

BRINGING OUT THE DEAD

First draft (11/7/97)

Paul Schrader

From the novel by
Joseph Connelly

After World War One it was called
Shell Shock.

After World War Two it was called
Battle Fatigue.

After Vietnam it was called
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Frank Pierce, 28, drives an EMS vehicle for
Our Lady of Mercy Hospital, New York City.
He has been a paramedic for five years.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS--NIGHT

An EMS "bus" careens around a corner, tires squealing, lights
flashing, siren whoop-whooping, swooping through Stygian
canyons of New York.

FRANK PIERCE, 28, drives. He wears dark cargo pants, black
boots, a white shirt with the paramedic badge, "EMS" gold
logo on one collar, "OLM" on the other. "Our Lady of Mercy
Paramedic" is inscribed in white across the back of his
navy jacket. On his belt: two-way radio, leather gloves,

beeper, drug kit, multi-purpose tool kit, mini-flashlight, collapsible baton.

LARRY, 35, overweight, his partner for the night, rides techie (shotgun), both hands clutching the dash.

Frank scans the blurring cityscape for hidden danger. He is a young man of slight frame and open face--his life, his possible futures, still before him: behind those open eyes, beneath those dark shadows: hollowness beckons.

Dispatcher's voice crackles through the cab static: "Ladder 4, respond to a 10-22, four flight residential, 417 East 32. 13 Boy, men's room Grand Central, man set his pants on fire. Bad burns. 17 David, at 177 East 24, there's a woman who says a roach crawled in her ear. Can't get it out, says she's going into cardiac arrest ..."

Frank's detached voice speaks over the urban landscape:

FRANK (V.O.)

Thursday started out with a bang: a gunshot to the chest on a drug deal gone bad. Heat, humidity, moonlight--all the elements in place for a long weekend. I was good at my job: there were periods when my hands moved with a speed and skill beyond me and my mind worked with a cool authority I had never known. But in the last year I had started to lose that control. Things had turned bad. I hadn't saved anyone for months. I just needed a few slow nights, a week without tragedy followed by a couple of days off.

The radio continues: "Zebra, 13Z, 524 East 17--"

LARRY

(on radio)

We're there.

The ambulance breaks to a halt in front of a row of vintage walk-ups. Frank and Larry jump out: Frank lugs the EKG monitor and airway bag, Larry the drug box, yellow oxygen pack slung over his shoulder. Neighbors crowd around.

OLD WOMAN

Which apartment? Which apartment?

FRANK

Move back. Where's the stairs? 5A.

OLD WOMAN

Oh Jesus, it's Mr. Burke.

The front door opens, a young boy holding it.

Author's note: in emergency situations, either on the street or in the hospital, it is assumed there is continual background noise--voices, sirens, cries, questions, etc.

CUT TO:

INT. TENEMENT STAIRWELL--NIGHT

Four flights up: Frank and Larry climbing rotting steps, gray-yellow painted walls, red doors with three locks each, Larry, out of breath, his stomach rolling around like a bowling ball in a bag.

CUT TO:

INT. BURKE APARTMENT--NIGHT

They enter 5A. MRS. BURKE, 55, her eyes run dry, standing in the center of the room, surrounded by neighbors. Someone leads them to the BEDROOM where Mr. Burke, 60, lies unmoving, stretched on the bed. A young woman, MARY BURKE, 24, kneels over the old man, pressing her lips to his flaccid mouth.

JOHN BURKE, 30, grabs Franks arm:

JOHN

We were just watching TV and Dad yelled out and started punching his chest, next thing he locked himself in the bathroom. I said we were gonna call you guys and he said not to. He was crying, I never heard him crying before, then he sorta stopped. We pulled him out and put him on the bed.

Frank and Larry moving the body to the floor:

FRANK

How long ago did he stop breathing?

JOHN

Maybe ten minutes. Woman on the phone tried to tell us how to do CPR. Please, you gotta do something.

FRANK

We'll do all we can.

Larry ripping open Mr. Burke's shirt, prepping electrode patches, hooking wires, Frank opening Burke's mouth, feeling a puff of gas escape; Larry calling for backup. Burke's EKG rhythm on the monitor a flat green line.

Frank's training takes over: he injects the long steel

laryngoscope down Burke's throat, he finds a vein, injects epinephrine, followed by atrophine, followed by another epi: no response on the monitor. Larry pulls out the paddles:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Clear! Clear!

Larry activates defibrillator, shock--Burke's body heaves. Sweat drips from Larry's nose onto Burke's chest.

MARY

No more, please don't!

They shock him again. This time the body moves less. Frank glances up: Mr. and Mrs. Burke's wedding photo sits on the nightstand. Other pictures: a day at the beach, a young serviceman, happy parents. Frank's mind drifts:

FRANK (V.O.)

In the last year I had come to believe in such things as spirits leaving the body and not wanting to be put back, spirits angry at the awkward places death had left them. I understood how crazy it was to think this way, but I was convinced if I turned around, I'd see Old Man Burke standing at the window, watching, waiting for us to finish.

Frank feels Burke's heart beneath cracked ribs. The EEG remains flat. He's dead. It's time to quit.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(to Larry)

I'll take over. Call ER and ask for an eighty-three.

(to Mrs. Burke)

Sorry.

Larry stands, breathing heavy, looks for a phone. Frank turns to notice relatives and neighbors standing around.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Do you have any music?

MARY

What?

FRANK

Music. I think it helps if you play something he liked.

MARY

John, play the Sinatra.

John enters crying. Mary repeats softly:

MARY

Play the Sinatra.

John exits. Frank notices Mary for the first time: blond hair dyed black, cut short, loose fitting tank dress, black makeup running down her cheeks. He notices her prom picture, glances back to Mary: it seems she hasn't smiled since that day eight years before. Something special about her, that something that hits you right away.

"September of My Years" plays from the other room. Frank continues massaging Mr. Burke's chest (now to Sinatra beat), even though it's hopeless. Larry returns:

LARRY

It's OK, Frank. We can call it. Eighty-three.

Frank feels something strange, looks into Burke's pupils, checks his neck pulse, wrist pulse. His eyes go to Larry:

FRANK

No we can't. He's got a pulse.

LARRY

No shit.

Larry checks the monitor: the green line up and down. Mary senses a change in status:

MARY

Is he going to be alright?

FRANK

(not encouraging)
His heart's beating.

A distant siren signals the arrival of backup. Frank turns to Larry:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Have 'em bring up a stretcher.

He looks from Mary back to Mr. Burke--breathing but comatose.

CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE--NIGHT

Larry climbing through the back doors, sitting in the jumpseat at the stretcher's head as Frank hangs IV bags, replugs EKG wires that have come loose.

Frank looks up, sees Mary entering; he takes her arm, turns her toward the rear doors:

FRANK

Help your family. Ride with your
mother and brother.

(she hesitates)

Help your family. They need you more.
Help yourself.

Mary steps out, stands in the red flashing light as Larry
closes the door, Frank climbs in the driver's seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECOND AVENUE--NIGHT

The EMS bus cruises up Second. Frank checks the side mirror:
John, Mary and Mrs. Burke pull behind in a black Ford. Seeing
their faces, Frank flips the lights and siren on. It's too
late to help Mr. Burke, but it's important to the family
that it look urgent. Frank watches passing lights, cars,
faces:

FRANK (V.O.)

I needed to concentrate because my
mind tended to wander on these short
trips. It was the neighborhood I
grew up in and where I had worked
most as a paramedic, and it held
more ghosts per square foot than any
other.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUR LADY OF MERCY--NIGHT

Larry and Frank's 13 Zebra ambulance lined up beside two
others outside a blazing "Emergency" sign on the crowded
side street.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Every large city has a hospital Emergency Room so replete
with trauma, violence and suffering it picks up the sobriquet
"Knife and Gun Club." On Manhattan's Lower East Side it's
our Lady Of Mercy, aka, Our Lady of Misery.

ER: a white-lit cement box painted yellow and decorated with
old framed Playbills. Four rows of six plastic chairs face a
TV bolted and chained to the ceiling. The seats are filled
with backed-up drunks, assault victims and "regulars,"
bleeding and spilling over against the walls and the floor,
getting up to ask their status or going out to throw up and
have a smoke.

Larry and Frank wheeling Burke in, two IV lines, each
connected to an elbow, tangled in EKG cables. Two LACERATED

RUSSIANS scramble out of their way as they approach GRISS, the large black sunglassesed security guard. He looks up from his television guide:

GRISS

Hey partner. Your man does not look well. They're not gonna appreciate you inside.

FRANK

(pumping Ambu-bag)
Griss, let us in.

GRISS

Things are backing up.

Griss pushes a button, activating the automatic door, striking the bandaged leg of a man lying down on a stretcher in the hall. Larry and Frank wheel Burke inside. A pleading family tries to follow. Griss stretches out his hand:

GRISS (CONT'D)

You can't go in there, folks.

Mary, John and Mrs. Burke rush in from the street, hoping some miracle has occurred during the drive to the hospital, approach the sign-in desk.

Frank and Larry pass four stretchers lined against the wall-- a passage nicknamed "Skid Row" leading past triage NURSE CONSTANCE's station.

NURSE CONSTANCE

Just keep moving. Don't even slow down.

Nurse Constance turns back to the nervous man seated beside her:

NURSE CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Sir, you say you've been snorting cocaine for three days and now you feel your heart is beating too fast and you would like us to help you. To tell the truth, I don't see why I should. If I'm mistaken, correct me. Did we sell you the cocaine? Did we push it up your nose?

Larry and Frank slow at the last Skid Row stretchers. On one, NOEL, a young dark-skinned man with chaotic mess of dreadlocks, pulls feverishly at his restraints:

NOEL

For God's sake, give me some water.

From the next stretcher a man with feet swollen purple like

prize eggplants replies:

BIG FEET

Shut up! Goddamn civilians.

NOEL

Give me some water!

NURSE CRUPP stops Frank and Larry as they approach the Critical care room. Inside, the staff appears as if under siege by a battalion of shriveled men and women lying on a field of white sheets.

NURSE CRUPP

Don't take another step. We're on diversion. Can't accept any more patients. Your dispatcher should have told you.

FRANK

We got him at Eighteen and Second. You're closest.

NURSE CRUPP

Where will I put him, Frank? Look. Tell me.

FRANK

He wanted to come here. Said the nurses at Misery were the best.

NURSE CRUPP

(acquiesces)

All right, give me a minute. I'll kick someone out of slot three.

Larry unravels himself from the IV lines as nurse walks over, takes Burke's pulse.

NOEL

(to Frank)

Excuse me. You are a very kind man. I can see that. A man like you could not refuse a poor sick dying helpless man a small cup of water.

FRANK

I can't. I have to stay with my patient.

BIG FEET

Shut the fuck up! If it wasn't for these dun feet I'd get up and kick your ass!

DR. HAZMAT, 30, steps over.

HAZMAT

Godammit, guys, what are you doing to me? We're all backed up in here. Christ, would you look at him? He's gonna need the works. What's wrong with him?

LARRY

You should know. You pronounced him.

HAZMAT

You told me he was dead. Flatline.

FRANK

He got better.

HAZMAT

I hate pronouncing people dead over the phone.

(flashes light in
Burke's eyes)

Better, huh? They're fixed and dilated. He's plant food.

NURSE CRUPP

(returning)

We stole a stretcher from X-ray. No pad on it, but I don't think he'll mind. Put him in three, next to the overdose.

HAZMAT

He's our lowest priority now. He shouldn't even be here. All this technology. What a waste.

Back at SECURITY, the Burkes confront Griss.

GRISS

Please folks, step back.

(they hesitate)

Don't make me take off my sunglasses.

In CRITICAL CARE, Larry wheels Burke into unit three as Dr. Hazmat turns Frank to face the room, explaining:

HAZMAT

First-time heart attack, age 45. Should have gone to the CCU ten hours ago. There's three bodies up there Mike the one you just brought in. over there, two AIDS patients, one in twelve filling up with liquid. I'm gonna hafta intubate because the kid's mother won't sign the Do Not Resuscitate. Mercy killing doesn't translate well in Spanish. It's a

sin to tube this kid. Three more ODs from some new killer junk. They call it Red Death.

Hazmat pulls out a vial marked with a red skull and crossbones, shows it to Frank.

NOEL

Water, water, water, doctor man, water.

HAZMAT

A mix of heroin and I don't know what else, some kind of amino acid maybe. Stuff so strong they're drinking it with grain alcohol. You have to use ten times the usual amount of Narcan and watch out when they wake up, liable to go nuts on you.

FRANK

(about Noel)
He one of them?

HAZMAT

No, that's Noel. Used to be a regular off and on, hasn't been in in a while. He seized and almost coded--I gave him a hypertonic solution. He drank so much the kidneys were taking out salt. One for the textbooks.

NOEL

Oh doctor, you are the greatest. You must help me.

BIG FEET

For God's sake, give him a drink of water.

HAZMAT

I am helping you, Noel. You could die if you drink more water.

Nurse Crupp pulls on Hazmat's arm.

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

What is it?

She points to Burke. His monitor is ringing like a fire alarm. Hazmat and Crupp rush over, wave to others:

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

Crupp, start CPR. Milagros, get me an epi. Odette wake up Dr. Stark. Tell him I need a blood gas, stat.

As the staff crowds around Burke, pulling the paddles from off the monitor, Frank, pushing his stretcher away, notices Big Feet climb onto his infected feet, hobble over, work to untie Noel.

NOEL

Bless you sir, bless you.

BIG FEET

Shut up.

Frank heads down Skid Row pushing the stretcher, passing Nurse Constance speaking with a man with a gash over his eye:

NURSE CONSTANCE

... so you get drunk every day and you fall down. Tell me why we should help you when you're going to get drunk tomorrow and fall down again?

Frank pushes the automatic door button--and is suddenly hit from behind by Noel. The stretcher spins sideways. Noel dives out the doors for the water fountain, snorting up water like a bull. Mary Burke, standing with her family, looks at Frank.

FRANK

(stock reply)
He's very very sick.

MARY

I know him. That's Noel.

FRANK

We'd better go outside. Quickly.

Frank and Mary step out into the humid night.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Checking behind then, Frank stops. Mary pauses before she speaks:

MARY

Is there any chance?

FRANK

(shakes head)
I guess there's always a chance.

The doors break open. Noel comes flying out, bounces on the sidewalk. Griss, in the doorway, closes the doors.

Mary goes over to Noel:

MARY

Noel, Noel, it's me, Mary. From 17th Street.

NOEL

Mary, Mary, Mary. I'm so thirsty. They won't give me anything to drink. Please, Mary.

MARY

(heading inside)
I'll get you some.

Frank watches: Mary returns with a cup of water, gives it to a grateful Noel.

FRANK

I wouldn't do that.
(Noel drinks)
The doctor seems to think he's suffering from some rare disorder.

MARY

It's not so rare. He grew up on our street. He's had a rough life and he's a little crazy from it, but that's no excuse for not giving someone a lousy cup of water.

Mary starts to cry. Frank fumbles in his pocket, finds a tissue, gives it to her.

MARY (CONT'D)

My father's dying, Noel.

NOEL

Oh Mary, Mary, Mary.

Noel hugs her clumsily, his shoulders bobbing. Frank watches, realizing this is what he should have done for her.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST SIDE STREETS--NIGHT

13 Zebra cruising down Avenue C, Frank at the wheel, Larry shotgun.

LARRY

The Chinese close in five minutes. Beef lo mein. It's been on my mind since I woke. Whatjathink?

FRANK

I think the moment that food hits your mouth we'll get a job.

LARRY

Turn here. You missed it. The Chink
is on 3rd.

Franks turns, gets jammed up behind a pimp car at Second and Avenue B, a corner populated by pushers and hookers. TWO WHORES stand in front of an abandoned building. Frank turns to look.

WHORE #1

Hey ambulance man. What you looking
at?

The second whore, wearing a yellow vinyl coat, turns. She has a face that instantly freezes Frank: the Rose face. Pregnant, she gestures to her belly:

WHORE #2

Pretty soon you'll be coming for me.

LARRY

Some partner you are Frank. I coulda
walked there faster. I'm starving
and you stop to talk to hookers.
You're making me nuts. Is that what
you're trying to do, drag me down
with you to nutsville?

Frank hits the whoop-whoop siren. The pimps in the black BMW jump, look back, realize its only an ambulance, and pull away.

LARRY (CONT'D)

(slams dashboard)
Oh no!--I just remembered.

FRANK

What?

LARRY

I'm so stupid. I had beef lo mein
last night. I can't eat the same
thing two nights in a row. It's almost
two o'clock, what the hell am I gonna
do? What you getting?

FRANK

I'm not hungry.

LARRY

Oh yeah, you don't eat food.

FRANK

I eat. I just haven't had coffee
yet.

LARRY

Coffee and whiskey, lucky you ain't
dead with that diet. Wait, I've got
it. Half fried chicken with fries.
Let's go, hurry up. Come on.

Frank speeds up Avenue B. Noel, wearing generic homeless
combat fatigues, muttering to his friends in Hell, passes on
the sidewalk. Frank notices another hooker, catches her face:
the same face as the pregnant Whore #2. The Rose face. His
mind drifts:

FRANK (V.O.)

Rose was getting closer. Ever since
the call a month before, when I'd
lost her, she seemed like all the
girls in the neighborhood. One of
the first things you learn is to
avoid bad memories. I used to be an
expert, but lately I'd found some
holes. Anything could trigger it.
The last month belonged to Rose, but
there were a hundred more ready to
come out.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICKEN TAKE-OUT--NIGHT

The EMS vehicle is stopped at a fast food joint. Larry orders,
waits.

FRANK (V.O.)

These spirits were part of the job.
It was impossible to pass a building
that didn't hold the spirit of
something: the eyes of a corpse, the
screams of a loved one. All bodies
leave their mark. You cannot be near
the new dead without feeling it.

Larry gets his chicken, chats with counter clerk, returns.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I could handle that. What haunted me
now was more savage: spirits born
half-finished, homicides, suicides,
overdoses, innocent or not, accusing
me of being there, witnessing a
humiliation which they could never
forgive.

Larry climbs in, sets his take-out on the dash, hands Frank
a coffee. A police walkie-talkie is in the front tray.

LARRY

Turn it off.

FRANK

What?

LARRY

You know what. The radio.

POLICE DISPATCH

Ladder Four, respond to a 10-22 four flight residential, 317 East 32nd.

LARRY

Let's do it. It might be a good one.

FRANK

You wanted it turned off. There's no such thing as a good fire. People get burned up. They can't breathe.

LARRY

That's what we're here for. Come on, Frank.

FRANK

Don't push it, Larry.

LARRY

You're burned out.

RADIO DISPATCHER

One-three Zebra. Zebra three, I need you.

LARRY

You see, he's giving it to us anyway.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Zebra, are you there? I'm holding an unconscious at First and St. Marks.

LARRY

(screams)

No! It's three o'clock. That can only mean one thing.

FRANK

Mr. Oh.

LARRY

It's Mr. Oh. I'm not answering it.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Answer the radio Zebra. You know it's that time.

LARRY

Four times this week I've had him.

Aren't there any other units out there? Don't answer the radio. They'll give it to someone else.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Thirteen Zebra. One-Three Zebra. You're going out of service in two seconds.

Pause. Neither moves.

LARRY

Look, Frank, when I say don't answer it, that means answer it.

(picks up the mike)

You can do that for me at least.

(keys mike)

Three Zebra.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Yes, Zebra. You'll be driving to the man who needs no introduction, chronic caller of the year three straight and shooting for number four. The duke of drunk, the king of stink, our most frequent flier, Mr. Oh.

LARRY

Ten-four.

(Frank starts the engine)

Don't go. Not this time.

FRANK

(driving off)

Relax, it's a street job, easy except for the smell. We'll just throw him in back and zip over to Mercy--no blood, no dying, that's how I look at it. He's just a drunk.

LARRY

It's not our job to taxi drunks around.

FRANK

They'll just keep calling.

LARRY

Someone's gonna die someday causa that bum, going to have a cardiac and the only medics will be taking care of Mr. Oh.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST & ST. MARKS--NIGHT

Frank and Larry standing over Mr. Oh, 40, surrounded by street people. Oh lays curled up beside his wheelchair, wearing a black garbage bag with holes cut out for his arms, his pants around his knees.

MALE STREET PERSON #1

He's bad mister. He ain't eaten nuthin all day, he's seizing and throwing up.

LARRY

(hand over nose)
So what's different?

MALE STREET PERSON #1

He says his feet hurt.

FRANK

Well why didn't you say so?

LARRY

He's drunk.

MALE STREET PERSON #2

He's sick. You gotta help him.

LARRY

He's fine. He can walk to the hospital.

FEMALE STREET PERSON

Walk? You crazy? He's in a wheelchair.

LARRY

Don't start that. I've seen him walk. He walks better than me.

Frank crouches over Oh, tries to pull Oh's pants over his white, dirt-stained ass. Oh moans:

MR. OH

Oh, oh, oh.

LARRY

That's him, Mr. Oh.
(pulls at his arm)
Get up.

Larry and Frank get Oh to his feet only to have him stumble over his lowered trousers. This time Frank lifts him, sets his white ass cheeks into the wheelchair. They push him toward the ambulance.

CROWD

Good luck! Get better!

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST AVE--NIGHT

13 Zebra heads up First, double Caduceus symbols shining from the back of the van.

Inside the cab, Larry and Frank lean out the front windows to avoid the king of stink:

LARRY

Faster! God!

FRANK

(flips on top lights)

Faster!

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Griss holding up his hand:

GRISS

Get that stinky-assed motherfucking bug-ridden skull out of my face.

Frank and Larry stand beside Oh slumped in his wheelchair. Fellow drunks welcome their comrade from plastic chairs. Nurse Constance escorts a young man from the triage area:

NURSE CONSTANCE

I would have to register you to give you something to eat and my conscience just will not allow that. Griss, the gentleman wants to leave.

(looks at Oh)

He looks pale. You're not eating enough. You need more fiber.

Griss shows young man the door.

LARRY

(holds up his report)

He's wasted. That's my diagnosis: shit-faced.

NURSE CONSTANCE

He just needs a bath and some food. Take him in back and see if you can find a stretcher.

LARRY

(to Frank)

She's nuts. That's why he comes here. She encourages him.

Griss returns as Crupp calls from critical care area:

NURSE CRUPP

Don't you dare! That's my last
stretcher. This is not a homeless
shelter. He'll have to wait in the
lobby.

GRISS

No way man. Not even in the corner.
Griss cannot abide the funk tonight.

Larry and Frank turn, secretly pleased, and wheel Mr. Oh
outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Larry setting Oh outside the entrance, heading towards the
all night deli. Frank takes out a cigarette.

Mary Burke walks up the drive opening a pack of cigs. Frank
offers her a light. She inhales, exhales:

MARY

It's my first cigarette in over a
year.

FRANK

The first is always the best.

MARY

It's the waiting that's killing me,
not knowing, you know? It's really
hard on my mother. The doctor doesn't
think my father'll make it. He says
he was dead too long, after six
minutes the brain starts to die and
once that goes, close the door.

FRANK

You never know.

MARY

I mean if he was dead, I could handle
that.

FRANK

At least he's got people around him.

MARY

I'm not so sure. My father and I
haven't spoken in three years. When
my brother called to say my father
was having a heart attack, that he'd
locked himself in the bathroom, all

the way going over I was thinking how I was gonna tell him what a bastard he was. Then when I got up the stairs and we moved him onto the bed, I thought of all these other things I wanted to say.

FRANK

Even when you say the things, there's always more things.

MARY

Right now, I'm more worried about my mother than anything. They won't let her see my father.

FRANK

Go home. Take her home. Get some rest. Not going to find anything out now.

MARY

That's what I told her. If she could just see him a second, then I could take her home.

Larry walks back with a coffee for himself and a brown bag beer for Frank.

LARRY

Time to switch. I wheel, you heal.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE--NIGHT

4:00am. The EMS vehicle drives downtown. The city has transformed: a deserted city, inhabited by the hardcore: hardcore night-shift employees, hardcore party-goers, hardcore druggies, hardcore homeless, people with something special to do or nowhere to go.

RADIO DISPATCHER

12 David on the corner of Thirty-eight and Two you'll find a three-car accident, two taxis and a taxi. One-two Henry, 427 East Two-two, report of a very bad smell. No further information ...

Larry driving at a good clip, riding both the gas and the break pedals, enjoying the newfound freedom of movement.

FRANK

Larry, swing over on Eighth. We're gonna hafta run one of these calls.

LARRY

Relax, will you.

Frank places both hands on the dash as Larry squeals around a corner.

FRANK (V.O.)

The biggest problem with not driving is that whenever there's a patient in back you're also in the back. The doors close, you're trapped. Four in the morning is always the worst time for me, just before dawn, just when you've been lulled into thinking it might be safe to close your eyes for one minute. That's when I first found Rose ...

Larry slows down on a side street. Frank turns to watch a homeless man. The man looks back: it's Rose. The Rose face.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She was on the sidewalk, not breathing.

Frank turns to Larry:

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm not feeling very well, Larry. I say we go back to the hospital and call it a night.

LARRY

You have no sick time, Frank. No time of any kind. Everyone knows that.

FRANK

Take me back, put me to bed; I surrender. We've done enough damage tonight.

LARRY

You take things too seriously. Look at us, we're cruising around, talking, taking some quiet time, getting paid for it. We've got a good job here.

FRANK

Yeah, you're right.

Larry pulls into the Jacob Riis projects by the river, slows to a stop. Larry cuts the lights, not bothering to inform his partner what his partner already knows: they're taking a rest.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIIS PROJECTS--NIGHT

13 Zebra sits in the quiet dark. Larry puffs a cigarette.

FRANK

Tell me, you ever think of doing anything else?

LARRY

Sure, I'm taking the captain's exam next year. After the kids are in school, Louise can go back to the post office and, I thought, what the hell, I'll start my own medic service. Out on the Island the volunteers are becoming salaried municipal. It's just a matter of time and who you know. Someday it's going to be Chief Larry calling the shots.

Larry tosses the cigarette out the window, leans against the door jamb, closes his eyes. In a second he's asleep.

Frank turns down the radio volume: the calls are fewer and further between now. Frank leans back, tries to rest:

FRANK (V.O.)

I'd always had nightmares, but now the ghosts didn't wait for me to sleep. I drank every day. Help others and you help yourself, that was my motto, but I hadn't saved anyone in months. It seemed all my patients were dying. I'd waited, sure the sickness would break, tomorrow night, the next call, the feeling would drop away. More than anything else I wanted to sleep like that, close my eyes and drift away ...

TIMECUT: radio wakes Frank from his reverie.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Zebra. One-three Zebra.

(Frank opens eyes)

Zebra, answer the radio. Come on, I've got one for you. Pick up the radio and push the button on the side and speak into the front.

FRANK

(answering call)

Zebra.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Male bleeding, corner of Houston and

One. No further information.

FRANK

Ten-four.

Frank hangs up, bangs Larry's steering wheel:

FRANK (CONT'D)

We have a call Chief. Somebody's
bleeding, Houston and First.

Larry instinctively reaches for the ignition key, starts the engine, drops the ambulance into gear, hits lights, jerks the EMS bus away, still half asleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSTON & FIRST--NIGHT

13 Zebra coming to a bone jarring stop at the corner. Getting out of the techie seat, Frank sees Noel, his face bloody, charging at him.

NOEL

Kill me!

Noel has sliced up a tire and fastened the pieces with string over his shoulders. Tin cans circle his wrists and ankles. One hand carries a broken bottle, the other a stringless violin.

Frank jumps back inside as Noel rams the window, leaving stains from his blood-matted dreadlocks. Larry calls for backup: medics, police, firemen, anybody.

The side window glass bends as Noel rams his head against it. Frank reaches for the short club between the seats; Noel holds the jagged bottle to his neck.

FRANK

Noel, don't!

Noel drops the bottle. Frank rolls down the window.

LARRY

He's crazy.

FRANK

You really think so?

NOEL

See, I can't do it. I came out of
the desert.

FRANK

You came out of the hospital. You
were tied down and hallucinating.

You got some bad chemicals in your head, Noel. There's some medicine at the hospital that will fix that.

NOEL

No, no medicine!

Noel swings his bloody dreadlocks: Frank ducking, getting splattered anyway, rolling up the window.

LARRY

He got you.

A BLACK PUNK calls from the crowd:

BLACK PUNK

Do it! Man wants to die. Take him out! I know how to kill that mother.
(points a finger)
Pop, pop.

Noel, spraying blood, chases the Punk. The crowd scatters. Noel trips, falls to the sidewalk. Frank, carrying the short bat, gets out, walks over, hunches beside Noel:

FRANK

Noel, you didn't let me finish. We have rules against killing people on the street. Looks bad, but there's a special room at the hospital for terminating. A nice quiet room with a big bed.

NOEL

Oh man, do you mean that?
(smiles)
Thank you man, thank you. How?

FRANK

Well, you have your choice: pills, injection, gas.

A siren draws closer, Noel gets to his feet as Larry opens the rear doors.

NOEL

I think pills. Yes, pills, definitely.

A second ambulance skids to a stop. TOM WALLS, 35, a 220 pound bald-headed bruiser, gets out.

LARRY

Jesus, Tom Walls, that crazy motherfucker.

FRANK

Used to be my partner.

WALLS

Frank, this the guy you called about?
I know him.

(pushes Noel)

You give my friend here any trouble
and I'll kill you.

NOEL

Yes, at the hospital.

WALLS

This looks like a very bad man I
took in a couple weeks ago, a man
who'd been holding two priests hostage
with a screwdriver. I told him if I
ever caught him making trouble again
I'd kick the murdering life outta
him.

FRANK

It's not worth it, Tom. He's
surrendering.

WALLS

No prisoners. Don't worry, Frank,
just a little psychological first
aid.

Walls hauls back, swings at Noel; Noel ducks.

WALLS (CONT'D)

Stay still, dammit!

Walls throws Noel against the bus, knocks him down, sets to
kicking him.

FRANK

Don't do it, Tom!

Noel moans. Larry sticks his head out the back of the bus:

LARRY

There's a double shooting three blocks-
up. First and Third. confirmed.

WALLS

(looking up)

We'll do it.

Walls releasing Noel as Noel scrambles into the bus, Frank
stepping over him, Larry climbing into the driver's seat,
Frank closing the doors. Noel trembles:

NOEL

At the hospital. You told me at the
hospital.

Larry squeals off full gun, all sirens blaring: the Wah, the Yelp, the Super Yelp. Strobe bar, side strobes, quarter panel strobes. Rock n' roll.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST & THIRD--NIGHT

Both EMS buses breaking to a stop at the crime scene, cops holding the crowd back; Walls, Frank, Larry, Walls' partner moving through the crowd.

FRANK & WALLS

EMS. Move it!

BYSTANDER

Man just walked up and shot 'em. Not a word. Man, that was cold.

Two boys, DRUG DEALERS, lie bleeding on the sidewalk. Frank drops to his knees beside one, Walls the other. Larry wheels out the stretcher.

FRANK

(to Drug Dealer)

Where you hit?

VOICE IN CROWD

Outlaw did this. He works for Cy.

Two white vials roll out of the Drug Dealer's shirt: marked with red skull and crossbones. Frank looks over--they're gone, swiped by eager hands.

Listening for a heartbeat, Frank calls to Walls:

FRANK

Major Tom, I'm going to Misery. You take yours to Bellvue.

CUT TO:

INT. 13 ZEBRA EMS VEHICLE--NIGHT

Larry charging through the night while, in back, Frank, stethoscope in his ears, wrapping a tourniquet around the Drug Dealer's arm: he's dying fast.

FRANK

You're gonna feel a stick in your arm. Don't move.

DRUG DEALER

I don't want to die.

NOEL

I want to die. I'm the one.

DRUG DEALER

Oh Jesus, I don't want to die.

FRANK

You're not going to die.

NOEL

What did you say?

FRANK

(to Noel)

Shut up. You're going to die and he's not. Got it?

DRUG DEALER

(weak)

Hold my hand.

FRANK

I can't. I got to do the other arm.

DRUG DEALER

Please.

FRANK

(to Noel)

Hold this--right there. If you let go, I swear, I won't kill you.

Noel holds IV bag as Frank searches for a vein, inserts second IV needle.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Larry pulls into Our Lady of Mercy Emergency. Frank says to the boy:

FRANK

It's all right. We're here.

No answer. Frank feels for a pulse, listens with the stethoscope: nothing. Larry opens the doors.

LARRY

Noel, let's go.

Frank turns to his partner:

FRANK

He's not breathing. Call a code.

Larry and Frank pull the dead boy out of the bus.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Frank finishes his report, hands a copy to the clerk, looks around the now almost empty waiting area. John Burke sleeps slumped in one of the chairs. Griss stands at his post.

Pulling out a pack of cigarettes, Frank steps outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Frank exits, lights up. The sky is going blue. Inside the open rear doors of 13 Zebra, Larry mops up bloody floor.

Mary Burke, weary, steps beside Frank.

MARY

Hello again.

He offers a cigarette. She accepts:

MARY (CONT'D)

You shouldn't smoke.

FRANK

It's okay. They're prescription.

(beat)

Works better with a little whiskey.

MARY

That's my brother's problem. He's passed out inside.

Larry jumps theatrically out of the ambulance, swings the mop wildly over his head:

LARRY

That's it! I can't do it anymore!

Mary laughs once, less than a second. She notices blood stains on Frank's shirt:

MARY

That boy you brought in, he was shot, wasn't he?

FRANK

Yes.

MARY

He's dead, huh?

FRANK

Yes.

MARY

(pause)

I think this place stinks.

FRANK

Our Lady of Misery.

MARY

Did you see my father?

FRANK

No.

MARY

It's crazy in there. What's wrong with that doctor? He keeps mumbling, poking himself in the eye when he talks to me.

FRANK

He's working a double shift.

MARY

Thing is, I'm supposed to be the fuckup. The one on the stretcher in there--that's supposed to be me. With my parents crying out here. I got a lot of guilt, you know what I mean?

He does.

MARY (CONT'D)

My father's in a coma, now my mother's going crazy. It's like she's in a trance.

FRANK

She should go home.

MARY

I'd take her, but then who would stay here?

Frank looks at her, trying to say the right thing. He notices Mrs. Burke coming from inside.

FRANK

Here she is.

Mrs. Burke, dazed, steps out. They join her.

MRS. BURKE

It wasn't him.

MARY

You saw him?

MRS. BURKE

They showed me someone. It wasn't him. It wasn't my husband.

FRANK

Mrs. Burke, please, they'll take care of him. You should go home now.

MRS. BURKE

I should know my own husband. They wouldn't let me see him.

She drifts away. Frank speaks to Mary:

FRANK

Larry and I'll drop her back home. Help me get her to the ambulance.

MRS. BURKE

You want some coffee? I have some apple sauce cake too.

They walk Mrs. Burke to 13 Zebra.

MARY

Thank you.

Mary watches as Larry backs up the EMS vehicle, Frank sitting in the back with her mother, pulls into first light.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 12TH STREET--EARLY MORNING

Larry dropping Frank off at the corner of First and Sixteenth, driving on.

It is as if the sun has risen on a different city, different from the one which Frank drove through the night before: a city of crumbling neighborhoods laid bare by sunlight; a city of day people, getting up, having breakfast, going to work.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT--DAY

Frank's studio apartment betrays a minimal existence: single bed, table, fridge and stove, loveseat, bookshelf, television. The bookshelf contains a CD player, medical texts, old schoolbooks ("Romantic Poetry"), paperback novels and, incongruously, a picture book of women's fashion.

A framed commendation from the New York Fire Department hangs beside and open closet of work clothes, corduroy jacket, two

ties on a hook. Remnants of a fast food breakfast on the table. Aluminum foil covers the windows, blocking out the sunlight.

Frank stands bareback at the single open window, smoking, drinking from a glass of whiskey, looking across the gray cityscape of high rises and water tanks: winding down from the night's work:

FRANK (V.O.)

Saving someone's life is like falling in love, the best drug in the world. For days, sometimes weeks afterwards, you walk the street making infinite whatever you see. Once, for weeks I couldn't feel the earth. Everything I touched became light. Horns played in my shoes; flowers fell from my pockets ...

TIME DISSOLVES: Frank paces the room. Pours himself another drink.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You wonder if you've become immortal, as if you saved your own life as well. What was once criminal and happenstance suddenly makes sense. God has passed through you, why deny it, that for a moment there, God was you.

TIME DISSOLVE: window is closed. Frank tosses in his sleep.

Nightstand alarm buzzes. Frank sits up, looks at the clock. Stretching his neck, he walks over to the sink, runs water on his hands and face.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMS GARAGE--NIGHT

The maintenance garage and dispatch office adjacent to our Lady of Mercy.

CUT TO:

INT. EMS GARAGE OFFICE--NIGHT

Frank standing on one foot before the desk of CAPTAIN BARNEY, 50, ex-paramedic and lifetime civil servant.

FRANK

Good morning, Captain.

Capt. Barney looks over to MISS WILLIAMS, his secretary, seated at a desk perpendicular to his:

CAPT. BARNEY

What am I going to do with this guy?

(to Frank)

Pierce, I was just on the phone with Borough Command. Out of twelve shifts this month, you've been late for nine, sick four and that includes the shift where you came late and went home early.

FRANK

I'm sick. That's what I've been telling you.

CAPT. BARNEY

You're killing me, you know that? You got no sick time according to Command. I've been told to terminate.

FRANK

It's okay. I'll just get my things out of the locker.

CAPT. BARNEY

I've never fired anyone in my life.

FRANK

I'm sorry Captain. Don't take it too hard.

CAPT. BARNEY

Nobody tells me to fire anyone. I told them: shove it up the big one.
(looks at Miss Williams)
Sorry.

(back to Frank)

I said, you want to fire him, come over and do it yourself.

FRANK

You know they won't do it. It's up to you. You gotta be strong.

CAPT. BARNEY

I feel for you, but we got an emergency here. It's a weekend of full moons. Everyone's called in sick. Larry, Veeber, Stanley too. We need bodies out there. I had to put Marcus on Twelve Young. You know he's not supposed to work two nights in a row.

FRANK

You swore you'd fire me if I came in

late again.

CAPT. BARNEY

I'll fire you tomorrow. Hell, better than that, I'll forward you some sick time. A week, two weeks off-- how about that?

FRANK

I don't think a week's gonna do it.

CAPT. BARNEY

I'm sorry, Pierce.
(hands Frank keys)
You're going out with Marcus. Duty calls. The City needs you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECOND AVENUE--NIGHT

12 Young heading downtown, lights off, slowing down for cross streets. At the wheel: MARCUS, 45, black, reserved, chin erect, seeming too old for the job. Frank rides techie.

MARCUS

My Lord mother man, you look like hell. What were you drinking?

FRANK

The captain almost fired me tonight. I'm on my way out. Anytime now.

MARCUS

Nobody gets fired. Look at me. Only thing they might do is transfer you to the Bronx. You look like you aged ten years since I rode with you last.

FRANK

The ghosts--

MARCUS

You ever notice people who see shit always, are crazy?

FRANK

I think the worst is over.

MARCUS

It can always get worse. You can't change what's out there, only where you're coming from. You got to let the Lord take over, in here.

(points to Frank's chest)

LOVE, a black, tough-talking female dispatcher, comes on the radio:

DISPATCHER LOVE

Twelve Young.
(beat)
Let's go, Twelve Young. Answer the radio.

FRANK

Hey, Marcus, it's Love. I haven't heard her in months.

MARCUS

She only works when I'm on. I make her wait and it drives her crazy.

FRANK

Is it true that you and Love went on a blind date?
(Marcus looks away)
She hit you with a bottle?

MARCUS

She loves me the way no woman ever has.

DISPATCHER LOVE

Twelve Young, I don't have time for your games. Now answer me or do I have to come out there myself?

MARCUS

I usually don't do calls before coffee. But I think it might do you some good.
(picks up mike)
Twelve Young is here and I'm gonna take care of you, baby. Don't you worry about a thing, yahear, cause Marcus is alive and on arrival.

DISPATCHER LOVE

I'm not your baby, Young, I'm not your mother either. You're going to a cardiac arrest, Avenue C and Ninth, northeast corner. It's a club. Take the side entrance.

MARCUS

Ten-four, hon.
(to Frank)
This is for you.

Marcus flips on the lights and siren.

CUT TO:

EXT. NINTH & AVENUE C--NIGHT

Marcus grabs the yellow airway bag, leaving Frank to lug the three heavier pieces as they push their way through the crowd toward a black jacketed DOORMAN holding a walkie-talkie:

MARCUS

(to crowd)

I hope we're not late from you guys
holding us up here.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB BACKSTAGE--NIGHT

The Doorman leads Frank and Marcus through the smoky graffiti-covered backstage ante-rooms to a cubicle where a knot of club types and band members hover around IB BANGIN, 18 year-old white rapper, face up, blank-eyed and breathless on dirt-impacted carpet. Hip-hop music echoes from the club PA.

Frank kneels beside IB Bangin, taking a pulse, realizing it's the gray and black stage makeup making him seem DOA. He pulls up IB Bangin's eyelid, shines a light into the pupil.

MARCUS

Okay, what happened?

DRUMMER

He's going to be all right, right?

MARCUS

No. He's dead.

DRUMMER

No way, man.

MARCUS

He's dead and there's nothing we can
do. Come on, Frank, that's it.

FRANK

(whispers)

He's not dead. It's a heroin overdose.
Break out the Narcon.

MARCUS

(announcing)

He's dead unless you folks want to
stop bullshitting me and tell it
straight. Then, Lord willing, we'll
try to bring him back.

BYSTANDER

He broke up with his old lady.

GIRLFRIEND

We didn't break up. We were just seeing other people.

MARCUS

I'm still waiting and this young man is still dead.

BYSTANDER

She broke his heart.

The Girlfriend shoots a look at the Bystander. Marcus just stands, hands on hips, silent. Frank opens the drug box.

The Drummer relents:

DRUMMER

All right, all right, he's been snorting that Red Death stuff. Been going for four days.

MARCUS

(brings hands together)
What's his name?

DRUMMER

IB Bangin.

MARCUS

What'd you mean IB Bangin? What kind of name is IB Bangin?

GIRLFRIEND

(Hesitant)
It's Frederick. Frederick Smith.

MARCUS

(to body)
Okay, Freddy.

GIRLFRIEND

It's Frederick.

MARCUS

Okay, IB Bangin, we're gonna bring you back. Every person here grab the hand of the person next to you.

Marcus assists them as Frank breaks the cellophane off a syringe, locates a vial of Narcon. Frank gives Marcus the high sign--Marcus raises his hands:

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Oh Lord, here I am again to ask one more chance for a sinner. Bring back IB Bangin, Lord. You have the power, the might, the super light, to spare

this worthless man.

Frank injects IB Bangin: he responds to the Narcon with a jolt, opening his eyes, raising his hands.

GIRLFRIEND

(kneeling)
Frederick!

BYSTANDER

Oh wow, man. Oh wow.

IB BANGIN

(sick)
What happened?

GIRLFRIEND

You died, you stupid bastard. I warned you.

DRUMMER

You guys are awesome.

FRANK

(to IB Bangin)
C'mon.

Frank and the Girlfriend guide IB Bangin to the door as Marcus collects the gear.

MARCUS

Not us. The first step is Love. The second is Mercy.

He follows Frank, IB Bangin and Girlfriend out, calling for the crowd to clear.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

IB Bangin sitting with Nurse Constance in triage. Past Griss, Frank talks with Dr. Hazmat:

FRANK

That guy I brought in yesterday, post-cardiac arrest. He's gone.

HAZMAT

Burke. You won't believe it. He's showing cognitive signs. He started with spontaneous respiration, now he's fighting to pull out the tube. Had to sedate him. He's in a CAT scan. I'm giving him every test I can: thromboytics, steroids, nitrodrips, heparin.

FRANK

What do you think?

HAZMAT

Who knows? It's all lower-brain-stem-activity. The heart refuses to stabilize--he's coded eleven times since he got here. This guy's a fighter. Every time the Valium wears off he starts yanking those restraints.

FRANK

The family know?

HAZMAT

I wanted to bring them in, to see if he'd respond to voices, but they weren't in the waiting room. The guy's daughter was in my face all last night and when I finally have something positive to tell her, she's gone.

Frank nods, walks down Skid Row, passing Nurse Constance lecturing IB Bangin:

NURSE CONSTANCE

... you put poison in your veins and now that you're breathing again you can't wait to say thank you and go back to poison shopping. Well, since we saved your life, maybe you could do us a favor and stop breathing in another city next time ...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST AVE--NIGHT

12 Young heading up the avenue.

MARCUS

I ever tell you about the time years ago I was on this ledge uptown, trying to talk this psycho inside?

FRANK

Where the guy jumped and you almost fell. No, you never told me that story.

MARCUS

No, you never listened. I was going, man, if someone on high hadn't pulled me in. I had put all I had into saving

this dumbass lowlife suicidal that when he went down, there was a part of me that wanted to go with him.

FRANK

Make a left here. I want to stop.

CUT TO:

EXT. BURKE APT. BUILDING--NIGHT

Marcus stops the ambulance on 17th Street.

FRANK

I'll be right back.

Frank gets out, walks over to the intercom, pushes the button for 5A. Mary answers:

MARY (V.O.)

Yes?

FRANK

Hello, I'm Frank Pierce, from the ambulance last night. I brought your father into the hospital and I just learned some news.

MARY (V.O.)

I'll be right down.

Mary appears in a white sweater and simple gray skirt like schoolgirls wear. The dark makeup is gone. She looks happy.

MARY (CONT'D)

He's better, isn't he?

FRANK

Well, the doctor says he's showing some movement. It's still early, it might mean nothing, but I thought you'd want to know.

MARY

I knew. I sensed it when I heard your voice.

FRANK

You look so different.

MARY

I know. It's awful, isn't it? Night of the Living Cheerleaders.

FRANK

I think it looks good.

MARY

I was going nuts in that waiting room so I came back to check on my mom.

FRANK

How is she?

MARY

Sleeping.

FRANK

I was just going to get some food. Pizza. Maybe we could.

MARY

You can't kill my father that easy. He'll fight forever. Like with me: hasn't talked to me in three years. But it's okay. Sometimes you have to put things behind you.

Mary steps to the curb, raises her hand for a taxi. None in sight.

FRANK

Be tough to get a taxi here. We can give you a ride if you like.

MARY

(looks at him)

Okay.

Frank opens the back doors of the bus, climbs in behind Mary. They sit on the bench opposite the stretcher.

MARCUS

Who's that?

FRANK

She's the daughter of a cardiac arrest I brought in last night. I told her we'd give her a ride back to Misery. Her father's showing signs of improving.

MARCUS

Oh, Frank, you've got it bad, so much worse than I thought.

FRANK

I'm hungry too. We gotta get some food after this.

MARCUS

God help us, he's hungry too.

Marcus turns on the radio, an old song from the sixties, as they head uptown.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY CRITICAL CARE--NIGHT

Frank and Mary walking past the triage station toward the curtained corner where her father lies. Next to Burke, Dr. Hazmat assists an AIDS patient amid a forest of IV tubing.

Mr. Burke lies prone, two IV lines hung from poles, intubated by a hose running to the ventilator, a NG tube covering his nose. His eyes are permanently half open. Burke's hands and feet are tied by white nylon restraints. Mary takes her father's hand as Frank pulls the curtain.

MARY

Dad, can you hear me?
(beat)
Open your eyes if you can hear me.

A nearby patient SCREAMS. Mary Burke SCREAMS too:

MARY (CONT'D)

He squeezed my hand!

Dr. Hazmat and MILAGROS, an intern, walk over.

MARY (CONT'D)

He's moving, Doctor. He grabbed my hand. Move your hand, Dad, one more time.
(Burke's hand twitches)
See. See.

HAZMAT

I'll be damned.
(check's Burke's pupils)
It's movement, but I'm not sure how voluntary.

MARY

He hears me. Open your eyes, Dad.

Burke's eyes fully open. His cheeks ripple and his lips smack against the tube between them. His back arches, his body shakes, his arms yank at their restraints as if reaching to pull out the wires and tubes. Green lights dance across the EKG screen, ALARMS sound: first the cardiac monitor, next the ventilator.

HAZMAT

Nurse Crupp, I need ten milligrams of Valium.

Hazmat and Milagros hold down Burke's arms as Crupp prepares

the Valium. Mary backs away.

FRANK

Why don't we go outside for a little while, wait until this passes.

They step away.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM--NIGHT

Passing Griss (reading anti-white agitprop) and waiting room regulars, Frank leads Mary to a small rectangular paramedic locker area: sofa, desk, two banks of gray lockers, walls decorated with hospital rules and regulations.

FRANK

He wants to pull that tube out. It's pretty painful--that's why they keep him sedated--but it's a good sign.

MARY

You sure? I know my father would hate to be tied down. He wouldn't even go to the dentist.

He sits across from her, wishing he could be in three seats at once, each to watch her from a different angle.

FRANK

That's how it's done. You have to keep the body going until the brain and heart recover enough to go on their own.

MARY

He's better, though, right?

FRANK

(reluctant)
He's better.

MARY

Look, I'm sorry, but it's important to me. I mean, a week ago I was wishing he was dead. And now I want hear his voice again, just once more-- you know what I mean?

Marcus enters with a small pizza and two cokes.

MARCUS

Went over to Sal's got this. There must be some place in Hell for a guy who sells a dollar-fifty a slice. I call you if anything comes up.

FRANK

Thanks.

Marcus exits.

MARY

I'm not really hungry.

She says as she picks up a slice of cheese pizza.

MARY (CONT'D)

My father was a great man, you know. There was nobody he wouldn't help. You know that crazy guy Noel who I gave water to last night? He lived in our house for almost a year. A total stranger he'd do anything for, his own family though ...

FRANK

It's best not to ...
(off her look)
It's good pizza, huh?

MARY

Not as good as Nino's.

FRANK

You remember that pizza place, Joe's on Tenth Street maybe fifteen years ago? When you ordered a pie it came with a little plastic madonna in the middle?

MARY

Yeah, or Saint Anthony. You from the neighborhood?

FRANK

I grew up on Elizabeth. I went to Blessed Sacrament.

MARY

On yeah? I went to Holy Name. Where'd you go to high school?

FRANK

We moved out after that. Upstate.

MARY

Like everybody else--except us. Always standing on the sidewalk waving goodbye to moving trucks. Your parents ... ?

FRANK

They're fine. My old man was a bus driver, mom a nurse--I was sort of born to it, I guess.

MARY

You married?

FRANK

Ah, no. I was.

(beat)

It's hard to explain. She had a hard time adjusting to, well, maybe it was my fault too.

Pause. This thought hangs in the air. From outside: a BELLICOSE DRUNK is escorted into the ER.

DRUNK (O.S.)

White cocksuckers! Get your--Ow!

MARY

Is it always this bad in here? I mean, how does anyone survive?

FRANK

It's been bad lately, but it's always bad.

MARY

How long you been doing this?

FRANK

Five years.

MARY

Wow, you musta seen some things, huh? What's the worst thing you ever seen?

FRANK

You learn to sort of block it out, you know, like cops fence off a crime scene. But then something good will happen and everything will just glow.

MARY

You must get a lot of overdoses. I bet you picked me up a couple of times.

FRANK

I think I'd remember that.

MARY

Maybe not. I was a different person then. Does everybody you meet spill their problems on you like this?

FRANK

Mostly. It must be my face. My mother always said I looked like a priest.

MARY

(wipes her mouth)

I better go check on my father. Thanks for the pizza. I owe you one. Maybe when he gets better, you know, when we're done with all this.

FRANK

Sure.

Frank puts his hand out but she's already on her feet. He grabs the last slice of pizza, hands it to Griss as she heads back to Critical Care.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look after her, Griss, okay?

Griss nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANAL STREET--NIGHT

12 Young back on the job, moving with traffic.

MARCUS

Rule number one: Don't get involved with patients. Rule number two: Don't get involved with patient's daughters. You understand?

FRANK

What about rule number three: Don't get involved with dispatchers named Love.

MARCUS

You don't know the first thing about rule number three, cannot begin to understand the complexities of that rule. Come on, let's go look at some hookers. The Kit Kat will be letting out.

(relevant to nothing)

Don't ever call a junkie whore a crackhead. They get real mad.

Marcus swings up First Ave:

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Look at these women. You can't even tell who's a hooker anymore. Whatever

happened to go-go boots and hot pants?
They wear anything now, walk outta
the house with whatever they got
on ...

Frank watches night tableaux (police cars flashing, lovers
kissing, woman crying hysterically, drunken slugfest) as his
mind wanders:

FRANK (V.O.)

The street is so much more
unpredictable than the ER and to
prepare for the unexpected I was
taught to act without thinking, like
an army private who can take apart
and reassemble a gun blindfolded ...

Frank notices another EMS bus: Tom Walls wheeling a stretcher--
Noel, face bloodied, lies restrained as Walls' partner opens
the rear doors.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I realized that my training was useful
in less than ten percent of the calls
and saving someone's life was rarer
than that. As the years went by I
grew to understand that my role was
less about saving lives than about
bearing witness. I was a grief mop
and much of my job was to remove, if
even for a short time, the grief
starter or the grief product. It was
enough I simply showed up.

Marcus continues as if uninterrupted:

MARCUS

... look at her. Leaves you no idea
what's underneath, not even a
suggestion. Could be a skeleton for
all you know.

They pass a working girl in a rain slicker who pulls off her
hood to look at them: a familiar face.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Nice though, pulling back her hood
as we drive by. There's a mystery to
it, then she shows you.

FRANK

She's no whore, Marcus.

MARCUS

We're all whores, Frank. You know
what I'm talking about, the way she
looked at me.

FRANK

She wasn't looking at you, man, she
was looking at me.

Frank, looking back at the Rose face, hears her faintly say:

"ROSE"

Why did you kill me, Frank?

FRANK

I didn't kill you.

Marcus, not hearing "Rose's" voice, replies:

MARCUS

No, you didn't, Frank, thank you.
But there's still a couple hours
left on the shift.

FRANK

I need a drink, that's all.

Dispatcher Love's voice cuts through:

DISPATCHER LOVE

Twelve Young, answer the radio. I
have a call for you.

MARCUS

She said to me, I love the way you
talk on the radio.

DISPATCHER LOVE

I can't wait all night, Young. I'm
holding a priority and if you don't
answer I'm going to knock you out of
service.

MARCUS

(keys radio)

Don't worry, hon. Young is here and
he's gonna help out--just remember,
you owe me.

DISPATCHER LOVE

You're going to three-four Avenue C,
17 year-old female cardiac arrest,
no further information.

MARCUS

Ten-four, hon.

Marcus hits the siren.

CUT TO:

INT. RUNDOWN TENEMENT--NIGHT

Frank and Marcus standing in a no-income apartment with their cardiac equipment. MARIA, a 17 year-old Hispanic girl, lies moaning and breathing shallow on a ratty sofa. CARLOS, her equally young boyfriend, watches anxiously, holding a candle for light.

MARCUS

Look at that. A fat junkie. That's a first.

FRANK

(to Maria)
What's wrong.

Carlos speaks broken English:

CARLOS

No English. She has terrible pain in her belly.

FRANK

(hands on stomach)
Pregnant.

CARLOS

No, no, that's impossible.

FRANK

Are you pregnant? Estas embarazada?

Maria shakes her head, looks away.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Can you walk? Puedes caminar?

CARLOS

She say she in great pain.

FRANK

Thanks for the translation.
(to Maria)
What's your name? Nombre?

MARIA

Maria.

FRANK

Let's have a look.

MARCUS

(to Carlos)
You know each other a long time?

CARLOS

Two years. Ever since we left island.

MARCUS

In that time, you ever have sex?

CARLOS

Never. No cigarettes, no drugs, no
booze.

MARCUS

No underwear?

CARLOS

We are virgins.

FRANK

(inspecting Maria)

Oh Jesus, we'd better go. Call for
backup.

Marcus radioing for assistance.

FRANK (CONT'D)

It's coming.

(to Carlos)

Hold her down.

MARCUS

What's that, Frank?

FRANK

Three legs.

MARCUS

That's too many.

FRANK

Backup?

MARCUS

It's coming.

CARLOS

Is she dying?

FRANK

She's having a baby. Twins.

CARLOS

Es impossible.

FRANK

You can trust me on this one.

CARLOS

It's a miracle.

Maria SCREAMS. Marcus kneels beside Frank as a distant EMS

siren grows louder.

FRANK

You take the first one.

Frank looks up at the screaming mother: it's not her face.
It's Rose. The Rose face.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Frank rushing past Nurse Constance, carrying a newborn in thermal wrap, passing Noel restrained on a gurney:

FRANK

She had a pulse.

NURSE CONSTANCE

Code! Code Blue!

Hazmat rushing over:

HAZMAT

Oh Jesus, put her on the monitor.
Where's the pediatric code cart?
(Odette arriving with
cart)
Odette give me that tube. All right,
flatline--let's do CPR. step back,
Frank. How many months?

FRANK

Can't tell. It was a breech, twins.
The other one seems okay, though.
Marcus is taking him and the mother
to Maternity.

Across the room an obscenity-spouting FEMALE CRACKHEAD being restrained by a patrolman and hospital security--adding to the sense of emergency and chaos. DR. MISHRA, 50, Pediatric MD, and nurses squeeze toward newborn edging Frank back. Mishra takes an osteocatheter out of the cart, forces it into the now obscured baby as Nurse Constance massages the infant's chest.

Hazmat steps over to the now restrained Crackhead.

CRACKHEAD

I'm a mother! I got a daughter! I
got rights!

HAZMAT

(to nurse)
10 mil Valium, stat.

Mishra, worried, checks with Nurse Constance--they're losing

the newborn:

MISHRA

Status.

NURSE CONSTANCE

I think there's a pulse. I think.

Frank looking at the EKG monitor--a green flatline--backs away.

MISHRA

Fuck.

NURSE CONSTANCE

Nothing.

Frank walking away, not looking where he's going, backs into Noel's gurney.

NOEL

Excuse me, sir, excuse me, I would please trouble you for one cup of water. The smallest thing in the world to ask for, water. A man is dying and that is me.

Noel, his face battered from his encounter with Walls, pulls at his restraints, howls:

NOEL (CONT'D)

For days I've eaten nothing but sand,
O Lord, I waited so long.

Hazmat looks over:

HAZMAT

Christ. Who the hell woke him up?

CUT TO:

EXT. CANAL STREET--NIGHT

12 Young on the road again, sky turning blue.

FRANK

Don't give me that look.

MARCUS

What look?

FRANK

You know what I'm talking about.
It's all over your face. That I-just-
saved-a-little-baby-boy look.

MARCUS

We just saved a little baby boy.
Think of it that way.

FRANK

I don't want to hear about it, okay?
That's three jobs for the night.
It's over. Three jobs and time for a
drink. Six am, the cocktail hour.
Pass the bottle; I know you're
holding.

Marcus reaches under the seat, pulls a pint of vodka, a quart
of orange juice and two cups out of an old gym bag, passes
them to Frank.

MARCUS

The bar is now open.

Frank mixes a screwdriver for Marcus, straight vodka for
himself.

FRANK

I hate vodka.

MARCUS

Please, a little decorum if you will.
What I was going to say is, is that
holding that baby in my arms, I felt
like I was twenty-one again. A call
like that makes me think of going
back to three nights a week, not
two, start running again, cut down
on the drinking.

FRANK

(pours drink)
I'll drink to that.

MARCUS

(raises cup)
Here's to the greatest job in the
world.

FRANK

(knocks vodka back)
Greatest job in the world.

DISPATCHER LOVE

Twelve Young, I have priorities
holding. Pick up the radio.

FRANK

Don't do it, Marcus. Tell her the
bus died, our radio's not working,
our backs are out. Tell her we're
too drunk to take any more calls.

MARCUS

Let's do it!
(keys mike)
It's Marcus, Love, only for you.

DISPATCHER LOVE

Male diff breather, approximately
30, Houston and A.

MARCUS

Ten-four.

Marcus hits the sirens and lights, accelerates to full speed.
The vodka spills; Frank grabs the dash.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I'm coming, Love! I'm coming!

Marcus swings the bus wildly to avoid a cab, SKIDS into a
turn--and smack toward a parked truck. Frank covers his face
and screams.

CRASH! The back of the ambulance rams into the truck, the
rear windows shatter.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Shit.

Frank looks around, realizes no one is hurt. He climbs out:

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Where you going?

FRANK

I quit! I'm through!

MARCUS

You can't leave me now.

Frank walks up Avenue A, leaving Marcus and the disabled
vehicle. The first rays of sun strike the buildings ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--DAYBREAK

Frank turning the corner, checking his watch, about to enter
the Dark Bar across the corner from the hospital, watching
Noel run past him and away, skipping from one foot to the
other.

FRANK

So long, Noel.

The Emergency doors open: Mary Burke, head down, looking
neither direction, walks away from Frank. Griss steps out
after her. Frank joins him:

FRANK (CONT'D)

What's going on, Griss?

GRISS

Your friend there just untied the water beggar. Griss was coming out to thank her. Probably saved Griss a murder charge.

(about Mary)

Having a tough time of it.

Mary starts to run. Frank follows. She pushes her way through a group of high schoolers; Frank does likewise, keeping his distance.

Five blocks later, Mary hesitates at a plaza outside the Stuyvesant Town projects,

CUT TO:

EXT. STUYVESANT TOWN--MORNING

Frank stops a few steps away from Mary; Mary turns.

FRANK

Excuse me. You seemed like you were in trouble.

MARY

(steps over)

I'm all right. I just can't stand to see people tied up. I'm in the waiting room for hours, listening to Noel screaming. The only reason he's screaming is 'cause he's tied up.

FRANK

Don't seem so bad to me.

MARY

Don't say that. I wanted to cut my father loose too. They told me he almost died and five minutes later they say he's better and I go in. It's killing me seeing him fighting like that.

(gazes up building)

Look, since you're here, maybe you could do me a favor. I need you to wait for me outside this building, okay? I have to visit a friend who's sick.

FRANK

Okay.

Mary takes a few steps, turns back.

MARY

I'm only asking because it's a dangerous building. There's been some robberies, a woman was raped not long ago. This woman I'm seeing, she'll want to talk to me all day, but if I can point to you out the window and say you're waiting, I can be out quick. if anything happens, I'll be in apartment 16M.

FRANK

Maybe I should come up with you.

MARY

If I'm not back in fifteen minutes, hit the buzzer. That way she'll let me go.

FRANK

Nothing's going to happen. I'll come with you.

MARY

No, I'll be fine. I'm just visiting a sick friend.

She walks into the building. He follows.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR--DAY

The dinged metal doors shudder shut as Frank follows Mary into the graffittied elevator. It jumps three feet upwards, stops, then continues, metal scraping concrete at each passing floor.

MARY

I shouldn't have asked you to come.

FRANK

You asked me not to come.

MARY

Promise you won't go inside.

FRANK

Fifteen minutes.

MARY

I just have to relax a little. Not feel so guilty all the time.

FRANK

We can still go back. I'll walk you home. You sleep a couple of hours, watch some TV, take a bath.

MARY

Don't be a cop. If you have any doubts about this, it's my fault.

The elevator jerks to a stop; the doors open.

CUT TO:

INT. SIXTEENTH FLOOR--MORNING

Mary turns to Frank:

MARY

You go on home, okay. I'm fine, really. I don't need you. Thanks.

Mary pushes the bell at 16M. KANITA, 25, wearing a paisley robe, opens the doors and says:

KANITA

Hey Cy, guess who's here?

COATES (O.S.)

Mary ...

The elevator doors close on Frank.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY--MORNING

Frank paces past the sleeping security guard, checks his watch.

He presses the elevator button.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OASIS--MORNING

The door to 16M opens:

KANITA

Can I help you?

FRANK

Mary Burke. She's a friend.

KANITA

She's not here.

Frank pushes past her.

KANITA (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. You can't go in.

CY COATES, 45, light-skinned black, stands in the smoky room. Dark curtained windows block the sunlight; a dirty fish tank casts a green glow across the beat-up furniture.

A large framed photo of a volcano hangs over the couch.

COATES

It's okay, Kanita. Come on in.

KANITA

He looks like a cop.

COATES

He's not a cop, he's a medic.
(extends hand)
I'm CY Coates.

FRANK

Frank Pierce.

COATES

Mary said you might be coming.

FRANK

Where is she?

COATES

Sleeping in the back.

FRANK

She asked me to pick her up.

COATES

I know, but she told me to tell you
she wants to crash here a few hours.
Terrible about her father, isn't it?

FRANK

I better just go in and see her.

Kanita sits on the sofa next to an unshaven sleeping man.
Coates gestures:

COATES

I call this the Oasis. Refuge from
the world out there. Did you know
two people were shot in this building
last week?

Frank heads down the hall toward the rear of the apartment;
Coates follows. They pass an open door where inside TIGER, a
fat man with dried blood running down the corner of his mouth,
sits punching computer keys at a desk.

COATES (CONT'D)

Careful. That's the Tiger. The lady's down the hall. Welcome to Sunrise Enterprises, Frank, the stress-free factory.

In the NEXT ROOM Mary lies on a mattress on the floor, yellow sheet pulled up to her neck. Frank leans over her:

FRANK

Mary. Mary, we've got to get going.

MARY

(groggy)
No, no.

COATES

She wanted something to help her sleep.

FRANK

Mary, we really have to go.

Mary blindly swings her fist at him, collapses unconscious back to the mattress.

COATES

Frank, she's suffered enough. She's okay, I promise.
(puts hand on Frank's shoulder)
C'mon, Frank.

Coates escorts Frank back to the LIVING ROOM.

COATES (CONT'D)

I'm always interested in people in stressful occupations and being a paramedic is about as stressful as I can imagine. Here, sit down. What's it like? Tell me some war stories.

FRANK

(sits)
Got a beer?

Cy sits across from him, pulls out a pin-sized joint, lights it:

COATES

That shit is poison, Frank. We don't drink alcohol here. What you need is one of these.

FRANK

Did you give Mary something called Red Death?

COATES

Red Death?

(passes joint to Kanita)

Tell me something, Frank--does killing your clients make good business sense to you? The kids selling that shit have no sense. They'll be taken care of, don't worry about that.

FRANK

I should be going. I just quit.

COATES

Sleep is all stress reduction. Here.

(offers white pill)

You take one of these, sleep two hours, that's all you need.

(Frank hesitates)

Why do you think I'm telling you this, Frank--for my health? You ought to look at yourself in the mirror, man. Kanita, get him a glass of water.

Frank watches as Kanita gets up, walks to the kitchen. Coates places the pill in his hand.

FRANK

Is this what you gave Mary?

COATES

That's the stuff. I call it the Red Lion. Very king-of-the-jungle.

No language, only brute power. You can't believe how relaxing it is.

Kanita returns with a glass of water, gives it to Frank; Coates stands, feeds the fish.

COATES (CONT'D)

Frank, I'm trying to help you. Drink up.

Frank swallows the white pill, drinks the water. He places his arms on the chair:

FRANK

I guess I'll be going.

COATES

Just take it easy.

Frank looks around the smoke-filled room. Kanita walks over, extends her hand.

KANITA

Take my pulse.
(he does)
It's good, isn't it?

FRANK

Perfect.

KANITA

I knew it. I was wrong about you.
You're not so bad.

Kanita runs her hand across his shoulders. Frank starts to nod. The room getting warm and dark. His eyelids lower: sleep, precious sleep.

CUT TO:

FRANK'S ROSE DREAM

Voices and sounds echo through the purple haze as Frank's mind drifts in time and space. Action and sounds slow, speed up, distort--intermix with the Oasis--as Frank goes back:

This is how it begins: the last time, the first time ...

Larry exits 13 Zebra as Rose, 18, wearing a yellow rain slicker, falls to her knees in the miasmatic dream stank, onto the sidewalk, then onto her back. From forty feet away Frank, seeing her reach for a parking meter, grabbing the tube kit, running.

Rose gasping for breath, Frank falling to his knees, lifting her tongue, prying her teeth apart, slipping the blade between her lips--Rose not breathing: waiting for her to inhale, shooting the tube down her vocal cords. Larry listening to lung sounds, belly sounds:

LARRY

You're in the stomach!

FRANK

You sure?

ROSE

Rose!

FRANK

Huh?

ROSE

My name. Rose.

LARRY

You're in the stomach, man.

Frank pulling the tube out, trying again.

Somewhere: CY Coates laughs.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You're in the stomach! Let me try.

FRANK

One more time!

Rose going blue, pulse rate dropping, EKG Slowing: Jim Morrison singing.

LARRY

Stomach again.

FRANK

No way!

Larry ripping the tube from Frank's hands, taking over, pushing Frank aside, trying CPR, intubating Rose, air moving into her lungs--it doesn't matter. Rose is gone.

Frank hears a SCREAM: it's his own voice.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OASIS--DAY

Frank standing screaming in the living room. CY walking over, Kanita standing, the sleeping man awaking.

COATES

Frank, take it easy. what happened?

KANITA

He flipped out.

Frank bends over in pain.

COATES

Be cool, man. You're having a paradoxical reaction. It can happen.

(to Kanita)

Didn't I tell you this guy was stressed out?

KANITA

Stressed? He's psycho.

Frank heads to where Mary sleeps.

COATES

Frank, where you going?

In the BACK BEDROOM, Frank picks up Mary, hoists her over his shoulder fireman-style and heads out.

COATES (CONT'D)

You're making a mistake. Sit down
and relax a minute.

Frank opens the front door--no one stops him--exits.

COATES (CONT'D)

(calling)

She'll be back. And, by the way, you
owe me ten bucks.

CUT TO:

INT. STUYVESANT LOBBY--DAY

The elevator doors open. Frank sets Mary on her feet.

MARY

I can walk.

She says weaving out of the front doors.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUYVESANT TOWN--DAY

Mary walks a few steps into the plaza, stumbles; Frank catches
her.

MARY

Let go of me.

(he relaxes)

You shouldn't have come up. I told
you not to. You could have gotten us
both killed.

Mary heads up the avenue: past baby strollers, postal workers,
deliverymen.

MARY (CONT'D)

You and CY have a nice talk? He tell
you about Sunrise Enterprises, helping
people? Well, I've seen him hurt
people. Why are you following me?

FRANK

Because you can barely walk.

Frank walking slightly beside and behind, lights a cigarette.

MARY

You remember Noel, from the other
night, how Noel is now? He wasn't
always like that. He was my brother's
best friend. Cy or Tiger or one of
those other goons put a bullet in
Noel's head. He was in a coma three

months. Crazy ever since.

They stop at a three-story brick apartment building.

MARY (CONT'D)

This is my place.

She unlocks the door. He follows her in.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S APT. BUILDING--DAY

Mary grabs the railing, heads up the stairs.

MARY

What is it? You want to help me, you feel sorry for me? Keep it to yourself.

FRANK

I need to sit down a minute.

MARY

Or maybe you wanna fuck me? Everyone else has.

Mary opens the door to her first floor apartment; Frank follows. The room is clean and feminine. Unframed water colors stacked against the wall atop a desk. A black lab greets Mary, she pets him. Frank slumps on the sofa.

MARY (CONT'D)

I've been clean two years now. I got a job. I paint when I'm home. Don't bother anybody. Then all this shit happens.

Frank keels over onto his side, his head hitting a cushion, eyes closed, dog licking his cheek.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh no you don't. You can't stay here.

He's asleep, the sound of her crying fading in his head.

FADE OUT:

INT. MARY'S APT.--NIGHT

FADE IN: a passing siren wakes Frank. He thinks back, looking around the darkened room, realizes where he is. The dog comes over, licks his hand.

FRANK

Hello, I'm Frank. Mary's friend. A very close friend who loves animals.

He removes the blanket Mary has laid over him, stands:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hello?

Frank walks cautiously through the dark, finds a bathroom lit by a glowing Mickey Mouse switch. He flips on the switch: a string of green and red Christmas lights glow. Three types of soap sit on the sink. He turns on the faucet:

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I washed my face with three kinds of soap, each smelling like a different season. It felt good to be in a woman's room again, especially a woman who wasn't comatose or severely disabled. I felt that perhaps I had turned a corner, like I saved someone, though I didn't know who.

CUT TO:

INT. EMS GARAGE OFFICE--NIGHT

Frank standing at Captain Barney's desk.

CAPT. BARNEY

You're late, Pierce. I know, but I can't fire you. I've got nobody to work sixteen XRay with Walls.

FRANK

No ...

CAPT. BARNEY

I got some forms here to fill out about that accident when you get the time.

(hands him keys)

I'll fire you tomorrow. I promise.

FRANK

What if there is no tomorrow?

CAPT. BARNEY

Go on, get outta here, Pierce, before I give you a big hug.

(to Miss Williams)

I love this guy.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Frank walks toward Sixteen XRay as Walls gets out of the front seat. The EMS vehicle is dented and rusted, a relic of

wars and a hodgepodge of parts.

WALLS

Frank, what do you know. It's you and me again tonight, the Rough Riders, tearing up the streets just like old times.

(kicks the front tire)

This old bus is a warrior, Frank, just like us. I have tried to kill him and he will not die. I have a great respect for that.

Frank makes a "be right back" gesture, walks into ER.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Saturday night at the Knife and Gun Club: the joint is hopping, the sound system blaring.

Frank passing Griss holding back an angry Hispanic man with a bleeding arm:

GRISS

Don't make me take off my sunglasses.

FRANK

Morning, Griss.

NURSE CONSTANCE

We're full up tonight, Frank.

Frank walks over to unit three, Mr. Burke's cubicle, pulls back the curtain. Burke lies sedated, wired and tubed. Frank leans over, feels Burke's pulse.

Frank's expression changes--he looks at the EKG monitor: green lines seem to be at war, normal beats marching in formation against wild-looking rhythms, the heart working hard and not getting much done.

Burke's face twitches. Burke's voice speaks in Frank's head:

BURKE'S VOICE

Go to the bank, boy, take out everything you can.

Frank turns up the EKG amplitude:

FRANK

Mr. Burke?

BURKE'S VOICE

I'm going. I've had enough.

The alarms start to ring: EKG first, followed by the bells off the oxygen saturation monitor and low drone of ventilator.

Intern Milagros pulling open the curtain behind Frank, shaking her head, reaching for the defibrillator paddles, handing them to Frank. He steps back:

FRANK

You do it.

MILAGROS

Can't reach. You're taller.

BURKE'S VOICE

Don't do it.

FRANK

I thought he was getting better.

MILAGROS

Technically, yeah. I suppose. It doesn't matter.

FRANK

Why not?

MILAGROS

Tha family wants us to do everything to save him--so, that's it. They want to keep him alive, they want to believe in miracles, we keep him alive. Shock him, Frank. He'll come back. He always comes back.

FRANK

(takes paddles)
Clear!

Frank shocks Burke: his body convulses.

BURKE'S VOICE

Ow!

The heartbeats on monitor return to regular formation.

BURKE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You son of a bitch.

MILAGROS

Should I increase the lidocaine?

Frank, despondent, not listening, walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. AVENUE A--NIGHT

16 XRay driving past a strip of night clubs and restaurants: the sidewalks full of young people laughing, jostling, embracing.

Walls driving. In addition to the EMS two-way and AM radio, Walls keeps a police band walkie-talkie open. He looks into the back of the bus:

WALLS

Frank, what you doing back there?

Frank places an open drug box on the stretcher, pulls out an IV set, wraps a tourniquet around his left bicep.

FRANK

I'm sick, Tom. I need a cure.

(injects himself)

Vitamin B cocktail, followed by an amp of glucose and a drop of adrenaline. Not as good as beer, but all I got.

WALLS

Come on, Frank. There's blood spilling in the streets.

Frank crawls back in front carrying the IV bag, puts on the oxygen mask, turns on the main tanks, takes a deep hit.

FRANK

(pulls off mask)

These are hard times, Tom.

WALLS

Yeah. Great, isn't it?

FRANK

Great to be drunk. Sobriety's killing me.

WALLS

Look up, Frank. Full moon. The blood's gonna run tonight. I can feel it. Our mission: to save lives.

FRANK

Our mission is coffee, Tom. A shot of the bull, Puerto Rican espresso.

WALLS

Ten-four. El Toro de Oro. Blast off.

Walls hits the sirens, accelerates.

FRANK

The cure's not working, Tom. Maybe we should go back to the hospital.

WALLS

Don't worry, kid. Tom'll take care of you. Put your head out the window, get some of that summer air. Listen to the music. El Toro de Oro. Andale. Pronto.

Walls turns up the radio, drums his hands against the wheel.

DISPATCHER

Okay, units, it's suicide hour. Fourteen Boy, I show you in the hospital sixty minutes but I know you're in the diner on 14th. Put down the burger, I got a call for you around the corner, 14 and 3rd, a man with a noose around his neck and nothing to hang it on. Sixteen XRay, don't even think about getting coffee, I have a call for you too.

WALLS

(on radio)

Sixteen XTerminator here. We like our coffee bloody. Make it good--my partner's dying to help someone.

DISPATCHER

You're in luck, X: your patient awaits you with bleeding wrists on Avenue C and Fourth.

Frank pulls the IV needle out of his arm, searches the glove compartment:

FRANK

Tom, where are the Band-aids? This is an ambulance, isn't it?

WALLS

(hitting the gas)

Look out!

16 XRay lurches forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. AVENUE C AND 4TH--NIGHT

16 XRay brakes to a stop before a duster of derelicts, junkies and night people. Two DRUNKS are trying to help a friend with CUT WRISTS.

WALLS

What the hell's going on?

DRUNK #1

You've gotta take him to the hospital.
He tried to kill himself. Show him
your wrist. Show A.

Cut Wrists gets up, leans against the ambulance, shaking.

DRUNK #1 (CONT'D)

See, he ain't right.

WALLS

Hold it. I will not take anyone
anywhere against his will. This is
America. People have rights.

DRUNK #2

He was bleeding before. He kept
spilling his beer. I gave him mouth-
to-mouth.

WALLS

You're lucky you didn't kill him.

(to Cut Wrists)

We're going to hear it straight from
the loony's mouth. Are you crazy?
Did you try to bump yourself off?

CUT WRISTS

(salivatory)

Yesssss.

WALLS

Why didn't you say so.

Walls escorts Cut Wrists into the back of the bus, pulls a
plastic electric patch off the EKG monitor. Frank joins them.

WALLS (CONT'D)

Sir, I am going to give you some
medicine that is still very
experimental. It's from NASA, and
although the astronauts have been
using it for years, we are the first
service to try it. I will put this
patch on your forehead like this,
and in about a minute you will have
to relax.

(places patch)

You will forget all your suicidal
feelings. It's very important that
you wear this for a least twenty-
four hours and keep checking the
mirror. If the patch turns green you
have to see the doctor immediately.
The side effects could be fatal.

Cut Wrists nods.

FRANK

This is the worst suicide attempt
I've ever seen. You feel the pulse?
Here. That's where you cut, and it's
not across, it's down like so.

(takes out his knife)

Here take it.

CUT WRISTS

(shaking)

I can't.

FRANK

With all the poor people of this
city who wanted only to live and
were viciously murdered, you have
the nerve to sit here waiting to die
and not go through with it. You make
me sick. Take it.

Cut Wrists bolts out of the back of the bus, trips as he
hits the ground, runs down the street, turning the corner
still holding the patch to his forehead.

WALLS

We cured him, Frank. When we work
together there's nothing we can't
fix.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL TORO DE ORO--NIGHT

16 XRay parked outside a fluorescent chrome and plastic coffee
shop.

CUT TO:

INT. EL TORO DE ORO--NIGHT

Frank smoking at a formica table, his walkie-talkie upright
next to an ashtray. Walls returns with two espressos as the
Dispatcher rattles on.

WALLS

(sits)

Sounds like they're trying to clean
up the bus terminal tonight,

Frank doesn't answer. Tom shines his mini-flashlight in
Frank's eyes:

WALLS (CONT'D)

Hello, hello. Major Tom to Frank,
time to come home.

Frank watches a hooker on the sidewalk. Two street punks dripping gold and attitude head the opposite direction: one turns his head, looks at Frank--it's Rose. The Rose face.

Frank getting up, grabbing his walkie and coffee, heading out.

WALLS (CONT'D)

Where you going?

FRANK

C'mon, Tom. The city's burning.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSTON--NIGHT

Frank at the wheel, driving high speed: radio full volume.

WALLS

Whatja doing?

FRANK

I feel the need, the need for speed.
I'm driving out of myself.

WALLS

The brakes are shot.

FRANK

I've taken that into consideration.

WALLS

You okay?

FRANK

I never felt better in my life.

DISPATCHER

Sixteen XRay, XRay.

FRANK

(keys radio)

X.

DISPATCHER

First of all, I want you to know how sorry I am about this. I've always liked you two. A unit above none, a legend in its own lunchtime, so it hurts me deeply to do this but I have no choice. You must go to Second and St. Marks. In front of a liquor store you'll find a forty year-old male, unconscious, lying next to his wheelchair. Do I have to say more?

FRANK

(to radio)
You've said too much already.

WALLS

Mr. Oh.

FRANK

It's early for him.

WALLS

That's all right, we're not meant to do Oh tonight. Something is going to happen. I can feel it.

Tom hears something on the police band: a call for units to Stuyvesant Town.

WALLS (CONT'D)

Bingo.
(keys police walkie)
EMS to Central. What was that call?

POLICE DISPATCH

A jumper. Stuyvesant Town.

WALLS

Ten-four. One minute out.

DISPATCHER

Sixteen, Sixteen XRay. Level One
Emergency.

But they're not listening--Frank's off to Stuyvesant Town.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUYVESANT TOWN--NIGHT

Police cars, fire engines, a massive Emergency Service rescue truck all flashing dome lights on the street, on the plaza surrounding Cy Coates' building: cops, Swat team, spotlights, onlookers.

Frank and Tom, getting out, looking up: the spotlit figure of Cy Coates, thirteen floors above, suspended on a railing, legs dangling.

WALLS

Whadda we bring?

FRANK

Better bring it all.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY--NIGHT

Frank and Tom, lugging their equipment, meet up with cops, firemen and their rescue equipment.

FRANK

The elevator's fucked. We'd never all fit anyway. Let's go.

FIREMAN

That's thirteen flights.

WALLS

The news guys just pulled up.

POLICE SERGEANT

The stairs, men, the stairs.

The Sergeant leads a half dozen cops and firemen up the stairs as the elevator doors open. Tom, Frank and two COPS squeeze inside.

WALLS

This guy a jumper?

COP

We got a call for shots fired on the sixteenth floor. The jumper called right after.

FRANK

(to Walls)
I'm going to sixteen.

As the elevator doors close.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OASIS--NIGHT

Frank steps out with the officers. The door to 16M is open: Kanita lies half in, half out the door, a perfectly round hole above her eye, splinters of bone and blood down the side of her nose.

The carpet is soaked with water; shards of glass lie amid dying fish. A cop returns from the rear hall of the apartment, stands before photo of volcano:

COP

That's it, nobody else home.

Frank, looking over the balcony, sees Cy three floors below.

FRANK

I'm going to thirteen.

Frank heads clown the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. THIRTEENTH FLOOR--NIGHT

Frank emerges on thirteen: Walls, the panting Police Sergeant and team have overturned the furniture in 13M: the absent owners would have trouble recognizing it. The floor is covered with gas-powered metal cutters, acetylene torches, ropes, harnesses.

A trail of blood leads to where Walls stands, Tiger's prone body behind him:

WALLS

Get this, Frank--we got two patients.
Number one, the scarecrow outside.
Number two misses the railing but
breaks both legs on the balcony,
then throws himself through a glass
window, heads to the bedroom, where
he's now passed out.

FRANK

(about Coates)
Well, he's the steakhead of the night,
then.

WALLS

I don't think the fire people can
touch him out there.

FRANK

How's he doing?

WALLS

I haven't had a chance to see him
yet. I'm going to take care of
sleeping beauty.

Frank goes over to Coates as two cops strap on harnesses. CY hangs impaled on the railing, a steel spike passing through his hip. Glowing in spotlights from thirteen floors below, Frank takes Coates' vital signs, gently presses his abdomen:

FRANK

Does that hurt?

COATES

(screams)
No!

Frank, IV bag in his teeth, putting an oxygen mask on Coates:

FRANK

I don't think you've hurt any major
organs.

(sets IV line)
We got to get you off this thing
without setting off bleeding.

Cops behind click on harnesses ("You in?" "Yeah" "You in?")
attach straps to pitons they've hammered into the brick wall,
bring out metal cutters and torches.

FRANK (CONT'D)

They're gonna torch the fence. You're
gonna feel the metal getting warm,
maybe very warm.

COATES

I can't hold up my head anymore.

Frank passes the IV bag to one of the cops, holds Coates,
head. CY relaxes his neck as SPARKS splay like fireworks
beneath him, fall to the concrete.

COATES (CONT'D)

So, Frank, am I going to live?

FRANK

You're going to live.

COATES

I've been thinking about things.
Meditating on my financial future.
You guys gave me plenty of time to
meditate on the future. Whatja do,
stop for Chinese on the way over?
There's plenty of food in my place.

FRANK

I was tired. I needed a coffee.

COATES

What about Kanita?

FRANK

Dead.

COATES

That's too bad. Get some money, a
nice looking girl on your arm, and
everyone wants to take a piece. Some
kid I wouldn't let wash my Mercedes
is in my house, shooting at me. Damn,
I thought I could make it onto the
balcony like Tiger. He's fat, that's
why, falls faster. I'm trying to
watch my weight, and look what
happens. Am I shot, Frank?

FRANK

No.

COATES

Boy can't shoot for shit, either.
Goddamn that's hot.

Frank looks: the spike in Coates' hip starting to glow red.
CY stretches his hand toward the skyline, his face backlit
by raining acetylene sparks:

COATES (CONT'D)

Isn't it beautiful? When the fires
start to fall, then the strongest
rule it all. I love this city.

The torch breaks the spike free: Frank and Coates FREE FALL
three feet, jerk to a stop. Cy yelps. The crowd cheers from
below.

Frank now grabbing, holding Coates tightly--Frank's hands
the only thing keeping Coates from falling--as the cops hoist
them up.

COP

(to Frank)
Good thing we buckled you in, huh?

COATES

What about me? Who's supposed to
buckle me?

COP

(to 2nd cop)
I thought you did.

2ND COP

I thought you did.

COP

(to Coates)
I'm so sorry, sir.

The cops lift Frank and Coates onto the balcony.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

16 XRay parked in front.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY CRITICAL CARE--NIGHT

Frank walking out of the restroom wiping water off his face,
looking at the gurney where Coates lies on his side, metal
spike still sticking through his hip, IV line running to his
arm, eyes closed. Nurses walk past Coates: he's stabilized,

waiting his turn. CY, take a number.

Frank spots Hazmat at Burke's cubicle, walks over.

HAZMAT

Nurse Crupp, we're going to need some Valium here. He's waking up again.

The ventilator alarm goes off as Burke pulls at his restraints.

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

(urgent)

Where's that Valium?

Nurse Crupp walks briskly over, injects needle into one of Burke's IV bags.

Burke's voice speaks in Frank's head:

BURKE'S VOICE

Don't. Don't do it.

HAZMAT

Give me a hand, Frank. I've got to get something between those teeth.

Frank helps Hazmat force in a bite stick. The monitor alarm cuts off, the ventilator starts up again, pumping air in, pulling air out.

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

You can't believe how much he's improved.

FRANK

How many times have you shocked him tonight?

HAZMAT

Fourteen. We finally got him a room upstairs. Should be up there in a couple of hours.

FRANK

What do you do, just have someone follow him around with a defibrillator?

HAZMAT

(laughs)

That's good, Frank. No, but they might surgically implant one, about the size of my thumb. It goes near the shoulder here, with two electrodes connected to the heart. It sends a shock whenever it senses a drop in

blood flow. Amazing, isn't it?

FRANK

A medical miracle.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY WAITING ROOM--NIGHT

Frank notices Mary Burke in waiting area with her brother, mother and several others. Gone is the lost daughter, the scared junkie. Tonight she's dressed for strength: leather jacket, blue jeans, black work boots.

MARY

Everyone, this is the medic who brought my father in. Frank, these are some of my father's friends.

Frank greets them.

FAMILY FRIEND

We live out an the Island now, but we used to live right down the block from Pat. He was like a saint to us. Came as soon as we heard.

FRANK

(to Mary)

I'm going out for a smoke.

Mary whispers something to her mother, joins him.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

Frank offers her a cigarette. Walls waits in 16 XRay, now parked at the curb.

MARY

I heard CY Coates was brought in. He looked pretty bad.

FRANK

He'll be all right.

MARY

Too bad. He called me up today, can you believe that? I don't know how he got my number. He asks me do I want to come over and see him, I tell him I'd rather go to a leper colony. He says there's a new gang that wants to kill him, take over the business. I told him I hope he's right. That they kill him. That's

what I told him.

FRANK

It'll be a while before he's up and running again.

MARY

OK, last night I was weak. it won't happen again. And all that shit I said--it was just because I was stoned. Forget it.

FRANK

No problem. Thanks for letting me crash. It was the best sleep I've had in months. I used some of your soap.

MARY

I wish these people would leave already. I can't listen to another story. Did you see him?

(Frank doesn't answer)

That doctor says the brain is coming around. They're waiting for the heart to stabilize. I don't know who to believe. He says they still have to keep him tied up.

FRANK

Can I bring you something back to eat--a falafal, some pizza?

MARY

No, we just ate. I only remember how tough my father was. Now I know he had to be like that, to make us tough. This city'll kill you if you aren't strong enough.

FRANK

No, the city doesn't discriminate. It gets everybody.

Walls flashes 16 XRay's headlights, hits the horns.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I gotta go. Another call.

Frank, his heart pounding, steps closer to her.

FRANK (CONT'D)

We're all dying, Mary Burke.

He leans as if to kiss her.

MARY

This is not a good time.

FRANK

There's no time.

He places his hand on her shoulder, kisses her lightly, walks toward Walls and the waiting ambulance.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST AVE--NIGHT

16 XRay is cooking now--Walls at the wheel, Frank shotgun, passing a pint of whiskey back and forth: radio blasting--
INXS: "The Devil Inside."

WALLS

Get ready, Frank. Missed a drug shooting while you were dicking around in there. There's gonna be trauma tonight!

FRANK

As long as we keep moving. No standing still.

WALLS

(keys mike)

C'mon, look at your screen. Give up some blood!

DISPATCHER

Sixteen XRay, a man at the bus terminal shot three years ago says his arm hurts.

Frank looks at a group of girls exiting an after-hours club: every one a Rose. Rose faces.

FRANK

C'mon, Tom, pick up a job.

WALLS

You want some bum in the bus terminal? We'll wait for a real call.

FRANK

Let's get in a fight, then.

WALLS

Who with?

FRANK

That's your job. Just keep driving, keep moving. No stopping. We're sharks. We stop too long, we die.

Walls hits the accelerator: the old bus jerks forward:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Let's break something, Tom. Let's bust something, bomb something.

WALLS

What do you want to break?

FRANK

(taking a drink)

I don't know--let's break some windows.

WALLS

Why?

FRANK

Destruction, distraction. I feel the need.

WALLS

You need a reason, Frank. You don't just go around breaking people's windows. That's anarchy.

FRANK

What's the reason? Give me a reason, Tom.

WALLS

Let me think.

Tom hits the siren as he swings wildly around a stopped cab and its turban-headed driver:

WALLS (CONT'D)

Classic cabbie move.

(to driver)

Hey, swammy, that's called a crosswalk. You stop before it, not on it!

Walls turns onto a cross street, spots Noel standing by a Mustang, baseball bat on his shoulder. He wears yesterday's blood-stained clothes, cut tires tied to his shoulders and elbows, chest and belly wrapped with steel wire.

WALLS (CONT'D)

I know who to work over. Him.

Walls slows as Noel lifts the bat, swings it into the Mustang's front window, shattering it, puts the bat down, using it like a cane as he walks to the next parked car.

WALLS (CONT'D)

This guy's been terrorizing the

neighborhood for weeks, ever since he got outta jail, wreaking general havoc, contributing to the bad name of the place. The term "menace to society" was made up for him.

FRANK

He's crazy. He can't help it.

WALLS

(stops ambulance)

Well, why don't they put him away? Prisons don't want him. I took him to the hospital yesterday and here he is again.

Noel reaches the next car, a Bronco, carefully hefts the bat, smashes it through the windshield.

WALLS (CONT'D)

Look at that. Tell me that's a crazy person. Every move is calculated. He knows exactly what he's doing. This is the guy. I've been after him for weeks. He's quick, runs like a rat, tough for one person, but with two of us--

FRANK

Okay, whatta I do?

WALLS

If he sees me, he'll run, so I'll get out here. You start talking to him about baseball or something while I sneak around behind and get down and you push him. When he falls we get him.

FRANK

That's ridiculous.

WALLS

Believe me, it always works. The simpler, the better.

FRANK

You learn that in the army?

FRANK (CONT'D)

Flatbush.

Walls slips out, crouches beside the bus. Frank, stepping out, walks over to Noel as he whacks the bat through the hatch of a Pinto.

FRANK (CONT'D)

That's a hell of a swing you got there, Noel. I'm thinking Strawberry in his prime.

NOEL

Strawberry ain't shit. Drug pussy.
(heads for the next
car)
Me. I swing like Reggie. Mr.
October. Number three, game six,
World Series.

Noel hauls back, lays into a Volvo: glass shatters. Noel holds the bat out, extends handle towards Frank:

NOEL (CONT'D)

Here, you try.

FRANK

No, I'd better not.

NOEL

Sure, sure, give go.

FRANK

Yeah?

Frank, intrigued by Noel's suggestion, has forgotten Walls' plan. He takes the bat as Tom sneaks behind Noel, crouching.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What the hell.
(spits into hands)
The next year, tiebreaker for the
division, in Boston, Yanks down two
to nothing, Bucky Dent steps to the
plate.

NOEL

Oh man, Bucky.

FRANK

The pitch, high heater. Bucky knows
what's coming. He steps in, smash,
over the green monster.

Frank cocks the baseball bat, relishing every moment, swings into the Volvo's side window. Shattered glass flies on his hands and clothes.

Walls, fed up with this, stands:

WALLS

Frank, what the hell are you doing?

Noel, seeing Walls, grabs the bat, flees down an alley.

WALLS (CONT'D)

You go down those stairs there. Meet me back here if you can't find him in ten minutes. Call out if you see him. Get with the program, Frank.

Walls takes off after Noel. Frank, taking out his flashlight, enters second alley, walks down dark stairs which hopefully circle around to Noel.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEY--NIGHT

Mini-flashlight leading the way, Frank steps gingerly down the refuse-strewn alley. Ahead: footsteps.

He kicks something, thinking it's trash, looks down; a body rustles, pair of sleeping eyes look up.

Suddenly everything seems silent. He passes a row of glowing red doors. Shadows flash in the distance. He hears a woman crying, shoots his flashlight her direction: nothing.

Frank hears the voice again: Rose's voice:

ROSE'S VOICE

Why did you kill me, Frank?

FRANK

I didn't mean to.

ROSE'S VOICE

You should have helped me.

FRANK

I tried to help. I wanted to.

Shadows like hands extend against the wall ahead.

ROSE'S VOICE

Don't you love me?

Frank moves toward the reaching arms. The shadows swing like baseball bats. Noel SCREAMS.

Suddenly, before him, a blurry mass of bloody dreadlocks-- Noel goes flying to the ground, Walls standing over him swinging the bat, hitting him, killing him.

WALLS

I got him, Frank!

Frank stands back, watching Walls and Noel like some static black and white TV screen from his childhood. Noel, trying to protect himself, cries out.

WALLS (CONT'D)

(swinging bat)
To the moon, Alice! You little
motherfucker!

Frank charges forward into Walls, sending Tom, the baseball bat flying. Walls on the ground. Frank bends over Noel: Noel's face covered with blood, gasping for air, blowing red bubbles, convulsing.

FRANK

(to Walls)
Get the kit! We're gonna tube him!

WALLS

Frank!

FRANK

Do it!

WALLS

(standing)
Frank!

FRANK

(to Noel)
We're gonna save you, Noel. You're
gonna be all right.
(to Walls)
Do it, Tom! I'll call for fucking
backup, I swear!

WALLS

You're crazy.

Noel unconscious: Tom hurries down the alley toward the ambulance as Frank opens Noel's mouth.

FRANK

You're going to make it! You're going
to make it!

Pressing Noel's chest, Frank lowers his mouth, starts CPR. His mouth to Noel's. In the distance: Walls' footsteps returning.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--NIGHT

16 XRay parked out front: the sky is going blue.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCY ER--NIGHT

Frank and Tom, their shirts blood-stained, pushing Noel down

Skid Row, past Griss, past Nurse Constance. Tom wheels, Frank carries the IV bag.

NURSE CONSTANCE

Take him straight through.

GRISS

Who got that funky motherfucker this time?

FRANK

(to Nurse Constance)
Last show of the night.

HAZMAT

(arriving)
Jesus Christ. Nurse Crupp!
(to Frank)
Anybody else hurt?

FRANK

No.

HAZMAT

Crazy fucker.

Walls pushes Noel into unit one. Frank looks over to unit three--Burke's cubicle is empty.

FRANK

Where's Burke?

HAZMAT

Upstairs. 212. Had to shock him twice more.

Frank nods, walks out. Behind, Walls helps Hazmat and Crupp place Noel on a bed.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 212--NIGHT

Frank Pierce walks down the hospital corridor, steps into room 212.

Burke lies, tubed, wired and tied to life support. Blue light comes through the window. On the EKG monitor: a slow steady green endless line: up, down.

Frank takes a moment, exhales.

One by one, Frank flips off the machines. The clanging EKG ALARM is followed by the bass honking of the respirator alarm and two tweetering IV-drip alarms.

Frank, holding Burke's pulse, watches the life go out of

him. Hearing commotion outside, Frank flips the machines back on: the EKG monitor is flatline.

A FLOOR NURSE rushes in, feels for Burke's pulse.

FLOOR NURSE

What happened?
(calling out)
Code!

Frank steps back as the Nurse hits the emergency switch.

FLOOR NURSE (CONT'D)

Are we doing CPR?

Dr. Hazmat, out of breath, enters:

FLOOR NURSE (CONT'D)

He coded.

HAZMAT

Christ, what a way to start the day.
He's in V-fib. Shock him.

Frank pulls out the paddles, applies them to Burke's chest:

FLOOR NURSE

Clear!

Frank, knowing it's futile, shocks Burke: no result.

HAZMAT

Zap him again.

Frank goes through the motions, pretending to shock Burke. The flatline doesn't waver.

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

Nothing. Get the cart, start
compressions, get an epinephrine in.

Frank backs out the door as a nurse and intern enter.

In the corridor Frank listens as the activity becomes less urgent.

Hazmat steps out:

HAZMAT (CONT'D)

That's enough. I called it. Let's
get some coffee.
(to Frank)
You gonna tell the family?

Frank nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCY EMERGENCY--DAYBREAK

Frank walks out of Our Lady of Mercy, heads down the side street. He passes Tom Walls wielding a giant flashlight, smashing Sixteen XRay's headlights, denting the hood and side windows.

WALLS

Die!

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY'S APT. BUILDING--DAY

Frank rings the buzzer. Mary, sleepy-voiced, answers:

MARY (O.S.)

Who is it?

FRANK

Frank.

MARY (O.S.)

Come on up.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST FLOOR--DAY

Mary, wearing a burgundy robe, opens the door. Frank says nothing. Her expression darkens.

Frank looks at her again: it's not Mary, it's Rose. Mary has Rose's face.

FRANK

He's dead, Rose. Your father passed.

ROSE/MARY

How can that be? He was getting better.

FRANK

He coded. They shocked him one too many times. I'm sorry.

ROSE/MARY

He was tough. You did all you could.

FRANK

I'm sorry.

ROSE/MARY

You have to keep the body going until the brain and heart recover enough to go on their own.

Frank nods.

ROSE/MARY (CONT'D)

Would you like to come in?

FRANK

Yes.

Rose/Mary opens the door wider, closes it behind Frank.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM--DAY

Rose is Mary again: she and Frank lie clothed on her bed. He leans his head against her breast as she holds him. His eyes close: sleep.

THE END