

CONCRETE

by

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REVISION

FADE IN:

EXT. SUNLIT MOUNTAIN. DAY.

A towering, icy peak, gorgeous in the sunshine. A MAN--our hero, RON LITHGOW--speaks in VOICE OVER.

RON (V.O.)
I was drawn to the wild places.

A ROCKY SLOPE--

Filling the screen, almost abstract.

RON (V.O.)
But I never got there when I was
young and free. Got too busy. Like
most people.

CLOSE ON AN ICY OUTCROPPING--

sparkling in the sunlight.

RON (V.O.)
Then I was changed so that I saw in
a new way.

An overlarge ICE AXE bites into the ice.

A MICROSCOPIC VIEW--

of ice crystals. As abstract as that rock face.

RON (V.O.)
I saw the strange beauty of this
world again.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE. DUSK.

A STEEP ROCK CLIFF--with a cave barely visible a few hundred feet up--looms over the water. This is a different locale, without snow.

RON (V.O.)
So much is hidden from us.

A BEAR--

makes its way up a rocky incline near the cliff. Vegetation is sparse in this high country. The bear walks between...

TWO LARGE BOULDERS--

seen indistinctly in the dark. They're not quite round, and they almost seem to SHIFT as the bear passes.

THE BEAR--

sensing the movement behind him, WHIRLS AND CHARGES.

A BRILLIANT ARC OF BLUE LIGHT--

stuns the bear into instant unconsciousness. Two barely-seen figures DRAG HIM AWAY.

CUT TO:

INT. SENATOR DOUGLAS'S OFFICES. DAY.

MICHAEL MAYNARD, a lanky, bespectacled man affecting an air of jaded amusement approaches the desk of the Senator's assistant, DEANNE. She acknowledges him with raised eyebrows.

MICHAEL

(indicating the inner office)
Is Ron still trapped in there?

DEANNE

They're almost done, I think.
They're revising.

MICHAEL

Traffic's gonna kill us, now.
(facetiously) Say, Deanne...why
don't you come with us? We've got a
big tent.

DEANNE

Can I bring my husband?

MICHAEL

It's not that big.

Michael looks in through the open door, through which he sees SENATOR MARK DOUGLAS, practicing a SPEECH from a TYPESCRIPT. Gray-haired and patrician, Douglas peers through half-glasses.

Seated nearby, RONALD LITHGOW follows along in his copy, pencilling changes. Ron is a quiet type, attractive enough, if a bit pale and soft from office work. He NODS at each change Douglas makes.

Michael catches Ron's eye and points to his watch. Ron nods, holds thumb and forefinger apart.

DOUGLAS

Go ahead, Ron. Deanne'll type up this puppy.

RON

No, no...I can do this. I'd be happy to--

DOUGLAS

GO. NOW.

Abashed, Ron places the papers on the desk. Douglas is obviously used to being obeyed. Ron tenses when he's addressed again.

DOUGLAS

And Ron...enjoy yourself up there. I want to see you tanned and rested when you get back. A new man.

Ron smiles, relieved, as he pauses in the door.

RON

You will.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT-MICHAEL'S CAR--VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE--AFTERNOON

Ron and Michael wear new flannel shirts, still crisp from their packages. These are not seasoned woodsmen. Ron is examining a wicked-looking TEN INCH KNIFE.

RON

What is this? We going to chop down trees?

MICHAEL

You never know. I like it. It's me.

RON

Just don't put it in your carry-on. Turn up there.

THE CAR--

Turns and ascends and finally crests a small hill. Revealed is a quaint, modest HOUSE in the hollow below.

MICHAEL

Why's Lisa have it, anyway? She's the one afraid to pee in the woods!

RON

My apartment is small. Look, slow down...stop here, in fact. Stop, Michael.

MICHAEL

Come on. She doesn't have snakes for hair.

RON

Give me a minute. It wells up again, you know?

After a pause, the car rolls down to the house, stops again. Michael sits tight while a tense Ron goes in.

MICHAEL

(watching Ron)

Gotta stop bleeding someday, pal.

INT. LISA'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

LISA, an attractive woman in her late thirties, opens the door. Piled behind her is a PACK, TENT, and other GEAR, as well as some BOXES. Ron's eyes rove around the room as they speak.

RON

Hi. You got it out. Thanks.

LISA

There were some books and things, too. If you don't have room, maybe it's time you got a storage space. And nobody's been here, if that's why you're looking around.

Ron gives a little hurt smile, caught. He starts to consolidate the gear to carry it out. The tension between them builds for a moment as he fumbles--a bit too fervidly--with this and that.

RON

Be nice to finally use this stuff.

He pauses for a reaction that doesn't come.

RON

Might do some rock climbing.

Even this bait fails to get a rise from her.

RON

You're thinking I'll have one of my accidents.

LISA
It's none of my business.

Ron rises, wearing backpack, hat, boxes under each arm, enormous.

RON
Oh, that's it: 'Go ahead, crack
your skull. Got my settlement, got
the house, Ta ta.'

Anger flares for an instant on Lisa's face; then she swallows it.

LISA
No, that isn't it. Ron, it's been
almost two years.

RON
No, one and a half.

LISA
Look. Ron, these are the last of
your things. It's time to move
on...completely. Do be careful.
But for your sake.

She puts her HAND to his CHEEK, an echo of the tenderness that
must have once existed between them. Ron looks embarrassed,
aching, ridiculous with his burdens; a box SLIPS and he must LURCH
WILDLY to retain his grip and balance.

RON
I'm okay! Thanks and take care.

He hurriedly exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Ron packs the gear in the trunk and gets in the car. Michael
gives him an exaggerated down-the-nose inspection while starting
the car.

MICHAEL
No bruises? Concussion?

RON
She couldn't even touch me.

But he fingers where she touched his cheek. They drive off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFF FACE. DAY.

Ron and Michael inch up THE STEEP ROCK CLIFF we saw earlier.

Ron heaves himself up to the ledge where Michael rests. They're HIGH ABOVE A SMALL MOUNTAIN LAKE; an impressive climb. The day is glorious -- a soul restorer.

RON
(expansive from his exertions)
You know there are just nine mountains in the world over eight thousand meters? They call them eight thousands. I thought, as a teenager, that it'd be cool to climb all the eight thousands.

MICHAEL
I had a similar idea about some girls in my English Lit class.

RON
(ignoring the joke)
Why do some people really do it, chase their dreams? And we just...compromise?

MICHAEL
Look at the sweat pouring off you. Wrong dream, maybe. You haven't done too badly, you know.

Ron gazes out over the lake, squinting; his eyes aren't great. He takes out his wallet.

RON
This new beginning stuff. You look at your life. It's so narrow from here on.

Ron finds what he was after: a PICTURE of him with Lisa. He slips it out, starts to FLIP it into space, but HESITATES. The second time he does it with a BROAD ARM MOVEMENT. But as he lets the picture go, he jerks his arm back, as if to grab it, throwing himself off balance. He SLIDES OFF THE LEDGE.

Michael GRABS his shirt, arresting his fall just in time. Rocks tumble to the lake. The picture falls an eternity before hitting water. They know what a close call this was.

RON
T-thanks.

Ron heaves himself back up and composes himself a moment. They exchange glances, nod, and resume their climb, adrenalized.

CLOSE ON THE CLIFF FACE

An opening appears by Ron's foot, revealing an OPTICAL SENSOR. Neither climber notices.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAVE OPENING. CONTINUOUS.

Michael reaches it first.

MICHAEL

You were right. It is a cave.

RON

You...don't think anything could live in there.

MICHAEL

Like what?

RON

A bear?

MICHAEL

What would it eat up here?

RON

Hikers?

MICHAEL

Come on, let's look. What's the worst that could happen? (joking)
Look! A skull!

The pair creep up the slanted floor of the cave. It's deep; Ron plays a flashlight around the interior, making shadows shift and bend. Michael feels for the knife strapped to his belt.

RON

Why haven't I read about this? It's huge. How far should we go in?

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

RON

I mean 'getting lost.' Keep the entrance in sight.

But they don't; the pull of the cave is too strong. They climb over rough, broken shapes, a symphony of DRIPS plinking in the darkness. Then a SCRAPING SOUND echoes around them.

MICHAEL

Was that behind us?

RON

It couldn't be.

As they look back, the pair are SEIZED by half-seen shapes with rocky hands. The flashlight goes SPINNING, shadows doing a wild dance FLASHING ACROSS A ROUND, GRAY, NOSELESS FACE. They and the shapes ROAR with fear and fury; Michael draws his knife; it is seized and SNAPPED IN TWO by inhuman hands.

Michael's GLASSES fall, shatter. Screams, curses, ripping clothes, scrapes, bleeding skin--and the two friends are SUBDUED.

The pair are carried deep into the cave in a furious, crashing DASH by their still dimly-seen captors. They round a bend, and are suddenly in a CLEAN, FABRICATED INTERIOR, wild with curving detailing, an Alphonse Mucha fever dream.

Ron can barely take it in, or even see well, blood from a gashed forehead clouding his vision.

RON

Michael!

But Michael's too stunned to answer. They're being CARRIED LIKE DAUCHSUNDS by the still half-seen figures.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SURGERY ROOM. SAME TIME.

A room filled with intricate equipment on armatures, WORKING SURFACES containing DISSECTED ANIMALS. All half-seen in quick cuts.

Ron and Michael are brought in and placed for SURGERY. Bands emerge from the tables, binding them. Sinister INSTRUMENTS swing over them. They're sprayed with KNOCKOUT GAS.

Looking around in panic, beyond words, the men STRUGGLE and SCREAM LIKE ANIMALS. A louder WHINE like a high-pitched BUZZ-SAW DROWNS THEM OUT, echoing as the scene. Their last waking sight is LOOMING FIGURES who seem to be MADE OUT OF STONE.

FADES TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. WHITE ROOM. DAY.

A rocky hand lifts to a rocky brow. It shows signs of surgery: scabbing, a drain. The figure GROANS, eyes closed. The hand probes the noseless, jack-o-lantern face.

Its voice reveals THIS IS RON, horrendously changed. From offscreen comes a rhythmic CRUNCHING SOUND.

RON

Michael?

:

No answer; we still see only the transformed Ron.

RON

Michael, did I fall? I can't--I'm not working right. I can't feel-- Michael? I can't open my damn eyes!

But somehow, he does. He tries to focus on his hand, but the image makes no sense; for one thing, he can zoom in on MICROSCOPIC DETAIL.

WIDER--

He slowly rises to a sitting position. The room is all sinuous shapes, white on white. Across it sits ANOTHER ROCK MAN, huddled by the wall. He ROCKS FORWARD AND BACK as autistic kids sometimes do: the source of the rhythmic crunching.

They STARE at each other.

RON

Who...are...you?

It's MICHAEL'S VOICE that answers, husky with emotion, near tears.

MICHAEL

Look at the rest of you.

Ron does, and slowly appreciates the horror and magnitude of what has happened. Ron SCREAMS, again and again. Michael squeezes his eyes shut and ROCKS harder, escaping to some inward, mad place.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN MONITOR ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

ROCK MEN--differentiated from our pair by the technological accoutrements on their bodies--look up from a monitor, exchange GLANCES. Ron's screams and Michael's crunching come from a speaker.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAVE MOUTH. SUNSET.

A ROCKY FIGURE--again, decked out with otherworldly devices--emerges to appreciate the fiery sunset. He holds Michael's broken glasses, examines them curiously, then tosses them into the lake.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM. NIGHT.

Time has passed; FLAKES from their rocky crusts litter the floor.

Ron paces frantically, HITTING the wall uselessly each time he reaches it. Michael sits, not rocking, but exuding madness.

We can tell them apart by their different HEAD SCARS and the PAINTED ALIEN CHARACTERS on their bodies. Ron speaks, on the EDGE OF PANIC.

RON

We're not d-dead. Not dead.

MICHAEL

(lost in madness)

Dead.

RON

Don't! I need you, Michael! I
can't face this alone!

MICHAEL

Dead. Dead. Dead.

Michael leans forward on his hands and knees. He VOMITS BILE.

THE BILE--

a powerful acid, spreads and starts to EAT THROUGH THE FLOOR.

RON--

starts to HYPERVENTILATE at this sight. He starts SCREAMING again and WILDLY SMASHES the WALLS.

A SMASHED WALL PANEL--

reveals MACHINERY, TUBING, ROCKY CRUST, AND PULSING TISSUE: a weird biological/technological mix.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN MONITOR ROOM. SAME TIME.

The rocky aliens scramble in reaction to Ron's destruction.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM. A MOMENT LATER.

Ron CRINGES from the WET THINGS squirming in the wall. Suddenly, a concealed entrance SLIDES OPEN, revealing ALIENS WITH WEAPONS.

They fire BURSTS OF ENERGY; Ron and Michael fall down, stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOCK ROOM. NIGHT.

Ron and Michael--and a THIRD SUBJECT with the same rock body--are strapped to heavy, vertically sliding devices like the "test your strength" weights at a carnival, their feet in water.

SHOCKS are sent through the water which they can only escape by JUMPING. They YOWL with PAIN with each one. Ron looks up at an OBSERVATION WINDOW above them.

RON

Michael! Look!

IN THE WINDOW --

are THEIR OLD HUMAN BODIES--animate, but BRUISED and LACERATED. They're NAKED but for optical devices over their eyes. Horrified, Ron and Michael see that by their old bodies is a BEAR with the same devices over its eyes. A ROCKY FIGURE is in shadow just beyond.

THE THIRD SUBJECT --

next to Ron and Michael, GROWLS LIKE A BEAR and TEARS FREE. He LEAPS to the window, SMASHING it. He PULLS himself over the sill.

The rocky figure steps forth and DISCHARGES A WEAPON. The third subject FALLS at Ron's and Michael's feet, smashed, burned, dead. Beneath THE ROCK COATING IS CHARRED, SMOKING FLESH. The two are in shock; this could be them, soon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM. LATER.

A STEAMING VAT sits between Ron and Michael. They eat the lumpy STEW it contains with their hands. It contains ROCKS. Wear and the mess show weeks have passed. The wall's fixed; their scars have faded.

Ron looks at a CHUNK OF ROCK in his hand. Rage grows within him. He THROWS it at the wall. He stands up.

RON
(to the aliens)
We're not animals! We're men!
Change us back!!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ALIEN MONITOR ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The aliens remain impassive as Ron is heard over a speaker, and seen on a screen set in the floor.

RON (OVER SPEAKER)
Change us back!!

Ron LEANS against the wall, reduced to dry, gasping sobs.

DISSOLVE TO:

ALIEN TESTS MONTAGE

Close views of the disorienting experiences they're suffering.

RON'S EYES

...lids clamped open, dilating and contracting as LIGHTS STROBE.

A ROCKY HAND

...smaller hands on each of its fingers, which manipulate tiny tools as the hand DESCENDS TOWARD US.

MICHAEL'S UNCONSCIOUS FORM

...lasers tracing patterns across him. The patterns linger, glowing.

AN ANIMAL/MECHANICAL THING

...crawling on a rocky surface, probably Ron or Michael's skin.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM. NIGHT.

Ron whispers angrily to Michael, who now has a disturbing tick of neurotically SCRATCHING HIS FOREARMS, bits of crust crumbling down.

RON
We have to get out. We're test
animals. They'll kill us when
they're done.

Michael shrugs. He scratches harder, dislodging more crust. Ron GRABS his forearms, shakes him.

RON
(furious)
What do I have to do with you?!

He BACKHANDS Michael, who is KNOCKED INTO A WALL and falls to hands and knees--but the tough, rocky body is unhurt. A SIREN sounds. Ron freezes, eyes darting around.

The DOOR SLIDES OPEN, revealing an armed alien. He and Ron STARE at each other a tense moment. Then the door RECLOSES. The siren stops.

Ron stands panting. Michael speaks, still facing the floor.

MICHAEL
All right. My life's over. It's
walking around with some damn thing
in my skull. But if you still
care...I'll help.

Ron can't believe it; his friend is back, this much at least. He pulls Michael up and HUGS him so hard he CRACKS.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDORS. NIGHT.

An alien pushes a CART containing the food vat. He's armed.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM. A MOMENT LATER.

The portal opens and the alien eases in the cart.

The prisoners exchange glances. Michael nods. Ron SCREAMS AND FLAILS, upsetting the cart. Then Ron HURLS Michael into a wall by the portal. Michael slumps, motionless. The alien SHOUTS, brandishing his weapon.

Michael suddenly JUMPS HIM, wrests away the weapon, and BLASTS HIM APART. Dying, it unleashes an inhuman SCREAM. Michael stands there panting, disbelieving it really happened. But Ron grabs his arm and they run out the portal. The siren starts.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN MONITOR ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The aliens scramble to deal with the breakout.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDORS. CONTINUOUS.

Ron and Michael run through the twists and turns, BLASTING whenever they see an alien. Desperation makes them unstoppable. They come to the SURGERY ROOM, look in.

ON THE SURGICAL TABLE--

A DEER and a ROCKY BODY are under the knife. A brain transplant is clearly underway. The pair is too worked up to be shocked.

RON

We were here! We're close!

Michael BLASTS the surgical machine, and they run off.

THE DOOR TO THE CAVE--

is so unremarkable they RUN RIGHT BY IT. But MICHAEL STOPS RON and they go back: he's seen the small WINDOW in it that reveals the CAVE beyond. Ron searches for a control to open it.

ALIENS RUN AT THEM from the way they came, FIRING WEAPONS. A CHUNK OF RON'S SHOULDER is BURNT AWAY. Michael returns fire, and they fall back. Then he BLASTS THE DOOR off its moorings.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAVE OPENING. NIGHT.

Ron and Michael emerge into the sweet mountain air.

RON

Shoot inside! Seal it with a cave-in!

Michael tries, but the exhausted weapon produces only a feeble GLOW. They look at each other, eyes huge.

RON

Jump!

Ron gets off an instant before Michael, escaping the RAY that lances out of the cave, BLASTING MICHAEL TO BITS.

RON--

falls to the black lake far, far below, finally producing a mighty SPLASH, joined a moment later by a constellation of smaller splashes--the pieces of his unfortunate friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE FLOOR. CONTINUOUS.

Ron sinks to the bottom in a cloud of bubbles. He looks up, sees A RAY piercing the water, probing for him.

It reaches all the way to the lake floor. Where the ray hits, the mud is CHURNED violently. The ray is HEADED FOR RON. He dodges, then LEAPS into the trench it has left.

ABOVE THE LAKE--

A PROJECTILE arcs down from the cave into the lake. It EXPLODES.

UNDERWATER--

foamy, turbid, the muddy bottom barely visible. Ron's ARM EMERGES.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKESHORE. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Water roils from the explosion. SMOKE everywhere. FLAMING TREES, seen in reflection, paint the water orange. RON EMERGES, slogs to SHORE. He looks back at the cave, high on the mountain.

THE MOUNTAIN--

ERUPTS, giving violent birth to the huge SPACESHIP hidden in it, which soars off and is lost in the stars.

RON--

watches it go with a shell-shocked expression. He looks around hesitantly. What now? The burning trees crackle. He slogs through the muddy aftermath of the explosion into the woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP. NIGHT.

Ron comes upon their tent, needle-strewn, and packs, suspended on a rope to protect their food from bears. Snapping the rope and lowering the packs is no problem; dealing with the flexible support rods of the tent is impossible. He accidentally RIPS the tent again and again, muttering curses. Finally he CRUMBLES it into a ball like a discarded draft of a speech, and stuffs it in a pack.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILHEAD. NIGHT.

Ron and Michael's RENTAL CAR is ticketed, covered with A MONTH'S WORTH OF PINE NEEDLES, but still there. Ron pulls the CAR KEYS from the packs he's retrieved. They resist his now-massive hands.

Ron finds he can't fit into the car. So he PUNCHES THROUGH THE ROOF and tears a large hole. Somehow he starts it and drives off, his head poking through the ragged new sunroof.

CUT TO:

INT. LOGGER'S BAR. NIGHT.

Beards, checked shirts, arms like phone poles. There's a URINAL TROUGH immediately UNDER THE BAR so the patrons can relieve themselves without having to stop drinking. America's most dangerous occupation has left one patron, LANCE, in a WHEELCHAIR. But he bets on the ARM WRESTLING MATCH with as much gusto as anybody. SWEAT rolls off HARLAN and his weakening opponent.

A man and a woman BURST IN, their clothes dissheveled--evidently from pleasurable pursuits in the parking lot.

MAN

There's a sasquatch out there!

Harlan SLAMS his opponent's arm to the table. His backers CHEER.

WOMAN

It is! In the parking lot!

Skeptical sounds, chuckles all around.

HARLAN

No more for Billy and Liz!

He takes a well-earned swig from a long-neck during the laugh this gets. Then the DOOR OPENS AGAIN. It's RON. The room falls silent.

Ron takes a step forward, splintering the lintel. It's impressive, but Harlan, the alpha dog here, gets up, still holding his beer. He faces Ron.

HARLAN

Nice. But you need fur to fool anybody sober.

RON

Please. I need a phone.

A couple of Harlan's buddies come up and stand confrontationally.

HARLAN

First tell us the gag.

What he's been through has destroyed any patience Ron might have had. He PUSHES Harlan aside. Another man tries to PUSH Ron--but he only succeeds in pushing himself off.

MAN

He's really rock!

Harlan SWINGS the beer bottle, which hits the same cheek Lisa touched so tenderly. It SHATTERS. Ron PICKS HARLAN UP and SWINGS HIM AROUND by his arms. The room CLEARS OUT, except for a LANCE, whose WHEELCHAIR is hung up on some furniture. Ron sets down Harlan.

RON

Get out.

Harlan does, and Ron finds the phone. It proves impossible to operate. His huge fingers can't push one button at a time. He gives up in frustration and approaches Lance.

RON

You...

Lance lifts a PISTOL and EMPTIES THE CLIP into Ron's face. SIX LITTLE CRATERS are left on Ron's crust, but he SMILES BLANDLY.

RON

Could you work this phone for me?

Wide-eyed, Lance NODS.

CUT TO:

INT. SENATOR DOUGLAS' BEDROOM. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Douglas, in bed, sits up with a jolt at the voice on the phone.

DOUGLAS

Where have you been? Now hold on,
hold on. RON. We can handle this.
Where are you?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

A heavy-duty VAN speeds through the night. It heads up a slope toward forested MOUNTAINS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NATIONAL SCIENCE AGENCY (NSA) FACILITY. DAY.

A dozen complaining REPORTERS are herded out the front door by an OFFICIAL and some GUARDS. Numerous employees are simultaneously going in another door, flashing photo IDs.

Reporter TAWNY HILL, an intense, petite young woman, turns to the official.

TAWNY

Can you confirm that it's not a
viral or bacterial disease breakout?

OFFICIAL

We don't handle that sort of thing.

TAWNY

Is that a denial?

OFFICIAL

If you want to fish, Ms. Hill, try
another pond.

The reporters erupt with objections ("It's all over town!" "Then what's with this clampdown?" etc.), and an overzealous cameraman knocks a guard in the face. SHOVING ensues; Tawny FALLS TO HER KNEES in the mêlée.

By her falls THE GUARD'S ID. She pockets it, eyeing the line of employees rushing in.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA CORRIDOR. DAY.

Tawny, wearing the guard's ID badge, tries to look purposeful as people in street clothes run in one direction, and those in STERILE CLEAN-SUITS the other. She follows a woman into a dressing room.

PA SYSTEM

ETA is five minutes, people. Let's be ready.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA DRESSING ROOM. DAY.

Tawny falls in beside a woman nearly finished suiting up, and takes a clean-suit off the rack herself. The woman, with auburn hair and an unaffected beauty, gives her a look. Tawny notes her ID card: DR. MAUREEN VONNEGUT. She projects ease and intelligence.

MAUREEN

I can help with that, if you like.

TAWNY

Please. I've never worn one before...Dr. Vonnegut.

MAUREEN

We're all in for a new experience.

As she helps Tawny, a clean-suited technician pops in.

TECHNICIAN

Maureen, Mattingly's having fits out there.

MAUREEN

Tell him I'm coming.

TAWNY

Is the contamination risk really so great?

MAUREEN

Who knows? We've never dealt with--

A Guard pokes his head into the room; he and Tawny lock eyes.

GUARD

She's here, guys!

Tawny PRESSES HER BUSINESS CARD into Maureen's hand before she's grabbed by the guards and moved toward the door.

TAWNY

I'd love to talk, anytime!

Tawny is hustled out. Maureen pockets the card and seals her suit.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. DAY.

The VAN we saw earlier, riding low on its wheels, backs up through this VAST STERILE SPACE filled with PLASTIC BIOLOGICAL BARRIERS and people in CLEAN-SUITS. DR. DAVIS MATTINGLY supervises. A portly, wild-haired man in his fifties, he is anxious but cheerful--and perhaps a bit befuddled.

When the van reaches THE CENTER OF THE SPACE, the rear doors open and RON STEPS OUT, provoking a general vocalization of awe. The van LIFTS several inches after releasing its burden with a SQUEAK. Ron looks at the staring, suited people: it's a pregnant moment.

RON

Howdy there.

This prompts even louder babble--it speaks English!

MATTINGLY

Quiet please! We have a protocol to follow which Dr. Vonnegut is on her way with now.

Mattingly wheels around to look for her, almost knocking over a VIDEO CAMERA which, its red telltale glowing, is recording the proceedings.

MATTINGLY

Stay in your work teams and be ready for your call.

SENATOR DOUGLAS --

emerges from a door and walks toward Ron, who registers relief.

As Douglas advances, JOE STAMBERG, still sealing up his suit, RUNS from the door to intercept him. Even in the bulky clean-suit, Stamberg moves with athletic grace. His plastic face plate reveals a sun-creased, 50-ish face, eyes narrowed, sizing things up.

Reaching Ron, Senator Douglas stares in wonder.

DOUGLAS

(fatherly)

My boy, what the devil did you get into?

STAMBERG

One moment! Who here knows the background of this thing?

Mattingly and Douglas lift their hands in acknowledgement.

RON

Man.

Stamberg gives Ron a "could've fooled me" look.

STAMBERG

Henceforth it is "John Doe." The secrecy of this matter to be strictly enforced!

The technicians react nervously. Douglas whispers to Mattingly.

DOUGLAS

Dave, who is this...gentleman?

MATTINGLY

Joe Stamberg--security officer assigned here. I'm afraid we have to do what he says.

A VIDEO SHOT--

Ron suddenly looms in front of Stamberg.

We see this tableau from the angle of the video camera. Next to a time code that's already there, A SUBTITLE appears, letter by letter, typed by someone offscreen: JOHN DOE-DAY 1

RON

Not thing. Man.

BACK TO SCENE --

Stamberg looks Ron up and down with mild revulsion.

STAMBERG

Jesus...

He turns away from Ron, then is startled to find Ron's hand on his SHOULDER. The whole room TENSES. Then...

MAUREEN VONNEGUT --

arrives, burdened with fat, bound computer printouts.

MAUREEN

My God! He's magnificent!

Despite the clean-suit, Ron sees an exceptional beauty looking at him with something like rapture. He's flattered despite himself. The confrontational tension evaporates.

She juggles the print-outs.

MAUREEN
(to Mattingly)
Sorry. They're huge. Okay to start?

Mattingly nods. Maureen opens the first volume and reads.

MAUREEN
Welcome. Do you speak English?

Ron, Mattingly and Douglas share an amused look.

RON
Like a native.

MAUREEN
Great! We skip two hundred and
forty pages...

She finds the proper page.

MAUREEN
Do you have any physical needs we
can attend to?

Ron seems to want to make a joke, but his facetious tone falters.

RON
Sure! Change me...change me back.

Mattingly and Douglas exchange a worried little look.

MATTINGLY
What we'd first like to do, with
your permission, is a few tests.

Ron shrugs an assent. Team one sets to work.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE--NSA TESTING

RON is measured, weighed on a freight scale and while suspended in a sling underwater. His STRENGTH is tested: lifting (THE VAN), jumping (he clears seven feet), treadmill walking (three days without a break).

He HOLDS HIS BREATH UNDERWATER for an HOUR.

More than Mattingly, MAUREEN oversees the work. Ron enjoys her constant presence. While discretely OGLING her, he STEPS on a TECHNICIAN'S FOOT. The technician shows up later in a CAST.

Occasional VIDEO VIEWS show passing time ("JOHN DOE--DAY 3," etc.). Stamberg watches the video when he isn't INTIMIDATING Mattingly.

RON'S SHOULDER REGENERATES over time. Clean room precautions are dropped. He samples "foods," from burgers to wood to GRAVEL.

At one point, Ron gestures toward the door, and moves to go to it. He's intercepted, persuaded back. Later, he OPENS THE DOOR; outside are ARMED GUARDS, and he's again gently led back. But it's clear he's being--at least passively--RESTRAINED. He DISLIKES IT.

CUT TO:

INT. NEA MAIN ROOM. DAY.

A private area has been arranged for Ron with a CHAIR and a BED made of CINDERBLOCKS AND CEMENT; a bowl of GRAVEL for snacks. He and Senator Douglas echo their positions in Douglas' office, a few weeks and a lifetime ago. Ron reads a CLIPPING. They're alone.

RON

Not a bad obituary. What if they can restore me, though?

DOUGLAS

You're only presumed dead. We'll spin a yarn, if need be.

RON

Have you told Lisa?

DOUGLAS

I spoke to her new fellah.

Ron shoots him a look--surprise, hurt. Then he tries to cover. He pops a couple of pieces of GRAVEL.

RON

Any word on the aliens?

DOUGLAS

Zip. There's nothing up there but scorched rocks and trees. If it weren't for your new look...well, I think you just scared these boys off, Ron. Shooting up the place and so forth. Makes me proud.

RON

Thanks.

DOUGLAS

So you okay here?

RON

After what happened I wanted to crawl in a hole. This isn't bad. They react better to a freak like me than people out in the world, anyway.

DOUGLAS

I ought to underline something. I've promised a lot of people--the President included--that you'll keep what happened under your hat. Still with me on that?

RON

Of course, sir. I promised. Most of them think I'm an alien.

DOUGLAS

Thanks. Anything you need? Just ask. Dave's an old friend.

RON

There's one thing. Could I get my apartment stuff? My books, papers? Not clothes...

DOUGLAS

Done. Later.

Douglas EXITS, and technicians enter and lead Ron off to more tests.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. DAY.

Maureen is marking Ron's surface with a GRID. It's a painstaking process giving Ron ample time to study Maureen. Suddenly, a look of recognition crosses his face.

RON

I just realized. You're the leech lady!

MAUREEN

That's right. My fifteen minutes.

There's an edgy defensiveness in her voice.

RON

I'm sorry. You must hate that.

MAUREEN

Mr. Doe, I spent seven years studying neurons in leeches. They're exactly like ours, only fewer and more simply arranged. You can learn a lot from them, and I did. It had bearing on schizophrenia, strokes...many things. But since I had federal money, that Senator named me his taxpayer-ripoff of the month. He was wrong.

RON

The guy hasn't fingered any pork that goes to his own state, I've noticed. Douglas can't stand him.

MAUREEN

So you follow politics. Hmmm.

RON

A little.

MAUREEN

We can't ask about your background, but obviously you've been living with us for some time.

RON

I've been hanging out on Easter Island, trying to blend. There! A smile. Don't deny it. So how'd you end up here?

MAUREEN

I'd been a student of Dr. Mattingly. He hired me after the debacle. We evaluate grant applications, mostly. I was awfully glad you came along. This is what it's about. You're history.

RON

Your rosetta stone.

MAUREEN

No, better. Much, much better.

They're interrupted by Stamberg; he adjusts the surveillance camera.

STAMBERG

Dr. Vonnegut, we had an agreement.

MAUREEN

And I abided by it, as your camera told you; I didn't ask anything.

STAMBERG

Come on. Let's go see your boss.

RON

Hey, she didn't do anything!

Stamberg motions for Maureen to go on and leans close to Ron.

STAMBERG

Senator Douglas told me you promised to cooperate.

RON

I did.

STAMBERG

Then honor your word. Keep it under a lid.

Before Ron can respond, Stamberg turns on his heel and exits. Ron sits down in his chair. In annoyance, he lifts his feet and brings down his heels HARD. A CRACK radiates across the concrete floor.

CUT TO:

MATTINGLY'S OFFICE-A SHORT TIME LATER.

Maureen cools her heels outside, visible through a glass panel, while Mattingly pleads with Stamberg.

MATTINGLY

We'll have to widen the circle eventually! She's my right hand! She wrote the protocol we're following!

Stamberg's eyes go up to the ceiling, where, barely noticeable, is a tiny, disguised CAMERA. Then he looks Mattingly in the eye.

STAMBERG

Give me your right hand.

Mattingly doesn't know what he means for a second, but offers it; Stamberg takes it in a steely grip that makes Mattingly go pale.

STAMBERG

Your job's science. Mine's keeping secrets. Move your hand. See? I squeeze harder. That's how it works. There are a hundred outfits that would slit your throat for that thing. Don't do anything to lose your prize.

He releases the hand.

STAMBERG

She asks anything more personal than the state of his bowels, she's gone. Maybe you with her.

MATTINGLY

I--I'll speak with her.

Stamberg leaves, satisfied, as a shaken Mattingly motions her in.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MONITOR ROOM. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Stamberg enters. His aide ALAN WU gives him an admiring grin. On one of the monitors, Mattingly is arguing with Maureen--a view from the extracurricular camera in Mattingly's office.

Young, crisply dressed, Wu entered intelligence work out of an Ivy League school. He's a polished complement to the coarser Stamberg, who joins him to watch.

WU

Give the man an Oscar.

STAMBERG

People aren't complicated. They want daddy to tell them what to do. But daddy has to be firm sometimes.

WU

That true? Other people want John Doe?

STAMBERG

Used correctly...he's a gold mine.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. DAY.

Technicians methodically chip a bit of crust from each grid panel, placing the chips in bags, which they number and date. SHEER TEDIUM.

TECHNICIAN

Sixty five...sixty six...sixty--

RON

(playfully)

Sure you got fifty nine? I don't remember fifty nine!

TECHNICIAN

Quiet, please.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. DAY.

Maureen tests Ron's superhuman vision, holding a newspaper for him to read far across the room. He still wears the grid markings. Maureen's mien is politely formal, underlaid with anxiety.

RON'S POV--

Newspaper type SLIDES ACROSS HIS VIEW, so magnified the paper fibers are visible. Ron refocuses on Maureen's EYE, then her LIPS.

MAUREEN

And this one? Can you read it?

RON--

Blinks, then shakes off his reverie.

RON

Sorry. Yes--and we're not even near the limit. Have to go outside to reach it.

MAUREEN

Another day, I guess.

She folds the newspaper and walks back to him, writing on her clipboard, one of the sort made from a DISCARDED CIRCUIT BOARD.

RON

When do I get to go out?

CUT TO:

INT. NSA VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Wu and Stamberg watch the scene on monitors.

MAUREEN (ON VIDEO)

I...don't know. We haven't even discussed it.

Stamberg shakes his head; these two together mean trouble.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

RON

(irritated)

Too low a priority, eh? With all I went through to get here...

Ron starts pacing, too edgy to sit still.

RON

Do you people have a clue about this body? Will you ever be able to do surgery?

MAUREEN

You mean, with you alive!?

Ron looks at her, understanding that the answer is no, that this is his body, forever. He looks at his hands, forearms, ANGER GROWING.

RON

It was stupid to even hope.

He rubs his forearm with his finger. It abrades away the markings, along with the outer layer of crust. Grit rains down. Maureen DROPS HER CLIPBOARD, reaches to grab his hand.

MAUREEN

Don't! Those are important!

They FUMBLE a moment, unthinkingly. Suddenly, Maureen gives a HISS OF PAIN, grasping her wrenched wrist. Ron is MORTIFIED.

RON

I'm sorry...I didn't mean to.

MAUREEN

I know. It's all right.

But she's holding it in agony. A COUPLE OF SOLDIERS appear, holding their rifles but not pointing. Stamberg appears.

STAMBERG

(to soldiers)

Take it easy. I saw it happen.
Just a little accident. You okay,
doctor?

MAUREEN

I'd better have it looked at.

She walks off, with a backward glance at Ron of fear and hurt.
Ron looks wretched, and Stamberg eyes him, oddly PLEASED.

RON

Who are these guys?

STAMBERG

Security.

RON

They going to shoot me? Like that
would do something? I could just
walk out of here!

The soldiers look a little sheepish. He's right.

STAMBERG

Of course not. They're here to
protect you. A lot of people'd like
to get their hands on you.

RON

But I'm your little treasure, eh?

Stamberg smiles and shakes his head, as if holding back a
delicious secret. Then the three leave Ron. He looks sadder than
ever.

CUT TO:

INT-NSA CORRIDOR-A SHORT WHILE LATER.

Maureen walks toward the door to the main room, a stretch bandage
on her wrist. The soldiers stand rigid. Before she reaches it, it
OPENS. Stamberg steps out.

STAMBERG

Sorry. Can't let you in.

MAUREEN

My work's in there!

STAMBERG

The hands-on work will be done by others. For your own safety.

MAUREEN

Dr. Mattingly might see things differently!

STAMBERG

Ask him.

MAUREEN :

I will.

She turns and storms away, to Stamberg's amusement.

CUT TO:

MATTINGLY'S OUTER OFFICE--A SHORT TIME LATER.

Through the glass panel, we see Maureen blowing up at Mattingly. He tries to soothe her, then finally shrugs and cuts her off. She leaves the office, closing the door with a SLAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. NSA COURTYARD--SUNSET.

An ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC) pulls up. Troops get out. Stamberg is on the steps, arms crossed. The TROOP COMMANDER approaches him.

COMMANDER

Mr. Stamberg?

STAMBERG

Right. They briefed you on the deployment plan?

COMMANDER

Affirmative. But what is it we're deploying for?

STAMBERG

We have a special little problem here. I'll tell you about it...

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Stamberg approaches Ron, who's PACING like a caged animal, crunching his shedded chips underfoot.

STAMBERG

I thought you'd like to get some air.

RON

Of course I would.

STAMBERG

Follow me.

They exit.

CUT TO:

NSA ROOFTOP. DUSK.

Ron and Stamberg emerge from a stairway housing to a vast flat roof with islands of air conditioning machinery. Beyond are the Virginia suburbs, some city towers, the river. Ron eagerly scans the vista.

STAMBERG

Lots to see.

RON

Uh huh. I see bats over the river, dive-bombing bugs. A dog's chasing something a couple of miles away that way.

STAMBERG

You see that in this light?

RON

More. These eyes are the only silver lining.

STAMBERG

They sure did a number on you. A lot of guys would've lost it.

RON

You don't realize how much your body means to you. How it is you. I'm not Ron Lithgow anymore. I'm...I don't know.

STAMBERG

You could be a lot of things. Do a lot. Important things.

RON

Like what?

STAMBERG

We better go back down. I'm bucking orders bringing you up here. Come on.

They start for the stairs.

RON

Well, thanks. I enjoyed it.

STAMBERG

Sure. By the way, I had your stuff brought by.

Ron eyes him with new appreciation; perhaps he misjudged the man.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. NIGHT.

Most lights are off. It's quiet. Ron, still grid-covered, sits in his cinderblock chair. Wu sets down the last of a dozen BOXES. Ron grimaces at the "INSPECTED" tape on them.

Wu departs. Ron glances at the video camera perched atop a high rollable stand. In annoyance, HE TURNS IT AWAY FROM HIM.

Ron opens a box. He lifts an electric RAZOR; it's useless now. He tosses it into a METAL WASTE CAN where it makes a CLANG. A BRUSH, BAND-AIDS, and a HAIR DRYER make similar clangs.

A HAND MIRROR gets a longer inspection; Ron's never had such a clear view of his current face. He stares for a long hard moment, then BREAKS the mirror against the RIDGE of his forehead. Expression opaque, he tosses the SHARDS into the waste can.

THE CAN--

sounds like bells tolling for the dead as the shards fly in.

CUT TO:

INT. MAUREEN'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

Maureen types at her computer amid a sea of printouts, notes, photos of "John Doe." She looks around, finds a CLIPBOARD--a wooden one, with blank graph paper. Wrong one. She exits.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATORS. CONTINUOUS.

Maureen gets in one elevator and as HER DOORS CLOSE, the other doors OPEN. WU STEPS OUT and heads up the hall, none the wiser.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Maureen approaches the two (new) guards at the main room door.

GUARD #1

Sorry Ma'am. No entry after hours.

MAUREEN

I'm assistant director of research.
I need to retrieve my clipboard. I
left it there this afternoon.

The guards eye each other, irresolute.

MAUREEN

Shall we call my friend Mr.
Stamberg?

GUARD #1

All right, just for a minute.

She passes inside. They eye the WALL PHONE, but that's all.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Maureen gets the clipboard. Ron can't see her from the privacy area. The CLANGING SOUNDS draw her to him.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA SURVEILLANCE ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Maureen's SHADOW--she's keeping out of camera range--is VISIBLE ON THE SCREEN. Wu approaches, but doesn't see it. He spots his DINNER, cooling in a styrofoam clamshell. He takes it and sits in the armchair to eat it, STILL OBLIVIOUS.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Ron's back is to Maureen. She's afraid to disturb him. He has out A YELLOW LEGAL PAD AND A PEN. An open box of MOUNTAINEERING BOOKS is nearby. Some of them lay about, open to pictures of icy vistas. For the first time since opening the box, he's SMILING.

RON
(to himself)

I can write. They didn't take that.

But when he tries, he can BARELY HOLD THE PEN. Then he BREAKS it. He's just too clumsy--in despair, he CRUMBLES the pad as if it was tissue. He puts his head in his hands, then starts to TEAR HYSTERICALLY at his FACE. Bits of rock and grit hit the floor.

Embarrassed, Maureen withdraws, but BUMPS THE CAMERA STAND.

CUT TO:

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The view on the screen FLASH PANS, but Wu is oblivious, eating.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Ron looks at Maureen, embarrassed over what she may have seen. Maureen thinks a moment, then DISCONNECTS THE CAMERA.

MAUREEN

Sorry. Will you take the blame for this? I'm not allowed here.

RON

Thought you'd written me off. That you were scared of me.

MAUREEN

Not at all! This hardly hurts! A very mild sprain...In fact...

She begins to unwind the stretch bandage around her wrist.

MAUREEN

I've been demoted. I can't work with you. I guess Stamberg didn't want me to figure it out. Pretty obvious! Who were you? I mean--

RON

No, no, "were" is right. Ron Lithgow. I worked for Senator Douglas. Ther something happened.

MAUREEN

I wondered about him.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. CONTINUOUS.

The guards fidget, and peer fruitlessly through the window.

GUARD #1
What's taking her?

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Maureen examines Ron's FOREHEAD with awe. She's WINDING THE BANDAGE AROUND A PEN. He seems to have told his story to her.

MAUREEN
No scar at all. Amazing. But so is everything!

RON
Shoulder's back, too. The body regenerates somehow.

Maureen secures the fat, bandaged pen with package tape. She hands it to him. He tries writing with it. IT WORKS! It's large enough for his hand to grasp. He gives her a sad-eyed GRIN.

RON
You don't know how grateful I am. Writing is the only time I'm truly happy.

MAUREEN
You have a lot to write about.

RON
If they let me. I'd actually been thinking about other things, having a fantasy. When I was young, I wanted to climb mountains, see the Amazon, that sort of thing. Then write the kind of books I loved to read.

He looks at the dozens of BOOKS spread around, a mountain range of early dreams, surrounding him.

RON
Thing was, I didn't have the body, or drive, or whatever it is that makes people live on that level. And now...I do. The body, anyway. I could do all those things, and live by writing about it. I was getting pretty worked up. Then I tried to use that pen. They took so much from me.

MAUREEN

I can only start to see how hard
it's been.

RON

That's more than I've gotten from
the others.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA SURVEILLANCE ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Wu frantically adjusts controls, trying to get anything but the
WHITE STATIC on his screen. He RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. CONTINUOUS.

The guards are well into an argument.

GUARD #1

We're not supposed to go in. We're
supposed to call him.

GUARD #2

We weren't supposed to let anybody
in, either! Go get her!

GUARD #1

Another minute, I will.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR. CONTINUOUS.

Wu seethes with anxiety. The elevator's taking forever.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA MAIN ROOM. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

Maureen flips through SNAPSHOTS as they talk, noting Ron in his
human form, and Lisa as well.

MAUREEN

I should go. If Stamberg catches me
here, I'll be fired for sure.

RON

Why? The secret's moot now. In
fact, I wouldn't allow that.

Maureen smiles.

MAUREEN

You can insist on a lot of things.

RON

Yeah! You're my top evaluator, as of now. And we start field testing. I'm sick of this room.

MAUREEN

I don't know if I want to be the one who prompted you to walk out of here tonight...

RON

Tomorrow we lay down the law. I need some sunshine!

He SLAPS HIS THIGH with enthusiasm. A ROCK CHIP stings Maureen's cheek. She puts her hand to it; Ron looks dismayed--he's hurt her again! But she smiles and holds up her hand.

MAUREEN

Just surprised me. I'm okay.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Wu argues with the two guards, who are trying to cover their error.

GUARD #1

Mr. Stamberg said no exceptions!

WU

Then we'll call him!

Wu furiously punches the wall phone's keypad. As he talks, the doors swing open; Maureen walks out and FREEZES.

WU

(to Stamberg)

It's me. The John Doe camera is down and these guards won't let me in. Tell them--

He freezes in midsentence, staring at Maureen. She recovers first.

MAUREEN

Is that Mr. Stamberg? I'd like to talk to him.

Wu hands her the phone.

MAUREEN

Guess what? I'm back in the loop.
I went over your head. No, our
friend Mr. Lithgow. All right.

She hands it to Wu. Hearing his orders, he addresses the guards.

WU

Arrest her.

The guards seize her.

MAUREEN

Just a minute!

CUT TO:

INT-NSA MAIN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Ron catches a glimpse of the struggle through the door's window.

CUT TO:

INT-CORRIDOR. CONTINUOUS.

Ron BURSTS OUT of the doors. They SLAM against the walls so hard
the window glass SHATTERS. Everybody freezes.

RON

What's going on!?

GUARD #1

Mr. Doe, we have orders to request
that you please remain inside.

RON

What if I say to hell with that!?

Their answer is a demonstration: they RUN, disappearing around a
corner. Wu follows. Maureen and Ron look each other, nonplussed.
AN ALARM STARTS RINGING.

MAUREEN

I think we've started something.

They approach where the guards turned. They peer around the
corner. Through the glass doors at the far end they see SOLDIERS
ASSEMBLING.

RON

I am a prisoner. I doubt they can
stop me, but what about you?

MAUREEN

I have an idea. About your future,
too.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT-NSA LOBBY NIGHT.

Ron comes up to the glass doors. Outside is furious activity.

CUT TO:

INT-NSA MAIN ROOM. NIGHT.

Maureen starts up the VAN and drives out the opened roll-up door.

CUT TO:

EXT. NSA COURTYARD. NIGHT.

Ron emerges into AN ENCLOSED AREA with only one vehicle access to escape through. SOLDIERS ASSEMBLE, then do something quite incredible: LINK ARMS and fix their hands together with TWISTS OF NYLON ROPE. Ron looks baffled. Their COMMANDER approaches.

COMMANDER

Get a good look, Mr. Doe. You
aren't getting out of here unless
you tear these boys' arms out of
their sockets. From what I hear,
you're not the violent type.

Ron hesitates. It's true.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPLOYEE EXIT. SAME TIME.

Maureen drives through the now UNGUARDED EMPLOYEE EXIT.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD. SAME TIME.

Ron looks thoughtful, gazing at the human barricade. A
SURVEILLANCE CAMERA over the door takes in the scene.

COMMANDER

Let's talk. Bet there's a
compromise you can live with.

Ron turns, reenters. He props the door open. Their relief is palpable. But Ron comes out RUNNING FULL FORCE and LEAPS OVER the double line of men. He THUDS to earth, then continues on.

The APC drives into the vehicle access, blocking it--unless Ron climbs over the top. He continues toward it. The commander calls forward a soldier with a TEAR GAS LAUNCHER.

COMMANDER

Mr. Doe! This is tear gas.
Unpleasant, but it won't hurt you!
You'll be blinded for a bit!

Suddenly, Stamberg appears wielding a GRENADE LAUNCHER.

STAMBERG

Save it.

Stamberg fires. It HITS next to Ron, the EXPLOSION knocking him down. His side is spiderwebbed with cracks, and A CHUNK is gone from his leg, revealing a fleshy interior structure. But he crawls over the APC. Stamberg FIRES AGAIN, hitting the vehicle, starting a small fire and disabling the engine. Ron is beyond it and LIMPING into the night.

The vehicle DRIVER pops out of a hatch with a fire extinguisher.

DRIVER

What turd-brain did that?

All eyes go to Stamberg.

STAMBERG

Everybody out the back! If he
reaches the river he's gone!

The commander starts after Ron, gesturing for his men to follow.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERFRONT PARK. NIGHT.

Standing by the van, Maureen finishes a call on a CAR PHONE, nodding and signing off. She anxiously scans the river for Ron. Her face fills with joy as Ron EMERGES from the WATER (his GRID MARKINGS are GONE)--then FALLS as his WOUND becomes visible. She runs to him.

MAUREEN

How much pain is there?

RON

Scale of ten? Six, maybe. I'll
live. Let's go.

MAUREEN

There's not much choice. We have
til 11:00. We'll just make it.

RON

Make it to what?

MAUREEN

I'll tell you on the way.

CUT TO:

INT. "NIGHTBEAT" STUDIO-NIGHT

Preparations of the three guests of this nightly news-interview show are in full swing: mic'ing, makeup, pre-interview briefing. The HOST strides through, trailed by TAWNY HILL, the reporter who briefly infiltrated the NSA.

HOST

Can't change subjects this late.
I'm surprised, Tawny.

TAWNY

She said she's bringing the thing
from the NSA! Can't we be ready
just in case?

HOST

Sorry. I hear "story of the
decade"--I smell a crank.

They move out of view, but Tawny isn't giving up.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN. NIGHT.

Ron wraps DUCT TAPE around his leg as he speaks to Maureen.

RON

Just the decade? Not century?

MAUREEN

There were a couple of world wars.
Look at this--an accident. We'll
have to go on foot. Can you walk?

RON

It's regenerating already.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON BELTWAY. NIGHT.

The institute van is in a SNARL OF TRAFFIC. Ron and Maureen leave it, running along the line of blocked cars, causing double takes, exclamations, car-phone calls.

They come to the ACCIDENT SCENE; one of the two cars is FOLDED NEARLY IN TWO. The driver's unhurt, but can't get out. Ron acts as a one-man "jaws of life" and UNBENDS THE FRAME enough for the door to open, and moves it off the road. The grateful man limps out, dumbfounded. Ron and Maureen run on, giving cheery little waves.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CAR. NIGHT.

Two cops. The view beyond them is an ordinary street--for now.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
All units in the area of south
Connecticut avenue look out for
twelve foot monster. Repeat, twelve
foot monster, seen heading north.

The two cops look at each other. This is a new one.

CUT TO:

INT. NSA VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ROOM. SAME TIME.

Stamberg and Wu are both on phones.

STAMBERG
Keep the watch on his ex-wife's
house. And find where Douglas is,
too.

WU
He's been sighted, sir.

He pulls over a map and taps the street. Stamberg looks at it.

STAMBERG
What's up there? What's he doing?

WU
Isn't a network near there?

STAMBERG
Yes there IS.

Furious, Stamberg bolts for the exit. Wu follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THEATRE. NIGHT.

"UNIVERSAL MONSTER FEST" on the marquee; Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolfman in the poster cases. A FATHER walks out with his distressed little boy.

FATHER

Aw, sport. Monsters are just make-believe. Dry those tears.

RON AND MAUREEN come around the corner. The FATHER spots them, and though bug-eyed himself, MANEUVERS HIS BODY around his boy until they're out of sight, down the street. The boy never sees them. Father and son LOOK AT EACH OTHER, ROLES REVERSED. DAD is freaked.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR NETWORK. NIGHT.

PEOPLE RUN SCREAMING as Ron and Maureen lope up the street. Ron CRACKS THE PAVEMENT with each pounding step, in occasional weak spots leaving mammoth FOOTPRINTS. The NOISE echoes off buildings.

RON

People are so hung up on looks!

A MOTHER --

lets go of her SMALL CHILD'S hand and runs in panic. A CAR is HEADED RIGHT FOR THE CHILD. With huge strides, Ron reaches the child. He lifts her and the CAR HITS RON with a CRUNCH. He hails the mother:

RON

Hey lady! Wait a minute!

With another LEAP Ron is in front of the mother.

RON

You forgot your baby!

The mother RECEIVES it with awe and gratitude.

INT. POLICE CAR. NIGHT.

The same cops. Concrete's BOOMING FOOTSTEPS are faintly audible.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)

Twenty foot monster reported northbound Connecticut Avenue...

COP #1
We got April Fool's here or what?

COP #2
What's that sound?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET PUDDLE. NIGHT.

Two KIDS, one with a JURASSIC PARK T-Shirt watch the puddle SHAKE with Ron's thundering T-Rex magnitude FOOTSTEPS.

T-SHIRT
Whoa, cool!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR NETWORK. NIGHT.

A CAR, its driver distracted by Ron, JUMPS THE CURB and takes out A FRUIT STAND. ORANGES avalanche across the street, all around Ron. He FLATTENS ONE with a step. Ron scoops up a few in his hands, then pitches them underhand to some of the terrified citizens.

RON
Oranges! Good for you! Vitamin C!

People catch them, and it seems to bring them out of their fear. Anybody tossing oranges to them probably isn't about to kill them.

ORANGE CATCHER
Thanks, man!

Ron catches sight of POLICE LIGHTS far up the street. He points.

RON
Maureen, we've got company.

MAUREEN
Let's go around them!

She indicates an ALLEY and they dash into it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY. NIGHT.

Sheltered by a box, an old woman sits before a fire of scrap wood. Ron and Maureen LEAP OVER the fire. Ron's TOE CATCHES on some FUEL, sending SPARKS FLYING EVERYWHERE. The sparks, the beautiful woman, the rock man--it's a dreamlike vision. She peers after them, awed.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARALLEL STREET. NIGHT.

A beautiful COUPLE emerge from a restaurant and walk to the curb.

MAN
I'll get you a cab.

WOMAN
Maybe we could share one.

He gathers her implication. They slowly drift toward a steamy kiss.

Then she SCREAMS as Ron emerges from the alley behind the man. He thinks he's offended her.

MAN
What!? What!?!?

She CLINGS to him as Ron and Maureen DODGE AROUND THEM. They watch them go, HUGGING each other with a new sort of intimacy.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CAR. NIGHT.

The two cops are swiveling around, looking everywhere.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
...that's a hundred foot monster on
Massachusetts avenue...

COP #1
So it's Godzilla now, not
Frankenstein.

They round a corner to be confronted with RON RUNNING RIGHT AT THEM. They SLAM on the brakes, going into a SKID.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROSS STREET. CONTINUOUS.

Ron LEAPS and barely avoids being hit by the SKIDDING CAR, clearing the hood by inches.

He makes a virtual CRATER when he lands. He runs down the side street, Maureen shadowing him on the sidewalk.

THE COP--

lays down rubber turning the car around. His siren shrieks.

RON--

looks over his shoulder and puts on more speed.

CUT TO:

INT. STAMBERG'S CAR. NIGHT.

Stamberg, Wu and THREE BEEFY AGENTS speed to the network.

CUT TO:

EXT. NETWORK BUILDING. NIGHT.

The cops in pursuit, Ron runs up the street and then up the steps of the network building, people scattering. Maureen's half a block behind. The cops jump the curb and stop. They pull their revolvers, using their doors as shields. They train a spotlight on Ron and address him over a PA system.

COP #1 (AMPLIFIED)

Halt! Put your hands up!

Ron complies. Maureen catches up, outside of the spotlight, and waits at the entrance.

RON

I can explain.

They wait. Where to begin?

RON

It's a TV show. See, this is the network? I'm really, really late. I have to go in now, but thank you for being so alert.

Ron and Maureen go in. The cops don't know what to do, but they don't have cause to shoot. They look at each other, pained.

COP #2

We'd better call in.

CUT TO:

INT. "NIGHTBEAT" STUDIO. NIGHT.

The "minutes until airtime" CLOCK shows FIVE TO GO. Host and guests are in place, but even now, the Host is enjoined by Tawny.

TAWNY

If they get here, could we talk during the break?

HOST
Tawny...drop it!

Suddenly, there's a ruckus in the back of the studio. RON AND MAUREEN ARE STANDING THERE. For an instant, everybody falls silent.

Then everyone JUMPS INTO ACTION, shooing the talking heads out of their seats, prepping Ron and Maureen. A MAKEUP WOMAN approaches Ron with her gear, then thinks anew. Tawny slips away in the chaos.

The doors BURST OPEN, and STAMBERG AND HIS MEN enter, guns drawn.

RON
Gonna shoot everyone?

Stamberg sees that he's being videotaped and lowers his gun.

STAMBERG
(to his men)
Put the guns away.
(to Ron and Maureen)
I'd like to talk privately.

The three step into the "Green Room."

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTBEAT GREEN ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Couches, phones, TV, a restroom. Stamberg attempts a sort of charming frankness.

STAMBERG
You need to be free of the place. I see that. But if the aliens and the rest of it comes out, I've failed. I can't let that happen.

RON
How can't it? I'm here, aren't I? You plan on killing us?

STAMBERG
No, no. But my men can shut down this studio.

RON
You'd only delay things.

STAMBERG

I can take her with me. And other things.

RON

Just try.

STAMBERG

Look, I don't want to hurt you. I want a deal. We have a contingency plan.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTBEAT STUDIO. NIGHT.

A PRODUCER pounds on the green room door.

PRODUCER

Please hurry! We have a minute and half before airtime!

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM. NIGHT.

Ron's ticking off points on his fingers.

RON

...Maureen stays with me, she gets full support, I go where I want.

STAMBERG

But I'm with you too. 'Til I'm satisfied you'll live up to this. And you take P.R. cues from me.

There is POUNDING on the door.

PRODUCER (O.S.)

Thirty seconds!!!

RON

All right.

They open the door and are hustled to the set--though Ron fails to duck. TAKING OUT THE LINTEL OF THE GREEN ROOM DOOR.

Stamberg joins his men and watches the show.

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM. NIGHT

Tawny SLIPS OUT OF THE RESTROOM where she's been EAVESDROPPING. Then she exits the Green Room, straining to be nonchalant.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTBEAT STUDIO. NIGHT.

Stamberg notices Tawny emerging from the room. He GLARES at her, realizing she overheard them.

Ron sits on a sturdy steel chair. The normally imperturbable host is noticeably nervous. He clears his throat:

HOST

I've interviewed them all...
Presidents and Popes...but I
guarantee I've never done one like
this.

(to Ron)

First of all, sir: do you have a
name? People here are just calling
you "the concrete guy."

RON

I guess that's okay for now.

HOST

All right then, we'll be back with
our guest...(punching it)
Concrete...after this.

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT approaches Stamberg.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

There's a call for Concrete's agent.
It's Kenner Toys. You can take it
in the Green Room.

Stamberg stares a second--then goes back to take the call.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

A few kids in their teens and twenties are watching the show, eating Domino's, lounging around.

CONCRETE (ON TV)

I'm a cyborg. Mechanical arms and
legs. Amazing what's in that
Pentagon budget.

HOST (ON TV)
It's hard to believe that's
possible.

CONCRETE (ON TV)
I'm here. You need more proof?

One of the kids stands up.

WILSON
We could get down there before this
ends. Let's check this dude out!

Assent is given in the coolish way of youth. They start to stir.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTBEAT STUDIO. NIGHT.

Tawny is watching it all skeptically. Stamberg is visible, animatedly talking on the phone--as if he's cutting a deal already!

HOST
Why the rocky coating?

CONCRETE
Radar-absorbing. I'm a Stealth
cyborg.

CUT TO:

INT. SENATOR DOUGLAS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

Douglas, unbuttoned and relaxed, watches with a grin. The boy's doing just fine.

HOST (ON TV)
Why are you going public now? Some
of your associates were unhappy with
the idea.

CONCRETE (ON TV)
Well, the project was at a dead end.
I wanted to do something else.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTBEAT STUDIO. NIGHT.

Concrete's STEEL CHAIR is STRAINING under his weight.

HOST

And with this new body, immensely strong, impossible to fatigue...what will you do?

Concrete looks at him. He's stumped; what does the future hold? He DELAYS an uncomfortable time, searching for words. People in the studio begin to shift; Stamberg scowls; Maureen looks on anxiously.

Then CONCRETE'S CHAIR GIVES WAY and he CRASHES TO THE FLOOR.

CUT TO:

EXT. NETWORK BUILDING. NIGHT.

Concrete emerges to A HUGE CROWD of curiosity seekers, the press, police. FLASHING LIGHTS of police cruisers make the scene eerie. A NEWS HELICOPTER hovers overhead, casting a restless spotlight. The crowd CHEERS his appearance. He looks at Maureen and Stamberg.

STAMBERG

You're a celebrity, ace. Haveta ride this one out.

Somebody hands him a MEGAPHONE. He raises it to his mouth.

CONCRETE (AMPLIFIED)

Thanks. You're beautiful. And I'm not. But that's okay. I'm...Concrete.

It doesn't make much sense, but the crowd CHEERS him anyway. He's arrived.

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF TV CLIPS

Rapid as drumbeats come IMAGES OF CONCRETE in the videoscape: The Nightbeat interview; a still behind a TV anchor; impersonated in a REENACTMENT of the rescue of the woman's TODDLER on the STREET; holding the megaphone in front of the crowd; poked with mics in a throng of reporters--including TAWNY HILL; among celebrities at a charity event; presenting at the MTV awards; doing a sitcom cameo; looking out a HOTEL WINDOW; with LARRY KING. Message: he's everywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVID LETTERMAN SET. NIGHT.

Concrete walks onstage while Paul and the band play "I am a rock." He takes his SEAT--a construction of 4 x 4s and steel plate--next to Letterman's desk. Concrete's leg has HEALED. The applause ends.

LETTERMAN

So. You are a big guy. You are!

Simple words, but that Letterman magic makes it somehow just right; the crowd eats it up.

CONCRETE :

I've put on a few pounds. Few hundred.

LETTERMAN

There's something I've never seen you asked I've wondered about...

CONCRETE

Hit me with it.

LETTERMAN

Just what is it you do when your bladder is full?

The crowd reacts in phases, first enjoying the sheer rudeness, then appreciating what a good question it really is.

Concrete looks around like he's trapped. Then he STANDS UP. Letterman facetiously wards off an attack, getting more laughs--which are just a bit nervous. It isn't clear at all what Concrete's going to do.

He lifts the injured, now-healed leg--AND OPENS A TRAP DOOR in it. Amid the fleshy matter, TUBES AND A VALVE are revealed within.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE ROCK WAREHOUSE. DAY.

A REALTOR takes down his agency sign and the "FOR RENT" sign. We're on Colorado boulevard, the one commercial street in the otherwise leafy, residential L.A. suburb of Eagle Rock.

STAMBERG (V.O.)

Its beauty is how it sells the cyborg thing. Why else would you have a door in it?

CUT TO:

INT. EAGLE ROCK WAREHOUSE. DAY.

The mostly raw space is being, at the far end, furnished with cinderblock FURNITURE for Concrete. There's some temporary, rented furniture--a TABLE, CHAIRS, TV. Concrete and Stamberg stand talking. Maureen has the trap door open and is withdrawing fluid with a SYRINGE, then transferring it to TEST TUBES.

MAUREEN

We may be lying less than you think.
I think this body is partly artificial. It's stronger than muscle physiology allows.

Stamberg rolls his eyes at the technical talk, but doesn't ask.

CONCRETE

Makes sense. They mixed biology and technology like crazy on the ship.

Stamberg checks the workers at the far end. They didn't hear.

CONCRETE

Don't worry, I won't blab your precious secret.

STAMBERG

Your country's secret. See that you don't. You gave your word.

(to Maureen)

So what does he do? He eats; where's it all go?

Maureen sweeps up some of the flakes and chips from around Concrete, his constant companions. She hands them to Stamberg.

MAUREEN

That's where he gets his crust. He egests all over his body. The fluid evaporates from his mouth, mostly, with his high body temperature. An unexpectedly elegant system.

Stamberg looks at Concrete, drops the material.

STAMBERG

So you're sort of a walking turd.
Thank God you're dry!

Miffed. Concrete snaps the trap door shut and heads for the door.

CONCRETE

I'm going to look at my new neighborhood.

Concrete inadvertantly KNOCKS A CHUNK out of the lintel on his way out. He SLAMS the door. Maureen seems uncomfortable to be left alone with Stamberg. She begins labeling her samples and loading them into a carrying case.

MAUREEN

Must you? He's burdened enough.

STAMBERG

He's weak. Strongest man in the world and he's all soft inside. Even in my line we've got 'em...wind up drinking, mostly. But sometimes you can reach 'em, wake 'em up.

MAUREEN

I don't see why you need to reach him.

Stamberg says nothing, but his manner is dismissive. He has some idea he doesn't care to express just now. He walks over to her, sits on a folding chair, WATCHING HER. She becomes nervous.

MAUREEN

Yes?

STAMBERG

That valve you added. Can you inject things?

MAUREEN

We have. He needed painkillers, thanks to you. There're two circulation systems. This one serves his human brain.

STAMBERG

So if he got out of control, was hurting people...we could sedate him?

MAUREEN

That's hardly likely.

STAMBERG

I have to plan.

She gives him a look, then closes the clasp on the case and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLORADO BOULEVARD. DAY.

Concrete has attracted a column of KIDS following him. He does his best to ignore their quips and laughter. He's in no mood...

SKATEBOARD KID

Hey, quit takin' us for granite!

EYEGLASSES

Do you eat at The Hard Rock Cafe?

PONYTAIL :

On hot days can you fry an egg on your head?

BATIK SHIRT

You wanna come to my house? It's just a stone's throw from here!

Concrete RUNS INTO THE STREET; car brakes SQUEAL; he goes into a CONVENIENCE STORE.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY.

Concrete delicately closes the door, and is reassured that the kids don't seem to be following him. The affable OWNER is delighted by the celebrity visit.

OWNER

Concrete man! Welcome! Our new neighbor!

CONCRETE

News travels fast.

OWNER

Can I get you a snack? A nice hot dog? On the house!

CONCRETE

No, thanks. I can't taste food. I'd like a paper, though. May I open an account? Money is difficult for me.

OWNER

No problem! I'll bill you monthly!

Concrete gets a LA Times--and notices the TABLOIDS. The Weekly World News headline catches his eye: CONCRETE SECRET ENVOY FROM UNITED PLANETS--WILL WE QUALIFY? A doctored photo of Concrete by a classic FLYING SAUCER accompanies it.

CONCRETE

Close.

Another magazine draws him: Outside. A MOUNTAIN is on the cover. He tries to pick it up, but it defies his huge fingers. Frustrated, he TEARS SEVERAL COPIES. The owner picks up one for him.

OWNER

Let me get that.

CONCRETE :

Sorry. Put those on my tab.

The owner totes up the charges on the purchases and smiles.

OWNER

Okay! Nice to meet you! Come in any time!

CONCRETE

Thanks.

Concrete turns to go, holding his purchases, inadvertantly KNOCKING OVER a huge DISPLAY RACK. He looks at the huge mess, dejected.

CONCRETE

I'm so sorry. Put that on--

OWNER

No problem!

Concrete goes out into the street. This world no longer fits him.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAUMAN'S CHINESE THEATRE. NIGHT.

A PREMIERE is underway.

IN FAST MOTION, first one limo, then another, discharges STARS who walk over the famous cast-in-cement FOOTPRINTS AND SIGNATURES of performers, as cameras flash.

The THIRD VEHICLE is a red MONSTER TRUCK with OUTSIZED WHEELS. Concrete hops out of the truckbed, which SPRINGS UP on its shocks, lifts out his date (a real celebrity who'd enjoy such a lark [Madonna?]) and tromps in.

THE CEMENT WALKWAY--

has been overlaid with Concrete's FOOTPRINTS, CRUNCHED RIGHT INTO THE EXISTING PRINTS AND SIGNATURES.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. STREET. DAY.

News VIDEO footage. Concrete hemmed in by microphones, walking. SHOUTED but INCOMPREHENSIBLE questions pepper him.

CONCRETE

You know what I've always wondered?
What this sounds like.

He puts a MIC in his mouth and EATS IT. The crunching is DEAFENING.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY. DAY.

Concrete again rides in the bed of the MONSTER TRUCK. Stamberg drives, Maureen sitting by him, distant behind sunglasses. Stamberg's men follow in a black sedan.

Concrete opens the sliding glass in back of the door.

CONCRETE

I don't even see why I need to do all this.

STAMBERG

You're famous! Enjoy it while you can. Better if people see you as this year's big ape than a guy with something to hide.

CONCRETE

I'm not a big ape.

STAMBERG

Just for a while, 'til the next big ape comes along. Lord, it's been years since I've been on an op that made money.

CUT TO:

EXT. A ROCKY DESERT. DAY.

A Joshua Tree-like setting. A MUSIC VIDEO CREW is set up here.

A CLAPBOARD is in front of Concrete's face.

CREWMEMBER

"Rock of Gibraltar" First verse.
Take One.

The driving rhythm of the pop-rock song--"Rock of Gibraltar"--kicks in over MONITOR SPEAKERS.

A LONGER SHOT--

reveals THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG POP DIVA who is singing this song. (Lyrically, the song is the Diva's fantasy about a man who is as strong and faithful as the Rock of Gibraltar).

The Diva SINGS THIS SONG TO CONCRETE, who stands, foot tapping, on a FLAT-TOPPED PYRAMID. As she sings the first verse, the Diva moves provocatively towards Concrete.

CONCRETE--

LIP-SYNCHS the backup vocal. The melodious voice (female?) is comically incongruous.

CONCRETE AND THE DIVA--

DANCE on the faux pyramid platform which WOBBLES VIOLENTLY under Concrete's pounding steps. Finally, it COLLAPSES--definitely NOT part of the plan.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Art department! What can we do here?

The art department flies in and starts taking apart the pyramid set. Stamberg and his men have trouble keeping straight faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY DESERT. LATER THAT DAY.

Concrete and the Diva again DANCE on a MUCH REINFORCED PYRAMID. But IT TOO COLLAPSES--in a DIFFERENT way.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY DESERT. AFTERNOON.

Long shadows. CONCRETE SITS IMMOBILE on a BOULDER as the Diva sings to him and does all the dancing herself. The SONG CONTINUES OVER THE FOLLOWING MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETEMANIA--A MONTAGE.

Rows of Concrete plush dolls (as well as "Baby Concrete" and "Asphalta"), squirt guns, pet rocks, rock candy, school folders and other ephemera flash by. A kid pulls a copy of CONCRETE COMICS out of its protective bag. Crossed-out STICKERS show a rapid INCREASE in PRICE. He accidentally TEARS THE COVER, and guiltily slides it back in the bag, looking around. A TALKING CONCRETE DOLL has its STRING pulled:

CONCRETE DOLL

You're beautiful. And I'm not. But that's all right. I'm...Concrete.

"Rock of Gibraltar" ENDS.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. NIGHT.

Tables overflow with letters and Concrete paraphernalia. The door has been MODIFIED, the lintel TWO FEET HIGHER than it was. Concrete sits in his CINDERBLOCK CHAIR. Maureen's typing up one of her reports to send to the NSA, unwittingly beautiful in jeans and a leotard, bathed in computer-light. Concrete watches her with obvious LONGING. She senses his attention.

MAUREEN

What's on your mind?

Startled, he fumbles for some covering answer.

CONCRETE

Oh, everything. I feel adrift. I've done all this stuff of Stamberg's just because it's easier.

MAUREEN

He knows how to push.

CONCRETE

It's as if he likes to make me feel trivial. Wonder why.

Maureen ejects the disk and slips it in a mailer; then she logs off.

MAUREEN

I said it before: you can insist on a lot.

CONCRETE

I'll start saying no when I'm fed up enough.

Maureen looks at him with an expression of DISAPPOINTMENT which he doesn't quite perceive. Then she STRETCHES unselfconsciously-- though Concrete's conscious enough of her feminine silhouette.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE. DAY.

Stamberg and Wu are admitted by some tough-looking HENCHMEN, who frisk them. They find GUNS on both of them, as well as a VIDEOTAPE.

HENCHMAN

You'll get these back afterwards.

Stamberg takes back the tape.

STAMBERG

This is our show.

Assenting, the henchman directs them into the inner room where FLORES sits, backlit against drawn, translucent curtains. A man of both bulk and gravitas, he speaks with a slight latin accent.

FLORES

Joseph, you've aged well!

STAMBERG

And you've come up in the world.

FLORES

Things change. Which is why you're here, I presume. Last I heard you'd been disciplined, stuck away with research people. Now you're Concrete Man's friend.

STAMBERG

Just "Concrete." You want to see this?

Flores nods.

CUT TO:

VIDEO FOOTAGE--NSA MAIN ROOM. COURTYARD. DAY/NIGHT.

We see views of Concrete lifting the van, leaping, his escape through the troops, his survival of the grenade hit.

STAMBERG (OFFSCREEN)

An off-the-shelf army you can move in a single helicopter. Drop him, kick butt, get out. Nobody can stand up to that. You'll be invincible.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM. A SHORT TIME LATER.

The tape continues to play on the TV, then goes BLACK.

FLORES

Price?

STAMBERG

Peanuts. A couple million to cover costs getting him out of here. Plus the use of your island to complete his training.

FLORES

Why so cheap?

STAMBERG

That buys you a one-year contract. Then we renegotiate. Or I go freelance.

FLORES

What's to keep me from cutting you out? Pay him directly...

STAMBERG

He doesn't know about this yet.

FLORES

What?!

STAMBERG

Listen, you know me. I've turned more assets in my time than you have grandchildren.

FLORES

But this fellow...

STAMBERG

He's like everybody. Most people's lives are a joke. Just once, they want to feel important.

Flores leans back, nodding thoughtfully. He's interested.

CUT TO:

INT. BLANK BACKING. DAY.

A closeup of Concrete, head and shoulders, against white.

CONCRETE

I'm not a client of Hair Club for Men...but if I were, they could do wonders for me...

Concrete suddenly has A FULL HEAD OF HAIR, immaculately STYLED.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. NIGHT.

Concrete lies on his cinderblock bed. A HEARTBEAT is heard. It SPEEDS UP. Concrete CRACKS OPEN and RON LITHGOW EMERGES.

Ron, now clothed, comes into the other part of the warehouse. Maureen and Stamberg are there. Ron addresses Stamberg.

RON

It's over, thank God. Get out.

Maureen grins. Stamberg, now THREE FEET TALL, is furious.

STAMBERG

You get back in there! I'll have you dipped!

Maureen comes to Ron, takes his arm, TOUCHES HIS CHEEK.

MAUREEN

It's what I've dreamed of.

Stamberg, now the size of a SHREW, squeaks fiercely from the floor. Ron STEPS ON HIM like a cigarette butt.

Ron carries a rapturous Maureen, now swathed in smoky chiffon, and lays her down on the BED. It is now luxuriously soft, with smooth, satin sheets. They close in for a kiss with exquisite slowness. The heartbeat returns, getting LOUDER AND FASTER...

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. NIGHT.

Concrete (rock coated, alas) awakens on his belly on his cinderblock bed. Raising himself, he looks at where Maureen ought to be. He runs his hand across it. Then something else catches his eye.

A SPIDER--

is creeping across the floor. Ron gets up, looking like he's going to STOMP on it.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE. NIGHT.

The door opens and Concrete walks out carrying a YOGURT CUP. He sets it on the ground some distance from the warehouse and goes back in. THE SPIDER crawls out of the cup and scurries away. Alive.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUGH COUNTRY. DAY.

Concrete BOUNCES WILDLY as the monster truck jounces over ruts and rocks. Rousing music. Then Concrete's standing in front of the truck, holding a SHOCK ABSORBER between his hands. He gives it a SQUEEZE as the last note is hit and the title appears: MACPHERSON STRUTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ART GALLERY. DAY

Stamberg leads Concrete down the sidewalk to an appointment. They pass a TRENDY ART GALLERY. Concrete catches sight of a highly EROTIC PAINTING visible through the art gallery window. He goes in.

STAMBERG

What're you doing?

Stamberg hesitates, then follows.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. NIGHT.

The erotic PAINTING has been mounted over Concrete's chair. Stamberg's on the couch, in shirtsleeves with his tie loosened, going through papers, sipping bourbon. Concrete's reading a BOOK, turning pages with a TABLE KNIFE. Maureen gathers her things, gives the painting a DUBIOUS LOOK, and heads for the door.

MAUREEN

I'll leave you two to your art appreciation.

The men both mumble goodnight, and Concrete watches her go out.

CONCRETE

She doesn't like it.

STAMBERG

Too bad.

CONCRETE

It sort of fits the "hostile environment" definition of sexual harrassment...

STAMBERG

I can't believe you! You live in terror of pissing people off! A banana has more backbone!

CONCRETE

Maybe I just value their feelings.

STAMBERG

(becoming good cop)
Could be. Listen...I've been talking to some people about you.

CONCRETE

Oh?

STAMBERG

I've got them interested in letting you be part of some things. Important work. Not this publicity bull.

CONCRETE

Covert operations.

STAMBERG

They get a bad rap. I'm talking about what's really happening in this world while the public fixates on sports and sex. And Concrete.

Stamberg takes a sip of his drink and leans back.

STAMBERG

This isn't spoken of. But the fact is, a small number of people keep this planet from descending into chaos. An elite. It's always been that way. You could be part of it, if you show you're ready.

CONCRETE

Uh huh...how?

STAMBERG

I know about your years with Douglas. Your idealism...it's good. But you learned that politics is a game played by grownups. So's mine. Sometimes you have to deal with bad people to keep down worse people. Do difficult things. But it's still up to you, and the other few who see things clearly.

CONCRETE

I guess I still don't know what you're after.

STAMBERG

Just be aware. You're being watched with great hope, and not just by me. I'll give you cues.

Stamberg goes back to his papers, his purpose accomplished. Concrete stares at him--not really bought in--but thoughtfully.

CUT TO:

INT. ELANK BACKING. DAY.

A SERIES OF TAKES of a Coke ad, Concrete drinking from a can.

TAKE ONE--he misses his mouth.

CONCRETE

It's hard because I can't feel it.

TAKE TWO--he hits his mouth, but CRUSHES THE CAN AGAINST IT.

TAKE THREE--he clowningly hits his FOREHEAD with the can.

CONCRETE

Duh, I shore like dis Coke stuff.

TAKE FOUR he holds the can too hard, CRUSHING IT, spraying himself.

TAKE FIVE--the finished ad, with music. After quick cuts of pouring Coke and Concrete cavorting with beautiful people, HE HOLDS THE CAN UP BY HIS HEAD AND SMILES, not drinking at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOULEVARD. DAY.

Concrete and Maureen walk, Stamberg and Wu following a few steps behind. Suddenly, Maureen PULLS AWAY from Concrete.

MAUREEN

Watch out! You almost stepped on me!

CONCRETE

I'm sorry.

But he doesn't sound very sincere. Everybody's on edge today.

A CONVERTABLE FULL OF FRAT BOYS cruises by. One shouts out.

FRAT BOY #1

Hey, do you let your girlfriend get on top when you do it? I hope so!

Concrete, Maureen and Stamberg REACT; the car stops only a short way up at A RED LIGHT. The frat boys look a little NERVOUS.

FRAT BOY #2

Great. Is he looking at us?

FRAT BOY #3

Don't look at him! Look forward!

STAMBERG

You gonna let them get away with that? They insulted her!

Stamberg somehow implies there is more to it than Maureen's honor. He murmurs something to Concrete we can't hear.

Concrete stalks over to the car, his feet THUDDING ominously. He has to go around the car to reach the wiseacre, and as he does so HE DRAGS A FINGER ALONG THE CAR, LEAVING A LONG, UGLY SCRATCH. The boys BLANCH WITH FEAR. Concrete indicates the boy's BASEBALL CAP.

CONCRETE

Give me your hat.

He doesn't wait for a reaction, simply plucking it off the boy's head. HE RAPIDLY RUBS IT BETWEEN HIS PALMS like a chilled skier warming his hands with friction. He opens his hands--AND LETS THE FEATHERY SHREDS FALL IN THE BOY'S LAP.

CONCRETE

Now give me your hand.

They're all horrified, most of all the wiseacre. His eyes BULGE.

FRAT BOY #1
Drive! Get us out of here!!!

THE LIGHT--
is still RED.

CONCRETE
Give me your hand!!!

THE LIGHT--
turns GREEN.

FRAT BOY #1
Go! Go!!!

They LAY DOWN RUBBER getting out of there. Concrete returns to his group. Stamberg HOWLS WITH LAUGHTER. Wu can't stop grinning. Maureen looks at Concrete with a sort of horrified disbelief.

MAUREEN
That was disgusting. You're just
like him.

She walks away in fast, angry steps. Concrete looks bewildered. Stamberg smiles and exchanges a look with Wu.

STAMBERG
(to Wu)
He'll be fine.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKWAY. DAY (VIDEO)

NEWS FOOTAGE of Concrete waving to onlookers, walking away.

TAWNY (VOICE OVER)
...he weighs over a thousand pounds.
The question lingers: how could he
leave no footprints?

CUT TO:

INT. NEWS MAGAZINE PROGRAM SET.

Tawny is seated at a desk with the co-hosts for a follow-up "informal" discussion after the report proper, as done on "20/20".

FEMALE HOST

We have Tawny Hill, who produced this report, with us now. Tawny, it seems Concrete was in a part of the "black budget" that's even darker than usual.

TAWNY

Yes, Jane. Most classified weapons systems start that way; the Stealth bomber, most famously. But they're known to the oversight committee. Not this time.

FEMALE HOST

But Senator Douglas said he was aware?

TAWNY

Yes, which is curious since he isn't even on the committee.

FEMALE HOST

There's a rumor going around official circles...

TAWNY

Yes. It's wild, but persisting despite that. A conversation between Concrete and his handler was overheard in which the cyborg premise was proposed as a cover story to obscure Concrete's true nature. Having to do, I kid you not, with aliens.

MALE HOST

Given Concrete's self-promotion, one wonders if that's self-serving disinformation. Thanks, Tawny. We'll be back.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. DAY.

Stamberg and Wu are in an office area at the opposite end of the warehouse from Concrete and Maureen, who are straining to ignore each other. Stamberg finishes a call, hangs up. He is not happy.

STAMBERG

We have to move things up.

Wu raises his eyebrows.

STAMBERG

They want to bring him in, out of the spotlight. And out of our hands, they didn't need to say. We're bailing out just in time. It's all pointing fingers these days.

WU

How do we handle...our Golden Parachute?

STAMBERG

Get him to the island. Time enough to work on him there. And we make sure we have leverage.

He looks at Maureen, who brushes her hair back with her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. BLANK BACKDROP. DAY.

A woman pops a CONCRETE CRACKER into her mouth. It's really just a Ritz with two eye dots and Concrete's distinctive "plus sign" mouth. A box of the crackers replaces her on screen. TITLE: TASTIER THAN THE NAME IMPLIES.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY. DAY.

Maureen drives the monster truck, looking perturbed again. Concrete's speaking to her through the sliding window.

CONCRETE

What's the big deal? This woman's simply paying me a couple grand to make her fancy party a success.

MAUREEN

Going to tie balloons?

CONCRETE

I'm going to let a bunch of rich people bask in my fame. Boy, I can't do anything right lately!

MAUREEN

I just don't like bullies.

At this Concrete withdraws into a sullen huddle.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY NEIGHBORHOOD. A SHORT WHILE LATER

The truck turns up a residential street in Silverlake. Modest homes are dotted between the better homes.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Humble but tidy. A SUBCOMPACT CAR is in front of the garage. BALLOONS on the driveway lamppost. Concrete and Maureen get out.

CONCRETE

Not quite what I envisioned.

They walk around to the back where noise is coming from. When they turn the corner, A HORDE OF EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS in party hats MOB Concrete. He's astonished. The presiding mom, MRS. GRACE, wears an amused look on her dark, pleasant features. A "Happy Birthday Andre" banner dominates the decorations.

KIDS

Concrete!!

CONCRETE

Mrs....Grace?

GRACE

So pleased to meet you.

CONCRETE

This isn't quite what I expected. Sure you can afford...what was talked about?

GRACE

Frankly, no. I won't be able to pay you, except gas money. But Andre so loves you. They all do.

KIDS

(rehearsed for this moment)
We love you, Concrete!

GRACE

I'm terrible, I know. But could you stay just a bit? It would mean so much.

Concrete looks at Maureen, at the kids, at Mrs. Grace. He's furious at this humiliation, but...

GRACE

Besides, aren't you a teensy bit embarrassed, taking money for being famous?

CONCRETE

(sighing)

So who's the birthday boy?

ANDRE

I am!!

CUT TO:

MONTAGE-BIRTHDAY PARTY, DAY.

A boom box plays the new dance remix of "Rock of Gibraltar".

Kids ride an inverted PICNIC TABLE atop Concrete's back. Andre yells directions as they ride, happily screaming, around the yard.

Concrete KICKS A BALL far, far into the sky. It comes down in the food. Concrete poses for a POLAROID with the kids, to which we return as it slowly develops. A kid smashes a plate of CAKE INTO CONCRETE'S FACE. He scrapes it off, eats it plate and all.

Throughout, Maureen watches Concrete. Their eyes meet occasionally. Maureen obviously DELIGHTS in his ungrudging efforts to please the kids. They share SMILES.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY HOUSE, AFTERNOON.

Mrs. Grace speaks on the phone. The kids CHEER in the back yard.

GRACE

He's a dear. They're good sports once they're here. Who should we try next year? Not HIM...

KIDS (OFF SCREEN)

Goodbye Concrete! Thank you!

GRACE

I've got to go.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY HOUSE, CONTINUOUS.

Mrs. Grace rushes out the front door to say goodbye to Concrete, who's getting into the truck.

GRACE

Thanks so much. I'm so naughty.
But it was fun, wasn't it?

CONCRETE

Sure was. I'll never forget it.

Maureen puts the truck in gear and starts to pull out.

CONCRETE

And I imagine you won't, either.

We travel with the truck as it leaves just far enough to see down the driveway. Mrs. Grace's SUBCOMPACT is now on THE GARAGE ROOF, placed there courtesy of Concrete. Andre's in the driver's seat honking the horn for the laughing kids.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Stamberg, Wu and FOUR ROUGH FREELANCERS are rehearsing a scenario. Wu has a HUGE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE, and one of the freelancers has a MOCKUP OF CONCRETE'S TRAP-DOOR LEG on. Stamberg puts two at the far end of the warehouse. Wu is stationed behind the door.

STAMBERG

I'll bring him in. You guys are
already fighting.

Stamberg brings the one with the Concrete leg in; the two at the far end are PUSHING each other, making aggressive noises. Stamberg and the Concrete stand-in pause and watch the fighters.

With practiced motions Wu opens the trap door, JABS the needle into the valve, and PUSHES DOWN THE PLUNGER.

STAMBERG

(checking watch)

Twenty five seconds. Let's make it
twenty.

They take their original places and start again.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY. AFTERNOON.

Concrete sits sullenly in the truckbed. Maureen checks him in the mirror, then addresses him through the back window.

MAUREEN

What's this? You were wonderful! The car was a bit aggressive, but she deserved it. They'll remember you the rest of their lives.

CONCRETE

She's right, though. I'm cashing in on what happened--like some amputee who becomes "Stumpy the Clown." Pathetic. And that's my life.

MAUREEN

You could use some perspective...

CONCRETE

Oh, and you're the queen of that, aren't you!? You try life as a hideous freak!

Taken aback, she fixes her eyes on the road and falls silent.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE. AFTERNOON.

There's an unfamiliar VAN in the drive. Stamberg watches the truck approach through a cracked door. Maureen pulls up, checks Concrete, who's still smoldering, and starts to walk in. Stamberg REACTS; this isn't quite the plan.

Then Maureen thinks better of it, and returns to Concrete. She puts a comforting HAND on his back. He can't feel it, so she presses HARDER. He still can't. She HITS him, but he's OBLIVIOUS (traffic noise drowns the sound).

Stamberg steps out.

STAMBERG

Hey, big guy! C'mon in. I want to show you something.

Concrete doesn't move.

STAMBERG

Hey! I'm talking to you!

The CAR PHONE starts RINGING.

MAUREEN

Let him be.

She starts for the door. Stamberg bars her way. The phone rings. Concrete LEANS THROUGH THE WINDOW, BREAKING IT, and picks up.

CUT TO:

INT. DOUGLAS'S OFFICE. SAME TIME.

The Senator is surrounded by frantic activity.

DOUGLAS

Ron. I need your help. It's life
and death.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE. SAME TIME.

Newly animated, Concrete nods crisply to what he's hearing on the phone. He signs off, then turns to Maureen and Stamberg.

CONCRETE

In the truck! A plane's waiting for
us!

Maureen heads over, but Stamberg, his plan evaporating, is livid.

STAMBERG

What do you mean!? Get in here!!

Maureen's already at the wheel, revving the engine.

CONCRETE

With or without you, we're going!

Stamberg looks back at the door; Wu is peeking out. Stamberg curses, pulls out his gun and SHOTS IN THE AIR. Concrete and Maureen stare at him.

STAMBERG

Next one's in the tire!

Hugely annoyed, Concrete vaults out of the truck. He BARGES past Stamberg and violently SHOVS the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

The door SLAMS into Wu's face, sending him sprawling. Concrete thuds in, not seeing him, and looks at the two fighters--except that they're so surprised by his violent entrance they've stopped fighting, and are looking at him fearfully. Stamberg catches up.

CONCRETE

Is this it? Who're these guys?

Stamberg casts a glance behind them. WU ISN'T THERE. And the HYPODERMIC NEEDLE is LYING ON THE FLOOR.

STAMBERG
(fast and angry)
I wanted you to meet 'em. Oh,
forget it. Get in the truck!

Stamberg maneuvers himself to hide the hypo as Concrete goes out.

STAMBERG
Be right there!

He goes behind the PARTITION where Wu is hiding. Wu's standing there, BLOOD POURING from his NOSE.

STAMBERG
It broken?

WU
I think so.

Stamberg gives Wu's nose a SAVAGE TWIST, eliciting a howl of pain. Mean, not funny.

STAMBERG
Don't you ever fail me again.

Stamberg turns and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. COAL COUNTRY. DUSK.

A MILITARY HELICOPTER speeds over the darkening hills.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER. DUSK.

Concrete, Douglas, Maureen and Stamberg sit in the small space. Concrete's in dead center of the craft's axis, and spread out as much as possible to distribute his weight evenly.

STAMBERG
This is idiocy. You don't go into something this big without a plan.

CONCRETE
This time we don't do it your way.
Live with it.

STAMBERG

He's just using you for his re-election, you know.

Douglas winces a bit, since this has some truth to it.

MAUREEN

It's his life, let him live it!

CUT TO:

EXT. MINING COMPOUND. NIGHT.

The chopper lands. The compound throngs with rescue workers, support people, press. When the four debark from the helicopter, they face TV news people--TAWNY among them.

DOUGLAS

Concrete has to get to work, but I'll gladly answer questions.

CONCRETE

I'm glad Senator Douglas asked me here. I'll do my best to get them out.

TAWNY

How do you know each other?

CONCRETE

Excuse me now.

Concrete moves away and is joined by MINE OFFICIALS, leaving Senator Douglas to deal with Tawny and the press.

DOUGLAS

I called Concrete because I thought he could help save lives. That's all.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PIT HEAD. MOMENTS LATER.

The foreman, STRADLEY, goes over the MINE DIAGRAM for Concrete.

STRADLEY

There's a question where they are. Sixteen down there, in either this tunnel, this one, or both. You'll relieve the team here.

There's a sob; as Stradley continues, Concrete sees WOMEN AND CHILDREN, the trapped miners's families, in great distress.

STRADLEY

They've got air lines, so if they're not buried, it's a good chance. Know how to dig so you don't cause a new cave-in?

CONCRETE

No.

STRADLEY

We'll get you started, then.

A HEADLAMP IS STRAPPED on Concrete's head and they head into the shaft. The wives and kids watch, desperate, hopeful.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE SHAFT. MOMENTS LATER.

They ride a conveyance on steep tracks deep into the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. MOMENTS LATER.

A STRING OF BULBS LIGHTS the tunnel. WATER SPRAYERS on the shearer keep the dust down, creating a layer of water on the floor. A CONVEYOR BELT carries debris to an ELECTRIC CAR. The exhausted RESCUE TEAM clears out for Concrete.

STRADLEY

Small amounts at a time, fast and steady. No power blows. Just chip away at it.

CONCRETE

Gotcha.

STRADLEY

Come out when you need us to clear debris. We need to know you've stopped.

CONCRETE

All right. Give me an all clear.

He waits as they slog down the corridor and turn the corner.

STRADLEY

All clear!

Concrete DIGS LIKE A DOG, throwing the debris between his legs. Some goes on the conveyor, but much SPLASHES in the water, SHATTERS bulbs, and SMASHES into the BOLTED PLATES HOLDING UP THE ROOF. One of them SHIFTS AN INCH after a particularly strong hit.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PIT HEAD. SAME TIME.

The miners's families WAIT. One miner's wife comforts another, who is quietly CRYING. Kids play, oblivious. Maureen kneels, HOLDING A LITTLE GIRL'S HAND, COMFORTING her.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. SAME TIME.

Concrete UNDERMINES THE PILE OF RUBBLE, and it starts to shift. He stops digging and hastily steps back. A SMALL AVALANCHE covers his legs up to his knees, then stops. He extricates himself and starts digging again.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PIT HEAD. SAME TIME.

Two older kids start to FIGHT; a MOTHER breaks it up. Afterward, the woman starts to sob hysterically--her emotions over the brink now.

Douglas goes over to her and puts his arm on her shoulders. Not wanting to be comforted, she pulls away angrily. Douglas sees with dismay that a TV CAMERA has recorded all of it.

A commotion breaks out AT THE PIT HEAD. Concrete is CARRYING TWO MEN, both ALIVE. TEN OTHERS FOLLOW, with some assistance. It's JUBILANT CHAOS lit by TV lights. Wives and kids run to their men; a few other wives look on desperately.

MINER

Somebody give me a Bud!

A foaming bottle is slapped in his hand.

WIFE

Where are the others?

CONCRETE

Just these so far!

She turns away in disappointment. With an eye on camera position, Senator Douglas fights through the throng to congratulate Concrete.

DOUGLAS

Good work!

Concrete glows with pride. Maureen catches his eye, grins. Could life get any better?

THE MINERS--

are hustled into ambulances, as Stradley hastily interviews them.

STRADLEY :

Know where the others are? This tunnel?

Most of them shake their heads. Too quickly, he passes down the line. One of them coughs horribly, and motions someone to lean close. STAMBERG leans over him.

RESCUED MINER

They're in the other tunnel.

Stamberg nods and pats him. He lies down on the gurney and is lifted in the ambulance.

Stamberg joins Concrete, who is again coached by Stradley.

STRADLEY'

(to Concrete)

You want to try the other tunnel, or stay in this one? There're six more down there.

CONCRETE

Which is most likely ?

STRADLEY

It's a tossup. They didn't know.

CONCRETE

Since they were in this one, I'll finish it first.

Stamberg looks like he's going to say something, then THINKS BETTER OF IT. Concrete heads back down.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. LATER.

Concrete digs. With his success, he's become carelessly exuberant, THROWING the coal between his legs. More coal SMASHES into the bolted ceiling plates. A bolt starts to LOOSEN. More coal, then the ceiling bolt SNAPS and the roof COLLAPSES.

Concrete turns and is ENGULFED IN BLACKNESS.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PIT HEAD. A SHORT WHILE LATER

Stradley rises up in the conveyance to grimly face the crowd.

STRADLEY

We need B crew. Concrete's been
buried.

Maureen GASPS. Douglas seems to AGE VISIBLY. Stamberg frowns; he didn't plan on this.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. SAME TIME.

AN "ANT FARM" VIEW of Concrete buried in the dark tunnel. He's INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE SURROUNDING ROCK, stone against stone. Then HE MOVES AN ARM, giving a clue to what we're seeing.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINE COMPOUND. SAME TIME.

Maureen grips Douglas's arm.

MAUREEN

Tell them not to give up. He held
his breath a full hour in tests.

DOUGLAS

That'll give him 'til 1:30. We
can't lose Ron like this.

MAUREEN

Please, tell them now.

Douglas jogs to the pit head.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. SAME TIME.

Miners dig furiously.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINE COMPOUND. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

Maureen sits AGONIZING at the table where the mine families hold vigil--one of them now. She checks her WATCH. The little girl she comforted earlier PATS MAUREEN'S HAND in sympathy. Maureen gives her a sad smile. Then there's a COMMOTION from the pit head that sends Maureen and the rest HURRYING there.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PIT HEAD. SAME TIME.

People rush up as the conveyance rises to the opening. The crowd blocks Douglas's and Maureen's view. They strain to see to no avail. Then the crowd parts.

MEN CARRYING STRETCHERS, each with a DEAD MINER, FILE PAST. A collective howl of grief rises from the families. The SIX REMAINING MINERS ARE DEAD.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINE COMPOUND. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

A grim, haggard Stradley is interviewed by Tawny. Stamberg watches.

TAWNY

What about Concrete?

STRADLEY

We're still trying. He's in a different tunnel.

TAWNY

I don't understand. He was digging in the wrong tunnel?

STRADLEY

Well, from those dead men's standpoint, yes, he picked wrong.

Stamberg stays silent, jaw set. This part worked, anyway.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINE COMPOUND. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

Other reporters surround Douglas.

REPORTER #1

Any regrets, bringing Concrete here?

DOUGLAS

He saved most of them...

REPORTER #1

But these died! He chose the wrong tunnel!

DOUGLAS

I'm sure they told him which one--

REPORTER #2

Do you feel responsible for the miner's deaths, or for Concrete's?

DOUGLAS

Now listen! He saved a dozen men! It's crazy to twist it around!

CUT TO:

INT. MINE. LATER.

The miners dig, but with less energy. After fingering the dangling, SEVERED AIR LINE, Stradley calls a halt.

STRADLEY

It's 2:00. Everybody's beat. We'll get the body out tomorrow.

They file out, PILING TOOLS on the conveyor. As the last man leaves, THE RUBBLE STIRS. The man notices at the last instant.

MINER

Hey. HEY!! EVERYBODY LOOK!!

They rush back and dig around him. Soon CONCRETE IS STANDING-- shaken, gasping, but alive.

CONCRETE

Thanks...I'm all right...I guess we should...carry on.

STRADLEY

No, the other men are all out.

CONCRETE

Really? That s great!

STRADLEY

All dead.

Everybody looks at the ground, not knowing what to say next.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOUGLAS'S COUNTRY HOUSE. DAY.

Concrete, Maureen, Stamberg and Douglas WATCH TAWNY ON TV. The mine compound is visible behind her.

TAWNY

A dozen miners are alive. But this may score Senator Douglas fewer points than he'd hoped.

VIDEO FOOTAGE --

of Douglas's abortive attempt to comfort a widow, and of Concrete STUMBLING out of the shaft with the rescue team.

TAWNY (V.O.)

Critics are calling for a full accounting of who created Concrete-- and why.

Douglas mutes the television with the remote. The CONCRETE COKE AD SOMES ON. He switches off the TV.

STAMBERG

Maybe next time you'll listen. Plan things first, or let somebody plan for you.

CONCRETE

It was idiotic.

DOUGLAS

You saved a dozen men! Everybody's ignoring that!

CONCRETE

And nearly killed myself. I'm still me under this.

Concrete goes out to the back yard. Maureen's EYES urge Douglas to talk to him; Douglas follows him. Stamberg turns to Maureen.

STAMBERG

I'll be in Washington. They're blaming this on me.

MAUREEN

A terrible injustice.

STAMBERG

I'll be back by nightfall. Make sure he's here. No more heroics.

Maureen glares at Stamberg as he goes out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD. SAME TIME.

Concrete and Senator Douglas are in the backyard. Among other things, there's A WOODPILE COVERED WITH A BLUE TARP.

CONCRETE

I don't know how you do it. Being a public figure.

DOUGLAS

You get a thick skin. Look at the advantage you have in that department.

They stand silent a moment, just looking at the landscape.

CONCRETE

Could I come back? Write for you again?

DOUGLAS

Ron, if you need something to do...of course. But you know it won't be the same.

CONCRETE

Better than my life now.

DOUGLAS

What about your dreams? Climbing mountains, writing books?

CONCRETE

I'd wind up killing someone. Or getting killed.

DOUGLAS

Don't take that line. You can be a lot of things, if you want to.

But Concrete is barely listening, lost in self-pity.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRCRAFT HANGER. DAY.

A CHINOOK HELICOPTER is being loaded by Wu and the freelancers with an assortment of weapons: a steel-cable net, guns, a grenade launcher. Wu has a splinted nose and two black eyes. Stamberg oversees the work, fiddling with this and that.

FREELANCER #1
(to Stamberg)
Aren't you afraid of killing him?

STAMBERG
He grows back like a starfish. We
won't kill him. But we'll get him.
Anyway, we may not have to use any
of this.

The men pause, look at Stamberg and each other.

STAMBERG
I have an idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD. DUSK.

Maureen sits on a patio chair. Concrete emerges to join her.

CONCRETE
I should tell you what I'm going to
do. I'm going to slip away tonight
and see my wife.

MAUREEN
Your what?

CONCRETE
My ex, actually. She lives a few
miles from here.

MAUREEN
What for?

CONCRETE
If she sees me working for Douglas
she'll eventually figure out who I
was...am. I've let her think I was
dead. I owe her at least this much
truth. Out of friendship.

Maureen can't quite digest this information. She looks at him
like he's insane.

CONCRETE
My life's in pieces. But I figure I
can still patch together some kind
of existence.

MAUREEN
Ron, I think you should think this
over.

CONCRETE

Please, I've had enough direction...

MAUREEN

That's just it. He's going to be furious.

CONCRETE

I have a plan to sneak off without being noticed. It'll be over before he knows I'm gone...unless you tell him.

MAUREEN

Of course not. But Ron...

Concrete simply puts up his hand, cutting her off. He walks toward the woodpile.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOUGLAS'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Stamberg drives up and gets out of his car. He stretches wearily, then goes in.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. DOUGLAS'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Maureen's reading. Stamberg enters.

STAMBERG

Where's our boy?

Maureen indicates the window. Stamberg looks out. In the yard, Concrete has taken the BLUE TARP off the woodpile and draped it over himself as he sits out on the back lawn.

STAMBERG

What's this?

MAUREEN

Let him be alone. Can you?

STAMBERG

Always darkest before the dawn.

Maureen looks puzzled, but doesn't ask. Stamberg goes upstairs. Concrete doesn't move as the wind rustles the tarp.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD. LATER.

Looking back at the house, we see that the blue tarp now NO LONGER CONTAINS CONCRETE, but similar BULK OF FIREWOOD. In AN UPSTAIRS WINDOW Stamberg is visible, checking to see Concrete hasn't moved. He shakes his head and withdraws.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. NIGHT.

Concrete walks by fields, woods, under the stars. CICADAS grind away. A DOG is barking. A lone STREETLAMP glows ahead. This long wordless sequence is DREAMLIKE, with a sense of GREAT MEANING IN SMALL THINGS.

CONCRETE--

Looks upward, his dilated pupils huge, filling his eyes.

CONCRETE'S POV OF SKY--

contains fully three times the normal number of stars, so powerful is his vision.

CONCRETE--

Looks down at a puddle at his feet.

CONCRETE'S POV OF PUDDLE--

In his reflection, his hand touches his face. No question--he really is Concrete. A piece of grit is scraped off, making rings when it drops into the water. We FLASH ZOOM IN to

CONCRETE'S MICROSCOPIC POV OF PUDDLE--

PROTOZOA swim in the murk. An offscreen ENGINE ROAR grows rapidly. The tiny animalcules seem to REACT anxiously.

CONCRETE--

looks up and is frozen like a deer in the glare of ONCOMING HEADLIGHTS. His eyes reflect them like a deer, too -- two luminous green circles.

WIDER--

at the last moment, Concrete JUMPS OVER the oncoming car, a low-slung MG sports convertible. It races through the puddle, spraying water, as Concrete SOMERSAULTS back into what's left of the puddle.

The car races away as if Concrete wasn't even seen. On a dip, it bottoms out, creating a brief spray of SPARKS. Magical.

CONCRETE--

watches the car disappear, twin red taillight reflections shrinking to nothingness in his eyes.

Concrete turns and continues on his night trek. Distant dogs bark.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST. A SHORT WHILE LATER/STILL NIGHT.

Concrete picks his way through the undergrowth like a grey stone bear. A distant, intermittent, electrical "zapping" is audible.

CONCRETE'S POV OF FOREST--

is almost as dark as it would be to human eyes, but somehow CLEARER. Edges are SHARPER, leaf movement HIGHLIGHTED, textures ENHANCED. Artificial LIGHTS become visible. The ZAPPING becomes louder as he approaches...

A FENCED YARD--

where a glowing, violet BUG ZAPPER is electrocuting moths. TWO COUPLES PLAY CARDS AT A TABLE, one couple rather plain, even nerdy.

THE OTHER WOMAN AND MAN ARE STUNNING. The woman could be a model, and the man resembles an idealized Ron Lithgow -- more handsome, more at ease with himself. The kind of guy Ron might have hated in high school--a winner, a HERO. The hero wins the hand.

HERO

Straight flush. Luck is with me.

The others howl, but his wife kisses his cheek.

CONCRETE--

watches with narrowed eyes a man who has EVERYTHING HE HASN'T.

NERDY MAN (OFFSCREEN)

(jocular)

I hate you. I hate you!

It's as if he's voiced Concrete's thoughts.

HERO

So you said when you saw what my
Microsoft shares had done. Tried to
tell you...

NERDY WOMAN

Horace, you didn't mention thaaat.

The hero drains his beer.

HERO

Anybody want another? ;

NERDY MAN

Me. If I drink enough of your beer,
it'll offset my losses.

NERDY WOMAN

Or dull the pain. Nothing for me.
I'm driving.

The hero's wife shakes her head no and the hero WHEELS HIS WHEELCHAIR, which was not visible until now, up the ramp into the house. HIS LEGS are ATROPHIED, nearly SKELETAL. He hasn't walked in a long time, and he never will again.

CONCRETE--

registers SHOCK. Then SHAME for his envy. He looks down at his hands, stands up on tiptoe. Here's a man much worse off than he is--and living with GRACE and GOOD SPIRITS. He gives a little SALUTE to the Hero, then walks backward, passing out of the circle of light. His reflective eyes stay visible a little longer, then they too are gone.

THE HERO--

comes out with two beers. His wife takes them and KISSES him--missing his lips at first, then doing it right. They LAUGH.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GULLY. NIGHT.

Concrete LEAPS ACROSS in SLOW MOTION, power and strength personified. How could he have ever lost himself to self-pity?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE. NEAR DAWN.

Concrete approaches from up the hill. Lisa's windows are lit. Ron's pace slows, then he stops. He looks down at the front door.

CONCRETE'S POV OF FRONT DOOR--

A spider creeps across it, something only Concrete could see from this distance, in the dark.

CONCRETE--

takes another hesitant step, stops again. He looks at his hands, frowns. He looks at the house. He is torn; HE SITS DOWN.

WIDER--

Concrete sits ATOP THE HILL, hidden from the house by some shrubbery. He's MOTIONLESS as the SUN RISES and THE NEXT DAY AND NIGHT PASS IN TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY. The SECOND DAWN arrives.

CONCRETE--

sits, still frozen in deep thought. HE BLINKS. It's a start.

WIDER--

He moves his arms, stands, stretches--then turns and WALKS AWAY.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOUGLAS'S HOUSE. DAY.

Maureen paces in the back yard, consumed with worry. She JUMPS when she hears a stick break: Concrete emerges from some foliage.

CONCRETE

Howdy.

MAUREEN

Thank God you're all right.

CONCRETE

I'm fine. Better than fine.

MAUREEN

Stamberg has people combing this area for you. I'm supposed to call him if you show up.

CONCRETE

Hold off. Let's enjoy the peace just a bit.

MAUREEN

You must have had...a lot to talk about.

CONCRETE

I never saw her.

MAUREEN

Then what have you been doing!?

CONCRETE

Sitting. Thinking...

MAUREEN

About what?

CONCRETE

Many things. That I wanted to see her for the wrong reasons. Have her feel sorry. Feel that whatever she's been through, it's not as bad as this.

He pounds his stone chest.

CONCRETE

Then I realized my delicate feelings aren't her job anymore. Whatever we had ended long ago.

MAUREEN

But if you go back to work...

CONCRETE

That was madness. I'm Concrete now. There're new mountains to climb.

MAUREEN

You mean--literally?

CONCRETE

I've got a second chance at my dreams. How many people get that? Picked up some baggage on the way, but it has its good points.

He raises his forearms, indicating this body he's stuck with.

CUT TO:

EXT. A SHORT DISTANCE FROM DOUGLAS'S HOUSE. SAME TIME.

Wu speaks into a cell phone while looking through binoculars.

WU

Golden Parachute has landed. The Senator's house.

Wu switches off and RUNS to a CAR.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. DOUGLAS'S HOUSE. A SHORT TIME LATER.

Concrete and Maureen have seated themselves, both aglow over Concrete's epiphany.

MAUREEN

You'll need help on your expeditions.

CONCRETE :

If that's an offer, I accept.

Suddenly, they're both a little embarrassed. Concrete looks around.

CONCRETE

Where's Douglas?

MAUREEN

The Capitol. He had a vote.

The sound of a VEHICLE screeching to a stop comes from the front.

CONCRETE

Oboy.

STAMBERG--

Charges through the house and bursts out the back.

CONCRETE

I know you're mad, but--

STAMBERG

I'm not mad. I've got news. We've been contacted. They want to give you your old body back.

CONCRETE

Whaaat?!

Stamberg gestures for them to follow, and heads for the van.

STAMBERG

The aliens! C'mon, we don't have much time!

CUT TO:

INT. VAN. DAY.

Stamberg drives, Maureen in the seat next to him. Concrete braces himself on the curves.

MAUREEN

Why didn't you tell me earlier?

STAMBERG

Need-to-know basis. Plus, they didn't propose this until just last night.

CONCRETE :

I don't know about this. We shouldn't rush into anything.

STAMBERG

We don't know how long the offer's open. You wanna lose this chance?

CONCRETE

If they speak English, why the hell didn't they talk to me and Michael?

STAMBERG

Don't ask me.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE. DAY

The van climbs a foothill toward a mountainous area.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN. DAY.

Concrete's face is a study in ambivalence. Maureen is pensive.

CONCRETE

Look, if it involves going back in their ship I'm not sure I want to.

STAMBERG

Something you should know. This body only lasts a couple of years. If you don't do this, you're dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATEAU. DAY.

It's a large flat area with a precipitous slope on one side. Small trees and many rocks. Wu and the freelancers check equipment in the HELICOPTER. Wu's car is a short distance away. He checks the time.

WU

They should be here in ten. All
this stuff has to be out of sight.
But...be ready to use it.

A Freelancer checks the action on the GRENADE LAUNCHER.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE. DAY.

The van glides up a switchback past a sign: WATCH FOR ROLLING ROCKS.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN. DAY.

Maureen questions Stamberg with a skeptical expression.

MAUREEN

Are we going to the ship? Is Dr.
Mattingly there?

STAMBERG

We're going to a transfer point.

MAUREEN

Who contacted you? Who's
coordinating this?

STAMBERG

You'll be filled in when we get
there!

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATEAU. DAY.

The van approaches the helicopter, stopping thirty yards away. The three walk toward the chopper; its rotors begin to move.

Wu and the freelancers attempt amicable smiles. Somehow the effect is sinister. As the three near the helicopter, Maureen holds back.

MAUREEN
These aren't soldiers.

Stamberg tugs on her arm.

STAMBERG
C'mon. We had to improvise!

MAUREEN
Ron, don't get in!

STAMBERG :
You get in now!!

Concrete looks from face to face.

CONCRETE
We're not going.

Stamberg pulls out an automatic pistol with a 15-round clip and puts it to Maureen's neck. Concrete FREEZES. The gun has four velcro straps taped to its barrel. Stamberg SLIDES it down Maureen's body, ending at her KNEE. He fastens the straps, holding the barrel to the side of her knee joint.

STAMBERG
Do what I say or you'll be picking bits of her kneecap off your feet! Get in!

Guns come out all around and first Maureen, then Concrete are taken into the craft.

PILOT
(to Stamberg)
He's gotta be dead center or he'll flip us!

Stamberg nods, indicates the floor of the area.

STAMBERG
Spread Eagle! If we crash, she dies too!

Concrete spreads out, belly down.

CONCRETE
There aren't any aliens. Where're we going?

STAMBERG
This ain't the perfect way, but I'm getting you into the big game.

CONCRETE

You think you can force me?

STAMBERG

You may have to do some bad things to bad people. That's all. You can send piles of cash to the United Way if it makes you feel better. You'll have more than you'll ever need.

Stamberg hands off the gun attached to Maureen to a freelancer and heads for the copilot's seat. He pauses in the passageway.

STAMBERG

And you probably want to keep your girlfriend from losing any body parts.

Stamberg takes his seat and straps in.

PILOT

Grab something, people! With this load, it's gonna be a rough ride!

CONCRETE

(to freelancer)

Set the safety. If it goes off by accident, I'll kill you.

After only a little thought, the freelancer does. Then the chopper starts to LIFT. He lets go of the gun to get a good handhold.

THE HELICOPTER--

unsteadily LIFTS ten feet off the ground.

CONCRETE--

looks at Maureen, the gun, the man holding on as the craft bucks.

MAUREEN--

moves her leg so the gun is just a bit out of the man's reach.

CONCRETE--

SCOOTs to the SIDE. As he does, the craft TILTS his way. Everybody HANGS ON to keep from being spilled, but Concrete PUNCHES out the door and SLIDES RIGHT OUT.

He CATCHES HIMSELF on the SPONSON--the projecting "leg" which holds the helicopter's landing gear. The craft has dipped in his direction enough that he TOUCHES THE GROUND, forcing him to RUN to keep up with the forward motion.

THE DOOR--

cartwheels to a stop behind them.

THE PILOT--

struggles to keep the craft from flipping. It's racing along, just a few feet off the ground, held down to a forty five degree angle by Concrete.

PILOT

He's not letting go! I can't right it!

STAMBERG

We've got the girl! Knock him off!
We'll get him later!

The pilot aims for a LINE OF SMALL TREES. Apparently this area has been logged and is just starting to come back.

CONCRETE--

holding on to the sponson, sees the EIGHT FOOT TREES coming up FAST.

MAUREEN--

watches in horror as the TREES CRASH INTO CONCRETE. Somehow he hangs on, but the the trees are flattened and splintered.

THE HELICOPTER--

turns around. Concrete runs along, hopping over rocks, smashing through bushes, an obstacle course RACING AT HIM.

CONCRETE'S FEET--

RACE ALONG, then TRIP over a boulder. They DRAG for a moment, then he regains his footing, running again.

STAMBERG--

points to the van.

STAMBERG

Use the van to get him off!

The pilot NODS and HEADS STRAIGHT FOR THE VAN.

CONCRETE--

sees it coming and properly times a LEAP just ahead of it. HE RUNS RIGHT OVER THE VAN, leaving foot-deep DENTS in the top.

THE CABIN--

tilts forty five degrees THE OTHER WAY. The occupants hold on for dear life. WEAPONS spill across the deck. Then it corrects, and leans again toward CONCRETE. Everything slides THAT WAY.

CONCRETE--

blinks as a GUN bounces off his face.

STAMBERG--

shouts through the companionway to Wu.

STAMBERG

Shoot him off!!

Wu carefully braces himself and aims an automatic weapon with a monstrous ammunition clip at Concrete. He fires a CONTINUOUS STREAM OF BULLETS.

CONCRETE--

is pocked and cracked over his head and arms and hands with each bullet hit, rock dust and chips flying.

Wu aims at Concrete's hands. Chip by chip, THE FINGERS ARE WORN AWAY. But he seems determined to hold on until the bitter end.

MAUREEN--

sees the freelancer REACH FOR THE GUN AT HER KNEE. She KICKS at him and LETS GO, falling down the tilted deck. SHE KNOCKS WU OUT THE DOOR.

WU'S GUN--

sprays bullets as it falls.

IN THE CABIN--

everyone WINCES as rounds hit around them.

WU--

CRASHES INTO FOLIAGE as the helicopter, still burdened with Concrete, speeds away.

IN THE CABIN--

Maureen is holding on to the doorframe. Another freelancer LIFTS HIS GUN and takes AIM AT MAUREEN.

CONCRETE
I'll catch you!

MAUREEN--

closes her eyes and JUMPS.

THE FREELANCER--

fires his gun.

THE HELICOPTER--

lurches wildly after suddenly getting free of Concrete's 1200 pounds.

CONCRETE--

runs a last few steps before stumbling to his knees, MAUREEN SAFE IN HIS ARMS. He's a mess, the top of his head and much of hands blasted away--but it's mainly cosmetic damage.

CONCRETE
The woods. Quickly.

Maureen undoes the straps at her knee and carries the gun as they SPRINT for the trees.

Once they reach cover, Concrete checks for the helicopter. It's tracing a wide circle, gaining altitude.

CONCRETE
Keep hidden. I'll draw their attention. You're the vulnerable one.

He runs off before Maureen has a chance to disagree.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE. DAY.

Concrete runs down the road, a precipitous slope to the side. He checks over his shoulder.

THE HELICOPTER--

shadows him, a couple of hundred feet up. It's closing in.

IN THE CABIN--

a freelancer holds a HARPOON GUN. It's connected to the NET of steel cables. Stamberg shouts back to him.

STAMBERG
Lead him by a few feet!

THE HELICOPTER--

swoops down on Concrete.

THE FREELANCER--

FIRES.

THE NET--

spreads out over Concrete...and lands in FRONT OF HIM. Concrete leaps neatly over it.

THE HELECOPTER--

gains altitude.

IN THE CABIN--

Stamberg, who has unstrapped and come back to the main compartment, elbows the freelancer aside and AIMS A GRENADE LAUNCHER. He FIRES.

CONCRETE--

is hit by a shock wave from a FIERY EXPLOSION to his side. But he keeps running.

STAMBERG--

FIRES AGAIN. This time it hits on Concrete's OTHER SIDE.

CONCRETE--

cuts off the road and runs directly down the rocky slope dodging the occasional scraggly trees.

ON THE SLOPE--

A THIRD BLAST, upslope from Concrete, sends rocks flying. A load of dislodged mountain starts to rumble downhill. The moving material hits other rocks, sending them rolling. They SMASH DOWN the few TREES.

CONCRETE--

hearing the rumbling, looks over his shoulder.

CONCRETE'S P.O.V.--

a full-out AVALANCHE is THUNDERING TOWARD HIM.

CONCRETE--

puts on a BURST OF SPEED as the AVALANCHE GAINS ON HIM.

A ROCK--

KNOCKS HIM DOWN and he CURLS INTO A BALL. Soon he is ONE ROCK OF MANY CRASHING DOWN THE HILL. The ROAR is DEAFENING.

THE HELICOPTER--

swoops down to the base of the slope, where the rocks are coming to rest. It hovers a bit, the rock dust blown away in waves from the rotor backwash.

STAMBERG--

back in the co-pilot's seat, gestures for the pilot to LAND.

THE HELICOPTER--

touches down on the rubble-strewn ground. Stamberg, the pilot, and the freelancers look about for Concrete, not daring to get out.

THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THE HELICOPTER--

ERUPTS as Concrete stands up, holding a WATERMELON-SIZED ROCK above his head. He HURLS IT into the helicopter cockpit, where it SMASHES THROUGH the nose glass.

STAMBERG--

gestures upward frantically.

STAMBERG

Up! Up! Before he gets over here!

The pilot pulls back on the control yoke, and the copter lifts up, its nose pointed upward.

THE CONTROL YOKE--

becomes STUCK as the ROCK WEDGES ITSELF AGAINST IT.

THE HELICOPTER--

rises precipitously, its nose pointing higher and higher.

STAMBERG AND THE PILOT--

furiously attempt to dislodge the rock. The control yoke is STILL STUCK.

THE HELICOPTER--

reaches the top of its arc, two hundred feet in the air, its nose pointing STRAIGHT UP. It has lost ALL LIFT.

A FREELANCER--

FALLS OUT the open doorway and PLUMMETS to the ground.

STAMBERG--

wears a look of HORROR as he realizes he's about to die.

THE HELICOPTER--

FLIPS OVER BACKWARD. It speeds downward and SLAMS the ground, EXPLODING in a HUGE FIREBALL.

CONCRETE--

crouches as he's lit by the explosion, shielding his eyes. A hurled piece of ROTOR chunks into his FOREARM like a THROWN KNIFE.

THE BURNING HELICOPTER--

explodes AGAIN as the fire reaches the unused ammunition.

UP THE HILL--

Maureen looks down at the inferno far down the slope. A TWIG SNAPS BEHIND HER. She spins around.

WU--

stands, battered almost to death, dragging a leg. He lifts his gun.

WU

You...

MAUREEN--

squeezes her eyes shut and grits her teeth as she EMPTIES THE AUTOMATIC PISTOL into WU. She opens her eyes...

WU--

falls dead.

CONCRETE--

hearing the echoing shots, heads up the hill, concerned.

MAUREEN--

comes running down the road. Concrete sees her. He goes to her, limping a bit, a mass of pitted, cracked rock, the rotor shard sticking out of his arm. Tears streak the dust on her face.

They embrace. He holds her as hard as he dares.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. "NIGHTBEAT" SET. NIGHT.

The "Nightbeat" logo dissolves to a view of a mostly-healed Concrete being interviewed by Tawny. He's on a sturdy chair made of TRACTOR TIRES.

TAWNY

So in the moments remaining...why now, and why here?

CONCRETE

Well, you folks introduced me to the world, so I thought it the appropriate place...to bow out.

TAWNY

Will you be a hermit?

CONCRETE

No, you'll hear from me. I have plans. But this crazy celebrity thing...I've had enough. And people've had enough of me.

TAWNY

One last time: are you an alien?

CONCRETE

Well, if I was--and I'm not saying so--you'd have to agree: I speak pretty good American for a foreigner.

He leans forward in mock confidentiality.

CONCRETE

It just might be...we're being watched, and with great hope. Maybe we ought to start treating each other...better.

TAWNY

That's the last word. Thank you,
Concrete; good luck. (turning to
camera) Good night.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE CAMP. DAWN.

In EXTREME CLOSE UP we see Concrete tightening lug-nuts with a wrench. Metallic clicking and clanging.

MAUREEN'S HANDS--

knot a ROPE around Concrete's wrist.

CONCRETE--

fits custom-made GLACIER GOGGLES over his eyes.

WIDER--

He's outfitted with MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING GEAR made of steel and secured with lug-nuts: CRAMPONS for his feet, ice-biting SPIKES on his forearms. A WRENCH hangs on a cord. Tied to his wrist is an ICEAXE made from a pick head welded to an iron pipe. A WALKIE-TALKIE is STRAPPED to his shoulder.

Maureen, in a parka, stands by smiling. The wind shrieks.

CONCRETE

Better not give me a good-luck kiss.
You'd freeze to me like I was an
aluminum door.

MAUREEN

What a shameless ploy. I'll risk
it.

She KISSES his cheek and he gets a GRIN wider than South Dakota.

He holds his ICEAXE up in the air and strides toward the towering PEAK--the SAME MOUNTAIN as in the opening of the film.

CONCRETE

To the summit!

CUT TO:

EXT. FARTHER UP THE MOUNTAIN. DAY.

Concrete methodically plants his iceaxe before each couple of steps.

CONCRETE (VOICE OVER)
What did it for me was sitting down,
thinking. All day, all night.

He pulls himself up to a ledge, looking out on the vista.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
I thought about how it felt to lose
my sense of taste, of smell, of
touch.

He looks at Maureen, a mile below, magnified by his powerful eyes.
She's going about some task, unaware of his gaze.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
That hurt most. Not to be able to
touch...

He resumes his ascent.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
I thought about the times I'd pulled
in, unable to face what I'd become.
Wishing to go back, somehow...

He chops his iceaxe a little too hard, dislogging a chunk of ice.
He HUGS the mountain as it tumbles down.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
But my eyes. They took everything,
but they gave me these eyes. I
could look at the sun and see it was
alive.

On the mountain face, Concrete stares directly into the yellow
fire of the sun.

THE SUN (CONCRETE'S POV)--

huge, magnified: a teeming cauldron of pure energy--LIFE.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
I could look at a drop of water...

Concrete stares at a slow drip from A MELTING PATCH OF ICE.

A DROP OF WATER (CONCRETE'S POV)--

a crystalline jewel, reflecting a star 93 million miles distant.

CONCRETE (V.O.)
...and see it was alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN PEAK. LATE AFTERNOON.

Concrete has reached the top of the peak. It's magically beautiful, spindrift blowing around him, glistening in the sunshine.

CONCRETE (V.O.)

Life, all around me. I could shut myself off from it, go cold and dead.

Following some impulse, Concrete removes his gear, piece by piece.

CONCRETE (V.O.)

Or I could just get on with it.
Embrace life, despite everything.
Because it's there, in some measure,
even for those of us who are
wounded...or diminished.

The last of his gear removed, he's a clean SILHOUETTE against the SETTING SUN. Hands on hips, a SULPTURE of SERENE STRENGTH.

CONCRETE (V.O.)

Which, I suppose, is everyone.

Here's the brain and soul of Ron Lithgow, trapped forever in a thousand pound body of stone--and free at last.

FADE OUT.