the huge white sphere, in the center of one
 of the vaulted galleries, an enormous pile of horse
 manure is lumped atop a giant lucite wheelbarrow. It
 is the only object in this gallery. A swarm of flies
 are buzzing all over it.

Fred T. Barry is standing in the doorway, contemplating the scene -- and batting away occasional flies. His secretary, Kenneth, is at his side.

BARRY

What do you think, Kenneth?

KENNETH

It's a strong statement.

BARRY

It's going to be a lot stronger by the time we open this place! Cover it up! Get some kind of plastic dome or something and put it over the son of a bitch, will you? Keep the flies off it.

KENNETH

If I might, sir, I think the flies are part of the statement.

BARRY

Who told you that?

KENNETH

The sculptor, sir, before he went back to Texas. He said... I think I've got it here...

He deftly keys a portable memo device, reads from its screen:

KENNETH (CONT'D)

"The flies are the fundamental interactive part of the piece..."

BARRY

Just cover it up! If I paid forty thousand dollars for a pile of horseshit, I guess I've got some rights.

KENNETH

Yes, Mr. Barry.

Barry turns away, strides across the interior of the building toward the circular grand entranceway, which stands framed beneath a pair of equally monumental circular windows. All around the interior, we can see

WORK CREWS feverishly putting last-minute finishing touches on the structure and its exhibits.

BARRY

Okay, punch up that guest list and tell me how we're doing.

KENNETH

(consulting his memo device)

Bernice Keedsler has confirmed, the Gothic novelist? And Bozo Geranium, the abstract expressionist. He'll be here early for the unveiling of his new work as you requested--

BARRY

What about Trout?

KENNETH

Kilgore Trout? He hasn't replied, sir...

BARRY

We've got to have Trout. He's the world's greatest living writer! Phone him!

KENNETH

He doesn't have a phone, sir.

BARRY

Maybe it's unlisted.

KENNETH

No, sir, I checked. He doesn't have a phone.

BARRY

Send him a telegram!

EXT. ARTS CENTER - BARRY'S LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Barry strides out of the huge spherical building toward his waiting limousine. Kenneth taps in a memo as he hurries along behind.

KENNETH

Yes, sir. Certainly, sir.

BARRY
(getting into his
limo)

It's a damn shame! A genius like Trout and no one knows his name. He can't even afford a telephone. Well, he changed my life, and I'm going to change his. I'm going to make him famous -- put him on the map. Let the world see what a great prophet really looks like!

INT. KILGORE TROUT'S APARTMENT - COHOES, N.Y. - DAY

KILGORE TROUT is a grizzled, totally ruffled man in his late fifties. He could pass for a big-city street person, although he does have a place to live: a grundgy, sparsely-furnished upstairs room on a back street in Cohoes, N.Y. Trout is in his underwear, pacing back and forth, talking to his parakeet, BILL. On a table are a number of letters, opened and unopened. He is holding one in his hand, reading

TROUT

Three in one day -- must be some sort of record. Listen to this one, Bill -- Esquire Magazine -- blah blah blah -- we regret that we are unable to -- crap crap crap -- considerable writing skill and merit -- lies lies lies -- in future please submit other works -- bullshit bullshit bullshit -- Sincerely yours, -- Asshole asshole asshole.

He takes the letter, grabs two more from the table, and moves to the window sill, upon which resides a big jar of rubber cement. As if he's done this ritual many times before, he mechanically lays the three rejection letters down backside-up, and swiftly coats them all with the glue. Juggling the three letters, he moves toward his tiny bathroom.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Three in one day! Must be a record.

He snaps on the bathroom light. The tiny windowless room is covered from floor to ceiling -- literally wallpapered with letters. Familiar logos festoon the letterheads: Playboy, Vanity Fair, Harper's...

TROUT (CONT'D)

Ah, Rejection City!

He scans the walls, looking for a bare spot, pauses for a second to stare, almost fondly, at a yellowing, curling letter from "Saturday Evening Post."

TROUT (CONT'D)

That one was sent when a stamp still cost a nickel. The whole world cost a nickel then. A hot dog. The subway. Macaroni and cheese at the Automat.

He slams letter number one onto the wall so hard that the pipes rattle!

TROUT (CONT'D)

It's one...!

(smacks number two
onto the wall)

Two... !!

(slaps the third --
Esquire -- letter
onto a place of
honor near the
toilet paper holder)

THREE strikes you're out!!

'Cause it's their ball game!

He snaps out the light. Bill, the parakeet, watches from his cage as Trout crosses back toward the table.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Damned fools wouldn't know good writing from bad if I whacked them in the head with a dangling participle!

(picks up one of the
other letters)

This one's different, Bill -
Dear Mr. Trout - blah blah blah
- Midland City Arts Festival -
flak flak puff puff flak flak -

(MORE)

TROUT (CONT'D)
 greatest living writer -- huh
 huh huh -- great talent -- lies
 lies lies -- FIVE THOUSAND
 DOLLARS--!

He pauses at this, gasps, clutches his chest as if having a slight seizure, coughs, then regains control.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 Five thousand dollars?
 (continues reading)
 Aaaaah, ego ego ego ego -- please
 come -- phooey phooey phooey --
 Looking forward to -- ego ego
 ego ego -- Sincerely, Fred T.
 Barry!

He crumples the leuer impulsively and tosses it across the room.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 Ah, keep the hell out of my body
 bag!!

Mumbling to himself, Trout moves to the one window in the room and stares out at the huge belching smokestacks that dominate the horizon.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 Whatever happened to the promise
 of tomorrow? When the hope of
 something wonderful lay just
 over the horizon... Now...

He turns and studies his parakeet -- listening...

TROUT (CONT'D)
 You sound terrible, Bill.
 (listening to Bill's
 breathing)
 Worse every day. Sounds like
 you've got emphysema. That's
 what it sounds like, old buddy.
 That's old Doc Trout's
 diagnosis. Chippin' away a
 little each day, that's what
 they do.
 (a sudden rage)
 Damned irresponsible bastards.
 (MORE)

TROUT (CONT'D)

Screwing up all animalkind.
Plants and vegetables are
hurtin', too. Even the trees
wheeze in the breeze. Where will
it end, Bill? Where will it
end...?

Trout angrily picks up a large sketch-pad and
jerkily draws on it with a charcoal pencil. His
drawing is well-formed, but childlike in its
simplicity: A birdcage in the foreground -- huge
smokestacks behind it...

TROUT (CONT'D)

Bad Chemicals. Lung searing,
liver scorching, eye burning
molecules put into the air every
day by the Overlords of
Industry--

He peppers the page with a blizzard of toxic dots --
("Bad Chemicals").

TROUT (CONT'D)

That's what's going to finish
us, Bill. Forget the nukes! It's
chemistry that's going to kill
us. One damned new molecule too
many --

He draws a dot spiraling toward the birdcage.

TROUT (CONT'D)

And dammit if I won't be the
first to know because you'll be
the first to go.

Trout looks at the completed drawing and shows it to
Bill: A miner wearing a traditional lantern cap is
holding a birdcage. The bird in the cage is lying on
his back, X's for eyes, his feet sticking straight
up in the air.

INT. DWAYNE'S GARAGE - MORNING

CLOSE ON an exhaust pipe roaring to life. Dwayne is
sitting in his gleaming, cherried-out Bonneville
convertible with the top down, a drip-proof cup of
coffee in its holder. The car radio blares out:

VOICE--RADIO VOICE
 GOOD MORNING! Shake your dead
 head out of bed! Excuse me for
 living! You're on the morning
 zoo! With yours truly, Sandy
 Sacket. Get ready to fight
 traffic. It's out there waiting
 for you. Got your coffee? I got
 mine. One, two teaspoons of
 crystals -- mmmmm -- someday
 I'll have to try cutting it with
 hot water.

Dwayne is still just staring straight ahead.

VOICE--RADIO VOICE (CONT'D)
 Come on, what're you waiting
 for? Hit the road, Toad. Put the
 car on the tar, Mac. And I'll be
 right back.

The CAMERA MOVES STEADILY IN on Dwayne, who is
 sitting motionless. The air in the closed garage is
 getting gray with exhaust. On the radio, a Fats
 Domino sound-alike croons:

VOICE--LOGO THEME
 GOODBYE, BLUE MONDAY!

Over the theme, a friendly, fatherly VOICE intones
 proudly:

VOICE--COMMERCIAL VOICE
 We are Barrytron. And you may
 not know it, but every time you
 put on a pair of NoCare
 underwear, walk to work on
 Antproof shoe liners, unwrap a
 piece of SaniSpread sandwich
 filler, or fly in low on a pair
 of RadarReady airplane wings,
 you've put your trust in
 Barrytron. Barrytron Industries:
 If there IS a future, we 're it!

The "Goodbye, Blue Monday" logo theme swells. The
 CAMERA IS IN CLOSE on Dwayne, who still hasn't
 moved. He is staring at the remote control door
 opener in his hand, as if he's never seen it before
 in his life.

EXT. GARAGE - MORNING

A long moment passes. Sparky is sniffing at the garage door, whining. Then the door swings up. A huge cloud of exhaust pours out. From the RADIO of

Dwayne's car, the "Goodbye Blue Monday" jingle climaxes.

EXT. BARRYTRON INDUSTRIES - DAY

A big billboard proudly bearing the motto "Goodbye Blue Monday" adorns the expansive lawn in front of the hyper-modern one-way-glass factory complex that is Barrytron Industries.

INT. FRED BARRY'S OFFICE - BARRYTRON - DAY

Barry is sitting at his football-field-sized desk, reading a garishly-colored porno magazine. There's a huge stack of similar magazines near at hand. He's reading aloud - savoring the words of a well-remembered passage:

BARRY

"Dear Sir, poor sir, brave sir:
You are an experiment by the
Creator of the Universe. You are
the only creature in the entire
Universe who has free will.
Everybody else is a robot, a
machine."

(smiling to himself)

How true!

(flips the page)

"Some persons seem to like you,
and others seem to hate you, and
you must wonder why. They are
simply liking machines and
hating machines. Their only
purpose is to stir you up in
every conceivable way, so the
Creator of the Universe can
watch your reactions. They can
no more feel or reason than
grandfather clocks..."

Barry's intercom BUZZES. Barry, moved deeply by the words he's reading, wipes away a tear, then answers the buzz.

VOICE--SECRETARY'S VOICE
 The Xopolis brothers, Mr.
 Barry...

BARRY
 Send them in.

Barry closes the magazine reverently and looks up as
 MAX and MINOS XOPOLIS enter -- a pair of fifties-
 style gangsters turned ninties-style respectable.

BARRY
 (shaking hands)
 Max... Minos... Boys, sit down.
 Let me tell you a little
 story...
 (the Xopolis brothers
 sit)
 When I was a child--

MINOS
 (childlike sincerity)
 Oh, I love this story!

Max shushes him; Fred Barry frowns, then goes on:

BARRY
 My earliest memories were of my
 mother doing the wash on Monday
 -- and crying. I swore then and
 there to do something about it.
 Twenty years later, I invented
 the RoboMagic washer, and every
 housewife stood up and said...

Max and Minos join him as he proudly proclaims:

ALL THREE
 "Goodbye Blue Monday!"

BARRY
 In 1941, The RoboMagic
 Corporation changed its name to
 Barrytron and went to war. No,
 boys, we didn't drop washing
 machines on the enemy. But we
 took that same steel, those same
 gears, and that same American
 knowhow, and helped blow the
 world back to its senses!

MINOS
 I LOVE this story!

BARRY

I know you've heard all that before. But here's the news: As of today, boys, Barrytron Industries is entering a new phase of prosperity! We are doubling our production of Bipolar-poly-planar-methyl-amyl plastic. That means more NoCare underwear; more Antproof shoe liners; more SaniSpread sandwich fillers; more RadarReady airplane wings--

MAX

And a hell of a lot more bucks, huh, Mr. Barry?

BARRY

And a hell of a lot more TRI-polar-poly-planar-methyl-amyl utterly useless toxic goop.

MAX

(grinning)

Hey, getting rid of things is our specialty.

MINOS

Yeah, "Wastes R Us"!

BARRY

I know, boys. You've done an outstanding job disposing of the Barrytron wastes thus far. But can you meet this new challenge?

MAX

(considering it seriously)

Well, Mr. Barry, it means we're gonna have to find another hole to pour it in. The one we're using's almost full.

BARRY

(rising from his seat)

Are you up to it?

MINOS

(rising also, shaking
hands)

Hell, Mr. Barry, we know every
hole in this county!

As they exit, Barry pushes a button on his phone and
Kenneth Barby appears almost immediately in another
doorway.

BARRY

Did you send that telegram to
Mr. Trout?

KENNETH

Yes sir.

Barry nods in satisfaction, picks up the porno
magazine.

BARRY

Kenneth, I'm going to give you
Trout's masterpiece. It'll
change your life.

Kenneth gingerly takes the raunchy-looking magazine.

KENNETH

(squinting at the
title)

"Wet Beaver Weekend," sir. ...?

BARRY

No, no! ! It's called "Now It
Can Be Told"! You have to peel
the sticker off.

KENNETH

Does uh... Mr. Trout specialize
in sexually explicit material?

BARRY

Hell, no! The man's a visionary!
He's never written a dirty word
in his life! Whatever gave you
that idea?

KENNETH

What about the pictures, Mr.
Barry?

BARRY

It's a tragedy. The writings of a genius like Trout being used as filler in pornographic magazines.

(sighs, shakes his head)

You're sure you sent that telegram?

KENNETH

It should be in his hands right now.

INT. TROUT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Trout is holding a crumpled telegram -- and an equally-crumpled check for five thousand dollars. He looks at his parakeet.

TROUT

What should I do, Bill? What do you think I should do?

(the bird turns his back on Trout)

Dammit! Don't turn your damned back on me. I hardly ever ask you for advice. Now that I need you, you turn your damned back on me. Gratitude. That's real gratitude... Help me, will you, dammit? Aaaaah. Just for that, I'll show you! I'm going to go to the stupid thing!

Trout makes a beeline for his closet and fishes around in the darkness. From the deep recesses he removes an ancient tuxedo. It has a greenish patina of mold. Some of the fungus growths resemble patches of fine rabbit fur. He removes the jacket from the hanger and tries it on, inspecting himself in a mirror.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Yeah! This will do nicely for the evenings.

He dabs at his tuxedo with a damp rag. The fungi come away easily.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Hate to do this. Damn. Hate to kill things. Fungi have as much right to life as I do. Here they've been livin' a good life in that closet for years -- feelin' secure -- living a sublime existence -- growing there in the darkness -- safe as clams -- a result of my social inactivity... Then, BLAM! A telegram -- and sudden doom! All they wanted was a little peace and quiet... Hell, they know what they want, Bill. Damned if I do anymore.

(looking at Bill,
then exploding)

Dammit, Bill, are you listening to me? The least you can do is show me a little respect... after all I've done for you... after what we've been through together... Dammit, Bill, I'm talking to you!

(remorse sets in
suddenly)

Shit, Bill, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to shout like that. It's just that sometimes things pile up... get to be too much... Hell, you know how it is... Christ, I've got to yell at somebody... and, well... you're elected 'cause you're here. I really don't mean anything by it. I'm sorry, old fella. Please forgive me.

(Bill rests in his cage, his back to Trout. Trout explodes again)

Are you listening to me??

Trout storms across the room, picks up the crumpled telegram -- then the check. There's a big "Support The Arts!" logo in one corner of the check: two stylized masks -- like "tragedy and comedy," except that both are smiling. Trout moves back to the mirror, mugging -- trying to match the smiling faces on the check. He contorts his face radically before finally giving up.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Aw, the hell with it! I'm not going, Bill.

(pointing at the logo)

They don't want anything but smilers out there. Unhappy failures need not apply...

He crumples up the telegram and is about to crumple the check as well when Bill peeps loudly. Trout cocks his head.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Now you've got something to say! Well, it's about time you put your two cents in. Well, come on, what is it?

(Bill peeps again)

No, no, no, forget it. Nothin' doing. I know about your powers of persuasion. You're a master but my mind's made up. And there's nothing you can say that'll change it.

(Bill squawks furiously)

Storm warnings are up! Take it easy for Chistsakes, you're poppin' your feathers. No, no, that's not it. Of course the money's fine. And the tuxedo looks great. And I know I haven't been out of Cohoes in twenty years. But, Hell, look at me! What do you see? Tell me, Bill, what do you see? Certainly not a lion of the literary world! Definitely not! I'll tell you what you see. What you see - - and let's not mince words -- what you see is a plain, broken-down, unhappy, frustrated, old, old, old FAILURE.

(Bill chatters back excitedly)

What's that? What? A bitter, unhappy, old failure is what they need to see? Exactly what they need?

(MORE)

TROUT (CONT'D)
 (starting to laugh
 wildly,
 uncontrollably)
 Hahahahahaha! Yeah! I get it! I
 get it! You're right dammit,
 Bill, it's perfect! PERFECT!
 Alright, Bill, I'm going!! You
 heard me! I'm going!
 Hahahahahaha!

(He looks at Bill,
 considering
 something)
 Bill, I owe you one for that.
 And I am such a big shot in your
 universe, that I'm going to make
 your three biggest wishes come
 true.

Trout opens the door to Bill's cage, something the
 bird couldn't have done in a thousand years.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 Wish number one.

Bill flies to a windowsill. He puts his little
 shoulder against the glass. Just a slim piece of
 glass separates Bill from the great out-of-doors.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 Bill, your second wish is about
 to come true.

Trout again does something which Bill could never
 have done. He opens the window. But the opening of
 the window is such an alarming business to the
 parakeet that he flies back to his cage and hops
 inside. Trout closes the door of the cage and
 latches it.

TROUT (CONT'D)
 That's the most intelligent use
 of three wishes I ever heard of.
 You smart little bugger. You
 made sure you'd still have
 something worth wishing for --
 to get out of your cage!
 (thinks for a second,
 then)
 Bill, we're going! Dammit we're
 going! I'm taking you with me.
 (MORE)

TROUT (CONT'D)

We'll go out there and show those smilers and literary lion-tamers what nobody has ever seen at an arts festival before: a flesh and blood example -- a bone and marrow representative of all the thousands of artists who devoted their entire beings and lives to a search for truth and beauty -- and didn't find doodley-squat!

Bill squawks furiously.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - TALLYHO ROOM - DAY

The CAMERA IS IN CLOSE on a big "Support the Arts!" lapel pin with a twin smiling face logo. The pin adorns the sequined jacket of BUNNY, the resident lounge lizard and piano player of the Tallyho Room - - locale for Midland City's "power" breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. He is sitting at the pumpkin-colored formica piano bar, tinkling out Las-Vegas-cocktail-Muzak. Bunny's piano playing is truly dreadful.

BONNIE MACMAHON -- 40, a horse-faced cocktail waitress wearing white cowboy boots and black net stockings with crimson garters plainly showing across several inches of bare thigh, and a tight sequin sort of bathing suit with a puff of pink cotton pinned to its rear -- brings martinis to a nearby table. All the drinks have little flags in them, reading "Breakfast of Champions!"

Bonnie is also wearing a big "Support The Arts!" badge. As she sets down the drinks, she says to the people at the table:

BONNIE

(brightly)

Breakfast of Champions!

At the head of the table is Fred Barry. Seated around him are CASSANDRA BOXE, a "million dollar club" realtor, Max and Minos Xopolis, Lyle and Kyle Hoover, and CYPRIAN UKWENDE, a black doctor from Africa. All are wearing "Support The Arts!" badges. One chair is empty. Fred Barry is holding forth:

BARRY

You want to talk about success?

LYLE & KYLE

You bet! That's what we're here for!

BARRY

I am a perfect example of what's right about this country. You pick up the newspaper. You turn on the tv, and all you get are stories about how America is going down the tubes. But why editors and network news stars come out to my town: Midland City?

CASSANDRA

They'd write another story!

MAX XOPOLIS

Or I'd break their legs!

Minos cackles appreciatively, and pantomimes breaking legs.

BARRY

Fifty years ago, this town made railroad tracks, buggy springs, and celluloid collars. Those days are gone. But are we in the dumps? Like Pittsburgh? Philadelphia? Chicago? Detroit?

THE WHOLE TABLE

Hell no!!

BARRY

We've adapted! We've changed with the times! I waved goodbye to smokestacks and labor unions! And said hello to the clean wholesome world of high-impact plastics, guided missiles, and frozen yogurt.

Bunny breaks into "Happy Days Are Here Again!"

CASSANDRA

When I was a girl, you couldn't go swimming in Sugar Creek without catching polio. But now, we're drinking out of it!

BARRY

And there isn't an iron lung left in the County! Where there used to be block after block of dingy mills and sweatshops -- now there's hospitals. And doctors coming in from all over the world. And today it's my pleasure to welcome one of those doctors as the newest member the "Breakfast of Champions" table -- Cyprian... Well, how do you pronounce it?

CYPRIAN

Ukwende. It means throbbing spear.

LYLE

Well, I'll drink to that!

CASSANDRA

(fascinated)

We all will!

Bunny launches into "Breakfast of Champions."
(theme) Fred Barry gestures toward the empty seat at the table.

BARRY

(to Lyle & Kyle)

Where's Dwayne?

KYLE

Off making a commercial.

CASSANDRA

(sincerely)

God bless Dwayne Hoover.

BARRY

God bless America!

EXT. DWAYNE HOOVER'S EXIT 11 PONTIAC VILLAGE - DAY

Dwayne is standing next to a Volkswagon bug, talking to CAMERA:

DWAYNE

My dad fought these people. My sales manager, Harry LeSabre, his dad shot at them. My uncle Frank worked over at Barrytron - when it was a munitions plant? -- and he personally built the largest bomb ever dropped on Hamburg, Germany! And now that metal is coming back at us -- as Rabbits, Jettas, Sirrococs... and bugs.

(whispering
conspiratorially)

You know what you do with a bug?
Squash it!

A huge metal press drops on the car -- turning it into a bug-pancake with its wheels splayed out comically.

In a WIDER SHOT, we see the CREW making the commercial. They love it! They're trying their best to keep their laughter from going onto the soundtrack.

DWAYNE

(nodding in
satisfaction)

I'm Dwayne Hoover, and you can trust me. I don't sell bugs. I sell cars. Tell them what we got left, Harry...

HARRY

(laughing)

Thank you, Dwayne.... We got a black and silver one... We got a green on green with Walla Walla wire wheels... We got--

He stops, noticing that Dwayne hasn't left the shot as he usually does. Dwayne is staring at him in a crazy, unsettling way.

DWAYNE

Harry LeSABRE... LeSABRE ... I don't mind that you have the name of a Buick, Harry, when you're supposed to be selling Pontiacs. You can't help that.

HARRY

Hunh??

INT. MOBILE TV CONTROL TRUCK - DAY

Inside the mobile tv remote unit, the DIRECTOR and TECHNICAL DIRECTOR look at each other.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Is this part of the commercial?

DIRECTOR

I don't know... Let it run.

EXT. DWAYNE HOOVER'S EXIT 11 PONTIAC VILLAGE - DAY

DWAYNE

(building in
intensity)

When we started selling Pontiacs, Harry, the car was sensible transportation for school teachers and grandmothers and maiden aunts. Maybe you haven't noticed, Harry, but the Pontiac has now become a glamorous, youthful adventure for people who want a kick out of life! And you still dress like this was a mortuary! If you want to dress like an undertaker, go work in a mortuary -- and have yourself embalmed while you're at it!

Harry can't do anything but let his mouth hang open. Dwayne grabs Harry by the suit jacket and starts pulling him along the line of cars, pointing out their colors to illustrate his words.

DWAYNE

Harry, I have some news for you:
Modern science has given us a
whole lot of wonderful new
colors, with strange, exciting
names like red!, orange!,
green!, and pink! We're not
stuck any more with just black,
gray and white! Isn't that good
news, Harry? Smile, Harry! I
have the personal promise of the
Governor that never again will
anybody be sent to the Sexual
Offenders' Wing of the
Shepardstown Insane Asylum for
dressing up!

Harry gasps. Dwayne stares at him for a second,
suddenly brought back to reality, totally
disoriented. He looks around at the tv crew, some of
whom are laughing nervously, then he turns quickly
and walks off.

INT. DWAYNE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dwayne is sitting at his desk, holding his head in
his hands. There's a tap on the door, then it opens.
Dwayne looks up. A six-foot tall duck waddles into
his office, carrying a bright blue egg. Dwayne
shakes his head violently, clearing it. When he
looks again, he sees Francine Pefko approaching his
desk, carrying a bright blue aspirin bottle -- and
looking very worried. She's also carrying a black
3/4 inch tape cassette.

FRANCINE

Honey, they finished the
commercial. And I know it wasn't
really for me to do, but I had
to give Harry the rest of the
day off.

DWAYNE

I'm sure you did the right
thing.

FRANCINE

Well, after he finished, he came
back into the showroom. A
customer asked him a question
and he just lay down on the

(MORE)

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
floor and started sobbing. The customer thought it was some kind of sales gimmick. But Harry never got up.

DWAYNE
The poor son-of-a-bitch. It's all my fault. I never talked to him that way before.

FRANCINE
You're the kindest boss in the world.

DWAYNE
All of a sudden he just looked like death warmed over to me -- all black and gray and no colors and...
(shudders)
What's wrong with me?

FRANCINE
Do you want an aspirin?

DWAYNE
Give me two -- my headache has a headache.

She gets the pills and Dwayne opens a 32oz. bottle of water. The label on the bottle says "Sparkling Tears of Christ Water."

It shows water coming from a limestone face of Christ into a bottle whose label shows water coming from a limestone face of Christ into a bottle... ad infinitum.

FRANCINE
Adorable label. Whose idea was it?

DWAYNE
Lyle and Kyle. They say that tourists keep dipping their hands into the cistern out at the Miracle Cave, so the three of us might as well make a buck on it.
(taking a swig)
But I don't know. It tastes like plastic.

FRANCINE

Maybe it's the bottle.

She puts the water back on a shelf next to a half dozen more bottles, and holds up the cassette.

FRANCINE

Do you want to see the commercial? They cut it together real cute.

She puts it on the tape player, goes and stands behind Dwayne and gives him a gentle neck massage as the ad comes on the tv.

INT. SHEPARDSTOWN INSANE ASYLUM - DAY

On a poorly-tuned tv in the recreation room of the Shepardstown Insane Asylum, we can see Dwayne, standing next to the Volkswagon bug.

In the foreground, WAYNE HOOBLER -- 25 or so, black, dressed as a Trustee of the Shepardstown Insane Asylum -- is sweeping up the room, moving past the drugged-out INMATES -- and talking back to the tv.

DWAYNE (ON TV)

My dad fought these people. My sales manager, Harry LeSabre, his dad shot at them.

HOOBLER

You tell 'em Dwayne!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

My uncle Frank worked over at Barrytron -- when it was a munitions plant? -- and he personally built the largest bomb ever dropped on Hamburg, Germany!

HOOBLER

BAAA-BOOOOM!!!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

And now that metal is coming back at us --

HOOBLER

You say WHAT??

DWAYNE (ON TV)
 -- as Rabbits, Jettas,
 Sirrocos... and bugs.
 (whispering
 conspiratorially)
 You know what you do with a bug?

 HOOBLER
 Step on it!

 DWAYNE (ON TV)
 Squash it!

A huge metal press drops on the car -- turning it
 into a bug-pancake with its wheels splayed out
 comically.

 HOOBLER
 WHOA!
 (claps his hands)
 That's my MAN!

 DWAYNE (ON TV)
 (nodding in
 satisfaction)
 I'm Dwayne Hoover, and you can
 trust me.

 HOOBLER
 Oh, I trust you, Dwayne!

 DWAYNE (ON TV)
 I don't sell bugs. I sell cars.
 Tell them what we got left,
 Harry...

Harry comes on, barely holding it together.

 HARRY (ON TV)
 Here's a black one... Here's a
 bl...bl... blue one... Here's
 another blue one...

Hoobler dials the volume down and turns to one of
 the inmates.

 HOOBLER
 You see that car? You know what
 that car needs? Your face in it!
 And when Wayne Hoobler give it
 the wax, that's what you got!
 (a beat)
 You got a car?

INMATE

I am Satan.

HOOBLER

That's nice. I'm Wayne Hoobler,
and I don't have a car. And if
you don't have a car, you can't
wax on it. So what do I do? I
just go out and get me one. What
do you think of that?

INMATE

I am Satan.

HOOBLER

So you say. The Country Club's a
nice place to get cars. On the
weekends. Real pretty ones. But
there's always one that needs a
waxin' real bad. Now on
weekdays, I go to the bank. Nice
people. Nice cars. But there's
always one that needs a waxin'
real bad. Drive it home, get out
the rags and the can, go to
work, pretty soon the neighbors
are all around smilin', drinkin'
beer, kids laughin', the car
shinin' -- that's when I feel
like I'm one of them real
Americans on the ads on tv.

(a beat, shaking his
head)

Then the cops come. Lately, they
be comin' so soon I can't even
get the job done. Now that's a
shame. They say I'm crazy. What
do you think of that?

INMATE

I am Satan.

HOOBLER

And I am gettin' out of here.
One more day, Mr. Satan. One
more day!

He turns back to the tv, turns up the volume.

DWAYNE (ON TV)

You know, it's getting so you
can't trust half you see and
nothing you hear.

HOOBLER

Right on!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

But you can trust ME.

HOOBLER

Yes, I can!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

'Cause I'm Dwayne Hoover.

HOOBLER

And I'm Wayne Hoobler!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

So get on the Midwest Turnpike
and drive in the direction of
your choice till you cross Sugar
Creek and see my head spinnin'
around on a pole up there...

HOOBLER

I will!

DWAYNE (ON TV)

...and then you'll know you're
at Dwayne Hoover's Exit Eleven
Pontiac Village.

HOOBLER

I'm on my way! Whoa!

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Kilgore Trout is also on his way. He's in a Greyhound bus bound for New York City. Bill, in his cage, is on Trout's lap. His seatmate is a small, very clean and prim WOMAN in her sixties. She is reading aloud from a religious tract. Trout is trying, unsuccessfully, to take a nap.

WOMAN

"...And those were the
abominations of the sons of
Solomon: fornication, sodomy,
and the coupling with the beasts
of the field, for which the sons
were turned away from the sight
of the Lord and cast into the
(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)

fiery pit to suffer and travail
unto the end of time."

(closing the
pamphlet)

So you be wary, young man. New
York City is teeming with
homosexuals, lesbians, and
communists, every one of them
paid by Lucifer to drag you down
to hell.

TROUT

(to himself)

Sounds like good work if you can
get it.

WOMAN

(shocked)

I beg your pardon!?

TROUT

(turning to her)

Don't misunderstand me. I join
you in your miserable evaluation
of the human race. Madam,
mankind deserves to die
horribly.

WOMAN

(happily)

Oh, you're a Christian!

TROUT

Mankind deserves to die
horribly; but not for
fornication, sodomy, or the
occasional four-legged
girlfriend. Humans are damned
because they alone have
developed a taste for cruelty.
Because we are all Heliogabalus.

WOMAN

Helio--who? Is he in the Bible?

TROUT

Well, when they rewrite it
again, maybe he will be. He's
wicked enough.

He pulls out his sketch pad, unfolds it, and begins to draw: A resplendent figure -- HELIOGABALUS -- complete with the Imperial toga.

TROUT

Listen: Heliogabalus was the name of a Roman emperor who had a sculptor make a hollow, life-size iron bull with a door on it...

(he sketches the
forged iron bull...)

The bull's mouth was open. That was the only other opening to the outside. Heliogabalus would have a human being put into the bull through the door, and the door would be locked.

Trout draws a slave being imprisoned inside the bull. Despite herself, the woman is fascinated.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Any sounds the human being made in there would come out of the mouth of the bull.

A "balloon" issues from the bull's mouth. Trout writes "HELP!!" in the balloon.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Heliogabalus would have guests in for a nice party, with plenty of food and wine and beautiful women and pretty boys -- and Heliogabalus would have a servant light kindling. The kindling was under dry firewood

--

Trout grins at the woman. She edges away on her seat. Trout finishes the drawing and holds it up for her. Flames lick the belly of the bull.

TROUT (CONT'D)

The dry firewood was under the bull.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Carrying a battered cardboard suitcase in one hand and Bill's birdcage in the other, Kilgore Trout descends from the bus into the center of midtown Manhattan.

He looks around, orienting himself in the bustling crowd, then spots a huge sign half a block away:
 "Shorty Cox -- Adult Book Faire -- MAGAZINES --
 TAPES -- PEEPS."

INT. DIRTY BOOK STORE - DAY

Trout enters the store. The fat, greasy-black-haired CLERK is wearing a Beethoven tee-shirt and is engrossed in a huge (eight carton) Chinese take-out dinner. The clerk eyes Trout.

CLERK
 Something for the bird?
 (a disgusting,
 wheezing laugh)
 We got great pecker films.

TROUT
 I'm trying to assemble the
 complete works of Kilgore Trout.
 It's for an Arts Festival.

CLERK
 Trout!? Birds!? What do you
 think this is, a fuckin' zoo?
 Hey, what're you into, man? You
 want bimbo's doin' donkeys?

TROUT
 Another time, perhaps. May I see
 your magazines?

CLERK
 Suit yourself, Tarzan.

He points toward the magazine section -- aisle after aisle of garishly-colored raunch. Trout squares his shoulders and sets off on his quest.

INT. HARRY LESABRE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

IN CLOSE-UP: Harry LeSabre is a few inches from his medicine-cabinet mirror, carefully plucking an eyebrow. His shoulders are bare. He is talking loudly enough so that his wife, who is in their bedroom, can hear.

HARRY

He knows! You heard what he said. He made fun of my clothes. He knows, Grace!

GRACE'S VOICE

Bullshit, he knows. You haven't passed around any Polaroids, have you?

HARRY

No, honey...

INT. HARRY LESABRE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

GRACE LeSABRE is stretched out seductively on the purple satin sheets of their king-size bed. She is wearing "Frederick's Of Hollywood" style trashy lingerie and smoking a small cigar in a long holder made from the legbone of a stork. She looks like the cover of one of the magazines in "Shorty Cox Adult Book Faire."

GRACE

You haven't been subscribing to any magazines, have you?

HARRY'S VOICE

No... But he threatened me with the Sexual Offenders Wing up at Shepardstown. I know he knows!

GRACE

Fuck Dwayne Hoover. What does he know about sex anyway? How many orgasms do you think Dwayne Hoover has a month?

HARRY'S VOICE

Gee, I don't know, honey.

GRACE

One point five - that's my guess. Do you know what my average is?

HARRY'S VOICE

Tell me again. I like to hear it.

GRACE

Eighty-seven! Will you hurry up and get that thing on!

Harry appears, resplendent in a slinky, sequined strapless evening gown and spike heels, his cheeks are rouged now and his mouth a pout of lipstick.

HARRY

Grace, don't you understand? Dwayne Hoover is my boss. And he thinks I'm a freak.

Becoming excited, Grace slides across the bed toward Harry, starts to run her hands along the satin softness of his dress.

GRACE

You're not a freak, Harry. Listen, as nearly as I can tell, we're the only white people in Midland City with any kind of sex life. I'm serious. Midland City is the asshole of the Universe. Let's sell the God damn Barrytron stock and buy a condominium on Maui and live for a change!

Harry's erection is visible beneath the tight satin dress. Grace kisses him hungrily.

INT. DWAYNE'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM- NIGHT

CLOSE ON a revolver in a man's hand. The thumb cocks the gun. The barrel rotates and enters the mouth of Dwayne Hoover.

Dwayne is sitting, fully clothed, on the toilet in his luxurious master bathroom. He holds the muzzle of the gun in his mouth for a long moment. He closes his eyes...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sparky is sitting rigidly, ears cocked, right outside the door. A SHOT echoes explosively in the tiled bathroom. Sparky whines.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM- NIGHT

Dwayne is holding the smoking revolver. On the wall nearby, one of six tiles decorated with hand-painted flamingoes is shattered into pieces. Dwayne levels the gun at the next flamingo tile in line. As if he were in a shooting gallery, he picks off the flamingoes, one after another.

DWAYNE

Dumb fucking birds...!

He puts the gun down, picks up the bathroom telephone, and pushes a single button. The phone memory-dials a number. Francine's voice answers:

FRANCINE'S VOICE

Hello?

DWAYNE

Francine...? This is the corpse of Dwayne Hoover.

Francine laughs.

INT. FRANCINE PEFKO'S APARTMENT- NIGHT CLOSE ON

A cuddly bear's face: Its mouth begins to move -- in synch now with Dwayne's words:

THE BEAR

(Dwayne's voice)

What's so funny?

Francine is lying on her bed. She laughs again at Dwayne's lugubrious voice being mouthed by the bear-telephone.

FRANCINE

I'm sorry, honey. You're coming through the bear phone. The one Mom gave me? And it just seemed so silly. A bear moving its mouth up and down, saying "This is the corpse of Dwayne Hoover." I'm sorry. You must feel awful.

THE BEAR

(Dwayne's voice)

Yeah. I do. Staying in this house is like living in an open coffin.

Francine laughs again.

FRANCINE

This is impossible. I'm going to have to take it in the other room.

INT. DWAYNE'S MASTER BATHROOM- NIGHT

DWAYNE

Forget it. Want to go for a ride?

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - UNION AVENUE - NIGHT

Dwayne zooms down the Interstate, which he has all to himself. His car radio, tuned to a country music station in West Virginia, is offering him ten different kinds of flowering shrubs and five fruit trees for six dollars, C.O.D.

VOICE--RADIO VOICE

And every shrub, every fruit tree, and every vegetable in the Starter Kit has been mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and there's a tag on each one to show you where. No devil food in this deal!

DWAYNE

Sounds good to me.

Dwayne swerves into Exit Ten at about sixty miles an hour above the recommended speed limit, slams into a rubberized array of 55-gallon water drums, and spins around and around. He comes out onto Union Avenue going eighty miles an hour backwards.

VOICE--RADIO VOICE

Yes, you can grow the Lord's
Supper in your own back yard.
And to the first five hundred
who take advantage of this
remarkable offer, we'll include
the smallest white-suede-covered
Bible in the world. The full
power of the Word in a package
no bigger than a postage stamp!

DWAYNE

Sounds good to me.

Dwayne jumps a curb, roars across a vacant lot, jounces back onto the next street, and spins around once more. He slides sideways on two wheels, almost tipping over, and comes slamming down to a stop precisely in the gap between two parked cars in front of Francine Peflco's small red-brick tract house.

Only about a second passes before the front door opens, and Francine comes out, buttoning her coat. To Francine it looks as if Dwayne has done a particularly expert job of parallel parking.

INT. DWAYNE'S CAR - NIGHT

Dwayne is driving along Ridge Road, a highway that winds up into the hills above Midland City.

DWAYNE

I killed six flamingoes in my
bathroom tonight.

Francine stares at him. He shrugs.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

It was them or me.

FRANCINE

(studying him
sympathetically)
It's Celia's death, isn't it?
That's what you're carrying
around. That's what's been
making you act so--

DWAYNE

I sat there on the john with a gun in my mouth and I wasn't thinking about Celia at all. I was thinking about how oily the barrel tasted.

Dwayne is starting to drive faster...

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And I thought about the bullets -- neat little metal packages filled with charcoal and potassium nitrate and sulfur.

And faster...

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And all I had to do was pull this little lever, and the powder would turn to gas.

And even faster... He's barely staying on the road.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And the gas would blow a chunk of lead down a tube -- straight through my brains.

Francine slides over next to Dwayne, puts her hand on his arm. Throughout this scene, she shows not the slightest trace of fear. She is totally absorbed in Dwayne, truly loves and -- for whatever possibly misplaced reason -- TRUSTS him. (Just as he asks the world to do in his tv ads!)

FRANCINE

Honey, killing yourself isn't going to make you feel any better. I thought about killing myself. When they told me Frankie drowned in boot camp. And I don't know why, but I just felt so guilty that I thought I deserved to die. Maybe you're feeling the same way.

Dwayne is still accelerating. The car screams through a turn, just inches from sliding over the side -- down a hillside that grows steeper as they continue to climb.

DWAYNE

I don't feel guilty. Maybe I should. But I don't know how. I've always envied people who could. I've seen a thousand tv shows about people who feel guilty for what they've done -- being hunted down by people who feel guilty for chasing them. But I just don't get it.

(turning to stare
intently straight at
her)

I just don't get it.

FRANCINE

You have been pretty lucky all your life. Maybe that's why. But there must be something that's making you act this way.

Dwayne is still staring intently at Francine. The convertible is ripping blindly through the night at a hundred and twenty miles an hour now -- straight toward the edge of the cliff.

DWAYNE

It just comes and goes,
Francine. One moment, I'm Dwayne Hoover -- "Mr. Midland City" --
and the next thing you know--

He turns back, sees the rapidly approaching void...

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

I'm over the edge!

He slams on the brakes. The car shudders and screeches and comes to a stop one inch from the sheer drop into oblivion!

INT. PORNO MOVIE THEATER - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Trout is sitting in a dingy porno movie house on 42nd. Street in New York. In the nearby rows are a rag-tag assortment of DIRTY OLD MEN and TEEN-AGE BOYS. Spread out on the seats next to Trout are his possessions: his cardboard suitcase, his birdcage, and a recently-acquired collection of pornographic magazines (the collected works of Kilgore Trout). He also has a box of popcorn, and is feeding Bill as he

talks. The screen bathes them in its raunchy images; from theater speakers, PANTING and MOANING punctuate Trout's speech.

TROUT

How do you like it so far, Bill?
You like the plot? A college professor being stripped to his candy-striped underwear by a group of sorority girls -- and then having oral sex with all of them...? I love it! In three days, those walking success stories out in Midland City are going to be asking me about --

(takes the crumpled letter from his pocket, quotes from it)

"The American Novel Beyond Barth and Bellow." And you know what I'm going to say? "Gentlemen, I don't know pigeon shit about Barth and Bellow, but I know what it's like to spend the night with a lot of other dirty old men in a porno theater in New York City. Could we talk about that?"

The MEN around Trout yell for him to "Shut the hell up!"

TROUT (CONT'D)

(turning to the men)

Why? Do you find what's happening on the screen more interesting than what I'm saying? These phantasms of young men and young women sucking harmlessly on one another's soft apertures?

The BURLY MAN in front of Trout swings around.

BURLY MAN

Hey, Perfesser! You want somethin' inneresting from a "soft aperture"?

He farts long and loudly. The other men laugh. Bill tries to retreat within his cage.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Trout, carrying his suitcase, his magazines, and his birdcage, wanders out onto the sidewalk of Forty-second Street. It's a dangerous place to be. (The whole city is dangerous -- because of the uneven distribution of wealth and so on.)

In the background, a white Oldsmobile Toronado with a black vinyl roof is burbling along at about three miles an hour, ten feet behind Trout and close to the curb. A PIMP -- visible only as a silhouette in a wide-brimmed hat -- is at the wheel.

Trout suddenly stops. A gleam comes to his eye. He sets down the suitcase, and unfolds his sketch pad.

TROUT

(to Bill)

That dumb fart gave me a good idea for a story. Listen:

He writes across the top of the page: "The Dancing Fool."

TROUT (CONT'D)

It's about a tragic failure to communicate... A flying saucer creature named Zog arrives on Earth to explain how wars could be prevented and how cancer could be cured.

Trout draws brave young Zog standing beside his flying saucer.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Zog brings the information from his home planet, Margo, where the natives converse by means of farts and tap dancing.

In illustration, Trout himself does a little tap-step punctuated by a few staccato farts. TWO YOUNG PROSTITUTES -- one white, the other black -- are strolling along the street near the slowly cruising Oldsmobile. They stop and take in Trout's little show.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Zog lands at night in
Connecticut. He no sooner
touches down than he sees a
brush-fire spreading toward a
house. He rushes into the house
-- farting and tap dancing --
warning the people about the
terrible danger they're in. And
the head of the house brains Zog
with a golfclub!

Trout finishes his sketch with a golfclub embedded
in poor Zog's head. He folds the sketch pad and
reaches for his suitcase. The two prostitutes step
up on either side of him.

BLACK PROSTITUTE

Hey, Fred Astaire -- you and
tweety-bird looking for some
fun?

TROUT

Actually, we're looking for a
cheap hotel.

WHITE PROSTITUTE

I know a cheap hotel -- hundred
dollars a night!

TROUT

That's not cheap.

WHITE PROSTITUTE

We come with it!

BLACK PROSTITUTE

What's the matter, Grandfather?
You too tight to pop for a
little party?

WHITE PROSTITUTE

You broke or something?

TROUT

Actually, no. I've got five
thousand dollars.

The two prostitutes look at each other.

EXT. HANDBALL COURT - QUEENSBORO BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kilgore Trout is lying sprawled on a handball court underneath the Queensboro Bridge. Blood seeps from behind one ear. His clothes are in tatters -- razored open in a search for money. His possessions are scattered around him -- his pornographic magazines, his tuxedo spilling from the now torn-open cardboard suitcase, his birdcage battered and empty.

He is pinned in a pair of flashlight beams. Two NEW YORK COPS stand over him. His eyes open and he looks around, sees the empty birdcage.

TROUT

What have they done to my bird??

COP

We'll have the doc look at it
when we take you in.

TROUT

(looking around
desperately)

Bill!! Bill!!

In answer, a parakeet calls out from nearby. As Trout slumps back in relief, Bill flutters down and lands on his chest.

EXT. SACRED MIRACLE CAVE MOTEL - MORNING

Lyle and Kyle Hoover, carrying matched Browning automatic shotguns, are walking past a row of attached cottages -- the "Sacred Miracle Cave Motel." Each of the cottages has a different, evocative name: "Sheik of Araby," "Hawaiian Love-Nest," "Queen of Sheeba," "Polar Ice Palace." Dwayne's yellow Bonneville convertible is parked outside "Tarzan and Jane." Lyle and Kyle stop, look at the car.

INT. TARZAN AND JANE COTTAGE - MORNING

The cheapest possible version of fantasy -- like decorations left over from a high school play: a few tufts of bush grass, a mangy stuffed tiger with a broken leg propped up against one wall, a cloth monkey dangling from the ceiling, rattan walls and

astro-turf floor. Jungle sounds emanate from a tinny speaker in the corner.

Dwayne and Francine are lying in the mosquito-netted bed. Dwayne's eyes are open, his head is nestled against Francine's breast.

DWAYNE

I'm so confused.

FRANCINE

(sleepily)

We all are.

DWAYNE

I've got to talk to somebody.

FRANCINE

You can talk to me.

DWAYNE

(begging her fragrant
bosom)

Tell me what life is all about.

FRANCINE

Only God knows that.

Dwayne is silent for a long moment. When he speaks, it's haltingly at first.

DWAYNE

The day that Celia.. swallowed
the Drano.. I was in Detroit..
on a tour of the General Motors
research labs. I watched
scientists set upholstery on
fire, throw gravel at
windshields, snap crankshafts,
stage head-on collisions... The
sign on the front door of the
building where all that torture
went on said "DESTRUCTIVE
TESTING." And right now, I can't
get that sign out of my head. I
can't help wondering if that's
what God put me on Earth for.

FRANCINE

(stroking his hair)

For what, honey?

DWAYNE

To find out how much a man could
take without breaking.

FRANCINE

You're tired. You want to sleep
for a while?

DWAYNE

I can't sleep, until I get some
answers.

FRANCINE

You want to go to a doctor?

DWAYNE

I don't want to hear the kinds
of things doctors say. I want to
talk to somebody brand new. I've
heard everything anybody in
Midland City ever said, ever
will say. It's got to be
somebody new.

FRANCINE

Like who?

DWAYNE

I don't know. Somebody from
Mars, maybe.

There is a timid little KNOCK on the door.

EXT. TARZAN AND JANE COTTAGE - MORNING

Kyle is standing at the door, his hand poised to tap
again, torn by doubt and uncertainty.

LYLE

I didn't say kiss it, Pecker-
head, I said knock on it!

KYLE

But it ain't hardly eight
o'clock, Lyle!

LYLE

This is important! Put some wood
on those knuckles!

Kyle is about to knock again when the door opens a
crack and Dwayne peers out.

KYLE
(apologetically)
It's just us. Kyle...

LYLE (CONT'D)
...and Lyle.

DWAYNE
(Tarzan accent)
Go away. Tarzan have hangover.

LYLE
We gotta talk. We got a big
problem at the Cave.

DWAYNE
What kind of problem?

KYLE
Bubbles. The stream under the
Miracle Cave is filling up with
bubbles.

Francine appears behind Dwayne in the doorway.

FRANCINE
What's the matter, Honey?

DWAYNE
Bubble trouble at Cave, Jane.

LYLE
These ain't no ordinary bubbles,
Dwayne. They're as tough as ping
pong balls.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Them bubbles is halfway up to
the Moby Dick. The way they're
coming, they'll be up to the
Cathedral in a week or two!

DWAYNE
Why the guns? You going bubble
hunting?

LYLE
Righteroo! You wanta come?

INT. CATHEDRAL OF WHISPERS - MORNING

We are in a huge, dimly-lit, underground room densely populated with stalactites and stalagmites. A thicket of rustic, wooden signs shaped like hands point toward different attractions: "Ghost of Jesse James," "Moby Dick," the "Sacred Tears of Christ Sacred Grotto." The room we're in is identified as the "Cathedral of Whispers."

DWAYNE'S VOICE

(whispering)

Where's the problem, Lyle?

LYLE'S VOICE

(whispering)

In here...

Dwayne, Lyle, Kyle and Francine enter the Cathedral of Whispers. Activated by a photoelectric trip-switch, a sappy organ solo suddenly blares out. The MUSIC is coming from a cheap loudspeaker behind a cluster of stalactites and stalagmites which have grown together in one corner of the Cathedral. The cluster is illuminated by electric lights, which change colors in rhythm to the music.

DWAYNE

(wincing)

Would you turn off the "Pipe Organ of the Gods"!

Lyle flips a concealed switch and the lights and music cut off abruptly. The only sound now, is water TRICKLING down from a stone formation that has been very crudely modified with patching plaster to resemble a face of Christ. The water drips from its "eyes" into a pool: the "Sacred Tears of Christ Sacred Grotto."

LYLE

(surveying the Cathedral)

Brings back memories, don't it?
All the people that've been married here?

KYLE

(to Dwayne)

Harry LeSabre and his wife. You and Celia.

FRANCINE

I'd never get married here. This place gives me the creeps.

LYLE

Everybody to their own taste. It always makes me feel real religious.

Lyle sits down on the lip of the pool. It's bottom glitters with coins that tourists have tossed into the clear water.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Ya sit down here after the tourists go, and it gets real quiet, with just the Tears of Christ trickling into the Sacred Grotto, and you almost feel like God's talking to you.

KYLE

Not for long! Come on, Lyle, let's show him...

They walk downstream from the grotto, along a narrow twisting passage. As they turn a corner, they are suddenly face to face with a wall of tennis-ball sized bubbles shouldering one another up the passage. The bubbles have started to engulf a big boulder painted white to resemble Moby Dick the Great White Whale. Moby Dick's long-lashed blue eyes, as big as dinner plates, barely peer out above the rising wall of bubbles.

FRANCINE

Actually, it's kind of cute. Looks like the whale's taking a bubble bath.

Dwayne touches the bubbles. They're as hard as plastic. He picks one up, stares at it.

KYLE

You think it's some kinda egg?

DWAYNE

Yeah, Kyle. Laid by a plastic hen. How long has this been going on?

LYLE

Since yesterday morning. And if
we don't stop 'em fast, we're
gonna be out of business.

(cocking his gun)

Come on. Let's waste the little
suckers!

They lift their guns. Francine covers her ears and immediately backs out of the passage as Lyle and Kyle start blasting away! The sounds of the GUNS ROAR in the cavern -- mixed with the sounds of millions of BUBBLES POPPING.

The smoke from the guns conceals the wall of bubbles for a moment, then it clears -- revealing a huge, billowing cloud - of phosphorescent yellow gas. Lyle, Kyle, and Dwayne immediately begin to cough and choke -- and run headlong back out of the cave.

EXT. SHEPARDSTOWN INSANE ASYLUM - MORNING

Wayne Hoobler's content and smiling face is reflected in the sparkling, diamond-bright wax job on a Plymouth Estate car. The WARDEN of Shepardstown Insane Asylum appears behind Hoobler, his face gleamingly reflected as well.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK: the warden's car is parked just inside the main gates of the asylum. Hoobler is wearing a freshly-laundered set of coveralls from which the stitching that reads "Shepardstown Insane Asylum" has been removed. The ghost-image of the letters is still plainly readable in the unfaded parts of the cloth. Hoobler packs up his rags and can of Turtle wax, and sighs.

HOOBLER

(referring to the
car)

I'm gonna miss this baby.

WARDEN

Wayne, I just want you to know
that if things get too tough..
too complicated out there...
There's always a home for you
here.

HOOBLER

Well, Warden, I appreciate that.
But I'm gonna do all right on
the outside. I got myself a job!

WARDEN

You do?

HOOBLER

I'm gonna be working for Mr.
Dwayne Hoover down at his Exit
Eleven Pontiac Village.

WARDEN

Oh... Is this something the
Social Services Bureau arranged?

HOOBLER

No, Mr. Hoover told me
personally.

WARDEN

I don't remember Dwayne visiting
the Institution...

HOOBLER

Oh, he talks to me every day!

WARDEN

He does?

HOOBLER

On the television! That's his
personal way of getting messages
through to me.

WARDEN

(backing off)

Okay, Wayne... Well, you just
remember what I said.

Hoobler sets down the rags and the can, turns, and
strides -- happily and expectantly -- out the gates
of the asylum.

INT. POLICE STATION - NEW YORK - MORNING

Kilgore Trout is sitting at a table in a police interrogation room. He is dressed in his only remaining, unslashed clothes: his moldy tuxedo, his ruffled shirt, and a tangerine bow-tie and cummerbund. A Police DETECTIVE is scanning a report form. Bill, back in his dented cage now, is on the table between them -- along with Trout's pile of pornographic magazines.

DETECTIVE

According to your statement
here, Mr. Trotter

TROUT

Trout. Kilgore Trout.

DETECTIVE

It says here "Kilmer Trotter."

He disgustedly erases the form and laboriously re-letters it.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

The only statement you gave us
is that you were "kidnaped by
pure evil in a white
Oldsmobile."

He looks up at Trout, expecting Trout to add something. Trout simply nods his head.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Look, buddy, we're gonna need
more than that. How many people
were in the car? How old were
they? What sex? What color were
they? Did they have any accents?
Any gang markings?

TROUT

Officer, for all I know they may
not even have been Earthlings!

DETECTIVE

Huh??

TROUT

For all I know, that car may
have been occupied by an
intelligent gas from Pluto!

The Detective just stares at him. Trout folds his arms and stares right back.

EXT. MOUTH OF LINCOLN TUNNEL - NEW YORK - DAY

Trout is carrying Bill's cage and the armful of porno magazines, approaching the mouth of the Lincoln Tunnel.

TROUT

We have to look on the bright side, Bill. As I think back now, I started off on this odyssey as a fraud. How could I claim to bring to Midland City the specter of a failed artist when I had five thousand dollars in my sock? But now, thanks to that avenging angel in the white Oldsmobile, I am the epitome of the writer as a bum! A thousand miles from his destination, with only...

He reaches into Bill's cage, lifts the bottom paper, and pulls out a bird-shit-bespotted ten dollar bill.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Ten dollars to my name.

Trout stops at the mouth of the tunnel and sticks out his thumb. The expressions on the faces of several MOTORISTS remind us how truly weird Trout looks: an old man in a ratty tuxedo, carrying porno magazines and a birdcage.

A big diesel semi hisses to a stop. Huge lettering across the whole side of the trailer reads: "Leaning Tower Olives." The driver -- DENZEL WHITELAW, 35, with a mustache and sideburns, a Levi jacket, and a Mack Truck Bulldog hat -- leans out of the cab and yells:

DENZEL

Is the bird a boy or a girl?

TROUT

His name is Bill.

DENZEL

Too bad.

He points to a sign in the window of his cab. It shows a voluptuous blond and says: "PUT OUT OR GET OUT!" Trout shows his disappointment. The truck driver laughs.

DENZEL
Just kidding. Hop in.

INT. OLIVE TRUCK - DAY

The truck is passing the petrochemical cracking plants amid the poisoned marshes and meadows of New Jersey.

DENZEL (CONT'D)
Kilgore, it's enough to make me sick. Look at it.

He gestures toward the polluted landscape that girdles the New Jersey Turnpike.

DENZEL (CONT'D)
I used to be a hunter and a fisherman. And it breaks my heart when I imagine what these marshes and meadows were like only fifty years ago. And when you think of the shit that most of these factories make -- wash day products, catfood, pop...

TROUT
Well, Denzel, I used to be a conservationist. I used to weep and wail about people shooting bald eagles with automatic shotguns from helicopters and all that, but I gave it up. I laugh about it now. When some tanker accidentally dumps its load in the ocean, and kills millions of birds and billions of fish, I say,
(raising his arms in celebration)
"Up your ass with Mobil gas"!

DENZEL
(upset)
You're kidding.

TROUT

I realized that God wasn't any conservationist, so for anybody else to be one was a waste of time. You ever see one of God's volcanoes or tornadoes or tidal waves? Anybody ever tell you about the Ice Ages he arranges for every half-million years? How about Dutch Elm disease? There's a nice conservation measure for you. That's God, not man. Just about the time we get our rivers cleaned up, he'll probably have the whole galaxy burn up like a celluloid collar. That's what the Star of Bethlehem was, you know.

DENZEL

What was the Star of Bethlehem?

TROUT

A whole galaxy burning up like a celluloid collar.

DENZEL

(impressed)

Come to think about it, I don't think there's anything about conservation anywhere in the Bible.

TROUT

(shrugging)

Unless you want to count the story about the Flood.

DENZEL

(looking at him)

I can't tell if you're serious or not.

TROUT

Denzel, I won't know myself until I find out whether life is serious or not. It's dangerous, I know. That doesn't necessarily mean it's serious, too.

INT. DAN'S COUNTRY KITCHEN #306 - DAY

Dan's Country Kitchen ("Your Kind of Family Place!") is a national franchise outfit. It is totally decorated in SunBurnt Orange and Electric Circus Pink. Its walls are adorned with huge lighted plastic pictures of delectable-looking food that hasn't been served in Dan's since it opened -- art directed plates heaped high with perfect eggs, slabs of just-killed bacon, and mountains of potatoes -- meals called "The Famished Farmer," "Grandma's Come And Get it!" and "Pigs On A Roll."

The CAMERA TILTS DOWN to the food-warmer shelf under the row of spectacular pictures as a COOK's hands (with dirty fingernails) set two plates on the shelf -- each containing shriveled black bacon arranged into little funeral pyres, a tablespoonful of molecularly addled eggs, and a deep-fried brick of a substance that might be potatoes.

VOICE--COOK'S VOICE

(shouting)

Two Famished Farmers!

The waitress, PATTY KEENE, a pretty teenager, picks up the dreadful-looking plates and brings them to the booth where Dwayne and Francine are sitting. Both are wearing "Support the Arts!" badges -- as is Patty (and in fact most of the townspeople). Dwayne's clothes have weird yellow stains now (from the gas in the Miracle Cave). Patty pretends she doesn't notice Dwayne's clothes or the odor that emanates from them. Dwayne looks up at her and grins.

DWAYNE

Roses are red,
And ready for plucking.
You're sixteen,
And ready for...high school.
(he laughs loudly)

FRANCINE

Dwayne...!

DWAYNE

(to Francine)

It's just something my father
would sing sometimes when he was
drunk.

PATTY

(flustered)

Excuse me for calling you by name, Mr. Hoover, but I can't help knowing who you are, with all your ads and everything. Besides -- everybody else who works here told me who you were. When you came in, they just buzzed and buzzed.

Dwayne is looking at his plate. He begins to re-compose it: stabbing the bacon spears upright in the slab of "home-fries" like a miniature Stonehenge, and topping them with a crosspiece of the egg-stuff. Dwayne's actions are really spooking Patty.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(increasingly nervous)

Anyway, it certainly is an honor to have you visit us. Is the food all right? It's what everybody else gets, we didn't do anything special for you.

FRANCINE

It's fine. Just fine.

Patty hurries away.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Dwayne, I think you're acting crazy again.

DWAYNE

Tarzan? Crazy?

He accompanies this with a broad, chest-beating gesture. A puff of yellow dust comes off his suit.

FRANCINE

Whew! You smell like the wrong end of an oil refinery.

She runs her finger over the sleeve of his jacket, gets a little of the yellow powder on it, and sniffs at it. Dwayne takes her hand and licks her finger.

DWAYNE

Yuck. It tastes like Sparkling Tears of Christ Water.

FRANCINE

Dwayne, maybe you'd better hold off selling that stuff till you find out what's going on down there.

DWAYNE

Jane pretty -- and smart!

FRANCINE

And don't you drink any more of it until you're sure.

Dwayne drops his napkin atop his untouched breakfast-sculpture.

DWAYNE

Let's get the hell out of here.

FRANCINE

You go first, honey. I don't want the folks at the agency to start talking.

Dwayne goes out.

EXT. STREET - PONTIAC VILLAGE - DAY

Dwayne crosses the street that separates the restaurant from his "Exit Eleven Pontiac Village." As he enters the lot, he looks up at his big plaster head rotating on the pole at the corner. There's a giant pair of Groucho Marx "nose-glasses" attached to it now, and a big arrow (with an obvious loop of wire) supposedly puncturing the head. As Dwayne stares at it, he starts to get dizzy and disoriented.

And when Dwayne looks down at the asphalt prairie which surrounds his Pontiac agency, he discovers that someone has turned the asphalt into a sort of trampoline. It sinks beneath Dwayne's weight. It drops him to well below street level, then slowly brings him only part way up again. Dwayne is in a shallow, rubbery dimple.

Dwayne takes another step in the direction of his automobile agency. He sinks down again, comes up again, and stands in a brand new dimple.

He gawks around for witnesses, but there aren't any. Dwayne progresses from dimple to dimple, blooming across the car lot. He stops in a dimple, looks up at and finds himself face to face with Wayne Hoobler. Hoobler is standing on the edge of the dimple -- not sinking in at all. He is waxing and polishing a maroon Pontiac Firebird. He isn't merely polishing the car -- he is burnishing it. The car is blindingly bright. Hoobler smiles at Dwayne equally blindingly.

HOOBLER

Morning, Boss!

Dwayne is sinking deeper into the asphalt. Hoobler doesn't notice Dwayne's distress.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

I knew you'd want me here extra early, so I come in just like you asked me on the tv!

Dwayne is almost submerged now. Only his head is still above the surface of the asphalt.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

I tell you, Mr. Hoover, it's gonna be some honor working for the greatest man in Midland City!

In desperation, Dwayne reaches up out of the deep rubber dimple toward Hoobler -- like a drowning man grasping for a life preserver.

DWAYNE

Help me...!

HOOBLER

You bet I'll help you! That's what I'm here for! Give me five, Boss!

Their hands lock together. And Dwayne suddenly finds himself standing once again on solid ground. Grinning from ear to ear, Hoobler pumps Dwayne's hand up and down -- the handshake sealing their "deal."

Not trusting himself to cross the rest of the asphalt expanse, Dwayne reaches for the door handle of the maroon Firebird that Hoobler has been waxing.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

You want to check out the
interior, right?

He opens the door for Dwayne, and Dwayne immediately collapses onto the driver's seat. From Dwayne's point of view, the entire car now begins to slowly sink down into the asphalt. Dwayne grips the wheel. Hoobler leans in the window, surveys his handiwork.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

Looks just like new, don't it?

From Hoobler's point of view, Dwayne is slowly sinking into and off the seat. Hoobler leans in, takes a deep whiff of the interior scent, and grins.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

Ummmm... Ummmmmmmm...!

From Dwayne's point of view, Hoobler, leaning in, whiffing the air, looks like some kind of monster. Dwayne spots the power window button, reaches up for it, and pushes it with all his might. The window slowly rises while Hoobler speaks...

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

Just like my Daddy said -- Only
thing smells as good as a new
car is twelve year old Scotch...
and thirteen year old pussy!

And the window slides shut.

INT. OLIVE TRUCK - DAY

Kilgore Trout is still in Denzel Whitelaw's "Leaning Tower Olives" truck. He is reading one of his stack of porno magazines: "Beaver Fever." Occasionally he chuckles at what he's reading. Denzel watches him, grinning knowingly.

DENZEL

I bet you're curious.

TROUT

(without looking up)
Curious about what?

DENZEL

You want to know how truck
drivers make out with women,
right?

(Trout shrugs
indifferently)

You have this idea that every
driver you see is fucking up a
storm from coast to coast, am I
right?

Trout shrugs again -- trying not to enter the
conversation.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

Kilgore, God damn it, if I was
to have my rig break down in
your home town -- Cohoes, wasn't
it? -- and I was to have to stay
there for two days while it was
worked on, how easy you think it
would be for me to get laid
while I was there -- a stranger,
looking the way I do?

TROUT

It would depend on how
determined you were.

Denzel sighs.

DENZEL

Yeah, God, that's probably the
story of my life: not enough
determination.

Up ahead, a huge neon sign shouts: "EAT." Denzel
pulls his big diesel rig off the highway toward the
cafe.

TROUT

Just following orders, huh?

DENZEL

What?

TROUT

The sign says "Eat," so we eat. I
suppose if it said "Fart," you'd
just fart and drive on.

DENZEL
(laughing)
You're a caution, Kilgore.

INT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

The place is full of TRUCKERS. Denzel and Trout enter the cafe and sit down at the counter. The huge COUNTER MAN serves them coffee. Denzel studies the menu, then looks at Trout.

DENZEL
How far you going, Kilgore?

TROUT
Midland City.

DENZEL
Why would anybody in his right mind go to Midland City?
(Trout shrugs)
Midland City is the asshole of the Universe.

TROUT
I've often wondered where the asshole was.

Trout flips open his sketch pad and draws six straight lines all intersecting at a common point: a perfect, childlike vision of an asshole. Denzel glances at it, chuckles.

DENZEL
Yep. That's Midland City!
(studies Trout, then)
Kilgore, I'm gonna ask you a question, and I want an honest answer. I'm thinking seriously of buying aluminum siding for my house in Little Rock. And what I want to know is: from what you've seen and heard -- the people who get aluminum siding, are they happy with what they get?

TROUT
Around Cohoes, I think those were about the only really happy people I ever saw.

DENZEL

I know what you mean. One time I saw a whole family standing outside their house. They couldn't believe how nice their house looked after the aluminum siding went on. My question to you, Kilgore, how long will that happiness last?

TROUT

About fifteen years.

Denzel nods slowly, pondering Trout's words.

EXT. PONTIAC VILLAGE - DAY

A large crowd of people have gathered now around the maroon Pontiac Firebird -- inside which Dwayne is still slumped on the floor. Francine pushes through them and taps on the window. Dwayne looks up at her for a second, then the window starts to slide down.

FRANCINE

Move back everybody. Give him some air.

The "bad chemicals" in Dwayne's brain have now brought on an attack of incipient echolalia (he repeats out loud whatever has just been said).

DWAYNE

Air.

FRANCINE

Dwayne...? Are you all right?

DWAYNE

All right.

Hoobler smiles in relief.

HOOBLER

All right!

DWAYNE

All right.

Francine helps Dwayne out of the car, escorts him toward his showroom. The ground isn't blooming underneath him anymore, but now he sees something else for which there could be no explanation: His sales manager, Harry LeSabre, is standing in the doorway, holding an eight foot long spear, wearing a lettuce-green leotard, straw sandals, a grass skirt, and a fluorescent Hawaiian shirt, open to reveal the logo on his incandescent pink T-shirt: "Dwayne's Gone Crazy!!" He's also wearing "nose-glasses" and an "arrow through the head."

HARRY

Aloha!

DWAYNE

Aloha.

Dwayne's eyes are pinwheeling now. Harry swings wide the doors to the showroom, proclaiming grandly:

HARRY

Welcome to Crazy Days!!!

INT. DWAYNE'S SHOWROOM - DAY

There's a big banner across the showroom that shouts: "Dwayne's Gone Crazy!!" All of Dwayne's STAFF are dressed in uniquely bizarre costumes -- the only things they all wear in common are the "nose glasses," the "arrow-through-the-head," and the "Dwayne's Gone Crazy" tee-shirts.

Standing beside each of the gleaming car models inside the showroom is a full-sized cardboard figure of Dwayne (dressed like his staff) with a voice-balloon coming from its mouth declaring: "I must be CRAZY to sell this car for:_____" Each sign has a different hand-written price for each different car.

Dwayne walks unsteadily up to one of the cardboard Dwaynes and stares at it -- nose to nose-glasses.

DWAYNE

"I must be... CRAZY..."

He puts his hand on a brand new pink Pontiac Firebird to steady himself -- and the metal fender starts to move beneath his hand -- to elongate... He steps back in amazement. Harry sees Dwayne's expression and misunderstands it.

HARRY

Yeah, Dwayne, it's the brand new
model -- fresh from Detroit.
Ain't it sexy?

DWAYNE

Sexy...

As Dwayne watches, the car continues to change
before his eyes: The grille becomes a round, plump
tip... The rear end becomes a pair of balls housing
tractor-sized wheels... The front wheels retract
into the shaft-shaped front-end...

Dwayne's jaw sags as he contemplates the huge pink
Pontiac "penis car"...

HARRY

(taking his arm)
Want to get in...?

DWAYNE

Get in...

Harry opens the curved plastic door and helps Dwayne
inside.

INT. PENIS CAR - DAY

Dwayne slumps into the driver's seat, and he looks
out -- down the long, cylindrical front-end -- at
the staff and CUSTOMERS in his show-room. Harry
reaches past him and starts the engine.

HARRY

Just listen to that power...

DWAYNE

Power...

As the engine starts up, the windows crackle with
electric discharges -- and the view of the showroom
disappears -- replaced by highly-stylized computer-
game animation of a race course. The steering wheel
is a big joystick. Harry shoves it forward, and the
animated display outside the windows starts to race
by. The car swerves wildly, and Dwayne desperately
grabs the joy-stick with both hands.

In the animated display, all kinds of penis-cars are cruising by outside: a looooooong black one... a Chicano driving a low-rider penis that pumps up and down on the pavement... an R. Crumb businessman driving a compact prick -- a tiny little VW bug of a penis...

Up ahead, straddling the animated highway, a huge figure of an Amazon woman looms closer. She stomps on the VW bug -- and squashes it!

There's a big red "Fire!" button on top of the joystick. Dwayne pushes it. A long, clear plastic tube rockets past his head right down the center of Dwayne's car, ending at the tip. Dazzling flashes of light pulse down the tube, shoot out the tip -- and hit the Amazon woman -- blowing her up! -- and racking up a score on the flashing dashboard display.

Dwayne grins wildly, fires at another Amazon woman, and another... But they're coming too fast, now... He misses one shot and a giant Amazon fist engulfs Dwayne's car, appears to lift it off the animated highway -- straight toward her mouth...

Dwayne screams and starts to struggle frantically and we suddenly:

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT./INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

The Amazon's mouth is replaced by the doors of an ambulance. The driver's seat is a gurney on which Dwayne, struggling frantically in a straight-jacket, is being wheeled inside the ambulance.

The doors slam shut. Framed through the back windows, we can see Francine, Harry, and Hoobler all peering in -- shaken, truly frightened.

Siren screaming, the ambulance pulls away.

INT. OLIVE TRUCK - SUNSET

An alarm SIREN is shrieking from a small black box sitting on the dashboard. Denzel immediately slows the big rig to a few miles an hour under the speed limit. He grins in satisfaction and flicks off the alarm. Trout is staring at the black box.

DENZEL

Radar detector. Means there's a speed trap up ahead. I got caught one time down in Libertyville, Georgia. That's when I got this little fella. Saves me a lot of grief.

He pats the black box fondly, then spots a highway patrol car that's partly hidden by the side of the road. He gives the PATROLMAN a big wave as they cruise by.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

This speed trap where they caught me, you all of a sudden had to go from fifty-five down to fifteen miles an hour. It made me mad. I had some words with the policeman, and he put me in jail. You ever been in Libertyville, Kilgore?

TROUT

No.

Trout is looking out the truck's window. There's a broken guardrail ahead. He gazes into a gully below it, and sees a 1968 Cadillac El Dorado capsized in a brook. There are also several old home appliances in the brook -- stoves, a washing machine, and a couple of refrigerators. An angel-faced white CHILD, with flaxen hair, stands by the brook. She smiles and waves up at Trout. She clasps a thirty-two-ounce bottle of Pepsi-Cola to her breast.

DENZEL

The main industry there is pulping up old newspapers and magazines and books, and making new paper out of 'em. Trucks and trains bring in hundreds of tons of the stuff every day.

TROUT

Um.

DENZEL

They got so many old books in Libertyville, they use 'em for toilet paper in the jail. So I sat there in the calaboose for two days, with nothing to do but read my toilet paper. I can still remember one of the stories I read.

TROUT

Um.

DENZEL

It was called "This Means You."

Trout suddenly snaps to attention and Bill (inside his cage) squawks.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

It was about Hawaii. See, every bit of land on the islands was owned by only five families, and they got together one day and decided to put up "No trespassing" signs on everything. This created terrible problems for all the millions of other people who lived on the islands. See, because of the law of gravity, they had to stick somewhere on the surface. Either that, or they could go out into the water and bob offshore.

Trout has begun to sketch something that we can't see yet. Bill, meanwhile, squawks more loudly and frequently as the story progresses.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

But then the Government came through with an emergency program. It gave a big balloon full of helium to every man, woman and child who didn't own property. There was this cable with a harness on it dangling from each balloon. So with the balloons, Hawaiians could go on living there in the islands without always sticking to things that other people owned.

Bill, by now, is squawking his head off.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

Cute story, huh?

(noticing Bill
finally)

What's the matter with your
bird?

TROUT

(finishing his
sketch)

He heard the story before.

DENZEL

Hunh??

He shows Denzel the sketch: A dozen dangling
Hawaiians tethered to their balloons bobbing
completely legally above an island sprouting with
sugar canes and "No Trespassing" signs.

TROUT

I wrote it.

DENZEL

You're shittin' me!

TROUT

Nope.

DENZEL

Well, Kilgore, I wiped my ass on
your story!

He laughs and laughs, and his big rig glides off
into the gathering dusk.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Dwayne's eyes pop open. He is lying in a hospital
bed, still wearing a straightjacket. Cyprian
Ukwende, the black doctor, is looking down at him.
He is holding a test-tube filled with blood.

UKWENDE

How many blood samples do you
see, Mr. Hoover?

DWAYNE

One..?

UKWENDE

Excellent! And what are you
lying on?

DWAYNE

A bed..?

UKWENDE

Not a "penis-car"?

DWAYNE

(checking the bed to
make sure)

No...

UKWENDE

Excellent! Two for two. I think
we can take this off now.

He unfastens Dwayne's straight-jacket. Dwayne sits
up in bed, rubs the circulation back into his arms.

UKWENDE (CONT'D)

And how are we feeling?

DWAYNE

I have a splitting headache.

UKWENDE

No surprise. Considering that...

He holds up the test tube. IN CLOSE UP: We can see
that there is a thin layer of clear, liquid plastic
floating on top of the blood.

UKWENDE (CONT'D)

The vessels in our brain are
designed to pump this...

(pointing to the
blood)

Not this...

He points to the thin layer of plastic, and hands
the tube to Dwayne. Dwayne tips it, but the blood
won't run out past the impermeable plastic plug.

DWAYNE

What is it?

UKWENDE

Tri-polar-poly-planar-methyl-
amyl toxic residue.

DWAYNE

And that was in my blood? Where does it come from?

UKWENDE

(shrugging)

Well, considering that it is the chief byproduct of BI-polar-poly-planar-methyl-amyl plastic -- a patented molecule of Barrytron Industries -- we might make an educated guess.

DWAYNE

Tears of Christ... This stuff could have killed me!

UKWENDE

It wouldn't be the first time. You know, Mr. Hoover, I did the autopsy on your wife. The entrance to her esophagus was totally blocked by this very substance. It is, in fact, my opinion that her ingestion of Drano was a crude -- and unfortunate -- form of self-help.

DWAYNE

(stunned)

Why the hell didn't you tell anyone that?

UKWENDE

Mr. Hoover, the most amazing thing to me about your country is that you people spend enormous amounts of time volunteering information, signing petitions, going on crusades -- in short, looking for trouble. In my country, trouble spends all its time looking for us.

DWAYNE

That bastard Barry killed my wife!

INT. SACRED MIRACLE CAVE - NIGHT

The "Pipe Organ of the Gods" is pumping out another sickly-sweet tune. Lyle and Kyle are staring up at the face of "Christ" above the sacred grotto, wagging their heads in disgust. Instead of tears of water, ping-pong sized clear plastic balls are oozing from its eyes and plopping into the pool. There's a long ladder propped up on the edge of the grotto. Lyle is carrying a gallon can. Kyle starts up the ladder.

KYLE

Give me that there sealer, Lyle.

Lyle hands him the can, and Kyle climbs up to the face of "Christ." He starts daubing black goopy sealer around one of the eyes. It looks kind of like mascara.

LYLE

(unhappy with the
effect)

Didn't ya have any clear stuff?
That makes him look like a gol-
dang sissy!

KYLE

I think it makes him look
sadder.

LYLE

(sniffing the air,
grimacing)

Well, seal up the other one and
let's get the heck out of here.

Kyle tries to stretch over toward the other eye, but it's a long reach. He overbalances, slips, and goes plunging down into the water. He comes bobbing up, thrashing wildly. His cowboy hat has miraculously still stayed in place.

KYLE

Help! Help! I can't swim!!

He sinks below the surface.

LYLE

Oh, fer crap's sake, Lyle, it's
only four foot deep. You could
walk to shore.

When Kyle bobs back up to the surface, he is strangely silent -- and thrashing quite a bit less. He sinks a second time. Lyle shakes his head in exasperation, quickly strips off his boots, Western shirt, and pants, revealing boxer shorts with little doggies on them.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Oh, shinola, ya fool! Here I come!

Lyle climbs up onto the edge of the pool and dives in. He shudders at the stench of the water, and strokes off toward the spot where Kyle sank.

Suddenly, right in front of him, Kyle bobs back up to the surface. His face is frozen in bug-eyed terror. His entire body is rigid and immobile -- completely laminated in gleaming plastic.

Horrificed, Lyle grabs his brother's stiff body. It's so slippery that his hands slide right off. Finally, hooking an arm around Kyle's neck, Lyle starts back toward shore. His powerful stroke slows. He opens his mouth in slow-motion -- as if straining against some force that's keeping it closed. A big plastic bubble fills his mouth...

EXT./INT. OLIVE TRUCK - MORNING

The morning sun is shining. The olive truck sweeps past a highway sign that reads "Midland City -- Exit Eleven -- 5 Miles." A crudely hand-lettered sign wired beneath it declares: "TURN BACK!! You just missed the Sacred Miracle Cave!"

DENZEL'S VOICE

Five miles to the asshole of the Universe!

Trout begins gathering his possessions, stacking the porno magazines. Denzel looks at him.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

So you're in all those magazines and you've never written a dirty story.

TROUT

You are a Grand Inquisitor,
Denzel. Yes, my second wife,
Carlene, said that I could make
a fortune with a dirty story. So
I wrote "The Son of Jimmy
Valentine"!

DENZEL

(prompting)

Yeah? Yeah?

TROUT

And she was wrong. It remains my
only unpublished work.

DENZEL

Yeah, but what's it about??

Trout flips open his sketch-pad, and begins to
doodle: a man's hand, fingertips pointing downward.

TROUT

Jimmy Valentine wasa safe-
cracker. He sandpapered his
finger-tips so they were extra
sensitive. His sense of feel was
so delicate that he could open
any safe in the world by feeling
the tumblers fall.

Trout draws cross-hatching on the tips of the
fingers.

DENZEL

I like this one, Kilgore.

TROUT

I invented a son for Jimmy
Valentine, named Ralston
Valentine.

DENZEL

"Ralston"?

TROUT

I was eating breakfast cereal at
the time.

Denzel nods his understanding.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Ralston Valentine also sand-papered his finger-tips. But he wasn't a safe-cracker. He used his sensitized fingers for touching women.

Trout has added a long, sinuous line that swells upward just beneath the fingertips. He finishes his sketch by adding a nipple that suddenly reveals the line to be a woman's breast.

DENZEL

There ya go!

TROUT

Ralston was so good at touching women the way they wanted to be touched, that tens of thousands of them became his willing slaves. They abandoned their husbands or lovers for him, and Ralston Valentine became President of the United States, thanks to the votes of women.

Denzel laughs. "Exit Eleven -- Midland City" is right ahead. Trout closes the sketch-pad. Denzel signals for the turn-off.

TROUT (CONT'D)

No. Just let me out here.

DENZEL

You sure? The town's still a good two miles from the exit here.

TROUT

I'm sure. I wish to arrive on foot as the symbol of the American failure -- a man without wheels.

DENZEL

Okeydoke.

The air brakes hiss as Denzel pulls the big rig to a stop by the side of the highway. He and Trout look at each other.

DENZEL (CONT'D)

Kilgore, the thing I like best about you -- is that I never know what you're gonna say next.

TROUT

Denzel, not even the Creator of the Universe knows what I'm going to say next.

(thinking about it)

Perhaps I'm a better Universe in its infancy...

(thinking further)

Perhaps we all are.

DENZEL

(laughs)

Bill, keep an eye on this guy. I think he's trouble waiting to happen. Catch you on the go-around, Kilgore!

Trout climbs down from the cab. The olive truck pulls away.

EXT. SUGAR CREEK - MORNING

With the porno magazines under one arm and Bill's cage in the other, Trout surveys his surroundings. The shortest way to the frontage road leading to town is across a shallow stream that borders the road: Sugar Creek. Trout takes off his shoes and starts to wade across. He notices the ping-pong-ball bubbles but doesn't really pay them any attention.

When Trout steps onto the far bank of the creek, however, he discovers that something extraordinary has happened: his feet have become encased in clear plastic. He notices it at once because his feet are so slippery now that he immediately falls down.

He tries to put his shoes back on, but they won't fit over the thick layer of plastic. Slipping, flailing like a tight-rope walker to keep his balance, Trout makes it to the frontage road.

There are two little HISSING sounds as Trout steps onto the asphalt shoulder of the roadway. He steadies himself, takes a deep breath, then tries to walk toward town. But try as he might, now, his feet won't budge an inch. The plastic has cemented itself to the asphalt road surface.

A large van is approaching. Helpless to do anything else, Trout extends his arm (holding the birdcage) to try to thumb a ride. The van roars right by. Trout is blown forty-five degrees sideways by its draft, but he can't fall over because his feet are cemented to the asphalt. He leans back upright. Bill squawks his displeasure, preens at his ruffled feathers.

Another car is coming -- a black Lincoln town car. Trout tries to signal to it also. The Xopolis brothers blow the horn and both give him the finger as they roar by. Kilgore sways with the wind of their passage -- a helpless roadside weed.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Dwayne and Francine come out the front entrance to the hospital.

FRANCINE

I just can't believe Fred Barry could be involved in something like this.

DWAYNE

You'd better believe it! And I'm going to make him get down on his knees in front of this whole town and -- Arrrrgghh!

They have rounded a corner and are both suddenly blinded by an utterly amazing vision: Wayne Hoobler (working all night while Dwayne was in the hospital) has waxed Dwayne's Bonneville convertible into a veritable diamond of dazzling brightness. It's so bright that Hoobler himself has to wear sunglasses as he finishes burnishing the last few details.

Hoobler looks up, sees Dwayne and Francine -- both of whom are holding their arms in front of their faces to shield them from the dazzling car. Hoobler grins in pride.

HOOBLER

I've outdone myself, haven't I? Yes, sir, Mr. Hoover, I believe I've taken waxing to a new plateau!

Dwayne and Francine can't approach the car, it's light is so strong. Hoobler produces two pairs of wraparound sunglasses similar to his own, hands them to Dwayne and Francine.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

Here ya go. You're gonna need these if ya want to ride in this baby!

He opens the rear door for them.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

You just make yourselves comfortable back there and leave the driving to me.

They get in. Hoobler slides into the driver's seat, turns back to Dwayne.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

How you feeling, Boss?

Dwayne doesn't immediately answer.

FRANCINE

He's much better.

DWAYNE

I'm going to kill that son of a bitch!

HOOBLER

(starting the car)

He sounds fine to me.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Hoobler is driving the car. He glances back in the mirror at Dwayne and Francine, and shakes his head.

HOOBLER

Look, Boss, I just got out of the insane asylum, and Whoa! This is a lot crazier! I mean, in twenty-four hours, you been in and out of a straightjacket, nearly fried your brains chugaluggin' the same plastic Pop that done in your wife, and
(MORE)

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

now you're on your way to take
on the richest man in Midland
City. You know what I say? I
say, Whoa! That's what I say. It
don't get any stranger!

(a beat; then
suddenly)

I'm wrong.

There, up ahead on the shoulder of the road, just
recovering from a forty-five degree lean caused by a
truck passing in the opposite direction, is a man in
a moldy tuxedo carrying a birdcage, trying to thumb
a ride.

HOOBLER (CONT'D)

Think I should stop?

(without waiting for
an answer)

Of course, I should stop! Whoa!!

He slams on the brakes, and Dwayne's car screeches
to a stop.

EXT. ROADSIDE - MORNING

The CAMERA IS IN CLOSE on Hoobler's hands as he cuts
away at the plastic encasing Trout's feet with a
penknife. Dwayne and Francine are standing nearby,
watching.

DWAYNE

(to Trout)

You're lucky you didn't try to
swim across Sugar Creek, or we'd
be using you as a paperweight.

Dwayne and Hoobler lift Trout up out of the plastic
"boots" which remain permanently attached to the
asphalt. His feet make sucking SOUNDS as they slip
out of the plastic. Hoobler and Dwayne set Trout
down gently so he can get his shoes back on.

Trout squints at the dazzling light coming from
Dwayne's car. Hoobler hands him a pair of
sunglasses. Francine is frowning in concern at the
rash on Trout's feet.

FRANCINE

Your feet were beginning to develop an awful rash inside those.. boots. Here, it's just hand lotion, but I think it'll help.

She has pulled a tube of hand lotion out of her purse, and begins rubbing it on Trout's feet and ankles. Trout protests, but really, he enjoys Francine's attention.

TROUT

Is this the usual condition of your streams and rivers? If so, I would hate to be a local fish.

DWAYNE

No, Sugar Creek used to be as sweet as its name. Until Fred T. Barry turned it into his private dump.

TROUT

Ah! My patron!

DWAYNE

(suspiciously)
So you know Fred Barry?

TROUT

Only as the sponsor and chief smiler of the Midland City Festival of self-congratulation and bad taste.

(pointing to Dwayne's
and Francine's
"Support the Arts!"
badges)

And you, to judge by the badges on your lapels must be happy soldiers amongst his mindless legions.

(reacting with
pleasure to
the soothing hand
lotion)

Ahhhh!

FRANCINE

You have very sensitive feet for such an ornery and back-asswards old billy-goat.

Trout looks at her. No one has treated him like this in years. It softens the curmudgeon's heart. He can't suppress a little smile.

DWAYNE
(looking at his
badge)
And I used to be one of Barry's
mindless soldiers. That's true.

He takes off his badge, tosses it into one of the plastic "boots."

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
But I've deserted.
(shaking hands with
Trout)
Dwayne Hoover. And this is
Francine Pefko. And Wayne
Hoobler.

Trout finishes putting on his shoes, stands, and shakes hands with Dwayne.

TROUT
Kilgore Trout. Official
ambassador of the planet, Margo.

Trout does a quick tap-step and farts.

HOOBLER
Whoa! He fits right in, don't
he?

FRANCINE
(smiling)
Dwayne, I think you've found
your Man from Mars.

DWAYNE
Kilgore, hop in.

TROUT
Where are we going?

DWAYNE
We're going to have some drinks
with little flags in them.

INT. TALLYHO ROOM - DAY

In the background, Bunny is playing another of his inimitable Las Vegas-cocktail-Muzak arrangements. Seated around the "Breakfast of Champions" table are Max and Minos Xopolis, Cyprian Ukwende, Cassandra Boxe, and two newcomers: BERNICE KEEDSLER -- the Gothic novelist, 50 or so, overdressed in every possible way -- and BOZO GERANIUM, the abstract expressionist painter, 50, wearing a sweatshirt which proclaims, "Jackson Pollack Died For Our Sins."

There are a great many glasses with little "Breakfast of Champions" flags in front of Geranium. All but one is empty -- and that one is going fast. Bernice Keedsler, herself a little tipsy, leans over to Geranium, providing him with an excellent view of her ample bosom.

KEEDSLER

This is a dreadful confession, Mr. Geranium. I know this evening they're unveiling your painting, "The Temptation of Saint Anthony," but I don't even know who Saint Anthony was. Who was he, and why should anybody have wanted to tempt him?

GERANIUM

(plastered)

I don't know, and I would hate to find out.

KEEDSLER

You have no use for truth?

GERANIUM

You know what truth is, Bernice? You know what truth is? It's some crazy thing my neighbor believes. If I want to make friends with him, I ask him what he believes. He tells me, and I say, "Yeah, yeah -- ain't it the truth?"

KEEDSLER

That's just the alcohol talking.

UKWENDE

What a language! "Alcohol talking"! I imagine a dialogue between two pieces of yeast. Yeast, as you know, is a tiny creature that eats sugar and excretes alcohol. So these two pieces of yeast are discussing the meaning of truth as they eat sugar and suffocate in their own excrement. But because of their limited intelligence, they never come close to guessing that the truth is that they are making champagne.

Geranium thinks this is hilarious. Keedsler isn't sure if the Nigerian doctor is having fun at her expense. She peers uncertainly into her cocktail glass. Cassandra Boxe moves in to smooth over a difficult moment. She hands Geranium a copy of the program for the Festival of Arts.

CASSANDRA

Have you seen the Festival program yet, Mr. Geranium?

Geranium glances at it cursorily then points to its cover which shows a teen-age girl in a white bathing suit, with an Olympic Gold Medal hanging around her neck.

GERANIUM

Who is this nymphet?

CASSANDRA

(proudly)

That is Mary Alice Miller, the only internationally famous human being in Midland City. She won the Women's Two Hundred Meter Breast Stroke at the 1984 Olympics.

GERANIUM

(muttering)

White bread.

CASSANDRA

I beg your pardon?

GERANIUM

'84. The white bread Olympics --
no commies! They got swimmin'
women that could have eaten this
little pussy for lunch!

Ukwende giggles. The mention of "pussy" has captured Max and Minos' attention also. Cassandra, obviously shocked, tries to maintain her dignity.

CASSANDRA

(stiffly)

Nevertheless, we're very proud
of Mary Alice. Her father taught
her to swim when she was eight
months old, and he made her swim
at least four hours a day, every
day, since she was three!

Geranium thinks this over, then speaks loudly enough for everyone to hear.

GERANIUM

What kind of a man would turn
his daughter into an outboard
motor?

The cocktail waitress, Bonnie MacMahon, also hears his comment. Normally all smiles, she is so outraged she almost drops the tray of drinks she's bringing to their table.

BONNIE

Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah??

She slams his drink down in front of him hard enough to spill some on him, then turns and storms off toward the kitchen.

We can hear a car SCREECHING to a stop right outside. The door to the Tallyho Room bursts open and a shaft of blinding light pours in, silhouetting Dwayne, Francine, and Trout as they enter.

DWAYNE

(looking around)

Barry! Where's Fred Barry?

Max Xopolis, the only one at the table who always wears tinted glasses, is the first to recognize them:

MAX

Hey -- it's Dwayne!

MINOS

How you feelin', old buddy?

DWAYNE

(striding over to
them)

I'm a new man, partner. I've had
my asshole drilled and my eyes
opened!

He gives Ukwende a big wink.

MAX

We heard about your uh..
breakdown. I said it was just
another one of Dwayne's great
gags to sell cars. You know
"Come on down while I'm still
crazy!"

Dwayne steps behind the Xopolis brothers, puts his
arms around their necks -- more of a headlock than a
friendly gesture.

DWAYNE

Yeah, that's right. I'm always
selling cars. Maybe I can
interest you boys in a few more
trucks, huh?

Max doesn't trust Dwayne's mood. He gives a false
laugh.

MINOS

(innocently)

Oh, we got all the trucks we can
use.

DWAYNE

Come on, boys, you sure you got
enough to handle all that tri-
poly-moly...?

He can't remember the name, looks to Ukwende for
help. The doctor chimes right in:

UKWENDE

Tri-polar-poly-planar-methyl-
amyl toxic residue.

DWAYNE

Yeah! That's the stuff!

CASSANDRA

What in the world are you talking about, Dwayne?

FRANCINE

He's talking about Fred Barry poisoning this town.

DWAYNE

With the help of Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dumber here. Why you can't even wade across Sugar Creek without getting your feet laminated! Ask this fellow.

He gestures to Trout who has been listening with utter fascination, sketching the confrontation as rapidly as he can.

Max and Minos both stand, and pull Dwayne's arms from around their necks. Max gives Dwayne's wrist a subtle but vice-like twist as he speaks:

MAX

(a "friendly" threat)
Maybe you're still a little crazy, huh, Dwayne?

MINOS

(twisting his other arm)
Yeah! Maybe you ought to go home and sleep it off!

CASSANDRA

This is all too absurd. Fred Barry wouldn't harm Midland City. Why, Fred Barry is Midland City.

Max twists Dwayne's arm a little further.

MAX

That's right. He's three out of every four jobs in this town.

FRANCINE

I suppose that makes him think
he can do anything he wants to
with the crap pouring out the
back of that money machine of
his.

Max and Minos glare at her.

CASSANDRA

Dwayne, be reasonable. There
hasn't been anything on the news
about this. And even if there
has been some kind of accident
today, I'm sure Mr. Barry is on
top of it.

DWAYNE

(breaking free of the
Xopolis brothers'
grip)

Yeah, he's on top of it, all
right. But it's no accident.
That goop has been bubbling up
in the Miracle Cave for weeks.
Ask Lyle and Kyle --

Dwayne looks around, notices for the first time that
Lyle and Kyle are not in their accustomed seats.

DWAYNE

(looking around)
Where the hell are they, anyway?
(suddenly realizing)
Ohmigod...!

He races back toward the door. Francine and Trout
follow him. Dwayne remembers just in time to don his
sunglasses before he opens the door. A blinding
shaft of light illuminates them as they exit.

EXT. SACRED MIRACLE CAVE- DAY

Hoobler slams on the brakes and the blinding
Bonnevilles screams to a stop outside the entrance to
the Sacred Miracle Cave. Dwayne leaps from the car.

DWAYNE

(shouting)
Lyle!! Kyle!!

He dashes across the wooden bridge that spans the tiny stream that issues from the mouth of the Miracle Cave. A sign labels it the "Miraculous Source of Sugar Creek!" An ominous scum of ping-pong-ball sized bubbles is drifting down the creek. Dwayne races into the cave. Hoobler is the first to sprint in after him.

INT. SACRED TEARS OF CHRIST SACRED GROTTTO - DAY

The Pipe Organ of the Gods is pumping out sacharine sentiment as Dwayne races down the passage toward the Grotto. Ping-pong-ball bubbles cover the floor ahead. Dwayne tries to run on them, but they're as slippery as ball-bearings.

He flails and slides and finally falls and goes plunging down the passage on his stomach, coming to a sudden stop on the very lip of the Sacred Grotto - face to face with -- and utterly horrified by:

Lyle, wearing only his boxer shorts, permanently laminated in the middle of an Australian crawl-stroke, and Kyle, a horrified plastic cowboy waving for help, are bobbing up and down in the water of the grotto. They float somewhat higher than it seems they should, giving them the look of bizarre bathtub toys.

Hoobler comes pinwheeling down the passage, grabs a stalactite and hugs it to keep from falling. His eyes are like saucers as he takes in the scene.

HOOBLER

Whoa!

INT. DWAYNE'S PONTIAC SHOWROOM - DAY

The CAMERA IS IN CLOSE on the face of Harry LeSabre. Offscreen, a CAR MOTOR approaches. Harry turns toward the sound, looks out the window. His face glows steadily brighter as the car draws closer -- and steadily more frightened. He turns away, and runs off.

EXT. PONTIAC VILLAGE- DAY

Dwayne's Bonneville flashes by and comes to a stop. In the foreground, protruding from the back of the roped-up trunk, is a burlap-wrapped arm, tipped by a plastic-coated hand.

Dwayne gets out of the car, surveys the lot, which is still done up for "Crazy Days."

DWAYNE

Harry! Harry, where are you!?

He strides toward the showroom. As he reaches it, the door is opened cautiously by Harry LeSabre. He is wearing a full-length overcoat, holding it closed. The coat almost completely conceals his other clothes -- all but the straw sandals and the ankles of his lettuce-green leotard.

Dwayne reaches out and gently pries Harry's hands apart, opening the coat, revealing the rest of Harry's "Cray Days" outfit. Trout, in the back of Dwayne's car, is just putting the finishing touches on a sketch of Lyle and Kyle bobbing in the Sacred Tears of Christ Sacred grotto like two rubber duckies. He sees Harry's costume, and his eyes widen in increased amazement. He flips the sketch-book page and begins feverishly sketching the new scene.

HARRY

(timidly)

Dwayne..? Are you..? Uh.. still crazy?

Dwayne looks at Harry's T-shirt that says, "Dwayne's Gone Crazy!"

DWAYNE

(smiling)

I guess so.

(stepping back,
looking at Harry)

Harry, you don't have to hide it any more.

HARRY

(terrified, quickly
closing his coat
over his genitals)

Hide..? Hide what?

DWAYNE

Your legs, Harry. You've got
beautiful legs! Did anyone ever
tell you that?

Harry opens the coat, looks down at his legs.

HARRY

(a timid grin)

My wife...

DWAYNE

Call the tv crew, Harry. We're
gonna tell it like it is. We're
gonna show 'em all!

HARRY

(confused)

My legs..?

DWAYNE

No! The truth!

He holds up a plastic, ping-pong-ball bubble.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

We're gonna pop the bubble!

He squeezes hard on the resilient little bubble and
it finally pops -- and the tiny cloud of yellow gas
that is released makes them both cough.

EXT. STREET - PONTIAC VILLAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

The tv crew is almost set up. The mobile tv control
booth is parked in the street outside the lot, with
cables snaking toward the two cameras that are being
wheeled into position. Also parked nearby, on the
other side of the street, is the Xopolis brothers'
black Lincoln town car. Max is leaning against it,
watching the activity in Dwayne's lot through a huge
pair of binoculars. He puts them down, gestures to
Minos, and they both stroll over to the mobile unit,
and start talking to its beefy, cigar-chomping
DRIVER.

On the car lot, the tv director signals "ready," and climbs into the mobile unit. Dwayne winks at Trout, who's standing nearby, sketching him. Dwayne watches the cameras' red lights come on, and smiles. He is dressed in a "Dwayne 's Gone Crazy" tee-shirt. He has Lyle's shotgun cradled in his arm and Kyle's shotgun slung over his shoulder. He gestures to his tee-shirt:

DWAYNE

I guess you've heard about it. I
guess the news is out. Well,
it's true! Dwayne's gone crazy!
(grins)
And I feel great! For fifteen
years, my head's been spinnin'
around on that pole up there...

He hoists the shotgun. BLAM!! His spinning plaster head blows into a million pieces that rain down on the startled tv crew.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Not anymore! I'm going out of
business! And you're too late
for my going out of business
sale!

One of the tv CAMERAMEN glances questioningly at Harry LeSabre, who is standing next to him. Harry just shrugs. Trout is sketching as fast as he can -- flipping page after page as Dwayne starts to stride down the row of gleaming cars, pausing near one of them.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Too late for this beauty! A 1986
Chrysler LeBaron -- looks
gorgeous, doesn't it? It's a
lemon. Drove it's previous owner
to the poor house. This baby has
a service record longer than
Little Aboer's dick! Not a
scratch on it, though...

BLAM!! BLAM!! Both barrels pepper the car,
shattering all the glass and making the hood look
like a sieve.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Not anymore!

(striding over to
another car)

Here's 1987 Jeep Cherokee.

Former owner was an over-sexed
interior designer with no morals
whatsoever. I don't want to tell
you what's still swimmin' around
in the back seat of this car.

BLAM!! BLAM!! He riddles the back seat.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

I got a couple of them...

(moving on)

Here's an '81 Ford Pinto. It's a
deathtrap.

BLAM!!! The Pinto EXPLODES in a towering fireball!
The tv crew cringe back a little from the heat of
the explosion. Dwayne strides on -- to the creek
that borders his lot.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And here's Sugar Creek. It's
two-tone blue-on-blue. A major
tributary of the Big Sugar
River. It gets forty-two-million
gallons to the mile. And was
designed by God in the Ice Age.
Isn't it a beauty? Not anymore!

We can see the scum of bubbles, clearly back-lit by
the late afternoon sun. BLAM!! BLAM!! The surface of
the creek ripples with the shots. The exploding
bubbles release a haze of phosphorescent yellow gas.
The cameramen are amazed at the sight. One moves in
for a closer shot before having to retreat,
coughing.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

It's been poisoned by Midland
City's Number One son-of-a-
bitch. Who am I talking about?

The tv director shouts in sudden dismay from inside
the mobile unit:

TV DIRECTOR

Hey! Stop it! What the hell are
you doing?? STOP THE TRUCK!!

The beefy driver has put the mobile unit into gear and is resolutely driving it away. Its long cables pull taut, knocking over the cameras. One cable pulls loose and the other drags its camera halfway across the lot before it finally snaps.

Dwayne, startled, looks off just in time to see the Xopolis brothers' car driving away also. Trout can barely sketch the scene fast enough to keep up.

EXT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - EVENING

Against the darkening sky, brightly lit from within, its huge circular entrance and twin circular windows make the Fred T. Barry American Arts Center look like nothing so much as an enormous bowling ball. A giant banner above the entrance announces the opening night's festivities: "The Ball In The Ball." The parking lot is filled with cars now -- including the Xopolis brothers black Lincoln. The last of the TOWNSPEOPLE are scurrying inside.

INT. BARRY ARTS CENTER - OFFICE - EVENING

Fred Barry is sitting at the Administrator's desk in a plush office inside the Arts Center. Max and Minos Xopolis are standing nearby. All three are watching a video monitor which is replaying the tape of Dwayne's aborted commercial.

DWAYNE (ON TV)

It's been poisoned by Midland City's Number One son-of-a-bitch. Who am I talking about?

The image suddenly rotates as the tv camera that photographed it falls on its side and is dragged across Dwayne's lot until the cable finally snaps and the picture goes to static. Barry turns off the monitor, and smiles grimly.

BARRY
So much for Dwayne Hoover's
television crusade.

MINOS
(with childlike
enthusiasm)
Can we watch it again?

MAX

Shut up. Can't you see Mr. Barry
is doing some serious thinking.

BARRY

(pointing to the tv)
He's not finished. Not yet.

There's a timid tapping on the door. Barry's
secretary, Kenneth Barby, peers in apologetically.
The sounds of the large crowd are audible from
outside.

KENNETH

Uh.. Mr. Barry, they're ready
for you now -- for the
unveiling..?

BARRY

All right, Kenneth. Just a
minute.

Kenneth closes the door. Barry stands, straightens
his tie.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Boys, when we finally do get
this mess covered over, I don't
want it happening again. You've
got to find a God-damned deeper
hole.

(exiting)

And dump Dwayne Hoover at the
bottom of it.

INT. DWAYNE'S CAR - NIGHT

Dwayne and Francine are in the back seat; Hoobler is
driving; Trout is sitting beside him. He has a huge
stack of sketches on his lap. (Because the sun is
down, none of the four of them have to wear their
shades to ride in the gleaming Bonneville.)

Trout flips through the stack of sketches: the
bobbing plastic bodies, Harry LeSabre in his hula
skirt, Dwayne blowing up his agency, the tv cameras
bouncing across the lot...

TROUT

I've got to get out of Cohoes more often. There's more science-fiction out here in the heartland than I could ever dream up on my own!

HOOBLER

That's a fact, Jack!

TROUT

(filled with
enthusiasm)

This... All of this...

(holding up the
sketches)

It's more than a story -- it's a novel -- ten novels -- a saga!

Dwayne and Francine have both been listening to Trout.

FRANCINE

How does it end?

TROUT

I don't know yet. But great endings always reveal themselves -- at the end. If you're ready, you just look up, and there it is staring you in the face.

Up ahead, looming on the horizon, is the brightly-lit sphere of the Fred T. Barry American Arts Center.

INT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Fred Barry is standing at one end of a stage in the Art Center's largest exhibit hall. Beside Barry, a single object fills the stage: a giant painting veiled with curtains. Barry is holding a golden cord that will open the curtains.

The crowd of townspeople -- the entire town, it seems -- are dressed in their finest, listening with rapt attention as Barry speaks. Bozo Geranium, thoroughly fortified with liquor, is in the front of the crowd, leaning heavily against Bernice Keedsler. He has made a little wreath of "Breakfast of Champions" flags and is wearing it like a crown.

BARRY

And this isn't just art. This is expensive art. Twenty feet wide by sixteen feet high at eighteen-hundred-and-seventy-five dollars a square foot! This painting that I am donating to you, my fellow citizens, cost SIX HUNDRED BIG ONES!

The crowd murmurs with appropriate awe. Patty Keene (the waitress from Dan's Country Kitchen #306) is standing next to Bonnie MacMahon (the cocktail waitress from the Tallyho Room).

PATTY

I bet it's a beauty!

BONNIE

(glowering at
Geranium)

It better be.

Barry gestures for MARY ALICE MILLER (who is wearing her Olympic medal and shivering in her white swimming suit) to come up on the stage and take the golden cord.

BARRY

And now, to celebrate the opening of the Fred T. Barry American Arts Center, I give you Bozo Geranium's "The Temptation of Saint Anthony"!

Mary Alice Miller pulls the cord. The curtains fall away, revealing the painting: "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" is indeed twenty feet wide and sixteen feet high. The entire surface is a solid, perfectly even coat of "Hawaiian Avocado," a green wall paint. Its sole adornment is a single vertical stripe made of day-glo orange reflecting tape.

The crowd is thoroughly dumb-struck. People exchange nervous glances -- none daring to say aloud what most of them feel: that the Emperor has no new clothes. Geranium, alone, is beaming with pleasure. Keedsler studies the painting for a long moment, then whispers to him excitedly.

KEEDSLER

I think I see it! That band of tape is Saint Anthony!

GERANIUM

You got it, baby. You got it!

He kisses her. Bonnie MacMahon watches them is disgust.

BONNIE

(to Patty)

I think artists with their
meaningless pictures are in a
conspiracy with millionaires to
make poor people feel stupid.

Geranium overhears the remark (as he was meant to),
looks up at her for a second, and winks.

EXT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

A uniformed VALET drives one car away as the next
car pulls to a stop in front of "The Ball." It is
Dwayne's car. The SECOND VALET opens the passenger-
side door, then does a double-take, staring at its
occupants. None are even vaguely dressed in formal
attire (except Trout in his moldy tuxedo): Dwayne is
wearing his "Dwayne's Gone Crazy!" T-shirt;
Francine, a blouse and slacks; and Hoobler is still
in his "Shepardstown Insane Asylum" coveralls.

Dwayne pats Trout on the back.

DWAYNE

You and Francine go on ahead.
We'll get the bodies out of the
trunk.

The valet overhears them and moves cautiously away.

HOOBLER

(singing)

Lyle and Kyle are going to a
party!

As Dwayne and Hoobler start to un-rope the trunk,
Francine takes Bill's cage so that Trout can carry
his sketch pad. The CAMERA FOLLOWS them to the
entrance.

INT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Standing just inside the entrance checking names off a list, Kenneth Barby sees Trout and Francine and his first reaction is distaste and dismay. Then he suddenly brightens.

KENNETH

(in rapture)

Mr. Trout, I'd know you
anywhere. Welcome to Midland
City. We need you so!

TROUT

(startled)

How do you know who I am?

KENNETH

(pointing to Trout's
stack of porno
magazines)

I've read every one of those!
What imagination! What genius!
Oh, Mr. Trout, teach us to sing
and dance and laugh and cry!
We've tried to survive so long
on money and sex and envy and
real estate and football and
basketball and automobiles and
television and alcohol -- on
sawdust and broken glass!

TROUT

(flipping open his
sketch-pad)

Could you hold it there for just
a second...

He starts to sketch Barby. Hoobler's voice chimes
out:

HOOBLER'S VOICE

Move aside! Make way for Lyle
and Kyle!

Dwayne and Hoobler enter, carrying the plasticized
remains of Lyle and Kyle Hoover. The Xopolis
brothers step from their place of concealment near
the entranceway and immediately move in -- to try to
stop them.

Dwayne bats Max with Kyle's rigid body, clobbering him, and Hoobler uses the "Australian-crawling" figure of Lyle to deliver a solid right hook that sends Minos flying.

Dwayne and Hoobler push through the startled crowd, looking for Fred Barry.

On the other side of the room, Barry is standing by a pair of lifelike, white plaster-cast statues -- a "Grandma" on an overstuffed rocker and a "Grandpa" on a recliner, watching a plaster tv. Barry is holding forth to the small group around him:

BARRY

These are fine examples of the
ultra-realist school of
sculpture. Well...

(chucking the plaster
"Grandma" under the
chin)

...speaking ultra-realistically:
considering what I paid for
these dummies, it would have
been cheaper to just retire a
couple of my employees and dip
them in plastic!

Dwayne and Hoobler appear.

DWAYNE

Here's a couple more for your
collection, Fred!

Dwayne pushes "Grandpa" out of his recliner. He falls to the floor and his head cracks off. Dwayne sets Kyle in his place.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Have a seat, Kyle.

Hoobler sets Lyle on top of "Grandma" so that his outstretched swimming arm embraces her.

HOOBLER

Do your stuff, Lyle!

BARRY

You're sick, Dwayne. You need
medical attention.

DWAYNE

Yeah, I'm sick all right, Fred.
Sick from drinking the poison
water that's pouring out of your
plant -- the poison that killed
my wife!

(to the growing
crowd)

And soon everybody in this room
is going to be just as sick as I
am!

The crowd murmurs.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Go ahead! Deny it! I want to
watch your nose grow!

BARRY

I'm not denying anything,
Dwayne.

(turning to the
crowd)

Yes, I have, just today,
received word from my disposal
engineers that there appears to
have been a toxic event.

(the crowd is
startled)

And that it may, in some way, be
a product of our state-of-the-
art waste refining and removal
system. All the facts are not
in, but I can assure you that
Barrytron Industries will do
everything within its power to
remedy this situation.

Max and Minos, just revived from their overwhelming
introduction to modern art, move in on Dwayne.

DWAYNE

"State-of-the-art waste refining
and removal system"?? Horseshit!

(pointing at Max and
Minos)

-- You've been using these
sawed-off gangsters to dump that
stuff down holes all over the
county!

BARRY

There is a solution, Dwayne.
 (pats the breast-
 pocket of his
 thousand dollar
 suit)

I have in my pocket an offer
 from the Sultan of Brunei, to
 move Barrytron, lock, stock, and
 barrel, to the Sultan's simple,
 authoritarian kingdom. And
 despite the enormous profits
 that I could realize by
 accepting this offer, it is the
 horrifying prospect of what my
 relocation would mean to this
 town -- my town, our town --
 that has stayed my hand and kept
 me from accepting.

The crowd, listening intently, is impressed. Bonnie
 and Patty applaud. First one or two -- then more and
 more VOICES call out.

CROWD VOICES

We're with you, Fred!

Don't go, Mr. Barry!

You're our man!

This is a Barrytron town!

We're with you a hundred
 percent, Mr. Barry!

Francine steps in beside Dwayne, while Trout
 sketches the encounter -- fascinated to know what
 great ending will "reveal itself."

FRANCINE

He's lying! No country in their
 right mind would invite this man
 in to pump his poison into their
 lives.

HOOBLER

Are you folks all crazy??
 (pointing to Lyle and
 Kyle)
 I mean look at them corpse-
 sicles over here! Don't any of
 you fools trust Mr. Hoover ta
 tell you the truth?!

FRANCINE

I trust him!

But everyone else is silent: Ukwende (with his Third World attitude about "looking for trouble") looks away; Cassandra Boxe, Bonnie MacMahon, Bunny, Mary Alice Miller -- even little Patty Keene -- are all silent; Geranium breaks the silence with a drunken belch.

HOOBLER

Ain't there anybody else who's
 comin' out for my man??

A familiar male voice shouts from just inside the entrance-way:

HARRY LESABRE'S VOICE

I am!! I'm coming out for
 Dwayne!!

The crowd turns to see Harry LeSabre and Grace. Harry has "come out," indeed! He is wearing a sequin-speckled pink and red full-length satin creation that Cher or Ann-Margaret would be proud of. Grace, utterly feminine except for her long, thin Jamaican cigar, is completely proud of him.

BARRY

(grinning)
 Well, that's quite an impressive
 team of doom-sayers and freaks
 you've put together, Dwayne.
 (to the crowd)
 Citizens of Midland City, you
 have a simple choice: Stay with
 Barrytron, work with me, solve
 this slight industrial problem -
 - or join Dwayne's little
 crusade here, and lose your
 jobs, your homes, and starve to
 death.

The crowd considers it for a moment. Then a chant begins:

THE CROWD

Goodbye Blue Monday!

Goodbye Blue Monday!

Goodbye Blue Monday!

EXT./INT. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

The chanting -- louder and louder -- echoes inside of "The Ball" as Dwayne, shoulders slumped in defeat, walks out. Trout, standing just inside the doorway, watches Dwayne go. Hoobler follows. Then Harry and Grace. And finally Francine. Trout starts to go with them, but he's grabbed by Kenneth Barby.

KENNETH

And now, Mr. Trout, the moment you've been waiting for! It's time! Time to meet your patron - the man who will change your life just as you have changed his...

(calling out)

Mr. Barry! This way, Mr. Barry!

The crowd parts like the Red Sea as Fred Barry strides up to Trout, beaming with pleasure.

BARRY

Kilgore Trout...! Ahhh, "Now," indeed, "It Can Be Told"!

He takes from his pocket a slim book, beautifully bound in leather, embossed with gold letters: "Now It Can Be Told, by Kilgore Trout."

TROUT

Where did you get that?

BARRY

I had it personally published -- along with all of your writings...

He gestures expansively at a glass case nearby which contains hundreds of different books, all exquisitely leather-bound -- all the writings of Kilgore Trout. Barry points to the porno magazines that Trout is carrying.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Never again will you have to suffer that indignity. Soon, Kilgore, there will be pyramids of your works in the windows of every legitimate book store in this country!

TROUT

Why are you doing all this?

BARRY

Because I knew you were speaking directly to me when you wrote:
(opening the slim book)

"Dear Sir, poor sir, brave sir... You are the only creature in the entire Universe who has free will. Everybody else is a robot... "

TROUT

(truly stunned)

I never realized... that my work could have such... an effect...

BARRY

Oh, certainly! You just saw for yourself how I put your philosophy into action -- that little problem with the water? - - why should I have to listen to all the whining-machines, the complaining-machines, the do-gooder-machines -- when I'm the only being in the Universe who truly exists?

(holding up the book)

Before I read this, I would have felt guilty about putting my own comfort above the health and welfare of others. I would have done it, mind you - but I would have felt guilty about it. But

(MORE)

BARRY (CONT'D)

now, thanks to you, I'm at peace. Come with me, Kilgore, let's go up on the stage so I can present you to all the gawking-machines, and applauding-machines in Midland City!

Barry turns and strides off toward the stage, assuming that Trout will follow. Trout turns, instead, and heads for the door. Kenneth Barby tries to stop him.

KENNETH

Mr. Trout, where are you going? Come back. What am I going to tell Mr. Barry?

TROUT

Tell old Heliogabalus that it was a hell of a party -- but the bull was just getting a little too hot for me.

And out he goes.

EXT. ARTS CENTER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dwayne, despondent, is sitting on a low concrete wall that edges the gently sloping hilltop parking lot, looking down at the lights of Barrytron and Midland City in the valley below him. Francine is sitting beside him, holding his hands. Nearby, Hoobler is touching up his wax job on the Bonneville -- showing Harry and Grace that they can indeed see their resplendent reflections in every part of the car's body.

Trout walks over to Dwayne and Francine, sits on the wall next to Dwayne.

TROUT

I learned something amazing tonight.

DWAYNE

Oh, yeah? What was that?

TROUT

I learned that my words can affect people

DWAYNE

Well, that's great, Kilgore. I just learned the opposite.

FRANCINE

Dwayne, you can't give up. There's got to be something you can do.

DWAYNE

(shaking his head)

There's nothing... He's too big. He's got this whole town wrapped up. It's all over.

Kilgore watches Dwayne for a moment. In the extreme distance, THUNDER rumbles. Trout turns to study the gathering storm clouds for a second, thinking, then he smiles.

TROUT

Listen...

(Dwayne looks at him)

Where I come from, in upstate New York, there was a great story-teller named Washington Irving. And he told this tale about a man -- a solid member of his community, not at all unlike yourself -- who awoke one day to discover he'd been asleep most of his life...

DWAYNE

That's me.

TROUT

And this man was confronted with the evil mischief of the Gods. These Gods seemed all-powerful - - at least in the local sense. Yes sir, they had the whole place set up -- just as neat as ten-pins in a bowling alley...

Trout draws Dwayne's attention to the Barrytron plant below them, which, because of its distinctive design and the layout of its sleek, towering chemical tanks, does indeed resemble ten-pins set up in perfect formation. The distant thunder rumbles again.

TROUT (CONT'D)

So what could he do? Just lie
down and let the Gods bowl him
over? Or?

He turns and looks up at the huge white "bowling
ball" that is the Fred T. Barry American Arts
Center. After a second, Dwayne turns and follows his
look. The thunder rumbles again -- louder...

FRANCINE

But how does it end?

DWAYNE

(looking up at "The
Ball")

You just look up, and there it
is, staring you in the face...

INT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Max Xopolis is pulling the plasticized Lyle off of
his coital position with the plaster "Grandma."
Minos has put "Grandpa" back into his recliner, and
is trying (unsuccessfully) to put his plaster head
back on.

Fred Barry is standing by the huge Plexiglas
wheelbarrow full of horse manure, which has now been
tastefully covered by a thin glass dome. (Inside it,
swarms of dead flies dot the "sculpture.") Barry has
one arm around Patty Keene's shoulders. An
embarrassed and apologetic Kenneth Barby is pouring
champagne into Barry's glass.

KENNETH

I'm terribly sorry. I tried to
stop Mr. Trout, but, honestly,
he seemed a little... crazy.

BARRY

Don't worry about it, Kenneth.
No harm done. Actually, it's
cleared up something that's been
puzzling me. It occurred to me
that there might be another
being on the planet with free
will. But now I realize that
Kilgore Trout is nothing but a
scribbling-machine -- and a
failing-machine--

Suddenly -- BA-BOOM!! -- the whole building shakes, spilling champagne all over them.

EXT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

The front end of Dwayne's gleaming Bonneville is now crumpled against one of the four, slender concrete columns that are the sole supports of the spherical Art Center. The column has a big crack in it. The entire building is still vibrating slightly.

Dwayne, tightly belted into his seat, slams the car into reverse, screeches back twenty yards, shifts into drive, and floors it. The car rockets forward and smashes into the column again like a battering ram, knocking loose huge chunks of concrete -- and widening the crack.

Thunder rumbles as the storm draws closer. Trout's eyes, watching, gleam with satisfaction. Francine is terrified, but exultant in her support of what Dwayne's doing. Harry and Grace are laughing, embracing, and cheering Dwayne on. Only Hoobler is appalled as he watches the brilliantly-waxed surfaces of the car twist and rupture and groan.

HOOBLER

Oh, Boss! You're breaking my heart!

INT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Pandemonium! The building is quaking from the last impact. The crowd is beginning to race toward the doors.

Bozo Geranium and Bernice Keedsler are passionately embracing -- oblivious of the chaos around them. Right behind them, "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" pops off its hangers, thunks to the floor on its edge, and starts to heel over toward them -- like an enormous hinge folding shut.

Geranium puts up his hands to try to stop the painting's fall. His hands plunge right through the canvas surface, and he and Keedsler end up standing in a hole ripped through the middle of the vast painting.

KEEDSLER

Oh, how tragic!

Geranium looks down at the torn canvas for a second, amazed, then he beams ecstatically at Keedsler, raises his arms in triumph:

GERANIUM

No, I like it! Now it has...
dimension!

Fred Barry, near the entrance, watches in apoplectic rage as Dwayne's battered car races once more toward the shattered column. BA-BOOM!!! The building tilts slightly. Knocked loose by the blow, the giant lucite wheelbarrow breaks through the thin glass dome and starts to lumber across the floor straight toward Fred Barry. Barry, unaware of it, roars to Max and Minos:

BARRY

Get out there and stop that
madman! Shoot him if you have
to!

Kenneth Barby, looking over Barry's shoulder, sees the wheelbarrow coming. He grabs Barry.

KENNETH

No! No, Mr. Barry!!

Misunderstanding him, Barry tosses Kenneth aside.

BARRY

I'll do what I want, you little
shit!

The wheelbarrow crashes into Barry, flipping him up into the air. He splats down ass-first into forty thousand dollars' worth of horseshit.

EXT. FRED T. BARRY AMERICAN ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Most of the crowd have fled "The Ball," and are watching in amazement as Dwayne -- twenty yards from the building -- revs up for another shot at the all-but-demolished column. Max and Minos race out the door, drawing their guns. Francine screams:

FRANCINE

Dwayne! Watch out!!

Dwayne jams the car into gear, accelerates toward the column. Max and Minos -- right in his path -- squat down and open fire. People in the crowd scream and dive for cover. Bullets slam into the car, whiz by all around Dwayne -- but he keeps right on accelerating.

At the last minute, Max and Minos leap away to either side and the car roars by, and slams into the column. The column shatters and falls away.

The crowd gasps. The last people inside "The Ball" race to safety. Only Fred Barry remains inside, still jammed into the wheelbarrow. The huge building teeters on its three remaining supports. Barry blanches in fear. Lightning flashes on the horizon.

Then the building comes to a sudden, wrenching stop -- still upright and intact. Barry sighs in relief. The crowd cheers. Trout, standing next to Hoobler, frowns in disappointment. Dwayne jams the car into reverse, but Minos's revolver presses suddenly against his skull.

MINOS

The ride's over, buddy!

Max and Minos haul Dwayne out of the car. Thunder rolls across the valley. And in the background, in the crowd, we can see Trout lean toward Hoobler, and quickly begin to whisper.

Minos, his gun still pressed against Dwayne's temple, looks up eagerly to Barry, enthroned in the entranceway in the wheelbarrow of horseshit like a judge on a high bench.

MINOS

What do you want I should do
with this guy, Mr. Barry? Hunh?
Hunh??

BARRY

I don't care, you sniveling
idiot. But get me the hell out
of here! This place could give
way at any second!

MAX

Aw, no, Mr. Barry. You don't have to worry about that. This is an Xopolis building. It's solid as a rock. My own concrete company poured the pylons. Don't you remember?

BARRY

That's why I'm worried, Max -- Hey, stop him!!

Wayne Hoobler has slipped into the driver's seat of the battered Bonneville, jammed the car into reverse, and is starting back to give himself a run at the other column that flanks the entranceway.

HOOBLER

(yelling to Dwayne)
Watch out, Boss! Hoover's out -- but Hoobler's up! Time to get the ball rolling -- right, Mr. Trout??

Lightning forks across the sky. Thunder crashes down. In the crowd, Trout nods, and grins with unabashed pleasure.

Minos lets go of Dwayne, and he and Max open fire on the Bonneville, which has begun to accelerate toward "The Ball."

MAX

The tires! Get the fuckin' tires!

They empty their guns into the front tires of the car. It wobbles crazily and starts to slow. Closer to the column... Slower...

HOOBLER

(frantic)
Come on, baby! Come on!

Closer still... Slower... It barely taps the column as it sputters to a final stop. Exultant, Max and Minos cheer.

And from the tiny impact point at the base of the column, a huge crack suddenly forms -- and spreads in an instant up the entire length of the support. Sand comes pouring out of the fissure...

The column collapses, and "The Ball" begins to roll.

EXT. PARKING LOT- HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Barry, thrown free immediately, begins to scoot across the sloping parking lot in his wheelbarrow, just ahead of "The Ball." Max and Minos race off after him. The rolling "Ball" grinds toward the three of them. At the last second, at the edge of the parking lot, Max and Minos snatch the wheelbarrow aside. "The Ball," still picking up momentum, crunches past them into the low wall that edges the parking lot -- wobbles for an instant on the brink -- then plunges down the slope.

The edge of the parking lot crumbles and gives way beneath the weight of its passage -- and Fred Barry, Max, and Minos Xopolis all go sliding off down the hillside after "The Ball."

At the base of the hill, the "ten-pins" of Barrytron stand gleaming and tall -- almost exactly in "The Ball's" projected path. Almost... But not exactly...

A gutter-like flood control culvert slopes down the hillside nearby -- deep enough and wide enough to swallow up the rapidly accelerating "Ball" -- deflect it forever from its target.

On the crumbled edge of the parking lot, Dwayne, Francine, Trout, Hoobler, and all the others from the town are watching "The Ball's" progress with silent awe. All but Hoobler, who is on his knees like a bowler praying for help from the Gods themselves.

HOOBLER

Hook, baby! HOOK!!

Lightning sizzles overhead, simultaneous with the crash of its thunder. Bill squawks; Trout, looking up at the heavens, smiles. The rain begins to pour down.

And "The Ball," about to roll into the gutter, begins to slip instead on the wet earth -- and to change course!

As Hoobler and Dwayne and Francine cheer, "The Ball" hooks away from the gutter. With majestic inevitability, it slides straight in toward Barrytron -- smashes into its "ten-pin" array -- and scores a perfect STRIKE!

The chemical tanks rupture, unleashing torrents of pearlescent plastic, a tidal wave of goop that tumbles down the valley -- straight toward "Midland City."

On the edge of the parking lot high above, the townspeople gasp.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY- MORNING

IN CLOSE UP: The pair of plastic "boots" that once encased Trout's feet are still fused to the asphalt. In the background, like a band of post-Apocalyptic survivors, Dwayne, Francine, Hoobler, and Trout (with Bill, of course) trudge along the shoulder of the road near the Midland City highway exit.

Dwayne and Francine see the boots, and chuckle at the memory. Trout bends down, reaches into one of them, and retrieves the "Support The Arts!" badge that Dwayne tossed there. He pins it onto his moldy tuxedo, and grins.

As they reach the main highway, a car HORN sounds, and they all turn. Harry and Grace LeSabre cruise to a stop in their cherry red Bonneville. Both are still dressed as they were the night before. Harry is puffing on a thin cigar, now, too.

HARRY

Hey, Dwayne, want a ride?

DWAYNE

Where you going?

HARRY

Maui. We dumped our Barrytron stock just before you dumped Barrytron.

GRACE

We're going to buy a condominium and really live for a change!

Dwayne looks at Francine.

DWAYNE

What do you think?

She does a little hula.

DWAYNE

(grinning)

Sounds good to me!

He and Francine climb into the back of the car. They turn to Hoobler.

DWAYNE

Coming, Mr. Hoobler? Surf's up.

HOOBLER

You know, Boss, I'd like to, but
-- Whoa! -- I just don't think I
could stand the pace.

Hoobler steps away from the car. Francine looks at Trout.

FRANCINE

How about you, Kilgore?

TROUT

No, the call of Cohoes is too
great. You know, an old tree
needs a strong winter to get the
sap going.

Francine leans out of the car, kisses him on the forehead.

FRANCINE

Farewell, old tree.

Dwayne looks at Kilgore for a moment.

DWAYNE

Kilgore? If you run into
Washington Irving back there in
Cohoes...?

(a beat)

Thank him for me.

Trout, genuinely touched, smiles. Harry and the others turn onto the highway and drive away.

Trout turns in the opposite direction and he and Hoobler start to walk along the side of the road.

TROUT

I think I can see it now -- it begins quite simply... Listen:

(Bill squawks)

It's the tale of the meeting of two lonely men on a planet which was dying fast. One of them was a nobody at the time, a writer who supposed his life was over...

He looks at Hoobler, smiles.

TROUT (CONT'D)

He was mistaken... The man he met was an automobile dealer who was on the brink of going insane...

An air horn sounds from nearby. A big diesel semi hisses to a stop.

Huge lettering across the whole side of the trailer reads: "GLASNOST VODKA -- It Opens YOU Up!" The driver, Denzel Whitelaw, leans out of the cab and yells:

DENZEL

Cohoes?

INT. VODKA TRUCK - MORNING

Denzel is at the wheel, Trout and Hoobler are sitting in the passenger seat. There's a big jar of "Leaning Tower Olives" on the seat between them. Trout is pouring some "Glasnost Vodka" into a plastic cup.

DENZEL

So whattaya think, Kilgore, olives going down, vodka coming back! This trip has all the makings of a perfect martini!

Trout pops an olive in his mouth, follows it with a swig of vodka.

TROUT
 (toasting Denzel)
 "Breakfast of Champions!"

DENZEL
 (looking past
 Kilgore)
 Cohoes for you, too, Wayne?

HOOBLER
 No thank you. Just let me off up
 there at the Shepardstown exit.

DENZEL
 Anything you say.
 (turning to Trout)
 So, Kilgore, you've been to
 Midland City. Was I right? Is it
 the asshole of the Universe?

TROUT
 Well, Denzel, I think you can
 spend a lot of time searching
 for the asshole of the Universe
 -- only to find you've been
 sitting on it all your life!

EXT. MIDLAND CITY - MORNING

The entire town has been encased in a thick shell of
 translucent plastic, shimmering with colors.

Dazed townspeople, almost reverent with awe, walk
 slowly through its silent, permanently-plasticized
 streets. One of them, wearing a rumpled tuxedo, is
 suddenly recognizable. It's Fred Barry's secretary,
 Kenneth. He calls out occasionally:

KENNETH
 Mr. Barry...? Mr. Barry...?

Up ahead of Kenneth, a crowd of people are gathered
 outside the Holiday Inn's "Tallyho Room." Some are
 whispering in amazement, others are laughing.
 Kenneth approaches, slips through the crowd, and
 finally sees what they're gawking at:

A trio of plastic figures, cast up against the building as randomly as driftwood on a beach, gleam and sparkle in the morning sunlight: Max and Minos Xopolis, two runners frozen in mid-stride, looking back over their shoulders in perpetual surprise... And Fred T. Barry, laminated now and forever atop his wheelbarrow of horseshit.

Kenneth stares at the figures for a long moment, then he begins to laugh and laugh.

From a VERY HIGH ANGLE, the entire city FILLS THE FRAME. Then it suddenly

MATCH DISSOLVES TO:

A plastic paperweight -- the kind sold in tourist shops across the world: A miniature city encased in a dome of clear plastic atop the words:

"VISIT MIDLAND CITY -- THE TOWN THAT'S NEVER GOING TO CHANGE!"

THE END