

THIRD DRAFT

September 23, 1989

Rev. 10/02/89 (Blue)
Rev. 10/23/89 (Pink)
Rev. 11/02/89 (Yellow)
Rev. 11/20/89 (Green)
Rev. 11/27/89 (Goldenrod)
Rev. 11/28/89 (Buff)
Rev. 12/04/89 (Salmon)

FLATLINERS

by

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THIRD DRAFT

September 23, 1989

9/23/89

FLATLINERS

FADE IN:

1 EXT. CONCRETE PEDIMENT - DAWN 1

The sun, barely beginning to rise, casts a pale light on a haunting, sculptured image -- a classic Greek rendering -- a physician reaches out and touches the skeleton of death. Humankind's immortal battle and intimacy with the inevitable.

2 THE CAMPUS CLOCK 2

3 LATIN WORDS ON A BUILDING 3

4 OTHER ANGLES AND ESTABLISHING SHOTS OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY (CHICAGO) - DAWN (LATE OCT.) 4

5 HELICOPTER SHOT - OVER LAKE MICHIGAN 5

REVEALS the gothic and coldly beautiful university set dramatically on the shore of Lake Michigan. The CAMERA MOVES IN OVER the freezing water as a long figure appears in the middle of the otherwise empty campus.

NELSON WRIGHT, 24, wearing a long coat and sunglasses, moves toward the shore as the CAMERA MOVES TOWARD him.

6 CLOSE - NELSON 6

He surveys and smells the new day.

HIS POV

The lake. The dawn. The infinite.

CLOSER - NELSON

He removes his sunglasses. There is an arrogant confidence and self-determination mixed with the hint of a smile.

NELSON

Looks like a good day to die.

SMASH CUT TO:

7

INT. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM CORRIDORS - DAWN 7

A 30-year-old man bounces and shrieks in the middle of a full-blown crack psychosis. Nurses and orderlies try to strap him down, but he has the power of five men. Screaming, one of his massive flailing arms sends a nurse across the room. One of the DOCTORS shouts to a young orderly.

DOCTOR #1

Get more help! There are so many crackheads we don't have time for anybody else.

The young orderly, DAVID LABRACCIO, a rugged individualist with long hair pulled back in a ponytail, dashes into the:

HALLWAY

only to run into --

BOOM!!! A GURNEY carrying a blood-soaked Hispanic woman BURSTS THROUGH the ER (Emergency Room) door. A HISPANIC ORDERLY and a NURSE run along beside it, as does the woman's HUSBAND, screaming in Spanish.

The ER, already frantic, now becomes a madhouse, as ER staff scramble to handle the emergency. Labraccio rushes over to the gurney and accompanies it down the hall.

LABRACCIO

What we got?

HISPANIC ORDERLY

Some kind of hemorrhage. Husband brought her in a taxi.

LABRACCIO

Blood pressure?

NURSE

60/120 and dropping. My God, the blood... we can't stop it...

LABRACCIO

(quickly checking pulse)

Heartbeat, but no pulse. Vaginal bleeding...

HUSBAND

(battling, frantic)

Nina... Nina... no dinero para Nina...

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

What's he saying?

HISPANIC ORDERLY

No money... Jesus, probably a street abortion.

LABRACCIO

Severed the femoral artery. We gotta open her up. Do a midline.

NURSE

Surgeon won't be outa O.R. for another ten minutes.

LABRACCIO

Too late. Get her under.

NURSE

Who's gonna do the surgery?

LABRACCIO

(putting on
surgical gloves)

I am.

NURSE

You can't...

LABRACCIO

(hard)
Do it!!!

A peripheral nurse runs off as our Nurse slaps the anesthesia mask on the woman.

LABRACCIO

(to the Orderly,
indicating the
Husband)

Get him outa here.

Labraccio snatches up a scalpel out of a tray and makes an incision across the woman's abdomen. He quickly plunges his hand in among her intestines and grabs the severed femoral artery, physically stopping the blood flow.

LABRACCIO

Clamp!

The Nurse hands him a clamp which he affixes to the artery, just as TWO DOCTORS come running down the hall, led by the peripheral nurse.

(CONTINUED)

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4.

7

CONTINUED: (2)

7

Doctor #1 immediately takes over the situation.

DOCTOR #1

(to Labraccio)

All right, I got it.

(to the Nurse)

Let's get her into O.R.

They rush her away as Doctor #2 confronts Labraccio.

DOCTOR #2

What the hell do you think you're doing?

LABRACCIO

Saving her life.

DOCTOR #2

You're a student. Not a doctor!

LABRACCIO

(steamed)

It was an emergency. None of you were available. If I hadn't done a midline, she would have died in another twenty seconds.

DOCTOR #2

(firing back)

You're not licensed to do any surgical procedure. She could have died and the insurance companies dangle this hospital and university by a thin thread. That's why we keep students away from sharp objects.

(calming down)

I'm afraid I have no choice but to recommend your suspension. You can reapply next summer for the fall term, but I can't guarantee your scholarship will be renewed.

Doctor #2 walks away.

LABRACCIO

(calling after
him angrily)

Don't worry about it. There's no sense in my reapplying. If the situation ever arose again, I'd do the same thing!

8 EXT. TAFT BUILDING - CAMPUS - STILL VERY EARLY MORNING 8

The classic building is boarded up and large signs advertise "CLOSED FOR REMODELING," "NO ADMITTANCE."

Nelson Wright looks around, and seeing the coast is clear, he quickly pushes aside some boards and drops through a small basement window.

9 INT. RANDY STECKLE'S ROOM - MORNING 9

RANDY STECKLE, 24, brilliant, endearing, but soft at the core, speaks into his mini-cassette recorder.

STECKLE

(portentously)

Randall Steckle. Diary of a Surgeon. Day...

(clicking off tape)

Not a surgeon yet. Randall Steckle. Diary of a Surgeon to Be... wimpy...

(trying again; more macho)

Randy Steckle. The Forging of a Surgeon. Pretentious. The Making of a Surgeon? That's alright, that's good.

(switching tape back on)

Randall Steckle. The Making of a Surgeon. Day 98.

10 INT. TAFT BUILDING - MORNING 10

The old building is closed for renovation. CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY THROUGH a long hallway TOWARD a large mural surrounded by scaffolding and plastic sheeting.

Years and layers of old paint hide most of the mural.. The painstaking unveiling of the hidden art has begun. Fragments of faces. Color. Mystery.

Workers arrive to begin their day's work on the mural. They stop joking as suddenly Nelson appears from one of the adjoining old corridors.

NELSON

Nice work... very nice. You're doing a great job.

He leaves rapidly as the workers look to one another.

11

FRONT DOOR

11

As Nelson starts to close the door behind him, he artfully places a piece of tape over the lock.

12

INT. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL WARD - MORNING

12

RACHEL KINBERG, a crushingly-attractive med student, has forsaken her janitorial duties to talk to three patients, who have had "Near-Death" experiences; a 38-year-old HOUSEWIFE, A 60-year-old BLACK MAN in a wheelchair, and TERRY, a pretty, blonde student with a bandaged head.

HOUSEWIFE

... and suddenly even though I was in a coma, I could see myself ... like from above, looking down. Ralph, my husband, was crying... and the doctor was saying I was dying... and I could see myself in the bed and everything... and I started to float out into the hall and then into this tunnel... toward this light and it was the most beautiful light I ever saw... and then I heard this voice and it was the most beautiful voice I ever heard and it said... 'I'm taking your baby but you are going back'... and I woke up and there was Ralph and the doctor...

Rachel takes notes.

BLACK MAN

I was legally dead four and a half minutes... but I didn't see no tunnel or no light...

TERRY

Oh I did... and it was so beautiful...

BLACK MAN

I was in this garden...

Nearby, a terminal woman, someone really facing death, listens from her bed, eyes wide with terror.

TERRY

And this tunnel and this light and then this... like a guide... and a chariot and... music...

(CONTINUED)

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7.

12

CONTINUED:

12

Rachel stops writing, looking at Terry cynically.

RACHEL

I think they better get you off
medication, Terry.

A sudden WHISTLE from O.S. gets Rachel's attention.

RACHEL'S POV

A WARD NURSE alerts Rachel to a Code Blue at the end
of the ward. Nurses scurry as Rachel pockets her
research and quickly begins mopping diligently just as
doctors arrive.

EDNA (WARD NURSE)

You watch your ass for a while.
They'll be watchin' you kids
close. They dumped a third year
student for performing a
laparotomy by himself this
morning.

RACHEL

Who?

EDNA

Labratcho... or something.

RACHEL

David Labraccio?

EDNA

Why you always talkin' to the
patients about death anyways?

RACHEL

I'll be late for class. Thanks,
Edna.

13

EXT. CAMPUS - MORNING

13

The sun casts an autumnal glow to the red brick
buildings. Students hustle to class, Rachel among them.

14

INT. ANATOMY LAB - MORNING

14

CLOSE as Nelson's hand, using a scalpel, cuts a steady
red slice along the pale sole of a foot.

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED:

14

STECKLE (O.S.)

I am now beneath the transverse
'arch' of the foot. The three
cuneiforms along with the other
two of the metatarsus...

WIDER SHOT

Nelson interrupts Steckle, who is working on the
cadaver's other foot and talking into his mini-recorder.

NELSON

'Doctor' Steckle... a second
opinion.

Steckle shuts off his recorder and leans over to make a
helpful slice.

NELSON

Brilliant. Bring all that talent
tonight, 'Doctor,' and more.

STECKLE

Nelson, about tonight... I like you.
And because of that, I have to
decline on moral grounds. Isn't
there enough atrocity in the world
without your own little horror?

*
*
*

NELSON

Horror? Ignorance we fear, but
since when did 'truth' and 'knowledge'
become 'horror' to a scientist...
and a genius.

*
*
*
*

REVEAL that the sole of Nelson's cadaver has been diced
up with Tic Tac Toe marks. Nelson slices a final red
line, connecting the winning O's.

NELSON

Tic. Tac. Toe. You better show.

*

ANOTHER ANGLE

Rachel finds she is sharing a cadaver with JOE HURLEY,
a dangerously handsome and mischievous ladykiller.

JOE

So... you dating anyone?

*

Rachel rolls her eyes and points to their shared cadaver.

*

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED: (2)

14

RACHEL

Identify.

JCE

Seminal vessel. It's not offensive if I make conversation, is it? Sometimes it feels good to open up a little. Look at Lenny, he's open...

RACHEL

(ignoring him)

Identify.

JOE

Prostate. You know, I've heard all the rumors and nicknames, all that sour grapes guy stuff. But I don't believe it. It's unsubstantiated. I'm certain that you're really a very warm woman... not in the least bit frigid or repressed.

Joe pulls down the cadaver's sheet indicating the CROTCH.

JOE

Identify.

RACHEL

Your brains.

JOE

(smiles)

Good. You want to come over to my place and do some serious thinking.

Nelson interrupts them.

NELSON

Excuse me 'Doctor' Hurley. I need a word with 'Doctor' Mannus.

Nelson escorts Rachel towards a window.

RACHEL

Didn't I already say no to this?

NELSON

I already have Hurley and Steckle lined up. Two of the top GPA's.

RACHEL

An asshole and a putz.

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED: (3)

14

NELSON

(smiles)

All I need now is 'Numero Uno' to handle the IV and injections.

RACHEL

Forget it.

An ASIAN PROFESSOR enters, followed by TWO TA'S carrying blue books.

PROFESSOR

Good morning, class. Today's exam will be scaled. 3 A's will be given, 5 B's, 10 C's and the remaining four will get D's and F's.

NELSON

(softly)

I'm also working on a special mystery quest, a future surgical 'hall of famer'...

RACHEL

(interested)

Who's that, Powell? Westheimer?

NELSON

Show up and you'll see.

PROFESSOR

(continued)

Once again, as in life, you are not in competition with me, yourself, or this exam... but with each other.

RACHEL

Sorry, Nelson. I have no interest in watching you kill yourself.

NELSON

I think you do. Wouldn't it be easier than snooping around the hospital for all that National Enquirer 'back from the dead' crap?

Rachel's surprised. How could he know?

PROFESSOR

Mister Wright? Are you planning to participate?

All eyes turn. Nelson gives Rachel one last look, then shrugs.

NELSON

Absolutely.

15

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

15

Blood swirls down the old drains of the sinks. Nelson,
Joe and Steckle wash their hands after class.

JOE

The hell with 'Kinkyberg.' She's
at war with herself... a hopeless
introvert with 'come hither' tits.
A mental deficient.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

NELSON

You didn't see her grades.

STECKLE

What is this continual shit about grades? No one knows our scores.

NELSON

The files are over at six sixty-one, third floor, third drawer, Dean Powers' cabinet.

JOE

You saw them?

*

STECKLE

He's lying.

*

*

NELSON

What you do with feet, Steckel, I can do with locks.

JOE

Was I in the 'top five'?

NELSON

We're talking aren't we? Come on, you're the guys who brought that dog back after it was dead for almost four hours.

JOE

We were lucky. The dog had frozen to death. Greyhounds have very strong hearts...

STECKLE

And the dog was smarter than you.

NELSON

Nine o'clock the Old Dog Lab, Taft.

JOE

Alright, fine. You want it... I'm a very busy man but we'll be there...

STECKLE

Wait...

JOE

'Cause frankly, Nelson, I don't think you have the balls.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

JOE (CONT'D)

Sure it'll be dramatic, you'll
cry, faint, puke at best... but
then what?

NELSON

(smiling)

You bring your equipment,
gentlemen. I'll bring the balls!

16 EXT. LABRACCIO'S BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

16 *

Labraccio is angrily throwing down his bags. Nelson is
talking to him.

NELSON

Look, it's a four month suspension.
It won't even affect your scholarship.

LABRACCIO

It doesn't matter. I'm outta
medicine.

NELSON

You're the best student this school's
ever had. They don't let guys like
you walk away from medicine. Besides,
you were wrong.

LABRACCIO

She was dying. I saved her life. What
would you have done?

NELSON

Why are you taking this so personally?
They have to make an example of you
to protect their insurance bond. They'll
ask you back next term.

LABRACCIO

It doesn't matter. Given the same
situation, I'd do it again.

NELSON

I know, that's why I need you there
tonight.

(CONTINUED)

16

CONTINUED:

16 *

LABRACCIO

Right now I want to kill a few people, but you're not one of them.

NELSON

I don't want to die. I want to come back with the answers to death and life. I can get there with the others... but I need you to bring me back. (Alt: I can get there with the others but I can't get back. I need you.)

LABRACCIO

Sorry, I can't do it.

NELSON

Okay. Walk away. Go climb a fucking mountain. Today you burned your career for a stranger and now you're turning your back on a friend.
(beat)

Hey, I'm sorry about what happened ... What are my chances of making it back without you?

LABRACCIO

Then don't do it.

NELSON

What if it works...

17

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DUSK

17

The sun goes down, creating a cold, bleak mood.

18

INT. HOSPITAL WARD (UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL) - EARLY
EVENING

18

*

Rachel finishes her menial chores in the crowded unit. She straightens the bed of the Terminal Woman we saw earlier. Rachel gives a comforting smile. The Woman's eyes are filled with fear.

TERMINAL WOMAN

I'm going to die, aren't I?

RACHEL

No... no... of course not.

But both she and Rachel know that Rachel is lying.

19

INT. JOE HURLEY'S LOFT - EVENING

19

Messy. Subversive. CAMERA PANS ACROSS the painted floor PAST a trail of scattered schoolbooks, male and female underwear. The PHONE is RINGING and we also hear the RUSTLE and rhythm of love. Joe's RECORDED PHONE MESSAGE answers the phone.

JOE

'Leave a message after the fucking
beep... Sorry, Mom.'

CAMERA MOVES UP the crumpled sheets TO the mattress to find Joe Hurley captured mid-stride with an attractive co-ed named BRIDGET.

ANNE (V.O.)

Hi, honey... I just went to the
printers and picked out our
invitations...

Bridget writhes in ecstasy, but Joe is somehow removed, detached. He's making odd faces directly AT CAMERA. A big shit-eating grin. As Bridget's moans climb an octave, we PUSH INSIDE a dark closet opposite them and REVEAL a small camcorder tucked up on a shelf. The red light blinks.

20

CAMERA'S POV

20

Super 8, black and grainy. Joe smiles for the CAMERA.

*

ANNE (V.O.)

It's going to be such a beautiful
wedding. Call me. I miss you.
I love you.

BRIDGET

Who was that?

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED:

20

JOE

My sister.

BRIDGET

You're gonna marry your sister?

Joe stops her questions by kissing her as Nelson's voice comes on the ANSWERING MACHINE next.

NELSON (V.O.)

I know you're there, 'Doctor'
Hurley... Don't be late and bring
your camera.

BRIDGET

What camera?

She looks around.

21

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

21

Cold. Bare. Meticulous. Nelson sits at an oversized desk in the middle of his pure white Victorian apartment. He hangs up the phone. For the first time, Nelson's showing fear, a lack of cool. He types the final sentence of a letter into his

COMPUTER

... absolving all participants from
this voluntary act.

Nelson pushes "PRINT." The PRINTER begins to WHIRL as Nelson rises and walks to the --

22

BATHROOM

22

Nelson splashes water on his bleached bone face. He studies his own hollow eyes in the mirror. Chin up. Fear must be controlled. The PRINTER STOPS. He listens. Silence.

23

LIVING ROOM

23

Nelson walks back in and steadies his shaking hand as he signs the document.

23A INT. LABRACCIO'S ROOM - EVENING

23A

Labraccio is packing his stuff, emptying a drawer full of paper. He scans them nostalgically, momentos from his past. We see bits of home-town articles, an ACCEPTANCE LETTER, a SCHOLARSHIP LETTER, a corny Hallmark from Mom... "Proud of You." There's a photo of he and a friend, arms raised atop a mountain. And finally, an older photo of YOUNG DAVE, 8, sporting a cowboy hat with his FATHER.

Labraccio studies his Father. The frozen smile. He puts the papers away.

24 EXT. TAFT BUILDING - NIGHT

24

Seemingly empty, deserted. Dark.

25 INT. HALLWAY WITH MURAL - NIGHT

25

More restoration has been done. Heroic figures begin to emerge. There is magic and mystery here.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Steckle wheels a bottle of nitrous oxide down the dark corridor. He's spooked. Suddenly a SQUEAKING sound. Steckle freezes. Something large and white wheels out of the darkness. It's a gurney. Joe Hurley is pushing it. He's also holding his CAMCORDER.

STECKLE

Ah, the bed. Thank God he called a specialist.

JOE

No lectures, Steckle.

*

STECKLE

I actually hoped after your engagement to Anne, a person whom I respect very much, you would grow up.

*

They move down the dark corridor.

JOE

Did it ever dawn on you that I'm working some things out... recording some last adventures so I can resign myself to monogamy with the perfect woman?

STECKLE

No, it never dawned on me for a moment. But the words 'pussy hound' have popped to mind occasionally.

*

26

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

26

Steckle and Joe enter the forsaken lab. It's eerie and cold.

STECKLE

What the hell are we doing? This
is goodbye med school, goodbye career...

JOE

Chill out, 'Testickle.' Ten bucks
says he won't do it. Shits his
drawers and we're outta here.
Twenty bucks he doesn't even show.

Steckle reaches for the lights, but Nelson's hand stops
him.

NELSON

No lights. Security'll come running.

*

He reveals a couple of small high beams.

NELSON

Set up over there...

STECKLE

We're not really gonna do this.

NELSON

Shut up, Steckle.

JOE

(to Steckle)

Humor the man.

Joe sets up the gurney as Steckle fearfully moves the
nitrous.

NELSON

You'll bring me down with nitrous,
sodium pennethol, and the refrigerated
blanket.

*

(beat)

At 78 degrees, hit me once with 200
joules to stop the heart. When it
does, take off the mask.

*

*

*

Nelson lies on the gurney and starts connecting the eight
EEG leads to his forehead, temple and cranium. Joe and
Steckle stand FROZEN.

*

*

NELSON

Cups, 'Doctor' Hurley!!

Joe is startled into action. He presses the EKG electrodes
to Nelson's arms, legs and heart. Steckle can't believe
his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

STECKLE

Where's Mannus? You said Rachel was coming.

NELSON

(indicating sodium
pennethol)

Draw 20 c.c's. Once the EEG flatlines and the brain is dead, I'll be exploring. At 30 seconds flick the blanket to warm and bring me up slow to 98 degrees. Joe moves in at one minute with the defibs and I come back to life.

RACHEL (O.S.)

With brain damage.

They turn. It's Rachel.

RACHEL

In many ways resembling a Cabbage Patch Kid.

Nelson smiles.

NELSON

Not with a body temp of 78. 'Doctor' Mannus, will you handle the injections?

Nelson is determined. Rachel hesitates, then nods.

STECKLE

Wait a minute, wait... quite simply, why are you doing this?

NELSON

Quite simply -- to see if there's something beyond death. Philosophy failed, religion failed, and now it's up to us... the physical sciences. Mankind deserves to know.

JOE

(cynical)

So this is for 'mankind'?

STECKLE

If you want to do something for mankind, why don't we try to find a cure for AIDS? 'Tonight on 60 Minutes, a young medical student who dared to experience death and come back!' Why do I see you squeezed between Andy Rooney and the new Suburu commercial?

ALT:

I don't see you trying to cure AIDS, Nelson.

NELSON

Fame, of course, will be inevitable.

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

STECKLE

Where's Mannus? You said Rachel was coming.

NELSON

(indicating sodium
pennethol)

Draw 20 c.c's. Once the EEG flatlines and the brain is dead, I'll be exploring. At 30 seconds flick the blanket to warm and bring me up slow to 98 degrees. Joe moves in at one minute with the defibs and I come back to life.

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With brain damage.

They turn. It's Rachel. Nelson smiles.

NELSON

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Nelson is determined. Rachel hesitates, then nods.

STECKLE

Wait a minute, wait... quite simply, why are you doing this?

NELSON

Quite simply -- because I can. For the first time in history, man has the technology to see it all. Philosophy failed, religion failed, and now it's up to us... the physical sciences. We're gonna' chart the final frontier.

JOE

(cynical)

So this is for 'mankind'?

STECKLE

This is for 'Nelson.' 'Tonight on 60 Minutes, a young medical student who dared to experience death and live to talk about it.' Why do I see you squeezed between Andy Rooney and the new Suburu commercial?

NELSON

You will. I'll log the trip, scientifically. And then we'll tell the world. I'm afraid the 'Fame' will be inevitable.

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (2)

26

RACHEL

That's the wrong reason.

NELSON

But it's the right idea. Here --

Nelson takes the letter from his pocket and hands it to Joe.

NELSON

This absolves you guys from any
blame... just in case.

Joe takes the letter.

STECKLE

Nelson...

NELSON

(interrupting)

How 'bout a little of that
nitrous, Steck? At least I'll
be going out with a smile. Start
filming, 'Director' Hurley.

Joe grabs his camera and starts filming.

NELSON

(smiles courageously)

We're all professionals, and, ah,
I'm sure everything will be fine.

JOE

Nelson, if you die, can I have your
apartment?

The others turn, not amused.

JOE

A joke. Just a joke.

NELSON

One minute. Don't be late.

Nelson clicks the refrigerated blanket to "cool."
Steckle, hands shaking, gives Nelson the nitrous mask.

NELSON

(continued; to Rachel)

What?... no kiss goodbye?

Rachel injects the pennethol into Nelson's IV. Nelson
places the mask over his own face, raises his right
thumb slightly, then is gone.

Unconscious. Silence.

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (3)

26

RACHEL

Ninety-six degrees.

STECKLE

Let him sleep it off. He'll have
a wet dream and think it was Heaven.

RACHEL

Ninety-four degrees.

JOE

It's only a minute. We have his
letter.

STECKLE

That letter means 'shit.'

RACHEL

Well now I know why I'm here.
He must have known you two would
bail out.

Rachel picks up the charged defibrillator paddles.

RACHEL

200 Watts, standing by.

STECKLE

I think I've expressed myself
clearly for the record. Good night.

Steckle starts to leave.

JOE

Steckle's probably right. Are you
willing to risk everything, your
career, your future, for Nelson's
fame?

Rachel hesitates. Suddenly Steckle charges back.

STECKLE

Someone's coming!

RACHEL

Get rid of them.

JOE

Jesus!

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (4)

26

There's nothing they can do. Nelson lies quietly.
FOOTSTEPS coming closer, closer. A shadow across the
floor. They hold their breath. It's Labraccio.

LABRACCIO

(sees Nelson)

Is he dead?

STECKLE

He's only sleeping.

JOE

It was a crazy idea. We're not
going through with it.

Labraccio looks at Rachel. She's silent.

LABRACCIO

I'll do it.

RACHEL

(miffed)

You taking over?

LABRACCIO

I have nothing to lose.

STECKLE

Just his life.

LABRACCIO

I can bring him back.

Labraccio holds his hand out to Rachel. She hesitates,
then hands him the DEFIB PADDLES.

RACHEL

Don't think I couldn't have.
Seventy-eight degrees.

Labraccio moves over and ZAPS Nelson. "WHUNK" the body
bucks.

STECKLE

No!

Joe grabs Labraccio's arm, but Labraccio shoves him away.

JOE

What the fuck?

LABRACCIO

Asshole.

(CONTINUED)

STECKLE

You're killing him! It's murder.
No wonder you got tossed!

Labraccio remains cool.

JOE

This is not the type of shit I
want on my transcript.

Suddenly a loud BEEP, a steady, high pitched DRONE. They
all know what this means.

RACHEL

Flatline.

LABRACCIO

Keep filming.

STECKLE

Please don't!... Don't do anymore!!
I didn't come to med school to murder
my classmates, no matter how deranged
they might be.

RACHEL

Quiet.

Labraccio removes the oxygen mask. Rachel flicks off the
EKG. Silence.

The EEG. 8 needles monitoring brain activity are still
active. The paper scroll winds into a neat pile.

JOE

I wonder what he's thinking?

LABRACCIO

The heart has stopped. Oxygen is
running out. Could be panic.

RACHEL

Or pleasant resolve.

The EEG lines are getting smaller. There's a HUSH set over
the group, a primal reverence. Their voices lower
unconsciously.

STECKLE

They're getting smaller.

The EEG sounds its TONE. Steckle lowers his head in
his hands. Labraccio flicks OFF the EEG tone.

RACHEL

Brain death. Now it's real.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (6)

26

STECKLE

Turn it back on. It's too quiet.

Labraccio turns the tone back on.

STECKLE

Let me defib him. He's dead,
that's enough. Let me try to
bring the asshole back.

LABRACCIO

Watch the door. If we get caught,
we're all dead.

JOE

(laughs nervously)

Excuse me. I don't want to ruin
anyone's evening, but are we in a
room with a dead man?

RACHEL

(beat)

One minute to go.

27 PUNCH TO BLACK

27

An intense black void. A sound more silent than silence.

28 INT. DOG LAB

28

LABRACCIO

Heat at 30.

He flicks the refrigerated blanket to "warm."

29 INT. BLACKNESS - NOW

29

Suddenly a beautiful, surreal image. A POV RACING THROUGH
a field of wheat. Children. Boys playing -- an Andrew
Wyeth setting. Dandelions blow in the wind. Trees. Summer.

30 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

30

Labraccio monitors Nelson's rising body temperature.

LABRACCIO

Twenty seconds to go, at ninety,
ninety-one... Stand by with Sodium
Bi Carb and 'eppy.' Rachel, charge
the paddles.

Steckle reaches for the two syringes on the crash cart.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

RACHEL

Wait, Steckle. Not yet. Temp at
Ninety-two.

31 INT. NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

31

The white sun. The boys playing. The dog. The most
idyllic, romantic, perfect dream of innocence and youth
moving toward a brighter, brighter sun.

32 INT. DOG LAB

32

LABRACCIO

Temp at ninety-three. Now!

He grabs the defribs and slams them against Nelson's
naked torso. "ZAP," the current races through his
body, causing the corpse to buck.

STECKLE

(reading the EEG)

Nothing! Not a goddamn --

LABRACCIO

Up me to 300. Clear.

"ZAP"!

33 INT. NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

33

The POV MOVES UPWARD THROUGH the huge trees, faster and
faster TOWARD the burning sun, when suddenly a grotesque
child's face pops in, menacingly. It is truly terrifying.

34 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

34

-- PAST Rachel's shoulder, Joe's hip, ACROSS the dog lab
and right UP TO the EKG. The flatline jumps. "Blip."

JOE

(spins)

Got him!

RACHEL

O2!

Steckel quickly puts the mask over Nelson's face.

LABRACCIO

Adrenalin.

Rachel already there, pushing lcc of the stimulant into
Nelson's IV.

(CONTINUED)

34

CONTINUED:

34

RACHEL

In.

And now the magic begins. Nelson's eyes slowly flutter...

LABRACCIO

REM.

... then open. Nelson looks about curiously, then smiles. His fellows are drenched with sweat.

RACHEL

Nelson, can you hear us?

JOE

You crazy motherfucker. You did it.

Nelson nods weakly and moves his lips, but no sound comes forth. The others smile.

STECKLE

(sweating bullets)

Jesus Christ.

JOE

(nervous laughter)

That's quite the bedside manner, Steckle. You'll make a helluva doctor.

*

STECKLE

Suck me.

OFF their relieved reactions --

CUT TO:

35

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

35

Steckle and Joe carry Nelson, wrapped in a blanket, like a football hero across the campus. Labraccio and Rachel, more sedate, follow.

(CONTINUED)

STECKLE

Not since Lazarus or Orpheus...
Now Nelson!

JOE

You walked on the moon.

STECKLE

Trespassed on the gods.

They approach Labraccio's truck as they let him down.

RACHEL

Can you remember any of it?

NELSON

Oh yes, but it's an experience
that can't be broken down into
simple sensations... We need to
sit and talk...

(playing it to
the hilt)

Something overwhelming is out
there....

(gestures to her
chest)

... and somehow in here... I have
to go deeper. I have to go again.

STECKLE

No way. Your heart won't take it.
The trauma'll kill you.

NELSON

I'll rest, we'll reconvene in a
week.

LABRACCIO

Steckle's right, we don't even
know yet if you're fully
recovered.

Beat.

RACHEL

Then I'll go.

They all look at her, startled.

RACHEL

I want to do it...

NELSON

Wait a minute. This is my lab.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

You don't have an exclusive on death.

STECKLE

Yeah. Anyone that's dumb enough can do it.

JOE

Hey, why should you two hog all the glory? We're the guys that brought the dog back.

(including Steckle)

We'll go next.

STECKLE

Ah, Joe... I think...

JOE

Seriously, why shouldn't we all get famous from this?

NELSON

Because it's my idea!

LABRACCIO

You'll all be famous. They'll build monuments to you. Stone ones. Rest in peace.

JOE

Like it or not. I'm going next.

RACHEL

(boldly)

I would be willing to go under for a minute twenty.

JOE

One-thirty.

NELSON

(baiting him)

That would be redundant. Why not set a new standard to shoot for?

JOE

All right. One-forty.

Rachel is silent. Joe's won for a moment. They start to pile in the truck.

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

Are you all crazy or just so goddamn competitive that you would enter into a bidding war with your lives?

JOE

Nelson has inadvertently created a stock offering in fame, but the price is rising. If you guys want a piece of the glory you better climb on next, the price is rising with each investor and by the time we get up to four minutes, four-forty the dividends could be deadly.

LABRACCIO

(firing up engine)

Die to be a hero someday if you have to, but don't die to be a celebrity.

Light from the storefront splashes out on wet pavement. A lonely convenience store stands vigil. Labraccio's van is parked in front. The back doors are open. The group disembarks and mingles as we MOVE IN SLOWLY.

Steckle, Joe, and Rachel head into the store.

We're CLOSE now, right ON Nelson as he sits in the open tailgate, wrapped in a blanket. His eyes are distant, a smile of wonder. A man whose mind has been stretched.

Labraccio opens Nelson's jacket and checks the blood pressure gauge on his arm.

LABRACCIO

Are you okay, 'Wise One'?

NELSON

Labraish, I feel, like a highly tuned radio. Listen... can you hear the traffic on 128?

LABRACCIO

(reading gauge)

Uh-huh.

NELSON

Now, beneath that, there's a hum, it's from the streetlamps.

(CONTINUED)

Labraccio raises an eyebrow and stops the HISSING GAUGE.

LABRACCIO

(beat, then smiles)

Alright.

NELSON

Now even fainter. There's a scratching sound. A dragging rhythm.

Labraccio tries, nothing. He shakes his head.

LABRACCIO

Sorry.

NELSON

It's getting louder. Like a little boy, dragging a stick behind him as he delivers his morning papers. Like the same boy, sixty years older, a baker now, shuffling his tired feet home after a night by the ovens. I don't only hear it, I can feel it.

Labraccio shakes his head, smiles and stuffs the blood pressure gauge in Nelson's coat pocket.

LABRACCIO

Well, your prognosis is excellent. You'll look great on 'Sixty Minutes,' 'Doctor Death.' Can I get you something?

NELSON

No. No, go ahead. You're not buying any of this are you?

LABRACCIO

I'm an atheist.

Labraccio hurries off to the convenience store, leaving Nelson alone. Nelson listens to the SCRATCHING sound as it rises, getting louder... coming CLOSER. It's suddenly lonely, eerie and a bit grotesque in this odd setting. Nelson watches as nothing, nothing. Then, from around the corner, drags an injured dog. It sits on its rump, dragging its stiffened rear end. The dog's fur is matted with sweat and blood, as if it's been hit.

Nelson stares at the dog. It stops and stares back.

(CONTINUED)

NELSON

Puppy? Puppy? What happened?
Doggie?

It only stares. Nelson's uncomfortable.

NELSON

Puppy? Pup?

It's suddenly very cold and ugly.

NELSON

(hesitant)

Champ?

The dog slithers forward. Nelson shifts uncomfortably.
It's coming closer, slobbering from the laborious crawl.

NELSON

(scared)

Stay. Stay, Champ. Stop.

Nelson's backing away, away, into the van -- a car
wheels by, towards the dog.

NELSON

No!

A sound O.S. Nelson turns -- it's the group coming. He
turns back quickly and the dog is gone. Silence..

Only the sound of a CAR fading off into the distance.

THE GROUP

moving towards Nelson.

LABRACCIO

Somebody oughta stay with him.

STECKLE

I have class in three hours.

Joe is silent.

RACHEL

I will.

Steckle and Joe raise an eyebrow.

(CONTINUED)

36

CONTINUED: (3)

36

LABRACCIO

(beat)

Alright.

(reaching Nelson)

You okay?

NELSON

(shaken)

Yeah. I'd like to go home.

37

EXT. FIELD - SUMMER DAY

37

FLASHBACK to young Nelson, eleven years old. That same blond hair, bangs hanging in his eyes.

BOY #2 (O.S.)

Over here, Nelson!

Young Nelson turns with a smile and begins running through a field of straw with two young BOYS and Champ... now a healthy young pup. The scene is idyllic, cast in golden sun. The Boys are laughing, taunting, as they chase down some unknown prey.

BOY #1

Ollie, ollie oxen-free! Get 'im, Champ!

BOY #2

Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Champ is wagging his tail and young Nelson looks at him with adoration.

38

INT. NELSON'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

38

Nelson rolls over in bed, disturbed by what appeared to us as a pleasant dream of the past. Rachel sits watch, making notes.

RACHEL

Are you alright?

NELSON

Why?

RACHEL

You were hyperventilating.

She checks his pulse, makes more notes.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED:

38

RACHEL

We can expect your blood pressure
to rise slowly over the next
fourteen hours. As the cardio
valves --

Nelson reaches out and touches her hair. She's un-
comfortable, but he continues.

NELSON

(very softly)

You're beautiful.

RACHEL

We'll talk later. Get some rest.

She brushes his hand away and starts to leave the room.

NELSON

Twenty-four hours ago you never
thought you'd be spending the
night here.

RACHEL

You were lucky tonight. Don't
push it.

Nelson smiles. He'll try again.

39

EXT. UNIVERSITY DORMS - EARLY MORNING

39

The sunrise creates long shadows across the architecture.

40

INT. STECKLE'S DORM ROOM - EARLY MORNING

40

PAN ALONG a shelf of books written by doctors. Titles
like: Running, The Brain We Rent, etc.

Steckle sits on his bed speaking into a small recorder,
taking notes for his "novel" of this experience.

STECKLE

(melodramatic)

It was as if... it 'were' as if we
felt no fear, as if we were
already dead, and had nothing to
lose by dying.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

40

CONTINUED:

40

STECKLE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Or perhaps we lived so well, and
loved life so much, that we
imagined ourselves immortal...
overwhelming the powers that be
with the force of our passion.

(beat)

Or maybe we were just fucked in
the head.

41

INT. JOE'S LOFT - DAY

41

A dresser drawer opens revealing 15-20 1/2"
videocassettes all bearing women's names and stored
alphabetically. A hand scans the collection, then
removes the last tape, after "Yael," labeled "Engagement
Party."

STECKLE (V.O.)

Joe had volunteered on the spur
of the moment. Would he have all
of eternity to regret it?

Joe Hurley slouches in a big stuffed chair. We hear
LAUGHTER, a PARTY. Joe stares blankly at the TV.

A VIDEO PARTY. Uncle Dave addresses the camera, drunk
but sincere.

UNCLE DAVE (V.O.)

(on TV)

So I want to wish you two the best
of everything together. I'm sure
you'll be healthy, wealthy, and
happy together, with your ealth...

Let me see that thing --

(reaches for cam)

Stand over there by Anne.

Joe watches as the shakey angle adjusts to himself and
Anne, 21, a spunky, wholesome blonde whome we recognize
from their photo, now standing on the coffee table in its
proper place.

Joe apes for the camera. Anne punches his stomach
lightly. A great couple.

Joe is on the telephone, smiling. The video party
continues behind him.

JOE

Anne?

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

ANNE (V.O.)
Hi, honey. How are you?

42 INT. ANNE'S SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

42

A hall phone with scattered student traffic. Anne holds her free ear to shield the sound.

JOE (V.O.)
I'm looking forward to
Thanksgiving.

ANNE
I know. I can't wait.

INTERCUT WITH Joe.

JOE
Sometimes I wonder... Maybe we
should have gotten married last
summer.

(silence)
You know you're the best. If
anything should ever happen...

ANNE
Joey? What's wrong?

JOE
I don't know. I feel so tired. I
should go. Not really making sense.

ANNE
Joe? You're scaring me. What's
wrong?

JOE
Nothing. I love you.

He hangs up and shakes his head at his own inability to
articulate.

STECKLE (V.O.)
Day 99. Medical roulette!
Chamber two.

*
*
*

43 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

43

Hurley is preparing to go under. He shakes hands
solemnly with the others and climbs up on the gurney.

STECKLE (V.O.)
It was Hurley's turn with the gun.

(CONTINUED)

43

CONTINUED:

43

JOE

And now to board the interstellar
cruiser.

As Rachel presses the EKG suction cups to his arms, legs
and heart, Joe pulls Steckle close.

JOE

If anything happens to me, burn
my tapes.

STECKLE

You can count on me, Mr. Nixon.

As Nelson puts the nitrous mask over Joe's mouth, we --

SMASH CUT TO:

44

JOE'S DEATH EXPERIENCE - NOW

44

A large breast. Mom. Milk-laden breasts. A screaming
tour of erotica and Joe's sexcapades. You'd think he
died and went to the Playboy Mansion. T & A, hookers on
street corners, high school, summer school, grade school,
pushing through to --

45

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

45

The EKG goes flat, giving off its BEEP.

RACHEL

Flatline.

STECKLE

Yes, that's confirmed asystole,
which is what we're doing here.
There is tension, there is fear
as Mister 'L' removes the oxygen
mask...

Steckle tries to video the experiment with shakey hands.
His tape recorder hangs around his neck... running oral
notes.

Labraccio removes the oxygen mask as Nelson flicks OFF the
EKG TONE. Silence. The six lines of the EEG continue to
scribble. Only the brain is alive.

STECKLE

This is okay. Everything is fine.
Subject 'J' lies peacefully. Quite
a study. A fascinating study.

(CONTINUED)

45

CONTINUED:

45

NELSON

You're babbling, Steckle.

*

LABRACCIO

He does that.

46

JOE'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

46

SOARING OVER, THROUGH and UNDER curvaceous forms. Cresting waves of bosoms TOWARDS a distant light.

47

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

47

The frantic scribbles of the EEG have now reduced to tiny tremors. We watch as even those disappear, creating a series of thin, flat lines.

RACHEL

He's dead.

STECKLE

Oh boy. That's cessation of all brain function. Absence of all, ah, reflexes.

Steckle shifts for a better angle and knocks over the tank of high pressure nitrous.

NELSON

Steckle.

The cap snaps off and the tank spins wildly on the floor.

LABRACCIO

Look out!

Steckle backs into a chair and trips. The tank whirls beneath Joe's gurney. It slams through the wall, covering them all in a cloud of asbestos.

48

JOE'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

48

CLOSER TO the light. RACING ACROSS the sexual landscape. Women. Women. Too many women. Suddenly -- ZAP -- the POV VEERS off-course.

49

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

49

LABRACCIO

Atrophine in.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

49

Nelson is pumping on Joe's sternum as Rachel probes Joe's throat with the laryngoscope. The room is obscured by all the dust.

RACHEL

This is not sterile... got it.
Air.

NELSON

Three-one-thousand, four-one
thousand, five-one-thousand,
breath.

Rachel squeezes the bag as Steckle pans over to the EKG.

STECKLE

Nothing. Flat. I apologize. I'm
sorry everyone, I'm sorry. Please,
Joe, I mean 'J,' please, 'J' --
Come back!

50

JOE'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

50

Screaming BACK THROUGH the sensual pleasures. Who would
ever want to leave?

51

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

51

Joe's chest: We MOVE IN. Nelson's hands are rocking the
sternum, but there's no movement above the left nipple
as we hear the FRANTIC EFFORTS as they race to save his
life.

STECKLE (O.S.)

C.P.R. and Atrophine, but not a
mother-fuckin' --

NELSON (O.S.)

What's the matter here! C'mon,
Joe. C'mon, man. C'mon, c'mon...

Labraccio watches, getting concerned. His eyes meet
Rachel's.

RACHEL

A minute-forty.

Labraccio sighs and steps forward.

LABRACCIO

Nelson, let me try.

(CONTINUED)

51

CONTINUED:

51

NELSON

I'm doing every-fuckin'-thing I
can!

LABRACCIO

We're running out of time.

STECKLE

Yes, let Dave try!

RACHEL

Step back, Nelson.

Nelson moves back angrily as Labraccio picks up the
beat.

LABRACCIO

One-one-thousand, two-one-
thousand...

Nelson glares from the sidelines.

52

JOE'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

52

CAREENING TOWARDS a light --

53

INT. DOG LAB - CLOSE ON JOE'S NIPPLE - NIGHT

53

STECKLE

We're dead. No P, Q, R, S, T
waves --

LABRACCIO

Five-one-thousand, breathe --

The chest is still, silent, then --

"WHAM." It jumps ever so slightly, accompanied by the
sound of an ATOM BOMB.

"BLIP." Steckle wheels with astonished glee as the EKG
jumps.

"WHAM," Joe's chest pulses again.

Steckle leaps in the air and almost drops Joe's
camcorder.

STECKLE

Yeah!

Labraccio smiles, his eyes meet Rachel's. They respect
each other. Nelson doesn't miss this.

(CONTINUED)

53

CONTINUED:

53

LABRACCIO

Pacemaker.

Rachel smiles and shakes her head, it was a hard-won fight.

RACHEL

Strong hearts... I love them.

STECKLE

We did it! We got him!

"THUMP," Joe's neck vein leaps. "THUMP."

LABRACCIO

(apologetic)

Nelson...

Nelson turns away and injects the Atrophine into Joe's line. It should have been he who brought Joe back.

CLOSE ON JOE'S LIPS

as they quiver around the laryngyscope. The gag reflex begins to kick in as we --

CUT TO:

54

INT. EMPIRE DELI - NIGHT

54

Joe smiles as the group relaxes at a center table. He's wrapped in a blanket and at this late hour they're the only customers in the diner.

JOE

It was great.

LABRACCIO

(smiles)

Here it comes.

RACHEL

Define 'great.'

JOE

'Great' is not thinking about the past, or the future, it's just feeling here, now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Nelson's right. There's something out there... activity beyond death.

NELSON

Absolutely.

JOE

The experience was a little strange. Almost... erotic.

STECKLE

Leave it to Hurley to try to get laid after death.

NELSON

Erotic?

JOE

(quickly)

Just a little. I don't want you to think that it was casually, wantonly sexual, by any means. But there was an energy which I could feel, which felt like heat on the outside and love on the inside. It's hard to explain, maybe impossible --

LABRACCIO

I think you just redefined 'Big Bang.'

JOE

No, really... I think that there was something friendly and vaguely feminine guiding me.

Nelson knows this had nothing to do with his experience.

STECKLE

This is the conquest of our generation! The last great frontier. First you had the sea, then America, the West, the moon. The hippies had their drugs and the inner journey. But this is ours!

He jumps up excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

(smiling)

After growing up on disco --

STECKLE

We finally found something
worthwhile! Something to upstage
those fuckin' baby boomers!

NELSON

You mean 'I' found. I found it,
Steckle.

The diner's only WAITRESS, 42, interrupts with the check.

WAITRESS

Watch your language.

JOE

Sorry, but I came back from the
dead tonight.

WAITRESS

Is that so? Well, if you know the
trick, I wish you'd pass it on to
my mother. I miss her dearly.

(leaves check)

You can pay when you're ready.

She leaves.

RACHEL

(to Joe)

Did it seem difficult on your
end, getting back?

JOE

Nothing I remember.

LABRACCIO

But he remembers everything else.
You guys are full of it.

(to Nelson)

You lie and Joe swears by it.

NELSON

(smiles)

I wouldn't believe us, either.
Not until I saw for myself. How
'bout it, Labraich?

JOE

Yeah. If you're an atheist, you
have nothing to lose.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

I'm going next.

LABRACCIO

I think both of them just saw what they wanted to, and nothing's been answered. Give it up. It's getting too dangerous.

A moment.

RACHEL

We can't turn back now. It's too late. I'm going further. One-fifty.

The group looks at one another.

LABRACCIO

(beat)

Two minutes.

Everyone looks at Labraccio in disbelief.

STECKLE

I thought you said...

LABRACCIO

I changed my mind. I'll go two minutes.

RACHEL

Two-oh-five.

LABRACCIO

Two-fifteen.

Rachel burns, as the others look at Labraccio. She gets up and leaves. Labraccio follows.

Labraccio catches up to Rachel.

LABRACCIO

Hold on.

RACHEL

What was that, your idea of chivalry?

LABRACCIO

Hardly...

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

Or were you just trying to show me up?

LABRACCIO

What makes you think everything's about you?

RACHEL

Because nobody seems to want me to go under. I don't need your protection, Labraccio.

LABRACCIO

There seems to be a lotta speculation about what you need, Kinberg.

Rachel, really pissed now, stops.

RACHEL

Oh yeah, and what did you decide in your infinite wisdom?

LABRACCIO

I decided you probably work too hard to see anybody steady and you're too serious and shy to see someone casually.

Rachel is totally disarmed. He's right, and this is not where she thought the conversation was going. She doesn't know how to respond. Finally:

RACHEL

Well then why did you change your mind?

LABRACCIO

I'm the skeptic, the control in the experiment. I should go next. If there's nothing out there, I won't tell myself there is, and we'll know there's no reason to go on.

RACHEL

You don't believe anything Nelson and Hurley have experienced?

LABRACCIO

I'm sure they've seen something, probably images from their lives discharged by a dying brain, much like a computer dumping its program.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

Then how do you explain the similarity of death experiences from all over the world; the fact that people from different cultures and religions see the same things, in the same order?

LABRACCIO

I don't know, maybe there's some chemical or hormone released in the brain at the time of death that makes it more palatable to us.

RACHEL

You're reaching, Doc. What if you go and there is something there?

LABRACCIO

Then you can kill yourself all you want.

RACHEL

I don't want to kill myself.

LABRACCIO

I'm glad to hear that. I don't even know you... but I might miss you.

Rachel allows herself a little smile, touched in spite of herself.

LABRACCIO

Why this obsession with death?

RACHEL

It's not an obsession. It's an interest...

(pause)

A personal interest.

She looks at Labraccio a beat, as if debating whether to tell him more. No, she can't.

RACHEL

Good night.

LABRACCIO

'Night.

Rachel walks away. Labraccio watches her go as Nelson takes this all in from afar.

9/23/89

46.

56

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

56

Nelson walks with his brooding thoughts along the dark sidewalk. Traffic is sparse. Turning a:

57

CORNER

57

he passes the homeless huddling on subway vents, bathing in the warm mist.

The streets get weirder, grotesque. Burning garbage pails and scary shadows. A BAG WOMAN rants and raves to no one in particular. As Nelson passes she turns to face him eye-to-eye.

BAG WOMAN

... 'Cause in the end, we know
what we've done.

Rattled, Nelson turns off the main fare and cuts through a dark alley, leaving the noise and the safety of the people behind. Only the sound of his own breath, and the clicking rhythm of boots on broken tar.

Nelson hurries along. He approaches a narrower alley, then hears it. The sound again. The sound of the DOG.

It stops Nelson in his tracks... The dog slithers into view. Nelson studies the beast, then muscles through his fear.

NELSON

Champ?

The dog turns and slithers away.

Nelson follows.

Around a corner. Down a tiny alley. Into another narrower alley. He's scared, but continues forward. Suddenly, the dog is gone. Nelson's confused. A little lost.

NELSON

Champ?

Nelson sees an open doorway ahead. He enters.

58

INT. ICE HOUSE - NIGHT

58

A long narrow building, 1/4 mile long, with a low ceiling. Spooky. Nelson pads cautiously forward.

NELSON

Here pup. C'mon.

(CONTINUED)

58

CONTINUED:

58

Up ahead he notices a small figure standing in the shadows. It strikes Nelson as curious, but nothing worthy of alarm. As Nelson approaches, the figure reveals itself to be a small boy, about ten years old. Sweet-faced and forlorn.

NELSON

What's up, kid. What are you doing here?

The boy is silent. Nelson scrutinizes his sad face.

NELSON

You lost? Hey kid, are you okay?

The waif looks up into Nelson's face. His skin is chalk white. His features are suddenly frightening and evil. Without warning, the boy kicks Nelson in the crotch.

NELSON

Uhhh.

Nelson folds as the boy steps forward and rains a hail-storm of man-strength fists upon him. To the stomach, to the head. Nelson buckles.

*

NELSON

(astonished)

Mother fucker --

CRACK, another CRUNCHING right to the JAW. Nelson falls back and smacks his head on the pavement. A sickening thud. Nelson clings to the verge of consciousness as the boy steps above him. If this is the end, there's no defense.

The boy eyes Nelson blankly, then turns and runs away. Nelson coughs on his own blood.

59

EXT. CITY - DAWN (HALLOWEEN)

59

A haunting sunrise. The city yawns, stretches, and brings itself to life. Beautiful. Cold. October. A truckload of pumpkins is being unloaded, scattered on hay in an empty lot.

STECKLE (V.O.)

It was as if we had stepped on the moon. We knew that we were now within reach of the secrets of eternity. My own courage in the face of death had changed my views of mortality... I tried to give the others strength.

60 EXT. LABRACCIO'S HOUSE - DAWN 60

Labraccio hangs from his mountain gear. Sleep is out of the question.

STECKLE (V.O.)

Labraccio would journey next, and of course, because it would be most dangerous, I had offered to go last.

61 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - DAWN 61

CAM TRAVELS THROUGH Nelson's apartment, FINDING him beaten and terrified -- still in his clothes from last night.

STECKLE (V.O.)

How ironic that as each person journeyed further in, Nelson, the first to go, would probably end up having the easiest time.

CAM STOPS ON Nelson's terrified face. Steckle couldn't be more wrong.

62 EXT. CAMPUS - DAY 62

Joe, feeling full of himself, catches up with TERRY, the young co-ed girl from Rachel's hospital group.

JOE

Hi... I'm Joe Hurley... you're Terry.

TERRY

Uh-huh.

JOE

I heard you had a near-death experience.

TERRY

I don't want to talk about it.

She moves quickly away from Joe and enters one of the buildings.

63 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 63

Joe catches up with her.

(CONTINUED)

63

CONTINUED:

63

JOE

Wait a minute... I had one also.

TERRY

(skeptical)

You did?

Joe is full of charm and shit.

JOE

And... well, I kind of need to
share it with someone... it,
it changed my life.

64

INT. STUDENT LOUNGE

64

Terry falls for it as they enter the student lounge...
decorated with Halloween fare. A couple of young women
who have obviously been seduced and abandoned by Joe
get up and leave.

TERRY

Well, first of all, they didn't
even believe me.

JOE

Well, we've been there. We know.

TERRY

I'll never forget it...

JOE

I want to hear everything. But
if you have to go to class, well,
maybe we could grab a bite some
night this week and compare notes.

TERRY

You know, all that day I knew
something was going to happen.
I've always had premonitions
about things. Once my aunt was
supposed to fly in from Las Vegas,
and I said to my mother...

As Joe pretends to be interested in more than her body,
he notices the screen of the student lounge TV. Could it
be porno? Well, sort of. He stares and slowly realizes
that it's one of his own tapes.

CLOSE ON JOE

as he freaks out.

(CONTINUED)

64

CONTINUED:

64

ON TV

Suddenly, the attractive Girl in the tape that Joe is making love to looks directly at the screen and speaks to him.

GIRL (V.O.)

Why'd you do this to me, Joe?

CAM MOVES CLOSER to Joe as he freaks.

65

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

65

Nelson studies his battered face in the mirror. He takes a needle with thread, and stitches a cut above his eye. Suddenly a noise. A SCRATCHING.

Nelson leaves the bathroom and crosses quickly to the front door. He listens. Nothing.

Nelson opens the door slowly and peers out into the corridor. Nothing. His vision drops to the door.

There, on the lower panel, are scratch marks, shorn into the wood. Dog scratching.

A noise, SMALL FEET coming up the stairs. Nelson slams the door shut and races through his apartment. He grabs a coat and flies out the back door.

66

INT. BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT

66

Nelson dives down the hallway and jumps down a back staircase. Hyperventilating, he crashes open a heavy fire door.

67

INT. HALLWAY

67

He reaches the ground floor and peers out cautiously. No one in sight. He steps out. Suddenly FOOTSTEPS coming down the stairs. A shadow crosses the lobby. Nelson turns back but it's too late. The fire door is locked. He's trapped, waiting in terror as the FOOTSTEPS NEAR. CLOSER, CLOSER, up in the throat closer... only to reveal two LITTLE GIRLS in Halloween costumes.

LITTLE GIRL #1

Trick or treat.

Nelson charges past her, into the night.

68

INT. DORM - NIGHT

68

A rockin' party of beer-slamming ghouls, ghosts, and witches. The crowd has spilled out into the hall and Joe Hurley parties in costume with his friends, declining funnels, shots, and suggestive stares. He checks his watch. 8:30.

JOE

(disappointed)

Shit.

He squeezes towards the door and happens to catch the security monitor above his head. Black and white. Rainy. Another one of Joe's sex tapes. The Young Woman stares at Joe.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I trusted you, Joe.

He freaks and runs out of the dorm.

69

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

69

A large bonfire. Students in flowing sheets, skeletons, and pumpkin heads dash around the yard. It's beautiful, erotic, and scary.

*

70

INT. TAFT HALL - MURAL - NIGHT

70

More has been restored and now we see wings, soaring heroic images have begun to emerge.

71

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

71

The shades are drawn. Tiny highbeam work lights. Labraccio, Rachel, and Steckle are setting up shop. Nelson enters.. He's very shaky.

STECKLE

Thought you weren't coming.

They see his battered face as he moves forward.

LABRACCIO

Nelson? What happened?

NELSON

Does it look as bad as it feels?

STECKLE

It does.

RACHEL

Who did it?

(CONTINUED)

71

CONTINUED:

71

NELSON

Some guys, big buys, I didn't
know 'em, it doesn't matter.

Joe enters in his Halloween garb and gives the crowd
a start.

JOE

I don't feel very well.
(sees Nelson)
What happened to you?

NELSON

Enough. Worry about your camera.

Rachel adheres the EKG leads to Labraccio's bare chest.
His pounding heart betrays the cool demeanor.

RACHEL

(touching his chest)
Think about a place that's nice.
It'll help you relax.

Labraccio smiles. Nelson notices the two. Steckle
adheres the EEG leads as Joe powers up his camera.

LABRACCIO

Randy.

STECKLE

Yes?

Labraccio extends his hand. Steckle shakes it,
awkwardly.

STECKLE

Good luck.

LABRACCIO

Joe?

JOE

Huh?

Labraccio's hand is extended.

JOE

Oh.

(hurries over
and shakes it)
Right. It's beautiful. You'll
love it.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED: (2)

71

Labraccio smiles and extends his hand to Nelson. Nelson feels something between Rachel and Labraccio. He shakes the hand.

NELSON

(grudgingly)

Hurry back. You can buy me breakfast.

LABRACCIO

(smiles)

Nelson... don't let go of the rope.

72 INT. TUNNEL - NOW

72

Labraccio's trip. FLASHBACKS of his life. We see him walking with Rachel, an hour ago, jogging along the lake, with Nelson at his house, in the ER with the woman, then a small-town parade, high school graduation, a teen with a hot car, (Bacon home movies?) racing through these images, barely discernible, little girls chant and jump rope, faster, faster, then blasting into a beautiful aerial of mountains. Soaring. Flying.

73 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

73

The EKG goes flat. BEEP.

JOE

Flatline.

Steckle removes the oxygen mask as Nelson flicks OFF the TONE. He continues with his running oral notes.

STECKLE

As I remove the oxygen mask, my hands tremor slightly.

NELSON

Shut up, Steckle.

74 INT. TUNNEL - NOW

74

Soaring high above the earth, breathtaking. Beautiful.

75 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

75

The EEG needles have reduced to tiny tremors. We watch as they disappear, creating a series of thin flat lines.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

54.

75

CONTINUED:

75

NELSON

He's dead. Kaput.

(eyeing Rachel)

Maybe never to come back.

(beat)

Would you miss him?

She is not amused.

STECKLE

Two minutes. And we can only wait.

76

INT. TUNNEL - NOW

76

Still SOARING, the ethereal CHANT of LITTLE GIRLS joins the sound of AIR. Suddenly our image STROBES. Breaking up. More SOARING, BLACK, then back to the mountains. Something's wrong.

77

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

77

STECKLE

Two-twenty. Over twice the time of our first venture into the beyond.

Joe pans from Labraccio to the EKG monitor, but instead of a flat line, he sees himself having sex with a woman. Another tape.

Joe lowers his camcorder and stares. Dumbfounded.

RACHEL

Stations.

NELSON

(eyeing Rachel)

What do you say we give him another five seconds?

Rachel can't believe this.

STECKLE

What?

NELSON

Or ten? Why not? Think about it. We have a little more time to decide.

Joe eases over to the EKG monitor and stands in front of it, not wanting the others to see --

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED:

77

RACHEL

Stations, Joe. You're blocking
our view.

STECKLE

C'mon, no kidding around here.
Two forty-five.

NELSON

Who's kidding?

JOE

(laughs
uncomfortably)
What, what's going on here?

RACHEL

Quiet.

"SNAP," a WINDOW SHADE flies up. The group wheels and
there are faces at the windows. Halloween masks. Joe
lunges for the shade, yanking it down.

JOE

Damn it!

STECKLE

C'mon, it's two fifty-six, seven,
fifty-eight --

Joe lifts his camera back to his eye and sees another
section of one of his videos through the viewfinder.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

You said you loved me, Joe.

He drops the camera as Rachel wheels.

RACHEL

Three minutes! Let's go!

78

INT. TUNNEL - NOW

78

"Whunk," our POV is yanked from the sky. Flailing,
spiraling downward. Strobing madly. Little GIRLS
CHANTING.

79

INT. DOG LAB - NOW

79

Rachel is pumping Labraccio's chest as Nelson counts
for her.

(CONTINUED)

STECKLE

Atrophine in.

NELSON

Three one-thousand, four one-thousand, five... what comes next?

STECKLE

What the fuck! Knock it off, Nelson. The 'Eppy's' in, all the injections are in. I'm ready.

RACHEL

(extremely focused)

Breathe. Randy, take the ambu bag from Nelson. It's time for him to leave.

STECKLE

C'mon you guys, please!

Nelson squeezes the bag as Rachel continues to pump.

NELSON

Relax. I'm only kidding. One one thousand, two one-thousand...

Joe watches as if it's all a strange dream. Rachel ignores the men around her.

RACHEL

Alright, Dave, c'mon. Come on back. Please.

80 INT. TUNNEL - NOW

80

LITTLE GIRLS CHANTING. Racing back through a tunnel, which is a TRAIN BLASTING back and bursting out --

81 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

81

Across the room to the EKG. A SONIC ROAR paying off with a "BLIP." Steckle wheels.

STECKLE

That's it! That's it!

RACHEL

That's not it.

The EKG is a thin quavering line.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

He's stuck in 'V-fib.' Defibs,
200 joules.

JOE

What?

NELSON

I got 'em. Clear.

Nelson steps forward and "WHAM." Labraccio's body leaps
off the gurney. The EKG still quavers. Rachel dives
back into CPR.

RACHEL

C'mon, Dave, you're here. You're
home. Pick up the beat.

Nelson cranks up the heat on the defibs --

NELSON

300! Clear!

"WHAM." Labraccio bucks again. "BLIP," "BLIP."

RACHEL

One one-thousand, two one-thousand
... 360!

Nelson cranks the defibs higher and "WHAM." "BLIP,"
"BLIP," "BLIP"... then back down to the wavering line.

RACHEL

Shit! Steckle, lidocaine, 75 I.V.
push!

Steckle scrambles for the syringe and injects it in the
IV portal as the others continue CPR.

STECKLE

Four minutes!

RACHEL

Nelson 360!

"WHAM," "BLIP," "BLIP," "BLIP." They hold their breath,
a pause, then "BLIP," "BLIP"... a strong steady beat.

JOE

(waking from his
daze)

That sounds good.

STECKLE

Oh boy. Oh my God. That was
close. That was too close.

Labraccio's in bed, surrounded by the group and a host of liquids. His eyes are wide, a smile frozen on his face.

LABRACCIO

For awhile, it was wonderful. I felt as though I were soaring. I'm really overwhelmed. The power of the unharnessed human mind --

NELSON

(smiles)

You were brain dead, Labraish. There was no mind.

LABRACCIO

I know. But electrical current still circulating through the body --

STECKLE

Would have shown up on the E.E.G.

They're all smiles as Labraccio grapples with the inconsistency.

JOE

Forget about your body. We had your body... now what did you see?

Labraccio is silent, reaching for the words. The group laughs.

NELSON

He's blown.

LABRACCIO

It's a bit of a stretch, more of a feeling really... like being paranoid without the fear. Knowing, without seeing, that you're being watched. Examined. This could be what Joe described as 'feminine.'

STECKLE

What do you mean? What could be watching?

RACHEL

God?

(CONTINUED)

JOE & STECKLE

Oh come on!

NELSON

(beat)

The dead?

LABRACCIO

I didn't say that.

Rachel is silent. Thinking.

STECKLE

Could they be watching?

JOE

Why not? Where else do they go?

NELSON

Wherever they go, we're right on their trail. What Dave felt has to be verified. I'm going again.

RACHEL

No way, Nelson. I've been bumped twice.

LABRACCIO

You can't do that, it's her choice.

NELSON

You want me to outbid her? Four minutes! How's that!

RACHEL

Four minutes?

STECKLE

But that was a mistake! We almost lost Dave.

NELSON

And now we're out there.

JOE

That's bullshit, Nelson. Labraccio went in for three minutes.

NELSON

Anything less than four is redundant.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NELSON (CONT'D)

I don't think we should get
sexist where science is concerned.
I'll do a 4:25 myself if that's
what it takes. 4:25 rhymes with
alive!

STECKLE

Nobody can go that long.

NELSON

I can. I'm the Harry Houdini of
death. The great escape artist!

RACHEL

Harry Houdini promised his wife on
his deathbed to contact her from
the beyond. He never did.

NELSON

I'll have to ask him 'Why?' Five
minutes!!

Steckle shakes his head. Joe is silent. Rachel knows
she can't outbid this.

LABRACCIO

Without Rachel's help, five
minutes will be hard enough,
but without me --

STECKLE

Or me.

Joe is silent.

NELSON

(smiling)

Aha... Mutiny at last.

(to Rachel and
Labraccio)

The two of you, against me.

LABRACCIO

Go home and get some rest, Nelson.

NELSON

I trusted you, with my idea. The
kind of idea, so simple, so
brilliant, that you only get one
in a lifetime.

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

We're not messin' with your idea.
We're just giving everybody a
chance to participate in it,
maybe add to it, while the risk
is still manageable.

NELSON

Who gave you permission? I
fuckin' initiated this whole
thing. The rest of you were
sittin' around on your honor
rolls worryin' about what color
Mercedes to buy.

*

(CONTINUED)

82

CONTINUED: (3)

82

JOE

Oh, now he's the voice of
altruism. What were you planning
on driving, a Yugo?

NELSON

You're all just dilettantes,
playin' at being heavy.

RACHEL

Everybody here has been willing
to risk death, that's not playing.

NELSON

None of you had the foresight
to think of this. None of you
had the balls to do it, until
I did. Now everybody's lookin'
for their cut.

(to Rachel)

I coulda shared it with you. But
fuck the rest of you. You're
just tourists.

With that, Nelson turns and walks out. What can the
others say?

83

EXT. CHICAGO AVENUE - NIGHT

83

Steckle and Joe hustle home with Joe's broken camera.
They pass a darkened appliance store.

STECKLE

I would have gone 3:20 or 3:30,
of course I would. But 4:25 is
crazy. We're pushing the five
minute mark...

Suddenly the TV's in the widow begin to light up with
images of Joe's tapes. The women speak to him.
Steckle babbles on, unaware of Joe's nightmare.

84

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

84

Nelson, bitter and alone, enters.

He walks from the living room into his bedroom and
freezes. There's a muddy little sneaker print on his
pillow. The window above the bed is open. A GIGGLE.
Nelson turns. It's the boy.

(CONTINUED)

NELSON

(strained bravado)

So what do you want? What do you want... Billy? Billy Mahoney, right? You want me to kick the shit out of you? Is that what you want?

Billy steps closer, picking up Nelson's hockey stick. He begins to purr softly, mimicking an animal.

BILLY

Raccoon.

(purrs)

Baby raccoon.

NELSON

(closes his eyes)

You're in my head. You're in my fuckin' head. Go away. You're in my head.

Billy purrs with a smile, then "cracks" Nelson across the head with the stick, sending him sprawling.

NELSON

Aahhh!

Billy bashes Nelson. Nelson scrambles across the bed to the phone, reaches for it, but Billy brings the stick down on his fingers, crunching them.

NELSON

Shit!

Billy breaks the stick in two across Nelson's back, then punches, reopening old cuts, drawing blood from bruises. He flops Nelson over on his back --

Then sits on Nelson's chest, pinning his arms back with his knees. Billy looks down at his helpless victim and laughs.

NELSON

Alright, alright, I give --

Billy smiles and lets some spit drool slowly from his mouth, down towards Nelson's face. Torture techniques from the third grade. Just as the spit is about to drop, he sucks it back up, giggles and starts again.

Nelson starts to scream --

85

EXT. CITY - DAWN

85

His SCREAM FADES OVER the frozen landscape. It's an ugly day.

86

INT. LABRACCIO'S HOUSE - DAWN

86

Rachel, having spent the night on Labraccio's sofa, brings orange juice to him in the bedroom.

RACHEL

I'm on early shift at the hospital. You seem fine. Tonight then...

LABRACCIO

Wait a minute. Sit down.

Rachel balks.

LABRACCIO

Please. Have a seat.

Rachel sits uncomfortably on the bed. Pause.

LABRACCIO

Thank you for staying.

RACHEL

(quickly)
Don't try to talk me out of it.

LABRACCIO

I'm not.

RACHEL

Not after you just went. You hypocrite.

LABRACCIO

Whoa. Okay.

RACHEL

(reluctantly)
People who were close to me have died. I want to know that they're in a good place. Does that sound trivial? Naive?

LABRACCIO

That's the only good reason I've heard for going. Listen to me, Rachel. The soaring sensation I described, it was wonderful.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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*
*
*
*

86

CONTINUED: (A1)

86

LABRACCIO (CONT'D)

If man or woman were able to go further, another ten minutes or so, I'm sure that it would lead to a beautiful place.

RACHEL

So I guess you're not an atheist anymore.

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

I tell you this because you wanted to know. I honestly believe, after being so close myself, that people who die are well taken care of.

(beat)

Now that's not coming from any book, any religion, or any stranger on the ward. It's coming from me. If you believe I'm telling the truth... you don't have to go. If something went wrong...

RACHEL

(tender)

I believe you. But I also believe in you. I know that you have the skill and ability to let me see these things for myself...

She rises. There's no dissuading her.

RACHES

(smiles)

So thank you, but just think about all we'll have to talk about when you bring me back.

OFF Labraccio's reaction --

INT. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - WARD - MORNING

Rachel attends to the Terminal Woman, who looks at her with the same terrified eyes.

TERMINAL WOMAN

I'm dying... don't lie to me.

Rachel decides not to.

RACHEL

You've put up a great fight and you're very tired and in great pain. Maybe the right thing is to let go.

TERMINAL WOMAN

That's what the voices say, but I don't know how to let go...

RACHEL

Voices?

(CONTINUED)

87

CONTINUED:

87

TERMINAL WOMAN

They say, 'have you done enough?'
Have you told everyone you love
them? But I have... I have...

Rachel comforts her.

RACHEL

Sshhh. They're friendly voices
and they're just telling you
what you need to know...

TERMINAL WOMAN

What?

RACHEL

That you have some place to go.

TERMINAL WOMAN

(tears)

Do you believe that?

After speaking with Labraccio --

RACHEL

Yes. I do.

88

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

88

Rachel hurries to class.

STECKLE (V.O.)

Rachel Kinberg was a Venus to
some, a bitch to others, but
always too beautiful to be
ignored.

89

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

89

Steckle sits watching her as he speaks into his recorder.

STECKLE (V.O.)

Let's call this 'Chapter Three...
The Enigma That Is Woman.' Rachel
Kinberg knew more about death than
Joseph Hurley knew about women. I
believe that Rachel's fascination
with the netherworld stemmed from
long repressed sexual urges...
make note to borrow something from
Freud here.

9/23/89

66.

90

INT. RACHEL'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

90

Rachel prepares herself for her experience. Looking over her things, she comes across a photograph of herself as a little girl with her father in Army uniform.

STECKLE (V.O.)

Either way, Rachel confided in me, drawing advice from me, due to the well-mannered grace with which I stepped back and allowed her to explore the netherworld before me.

91

EXT. LONELY BUILDING BEING REPAIRED - AFTERNOON

91

A recently rediscovered old neighborhood in the process of gentrification. Workman on scaffolding. CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY.

RACHEL

from her car searching the building. Searching for something.

STECKLE (V.O.)

Willfully putting myself in the most dangerous position and deadly position... last.

92

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - DUSK

92

A train rushes by.

DISTANT THUNDER RUMBLES in the sky.

93

INT. TRAIN

93

Labraccio scrunched among silent commuters. The city whizzes by. The train enters a tunnel and proceeds underground. The train goes black. Odd light flashes by. Suddenly, a small voice.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Felatio!

Labraccio is startled. He searches the sporadic darkness with his eyes.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, shit for brains.

(CONTINUED)

93

CONTINUED:

93

Labraccio looks through the crowd. Bodies shift to reveal a small black GIRL, six yeras old, angelic in appearance, with the vocabulary of a drill sergeant.

GIRL (VOICE)

Got a match?

Heads are turning.

GIRL

Well, I do. Your face and my ass.
Your breath and a buffalo fart.

Labraccio is stunned. He doesn't know how to react.

The other passengers' reactions are changing from shock to amusement.

*

LABRACCIO

Do I know --

GIRL

You don't know jack-shit, butt-wad. You needle-dick, cock-bite, jagg-off, limp-wrist, corn-hole, banana-breath --

Labraccio is embarrassed, trapped. And the girl won't let up.

GIRL

Shit bird, bird-turd, turd-face, kiss-ass, brown-nose, macho-wimp, limp-dick, fuck-face, turd-merchant. What's the matter, gonna cry? C'mon, and cry baby Davie, c'mon and cry, cry, cry. You shit-face, rat-turd, ass-licking...

The subway comes out of the tunnel into the daylight. There is no little Girl. The commuters have seen and heard nothing.

94

EXT. STATION

94

The subway lurches to a stop and Labraccio dives onto the platform.

(CONTINUED)

94

CONTINUED:

94

Labraccio charges up the cement stairs, taking them two at a time, sprinting towards daylight. His heart hammers, demanding air. Labraccio reaches the top stair, choking for air, and bursts into the twilight.

95

EXT. STREET - DUSK (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

95

It begins to rain. Labraccio stops, bewildered.

He's shocked at his own reaction. He wipes casually at his eye and finds a tear. Labraccio rubs it off, curious. Blown-out. A tear?

96

EXT. TAFT BUILDING - NIGHT

96

It is raining.

97

INT. TAFT BUILDING - NIGHT

97

CAMERA MOVES TOWARD mural.

DISSOLVE TO:

98

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

98

All is silent, except for the pounding rain. Rachel lies down on the gurney. She's wired for sound, but a creeping sense of panic has set in. Too much time. Time for second thoughts. Nelson and Steckle stand quietly. Joe shifts a bucket under one of the dozen leaks in the roof. Puddles form on the floor.

Steckle checks his watch. 9:40.

NELSON

No show Labraccio.

JOE

This isn't like him.

RACHEL

It's his way of trying to stop me.
It won't work. I'm ready.

STECKLE

We can't, Rachel. Not without
Labraccio.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

69.

98 CONTINUED:

98

RACHEL

Randy, bring me that nitrous.
You'll be responsible for the
O2 as well.

Steckle turns to Nelson. Nelson shrugs. Steckle sets
the camera down, turns on the nitrous, and steps forward
with the mask.

99 INT. TAFT BUILDING - NIGHT

99

Labraccio, soaking wet, races down the corridor towards
Dog Lab.

100 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

100

Labraccio barges through the door. Heads snap. Rachel's
on the gurney, laid out cold. The EEG is flat.

LABRACCIO

How long has she been under?

STECKLE

(into mike)

Thank God, Student 'L' has
arrived.

(to Labraish)

Two minutes.

LABRACCIO

We're bringing her back.

JOE

What is it?

LABRACCIO

Click that blanket to 'warm.'
Body temp?

NELSON

Eighty-eight, captain.

JOE

Maybe we should wait, Dave. She
did want to go four-twenty-five.

LABRACCIO

Just do it.

NELSON

(smiles)

Don't expect any hugs or kisses
for this one.

101 INT. RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

101

Flashes of light from Instamatics. A party, circa 1967. A banner in the modest home reads "Welcome Home Daddy." Glimpses of a young father and his daughters, home from the war. A warm, disjointed dreamy quality. Her father's eyes are not happy.

A staircase, and our POV begins to descend. More flashes of light, and the mood begins to change. Innocent, naive, but suddenly creepy.

102 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

102

Labraccio intubates Rachel as Joe injects the Eppy and Atrophine. Nelson pumps on her sternum as Labraccio eyes his battered face.

LABRACCIO

What do you know?

STECKLE

Ninety degrees and everything looks good.

LABRACCIO

(to Nelson)

What's going on here?

NELSON

(nonchalant)

We're bringing Rachel back early. That's all.

LABRACCIO

That's all? Huh?

STECKLE

Ninety-one.

JOE

C'mon, you guys, don't start, not now. Let's think about Rachel.

STECKLE

I've got air.

Labraccio squeezes the Ambu bag.

A crack in the ceiling. Water is running down the wall and over the socket where the defibs are plugged.

9/23/89

71.

103 RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

103

A doorway at the end of the hall. MOVING CLOSER, CLOSER.
Our 4' POV reaches for the doorknob and opens --

FATHER (O.S.)

Stay out!!!

Her MOTHER yanks young Rachel away. Although her lips
aren't moving, we're overwhelmed with --

MOTHER (V.O.)

No!

"CRACK." A GUNSHOT. Mother crying. Outside our POV
rounds the garage to the '64 Falcon parked in the
driveway. Smoke creeps out of the driver's window.
Blood spattered on the windshield.

And it melts away to BLACK and a DISTANT LIGHT -
Charging forward.

104 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

104

NELSON

Three-one-thousand, four-one
thousand, five-one-thousand --
breathe --

STECKLE

Ninety-five degrees.

NELSON

Alright Rachel, c'mon now. Come
to me. Two-one-thousand, three-
one-thousand, four-one thousand,
five-one-thousand, breathe --

105 RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

105

Racing towards the light. Up, up, up --

106 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

106

Which is really down as her POV screams up to the EKG.

"BLIP."

NELSON

I am good.

LABRACCIO

"V-Fib."

(CONTINUED)

He's right. The heartbeat is a quivering tremor.

STECKLE.

That's okay, that's fine. We'll get her.

NELSON

Defibs, 'Doctor' Labraccio. 200 joules.

"WHAM." Labraccio lays the paddles on Rachel, her body bucks, but the generator box and socket POP, setting off a shower of sparks. The room lights flicker.

JOE

Shit!

NELSON

What'd you do?

LABRACCIO

A fuse. A short. Maybe a circuit.

Labraccio shoves the defibs into Joe's hands and yanks the plug from the wet wall socket.

He races across the room to a dry socket and plugs it in. Joe brushes the defibs together quickly. No juice.

JOE

Nothing!

LABRACCIO

Damnit!

NELSON

I had her! What'd you do!

Labraccio has no time to argue. He races over to the defib box and opens the back. It's raining harder in the room.

LABRACCIO

It has to be a fuse. Who has gum?
Joe, breath her.

(to Nelson)
Keep pumping!

STECKLE

Gum? Like, "to chew"? Here,
here. Just do something. Do
anything.

He shoves a stick into Labraccio's hands.

9/23/89

73.

107 INT. RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW

107

Her POV looking down upon the group working so hard. So close, but rising higher, higher... it jets away into BLACK.

108 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

108

Labraccio yanks the blown fuse from the box, wraps it in foil from the gum, and shoves it back in.

NELSON

Two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand -- This is bullshit! We're movin' to Bretylium.

LABRACCIO

No! Give me thirty seconds.

Nelson runs for the crash cart.

LABRACCIO

Get away from there, Nelson!

Nelson grabs a bottle of liquid and begins filling a syringe.

JOE

Four minutes.

NELSON

It's the only way!

JOE

You're out of sequence, Nelson.

STECKLE

Don't do it, you'll fry her!

Labraccio slams the box shut, leaps to his feet and grabs the defibs. Nelson sprints for Rachel's IV.

NELSON

It's our last chance!

STECKLE

Holy shit --

Labraccio brushes the defibs together, a surging spark, and jumps in Nelson's path. He holds the paddles up to Nelson's ears.

LABRACCIO

Don't do it.

Nelson freezes. He discards the syringe and Labraccio turns the defibs on Rachel. "WHUNK."

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74.

109 INT. RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW 109
Screaming images from her past. A violent struggle.

110 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT 110

NELSON

One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand,
three-one-thousand...

STECKLE

Back in V-Fib.

LABRACCIO

Randy, drop that camera. Give her
Lidocaine, 75 IV push and another
amp of 'eppy.'

Steckle snaps to it.

LABRACCIO

C'mon, Rachel. C'mon, don't leave
us. Don't screw us. C'mon.
C'mon.

111 INT. RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW 111
The struggle continues.

112 INT. DOG LAB - NOW 112
Nelson pumps angrily against her sternum.

LABRACCIO

Clear.

"WHUNK." He zaps her off the gurney -- and right back
into CPR.

STECKLE

I knew this would happen. Four-
forty! We're dead!

JOE

Please, Rachel, please.

113 RACHEL'S EXPERIENCE - NOW 113

Racing back through a mist, towards the light --
screaming by at an astonishing rate, hurling towards a
distant moon, no -- a sphere, no -- it's a young man's
face. Her father.

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75.

114 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

114

Screaming down, like a falcon, over shoulders, her own body, right up to the EKG for the first "BLIP."

Labraccio turns. Steckle's jaw drops.

"BLIP." "BLIP."

LABRACCIO

Hold the beat, Rachel. C'mon.
Hold it!

"BLIP," "BLIP," "BLIP..."

Labraccio smiles and wipes the sweat from his brow.

LABRACCIO

Pacemaker.

Steckle stands frozen. They all are. He checks his watch.

STECKLE

(spooked)
Five minutes.

LABRACCIO

The pacemaker, Randy. She's back.

Steckle nervously covers Rachel's face with the O2 mask.

115 INT. HALLWAY WITH MURAL - LATER

115

The four young men talk in hushed tones. Nelson's smoking a cigarette.

LABRACCIO

Something happened on the subway.
Something strange which ties in
with my memories.

NELSON

And that's why you stopped us?

LABRACCIO

(beat)

When I was a kid, there was this girl... Winnie Hicks. She was a little awkward at the time, so we all used to make fun of her. Stupid kid stuff, all sorts of names, mean stuff. And Winnie would cry.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO (CONT'D)

Pretty much every day, she'd cry.
I don't think I ever realized how
miserable we made her, until
tonight.

(beat)

I was riding here and suddenly
someone started making fun of me,
calling me every name in the
book, really bitchin' me out. I
looked around... and it was
Winnie Hicks... no doubt in my
mind, standing there, right beside
me, still only eight years old.

Nelson is silent. Joe's all ears.

STECKLE

That's quite an hallucination.
Maybe you fell asleep and those
thoughts were somehow triggered
by submerged guilt.

LABRACCIO

I know it was an hallucination.
But I can't tell you how terrible
it made me feel. In my
imagination, everyone was looking
at me, then laughing. I even had
a tear in my eye. Crying, like
Winnie used to.

Joe turns to Nelson. Nelson shrugs, remaining silent.

JOE

I've seen some strange things
lately, myself. From my own past.
(laughs awkwardly)
I thought it was brain damage.

STECKLE

In your case it probably is.
Shouldn't we be taking notes?

JOE

This is a little embarrassing, but
when I look at a T.V. or any kind
of screen, I often see myself with
an old girl friend, or whatever,
in a rather compromising position.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED: (2)

115

JOE (CONT'D)

It's always with a woman I've
fooled around with, and they're
all members of this secret club
I started... so to speak.

(taps his
camcorder)

The 'H.P.L.' Hurley Private
Library.

Labraccio looks to Nelson's battered face.

LABRACCIO

And who's come looking for you,
Nelson?

NELSON

It's no big deal. I think his
name's Billy Mulroney or Mahoney
or something. He's about eight
years old and we used to pick on
him in elementary school. He
was pretty weak as I recall.
Maybe he had diabetes or
something...

STECKLE

Wait a minute. I can buy
Labraccio nodding off on the
train and loverboy having
hallucinations, but are you
actually saying you've seen this
kid...?

LABRACCIO

And he hits you?

NELSON

(smiles)

Sometimes the little fucker gets
carried away.

STECKLE

He physically touches you? He's
not an hallucination?... Wait a
minute... it's impossible!

NELSON

This whole lab's impossible... or
is it? We went into death and
brought back our sins. Now
they're with us, physically, and
they're pissed.

(CONTINUED)

LABRACCIO

Doing unto us, as we did unto them?

NELSON

My limited study of Scripture leads me to believe that it's kind of like Hell, or at least the experience of Hell, brought back to Earth.

LABRACCIO

When did you know about this?

NELSON

I had my suspicions... After Joe went.

LABRACCIO

Before me? Before Rachel? And you let us go ahead?

STECKLE

That was wrong, Nelson.

NELSON

Where's your sense of adventure? Right now Rachel may hold the meaning of life in her head. Four-twenty! Can you imagine? What is good? What is evil? Why are we here and who put us here? If she walks out of the ladies room with those answers, as well she could, the world will worship her.

JOE

Yeah, but we're fucked!

STECKLE

Nelson didn't make the system.
'An eye for an eye'...

(indicating mural)

Prometheus stole fire and got his eyes plucked out. And there's Icarus. The dumb little shit flew too close to the sun. We've fucked with the Gods and we're damned!

JOE

Can we chill on the dramatics, Steckle?

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED: (4)

115

NELSON

So what was the price? What's the worst thing you or Dave or Rachel could have done? Videotape your sexploits? Wow. Tease a little girl on the playground? Oohh. Hey, they're your sins. Live with 'em.

(touching his face)

I do. Everyone was so eager to ride my coattails. Well, here we are. Welcome aboard.

Nelson leaves the group. They look to one another.

Labraccio moves to the ladies room door and knocks.

LABRACCIO

Rachel... you alright?

116 INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

116

Ancient plumbing, a high ceiling. Harsh fluorescent bounces off green tile, casting a sickly pallor to Rachel's reflection in the mirror. She splashes water on her face.

RACHEL

I'm okay.

She moves carefully to a stall and enters. Rachel locks the aluminum door behind her. She pauses to read the graffiti:

RACHEL

'God is dead,' Nietzsche.
'Nietzsche is dead,' God.

Rachel smiles. Suddenly we hear the OUTER DOOR OPEN. Hard leather SHOES CLICK across the tile floor. The SHOES STOP at one of the sinks.

RACHEL

I said I was fine...

Silence. Rachel pushes open the door.

RACHEL

You don't have to watch me...

Nothing. No one. Rachel is confused. She crosses to the dripping sink and splashes water in her face. Looking up into the shattered mirror she sees the outline of:

(CONTINUED)

116

CONTINUED:

116

A man behind her. Pale, sickly, he stands behind the painters' flapping dropcloths.

Rachel is frozen.

The man presses against the plastic sheeting. Blood has congealed on the side of his head. It is her father.

Silence. They study each other. She's too terrified to scream. A drop of blood hits the floor. "SPLAT."

117

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

117

Nelson's screwing a police bolt into this door. He's working at a furious pace, his foot wedged against the base, barring any entry. Behind the door we hear the DISTANT sound of SCRATCHING. Nelson kicks the door.

NELSON

Shutup! Fuck you, fleabag.

Nelson moves to the center of the room and sits on the floor, clutching his screwdriver.

NELSON

(beat)

Well? C'mon, Billy, Billy, Billy
Baloney. Bring it on, Silly
Billy. Let's go... come and get
me!

118

INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

118

Rachel sits up in bed. Labraccio is beside her.

RACHEL

Things from our past. They want
revenge?

LABRACCIO

We don't know exactly how it works
yet. But if you see anything, I
want you to talk to me about it,
alright?

Rachel nods.

LABRACCIO

It can be scary, but it's not
fatal. Whatever you see, tell
your doctor, okay?

(CONTINUED)

118

CONTINUED:

118

RACHEL

(nods)

But they're people, who we hurt
or wronged, for whatever reason.

LABRACCIO

That seems to be it. I'll be
right in the living room. Try
to rest. Mind if I read some of
these?

Labraccio gestures to her book collection. Beyond and
Back, Death and Dying, all the titles. A real fascina-
tion, and notebooks as well.

LABRACCIO

It's quite a collection.

RACHEL

(absently)

My research.

Labraccio takes a few books and notebooks. He exits
quietly. Rachel is alone. Terrified.

119

INT. RACHEL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

119 *

Joe and Steckle pace nervously as Labraccio enters.

STECKLE

How's she doing?

*
*

LABRACCIO

I don't know. I get the feeling
she's holding something back.

*
*

Labraccio sits and begins skimming the books.

*
*

JOE

(beat)

What do you think Nelson did to
that kid?

LABRACCIO

I don't know.

120

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - DAWN

120

Nelson's still huddled in the middle of the floor with
his screwdriver. He begins to nod, fighting off sleep
as best he can. Finally, he succumbs... dropping the
screwdriver.

121 EXT. FIELD - DAY

121

Again, Young Nelson, 11, runs through a field with his puppy, Champ. Again he's with the group of boys, yelling, taunting their unknown prey.

BOY #1

Ollie, Ollie, oxen-free!

BOY #2

Come out, come out, wherever
you are!

Nelson smiles, it looks so fun, so idyllic. The boys charge past a tree in the field, but CHAMP stops and turns back... wagging his tail and BARKING playfully up a tree. The boys turn.

YOUNG NELSON

Champ?

They walk back to the tree, looking up into the high branches, shielding their eyes from the sun.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

83.

121 CONTINUED:

121

BOY #1
Is that you, Billy?

BOY #2
Billy, boy, are you hiding?

The boys reach the bottom of the tree. CHAMP is still BARKING.

YOUNG NELSON
(smiles and points)
There he is.

High in the branches, backlit by the sun and scared shitless, is little Billy Mahoney... clinging to a branch.

YOUNG NELSON
(delighted)
It's a little raccoon. C'mon
down, little raccoon!

Billy climbs higher as the boys search for rocks.

YOUNG NELSON
C'mon down, raccoon!

122 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - DAY

122

Nelson wakes up with a start, then gasps madly... Billy Mahoney stands right before him, smiling cruelly.

BILLY
Hi!

Billy holds the screwdriver. Before Nelson can scream, Billy backhands him with the butt of the screwdriver.

123 INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

123

Rachel selects a thick sweater from her closet and pulls it on, over her head. She shuts the closet door, revealing a mirror --

Her Father stands behind her. Watching. Rachel gasps, choking to maintain control. He wants something. Rachel starts and he is gone. Vanished.

124 INT. RACHEL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

124

Labraccio has spent the night reading through Rachel's notebooks and books on death.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

84.

124

CONTINUED:

124

Rachel enters, bone-white, catches him in the act, but keeps moving.

RACHEL

I'm late. I'll see you later.

LABRACCIO

Where are you going? Wait a minute -- What happened while you were under?

RACHEL

I'm late. I have to talk to her.
I have to stop her.

LABRACCIO

Who?

She's at the door. Labraccio throws on his boots, grabs his jacket, and races after her.

125

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

125

Labraccio charges down the stairs.

126

EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING

126

Rachel waits with a crowd of commuters. She sees Labraccio charging her way.

LABRACCIO

Rachel!

The bus doors open. Rachel boards, and the doors close.

127

INT. BUS - MORNING

127

Rachel watches as they pull away, leaving Labraccio choking in a cloud of diesel fumes.

128

INT. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MORNING

128

Rachel's composure is strained as she hurries among the sick and dying.

EDNA (NURSE)

'Morning, Rachel.

RACHEL

'Morning.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

85.

128

CONTINUED:

128

Down the long ward to the terminal woman's bed.

It's empty.

Rachel is thunderstruck. The ward nurse looks on with sympathy.

RACHEL

I wanted to stop her. To tell her her voices were wrong. There's nothing beautiful for her. It's terrible.

Edna sees how upset Rachel is.

EDNA

Rachel, you got to get used to losing them... it's part of our work.

RACHEL

I was wrong. I was wrong.

129

EXT. SOMERVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

129

A group of FIVE EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS have backed young Winnie Hicks against a wall.

KID #1

Winnie, Winnie, sick and skinny.

KID #2

Stinky and skinny!

KID #3

(laughing)

Winnie, those are nice shoes, where'd you get 'em?

KID #4

Eww, they're gross!

Winnie begins to cry. She has none of the verbal defense so strongly demonstrated on Labraccio's subway ride. The group taunts and taunts. In the b.g., girls "double-dutch."

Labraccio watches.

HIS POV

REVEALS that there are no children in the schoolyard.

(CONTINUED)

9/23/89

86.

129

CONTINUED:

129

Just empty swingsets and monkey bars. The taunting is a memory.

BACK TO SCENE

Labraccio heads for home.

130

EXT. JOE'S LOFT - DAY

130

Joe hurries home, clutching his camcorder. Paranoid. As he nears his building, JILL, 18, steps from behind a tree.

JILL

You look like you're enjoying the day.

JOE

Yes.

JILL

Don't you remember me, Joe?

JOE

(lying)
Yes, of course.

JILL

Are you a model? You could be.

JOE

(smiles awkwardly)
Thanks. I have to go.

JILL

I'm not picking you up, I just picked you out. Mind if I buy you a drink?

JOE

(confused)
Here?

JILL

I'll call you this weekend. I've been looking for a study partner.

She's using all his old lines on him.

JOE

Fine. I'm in the book.

Joe walks briskly away from the strange girl and enters his building.

131 INT. JOE'S HALLWAY - DAY

131

Joe checks to make sure the door is locked. Suddenly a voice behind him.

TINA
Hey, wha'cha doin'?

He turns to find another attractive young WOMAN.

JOE
Oh, nothing. Some crazy girl --
Hey, I know you, don't I?

TINA (WOMAN)
(smiles)
Would you like to?

Joe's confused.

TINA
We don't have to do anything.
Let's just lie together, hold
each other, in our underwear.

Joe hurries down the corridor to his room, checks the number, unlocks the door, and enters.

132 INT. JOE'S LOFT - MORNING

132

Twenty WOMEN turn to greet him. Joe's SEX TAPES are PLAYING on TV.

WOMEN
Joe! Joey! Joseph! Carl!

BETH
You make me feel alive.

KATHY
It'll only make our relationship
better.

JANE
Would you be offended if I kissed
you?

The Women surge forward. Surrounded. Too much of a good thing.

JOE
You're not real!!

The Women part as Joe pushes through them, confused, upset, until he sees:

(CONTINUED)

132

CONTINUED:

132

Anne, his fiance, sitting quietly on the couch.

This is real.

JOE

Anne! Is it you? Is it really you?

ANNE

You sounded so upset on the phone. I was worried... I took the bus down.

JOE

What a great surprise! How long have you been here?

ANNE

Long enough to look at some of your tapes.

Now he realizes that the TAPE on the TV is not an hallucination. Joe slams the power button OFF. There is a long silence between them.

JOE

Anne, I love you...

Anne rises and begins walking toward the small staircase in Joe's loft.

ANNE

The worst part of this is that you're going to think I left you because you slept with all those girls...

JOE

(following her)

It was just stupid. An adolescent game. Those girls meant nothing to me.

ANNE

I wish they had meant something to you. 'Cause if you were honest, if you had cared for any of them, I would have fought it, fought for you. I loved you that much... But to film those girls, without them knowing... to have so little respect... They trusted you, Joe.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED: (2)

132

ANNE (CONT'D)

Every one of those women trusted you... and what kind of marriage could we have when you have no understanding of trust.

She hands him back the engagement ring.

JOE

No, Anne. Please... It's not what you think.

ANNE

I think, I just want to die.

She leaves. Joe is devastated.

133 INT. LABRACCIO'S HOUSE - DAY

133

Labraccio is on the fifteenth "Hicks" in the phonebook.

LABRACCIO

(on telephone)

Mrs. Hicks, hello, do you have a daughter, Winnie? About twenty-six years old? You do? And she's, still around?

(beat, then ecstatic)

She is! Uh-huh. I'm David Labraccio. I grew up with Winnie. That's right. Yep. My parents still live there. Fine, fine.

(nodding)

Good for her. That's great. Well, I'm trying to track her down. Sure.

(writes)

And her address? Thank you. Oh sure. Goodbye.

Labraccio hangs up the phone, throws on his jacket and moves for the door. He swings it open to find --

Nelson, beaten again.

LABRACCIO

Jesus! You alright?

NELSON

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

LABRACCIO
(going down stairs)
Make yourself at home. You need
a painkiller?

NELSON
Where you going?

LABRACCIO
Westerly.

NELSON
Westerly? Where's that?

LABRACCIO
About two hours from here.

NELSON
(beat)
Can I come? I don't want to be
alone.

Labraccio studies his battered friend.

134 INT. ANATOMY LAB - DAY

134

PROFESSOR
Today we'll remove the left
kidney, then bisect the lower
intestine.

Rachel, tired, strained, focuses on her work... the lower
abdomen. A sheet covers the torso and head of her
cadaver.

As she works around the lower intestine, the sheet slips
and uncovers a tattoo on the cadaver's pale arm.

Rachel sees it and freezes. Though right beside her,
Joe is oblivious. The hand moves. She gasps as blue
fingers curl around the sheet and pull it off.

Her Father with the bleeding head. He's alive. Rachel's
face drains of color as he sits up.

RACHEL
No!

The class turns.

(CONTINUED)

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91.

134

CONTINUED:

134

THEIR POV

Rachel is freaking out over a plain old dead cadaver.

Joe and Steckle react.

RACHEL'S REALITY

Her Father reaches out for her. She recoils hysterically.

RACHEL

No!!

PROFESSOR

Kinberg?

Terrified, she crashes past the Professor coming to aid her and dashes out of the lab. Steckle and Joe move to follow.

PROFESSOR

(to Joe and Steckle)

I'll handle this. Back to work or suffer the consequences.

Steckle and Joe hesitate, then dash out into:

135

HALLWAY

135

But Rachel is gone.

JOE

You go that way!

They race off in opposite directions, leaving the Professor alone and confused.

136

EXT. WESTERLY - LATE DAY

136

An attractive, modest suburban neighborhood. Labraccio drives slowly. He studies the homes.

LABRACCIO

That must be it.

NELSON

Well, Winnie seems to have done 'fairly' well for herself.

Labraccio slows down and parks.

(CONTINUED)

NELSON

We're dealing with two planes of existence here. It's the after-life, or spirit, that's angry with you. This poor girl probably doesn't even remember you. By all logic --

LABRACCIO

It's worth a shot -- You coming?

NELSON

No thank you!

Labraccio starts to get out.

LABRACCIO

If anything happens, if you need me, beep the horn.

Labraccio closes his door and starts for the house. Nelson shifts uncomfortably, smiling as he narrates.

NELSON

Oh, Jesus, this is fuckin' awful. Oh man, Labarish, you're fuckin' crazy.

Labraccio rings the bell.

NELSON

Ring ring. Ring ring. Oh, man this is awkward. You could have sent a letter.

Labraccio stands on the doorstep, silence. Suddenly, FOOTSTEPS, the sound of a LATCH, and the door opens. No one's there. Labraccio is surprised. His vision drops to a little GIRL holding the door. She looks very much like the girl on the train. He freaks.

LABRACCIO

Uh...

He recovers quickly. The Girl looks so much like her mother... young Winnie, who has been haunting him.

LABRACCIO

Hi. Is your mother home?

The Girl smiles shyly.

VOICE (O.S.)

Coming.

(CONTINUED)

136

CONTINUED: (2)

136

Labraccio shifts uncomfortably. The Girl watches.
WINNIE HICKS appears at the door, a bit harried from a
day of work.

Intuitively, she pulls her daughter behind her.

WINNIE

Yes. Can I help you?

LABRACCIO

Well, yes, I think so. You're
Winnie Hicks, aren't you? From
Clairemont?

WINNIE

(cautious)

Yes.

Nelson watches, shaking his head as --

LABRACCIO

I'm David Labraccio. We went to
S.B. Butler together. First
grade, second grade.

WINNIE

(still cautious)

Really?

LABRACCIO

Yeah, I was a little smaller.
We had Mrs. Tupper, remember?

WINNIE

(awkward)

Oh, yes, I think so.

137

INT. VAN

137

Nelson lights a cigarette and watches as Labraccio
continues to squirm.

NELSON

Her body language says it all,
Labraish. 'Don't let him in.
He's a robber, a mugger, a
rapist!' Just look at his
accomplice --

Labraccio turns and points out Nelson for Winnie. She
nods.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED:

137

NELSON

(smiling as he
waves)Hello. I'm nice, he's nice,
but we're both fuckin' lunatics!

Nelson watches as Winnie invites Labraccio inside and
the door closes behind them. Nelson shakes his head.

NELSON

Hats off, buddy. You've got
balls.

138 INT. HICKS'S HOME - DAY

138

Winnie puts up a good front, but it's obvious that she's
grown into a timid woman. The home is modest, working
class. It is excruciatingly awkward.

LABRACCIO

(to little Girl)

So, what's your name?

SHERRY (GIRL)

Sherry.

LABRACCIO

Sherry? Do you have any sisters
or brothers?

WINNIE

Oh no. Please... She keeps me
busy enough.

Winnie leads Labraccio into the living room. BEN,
thirty, her husband, a big outgoing sort, is busy
rebuilding the living room.

BEN

Hello.

LABRACCIO

Hi.

WINNIE

(awkward beat)

Ben, this is David. Labraccio?

LABRACCIO

Right. I went to school with
Winnie. A long time ago, and,
ah, just happened to be up here
on business.

(CONTINUED)

138

CONTINUED:

138

It all seems a little weird. Ben shakes his hand.

BEN

Well, that's great. Uh-huh.
Where you working?

LABRACCIO

Well, I'm in med school actually.
But I got suspended.
(quickly)
I came down here to do some
research.

BEN

(smiling; unsure)
That's great. Would you like
a beer?

LABRACCIO

Uhm... No thanks. Normally I
would, but --

WINNIE

He has a friend waiting in the
car.

BEN

Oh, well, why don't you bring
him in?

LABRACCIO

No, that's okay. I just wanted
to say hi to Winnie.

Labraccio looks to Winnie. She forces a smile.

BEN

I guess you came to reminisce
about the glory days.

LABRACCIO

Yeah... yeah.

No one, including Labraccio, knows why he's there.

139

INT. LABRICCIO'S VAN - DUSK

139

Nelson is getting nervous.

NELSON

C'mon, Labraish, spit it out.
On your knees, on your head, just
say the words.

(CONTINUED)

139

CONTINUED:

139

He is getting increasingly antsy. He looks in the side view mirror and notices a small form scoot by, behind the van. Nelson leaps in his seat.

NELSON

Shit!

He jumps over to the driver's seat and looks out that side mirror. Nothing. He locks the door, then locks his own door as well. "SLAM. SLAM."

Nelson is scared shitless. Silence. The back door handle jiggles. Nelson wheels and sees that it's unlocked.

He leaps from his seat and scrambles over equipment to the back of the van, reaching for the lock. "CLUNK," he slams the lock down. Silence. Listening.

140

EXT. HICKS'S BACK YARD - DUSK

140

Sherry has followed her mother and Labraccio outside.

LABRACCIO

This is pretty. You seem like you're doing well, Winnie. I'm glad for you.

WINNIE

Well, it isn't medical school... but I could never do that stuff anyway. I'm sure it's very difficult.

LABRACCIO

No, you could have done it. I don't think I'm going back to school anyway. It's all phony.

WINNIE

(smiling)

I never liked school. Wasn't too good at it. I'm surprised you even remembered me.

Little Sherry holds her mother's hand. She's looking straight up into Labraccio's face. Beat. This is very difficult for Labraccio, but he pushes forward.

(CONTINUED)

140. CONTINUED:

140

LABRACCIO

Well, I did... I also remember the way I treated you when we were kids.

(beat)

You were a little shy back then, and I was a jerk. A real jerk. I'm sorry.

WINNIE

(taken by surprise)

I...

LABRACCIO

I really am sorry.

WINNIE

(forced laugh)

David, wait. What are you talking about? That was so long ago. I don't even remember what you could have done. Please, let's not dredge up all that stuff.

LABRACCIO

(beat)

However we made you feel back then, about yourself, was wrong, because we were wrong.

WINNIE

(embarrassed)

David, please, I have a family now. A husband and a house. I haven't been that ugly little girl for quite some time.

LABRACCIO

But you were never ugly.

WINNIE

Oh, I know -- Sherry, go in the house. Go on.

Sherry is confused. She can see that her mother's hurt, ashamed. The girl hurries up to the door, hesitates, then rushes inside.

LABRACCIO

Winnie?

She can't face him.

WINNIE

Why did you come here?

141 INT. LABRICCIO'S VAN - DUSK

141

Nelson moves cautiously towards the front of the van. It's dark, suddenly quiet, scary. Then --

"WHAM," Billy springs over the passenger seat into Nelson's face. The two sprawl back in the van, fighting madly.

Nelson breaks free and lunges over the driver's seat, reaching for the horn. He almost has it, when Billy shoves him from behind, super force, sending Nelson's head into the windshield. The GLASS CRACKS.

Billy laughs, pulling Nelson into the back of the van.

BILLY

Come down, come down, you little raccoon.

142 EXT. HICKS'S BACK YARD - DUSK

142

Winnie's head is bowed. She's so ashamed. Labraccio reaches a gentle hand to her shoulder.

WINNIE

We were just kids. I know how kids are. It didn't mean anything.

Sherry leads Ben to the back door. The little girl is worried and Ben can see that his wife is upset.

BEN

Winnie? Are you alright?

WINNIE

I'm fine, Ben. Everything's okay.

LABRACCIO

I didn't want to make you feel bad. I'm sorry if I only hurt you again.

Winnie nods. Her eyes are moist.

LABRACCIO

I'll go.

WINNIE

David. Thank you.

She smiles painfully.

LABRACCIO

Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

142

Winnie nods.

LABRACCIO

Do you forgive me?

WINNIE

Of course. You just be a fine
man to have done this. Go back
to school. Be a healer.

There is a moment of "unsayable grace" between them.
CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY ON her child's face. Time stands
still. One person forgives another. Winnie and
Labraccio share something healing.

LABRACCIO

Thank you.

143

INT. LABRACCIO'S VAN - NIGHT

143

Nelson shifts just as Billy slams an air tank down at his
head. It's an iron cage match as the two throw
baseballs, ski poles and kayak paddles back and forth.
Everything's a weapon. Nelson's fighting for his life;
Billy's giggling.

144

EXT. VAN - NIGHT

144

The van thrashing, the wild sounds of CRASHING.
Labraccio races up to the side door and finds it locked.

LABRACCIO

Nelson!

The front door...locked. Labraccio peers inside and
sees Nelson, all alone, throwing himself like a ragdoll
inside the van.

LABRACCIO

Nelson, stop!

Nelson looks at him, pleading. Helpless as he slams
against the side wall. Labraccio SMASHES a WINDOW with
his elbow and opens the door -- just as:

FROM NELSON'S POV

Billy grabs a mountain pick-axe.

BILLY

Lights out, creepo.

(CONTINUED)

144

CONTINUED:

144

BACK TO SCENE

Labraccio flies across the seats. Billy is about to plunge the axe into Nelson's throat when Labraccio grabs the arm, really Nelson's arm, and holds it.

LABRACCIO

Nelson. Nelson, stop!

Labraccio, using all this strength, finally wrestles the axe out of Nelson's maniacal grasp.

NELSON

Billy, you fuck... Billy???

(looks to
Labraccio;
breathless)

Where is the little bastard?

LABRACCIO

(also breathless)

There is no Billy, Nelson. It
was your own hand that was trying
to kill you.

The two young men, bathed in sweat, struggle to catch their breath, as they deal with the truth.

145

EXT. LABRACCIO'S BUILDING - NIGHT

145

Joe and Steckle have been sitting on the front stoop. Rachel paces behind them as Labraccio and Nelson drive up.

*
*
*

JOE

(angry)

Where the hell have you guys
been?

*

As Labraccio and Nelson get out of the truck they notice Rachel waiting on the front porch. The four young men move quickly toward her.

STECKLE

She freaked out in class. We
had to stay with her all day.

*

JOE

Who's we?

*
*

Rachel is torn between anxiety and anger as they join her.

(CONTINUED)

145

CONTINUED:

145

LABRACCIO

How you doin'?

RACHEL

Fine. Just fine for someone who keeps running into her father who's been dead for twenty years! 'Death is beautiful'... what crap.

(angrily to Nelson)

Thanks, Nelson. Thanks for the nightmare.

NELSON

You were all so eager to ride my coattails. Well here we are. Welcome aboard.

RACHEL

You withheld data, which in my book is the same as lying.

NELSON

I'm sorry you're all so 'upset.'
(indicating face)
But take a look around.

JOE

You think you're the only one who risked anything or lost something?

STECKLE

I told everyone, explicitly, not to do this.

JOE

Shut up, Steckle.

STECKLE

Fuck you! I haven't cracked a book in five days!

LABRACCIO

Let's not fall apart now. We're in this together.

RACHEL

I'm not. I'll handle this myself.

Rachel begins to walk away.

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED: (2)

145

NELSON

Isn't she strong? so independent.

RACHEL

At least when I'm in trouble, I
don't drag anybody down with me.

NELSON

(to Joe)

You got caught with your videotapes
down. Wow.

(to Dave)

Swear at a little schoolgirl. Ooh.

(to Rachel)

And now you're having bad dreams
about daddy. Tsk. Tsk. Tsk.

RACHEL

You don't understand anything.

NELSON

Yeah, but young 'Doctor Dave'
understands you, doesn't he?

Rachel starts to walk away again.

NELSON

Hey they're your sins. Live with
'em.

(grabs Rachel)

I do. You wanna see death?

Forcing her to look closely at his face.

NELSON

Take a good look. It is beautiful,
isn't it?

Labraccio gets between them.

LABRACCIO

Leave her alone. You already
hurt yourself. Isn't that
enough?

Rachel walks away angrily. Labraccio talks to Joe and
Steckle.

LABRACCIO

Help him find Billy Mahoney.

JOE

Why me?

(CONTINUED)

145

CONTINUED: (3)

145

STECKLE

I have to study.

LABRACCIO

Just don't leave him alone.

Labraccio hurries after Rachel. Joe sighs to be left alone with Nelson.

JOE

Why do you have to find Billy Mahoney?

NELSON

(shrugs)

Young 'Doctor' Dave thinks he's solved our karmic dilemma... He recommends a humiliating dose of 'Atonement.'

STECKLE

'Atonement?'

Nelson walks away. Steckle and Joe look at him weird. Nelson turns.

NELSON

Coming, gentlemen? I'll show you Billy Mahoney. You don't want to miss this.

**

146

ANOTHER ANGLE

146

Labraccio catches up with Rachel.

LABRACCIO

Wait a minute. Wait goddamnit. You gonna clam up as usual, or you gonna talk to me?

*

She stops. She could use a friend.

147

INT. LABRACCIO'S APARTMENT - TEN MINUTES LATER

147

Rachel struggles with her feeling as Labraccio listens.

RACHEL

I still don't understand... Everyone I talked to or read about described near-death as beautiful.

LABRACCIO

It's in one of your books... Except people who tried suicide. Isn't that what we were doing, technically? Committing suicide.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

Of course. I was five when my father came back from the war. We were so excited, but it was as if a stranger had moved into our lives. He spent much time alone... by himself. The day... that day... I only wanted to see him... so I went to the door in this hallway... the door to the bathroom and I opened it... I wasn't supposed to open it... something... bad... I don't know...

She is very upset as Labraccio tries to calm her.

LABRACCIO

You were just a child.

RACHEL

There was yelling and my mother yanked me away and then... I don't know... a few minutes it seems there was this noise. I thought like the door banging. But it was a gunshot... My father had gone outside, gotten in the car and shot himself. I should have never opened that door, David. Somehow I felt I drove him to it.

She's getting more upset.

LABRACCIO

But all children feel responsible for things. You couldn't have been to blame.

RACHEL

My mother immediately moved us back to Georgia... where I could have studied anything... but medicine... my scholarship... I realize now it was no accident... I was drawn here... back to my father.

LABRACCIO

Going to see Winnie Hicks today... lifted this terrible guilt from me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

147

CONTINUED: (2)

147

LABRACCIO (CONT'D)

A remorse I didn't even know I had.
There was something in the act of
my asking forgiveness that was a
kind of healing... a sort of 'state
of grace'...

RACHEL

Yes, but she's alive...

(beginning to cry)

You don't understand... My father
brought me here to join him... I
can feel it... he wants me to kill
myself.

She's crying harder. Labraccio takes her in his arms.
She's a very strong person, and has been carrying a lot
inside her most of her life. She lets most of it out
now. It's good to have a friend. Labraccio feels himself
caring for her very deeply. He kisses her forehead and
tries to soothe her. Rachel kisses him now. A lot
passes between them. They kiss again. They need each
other, especially tonight.

148

EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD (ON OUTSKIRTS OF CITY) - NIGHT

148

Nelson, Steckle and Joe stop in Joe's car.

NELSON

Here.

STECKLE

Where are we?

Nelson grabs Joe's keys from the ignition and hops out of
the car.

NELSON

Follow me.

He breathes in the air and the surroundings.

NELSON

It's been so long... This is
the shortcut... I'm surprised I
remember... Come on. Salvation
just ahead!

He's gone in a flash over a fence. Joe and Steckle
follow quickly.

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149 BACK ALLEYS OF HOUSES

149

DOGS BARK. A BABY CRIES. Nelson leads them along a trail that only a child could devise; over fences, around gardens.

NELSON

Ssshh. Don't step on those flowers. Mister Shapiro's real mean.

Steckle and Joe trade glances. It's like following a little boy.

150 NELSON

150

darts across a street.

NELSON

Step on a crack and you break your mother's back.

Joe and Steckle follow as Nelson darts through:

151 ANOTHER BACK YARD

151

He ducks beneath a swing set. He reaches a dead end. Stone wall.

NELSON

Ollie... ollie... Come on, last one over's a rotten egg.

He disappears over the stone wall as Steckle and Joe follow.

152 GROVE OF TREES

152

They follow Nelson up a dirt trail.

NELSON

Hurry up... the Ashbys' kids'll beat the shit out of us if they catch us...

Nelson has disappeared again. Joe and Steckle race ahead, over another stone wall into:

153 GRAVEYARD

153

Joe and Steckle are not prepared for this.

(CONTINUED)

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153

CONTINUED:

153

JOE

Nelson...

Cold. Silent. Eerie.

STECKLE

Where the fuck are you, Nelson?

Suddenly Nelson pops out of nowhere.

NELSON

I'm right here.

He turns and leads them through some gravestones and over to a small child's mausoleum. It reads: "MAHONEY."

NELSON

And this is where Billy lives.

(to mausoleum)

Wake up... you little fucker. You got company.

Joe and Steckle are totally freaked as Nelson circles the mausoleum. Children's VOICES ECHO from the past.

NELSON

You know how I knew where he was?

(beat)

'Cause I put him here.

The CAMERA SWIRLS INTO a SWISH PAN.

154

FLASHBACK - EXT. FIELD - DAY

154

Young Nelson and the boys, gathered around the tree. They're searching for rocks.

The boys wind up and begin tossing rocks into the tree. "CLACK, CLACK, CLUNK." Billy dodges frantically, ducking his head, whimpering as he climbs higher. A large rock hits Champ in the leg. He's wounded.

BILLY

(crying)

Stop it. Stop, stop it.

It's hard for the boys to see exactly where their rocks are landing, whether they're connecting or not. Either way, Young Nelson's enjoying himself and winds up with particular relish --

YOUNG NELSON

Alright, little raccoon --

(CONTINUED)

154

CONTINUED:

154

He heaves the rock up into the tree. A terrible scream. And suddenly Billy Mahoney plummets down through the branches. Bouncing, breaking, tearing.

Young Nelson's face goes white. SCREEN GOES WHITE.

CUT BACK TO:

155

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT (PRESENT)

155

JOE

Nelson... It was an accident.

NELSON

I guess I thought I'd paid my dues. After it happened, I was sent to Stoneham School for Boys. I thought it was over.

STECKLE

'An eye for an eye.' It's so simple. I knew all that compassion crap they push was a myth. Have you ever seen even a trace of compassion in the animal kingdom? The guy who created this world didn't use a paintbrush, he used a sledgehammer. Look what's waiting for us when we die! A fuckin' nightmare!

NELSON

(to himself)

'We live, we die, and death not ends it. Journey we more into the nightmare.'

JOE

Who said that? Kierkegaard?

NELSON

(shakes his head)

Jim Morrison... So if 'Doctor' Labraccio is right, the only way I can make amends is to meet Billy face to face.

STECKLE

But where?

NELSON

The only place to take this fight is beyond where it all started... out around five minutes...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

155

He jangles Joe's car keys and runs away.

NELSON

The end of the line. The end
of the 'flat' line!!!

He runs away and Joe and Steckle follow.

JOE & STECKLE

Wait. Nelson.

They run over a bluff. He is gone. They are lost.

JOE

Jesus.

156

INT. LABRACCIO'S BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF NIGHT

156

Rachel sleeps with Labraccio. Restless, she turns in her
sleep facing away from him.

CLOSE - RACHEL

She opens her eyes to find she is face to face with her
dead Father.

RACHEL

gasps, to find she is in bed with Labraccio alone.
Disturbed, she tries to settle.

HER POV - BATHROOM DOOR

It's closed, but the light shows from the threshold. The
CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY TOWARD the door.

RACHEL

CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY TOWARD Rachel in the dark.

157

INT. BATHROOM

157

She enters and closes the door. A PHONE RINGS O.S.
Her Father, still bloody, stands there, before her. He
moves quickly, blocking the door. Rachel is panicking as
he seems to offer her a gun. Suddenly she realizes that
Labraccio is KNOCKING on the door.

LABRACCIO (O.S.)

Rachel?

The bathroom returns to normal. She opens the door to
find Labraccio pulling on his clothes.

(CONTINUED)

157

CONTINUED:

157

LABRACCIO

Nelson freaked out. Joe and Steckle are stranded... Will you be alright?

RACHEL

Yes.

158

EXT. LABRACCIO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

158

He races out and, jumping into his truck, takes off.

159

INT. LABRACCIO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

159

Rachel is alone and uneasy. A terrible sense of dread, violence and foreboding. Rachel moves anxiously around his living room, the CAMERA PANS 360... magically transporting us into the warm and well-kept home of memory. The house she grew up in.

160

FLASHBACK - INT. RACHEL'S OLD HOUSE

160

Rachel reaches the bottom of a staircase. We hear her mother, RATTLING PANS in the kitchen. Two young GIRLS, LAUGHING and PLAYING in the next room. Rachel ascends the staircase.

Creepy. Slowly. Scary. It's terrifying, but somehow she knows she has to do this. Atop the stairs is a hallway. A familiar door at the end. It calls to her. Mustering all the courage she has left, Rachel reaches the door, and pushes it open. To her horror, there he is.

The man. Her Father, dressed in his uniform. His back is to her. He turns slowly. Her nerves are shattering. He faces her.

Suddenly her horror changes to compassion. He's a boy only 25, back from the war. Frightened. Sweating. A needle in his arm. Heroin.

FATHER

(embarrassed)

Rachel. Rachel, I'm sorry.

RACHEL

Daddy?

FATHER

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

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160

CONTINUED:

160

Rachel begins to cry.

FATHER

Forgive me? Can you forgive me?

He breaks down sobbing. She embraces him. The feeling.
The "state of grace."

DISSOLVE TO:

161

EXT. STREET NEAR CEMETERY - NIGHT

161

Labraccio arrives in his truck as Joe and Steckle jump
in.

STECKLE

He was shouting about going
under again.

JOE

You don't think he could or would,
do you...

LABRACCIO

He'd have to go back to the lab.

STECKLE

'Paybacks' are a bitch. It's a
good thing I didn't flatline...
my three hundred pound babysitter
would have been chasing me, waving
the half-eaten pastrami sandwich
I stole from her.

162

INT. LABRACCIO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

162

Everything back to normal, Rachel sits with her feelings
and her relief. She is in a state of reverence and
understanding. The PHONE RINGS.

RACHEL

David?

INTERUPT WITH:

163

EXT. CAMPUS TELEPHONE - NIGHT

163

Nelson stands in the weird glow.

NELSON

Unfortunately it's Doctor Houdini.
The man who ruined death for you.

(CONTINUED)

163

CONTINUED:

163

RACHEL

Nelson... where are you?

NELSON

I'm going to make it up to you.
To everybody. In exactly ten
minutes I'm putting myself under.
Depending on your level of concern,
you could be here in fifteen
minutes and try to bring me back.
If not...

RACHEL

Nelson. You don't have to.

Nelson has a clarity, a poignant resignation about him
... two friends saying goodbye.

NELSON

Do I have a choice?

RACHEL

My father wasn't trying to kill
me. He wanted forgiveness.

NELSON

With Billy it's the other way
around. I have to make the dive.

RACHEL

No, wait. Listen to me --

Nelson smiles wistfully.

NELSON

If you get here in time, tell
Labraccio. You're gonna have
to pull awful hard on that rope.

ON RACHEL

as he hears Nelson hang up. She grabs for her clothes
quickly.

164

EXT. TAFT BUILDING - NIGHT

164

Nelson rushes through the trees.

EERIE POV'S

The sound of BILLY LAUGHING, PURRING like a raccoon.

(CONTINUED)

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112.

164 CONTINUED:

164

BACK TO SCENE

NELSON

Ready or not, here I come!

165 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

165

Labraccio's van careens through traffic.

166 INT. VAN.

166

Joe talks to Labraccio and Steckle.

JOE

I have to apologize to every girl
I taped?

LABRACCIO

Every one... and then maybe you
can face Anne again.

STECKLE

We've been paid back for our
arrogance. We dared to think we
could know the secrets of eternity
in two or three minutes. We
learned nothing about death. All
we learned about was ourselves.

167 INT. TAFT HALLWAY - NIGHT

167

Eerie moonlight as Nelson runs through -- past the mural.

NELSON

I'm coming, Billy... I'm coming
to face you.

168 EXT. LABRACCIO'S HOUSE

168

Rachel dashes into the street racing toward the school.

169 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

169

Nelson injects Thorazine into the IV and lies back on the
gurney.

170 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

170

Labraccio speeding through the streets.

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113.

171 NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

171

Nelson's on his way. HIS POV RACES TOWARDS the distant light, FASTER, FASTER. He BLASTS THROUGH the SUPER-8 clips of experience... TOWARDS the light.

CLOSER, CLOSER -- then he REACHES it, bright as the sun.

172 EXT. FIELD - DAY

172

And it is the sun. Young Nelson is running through a field of tall grass, a field we recognize, only now he is the pursued.

In the distance, we hear the SHOUTS of YOUNG BOYS, and the BARKING of a DOG. Nelson is scared, running hard, tripping, falling, running. He reaches a tree and begins to climb. Higher, higher.

Suddenly the boys rush by beneath the tree. Young Nelson shifts behind the trunk and holds his breath. They didn't see him. Thank God. But now CHAMP stops short and begins circling the tree... BARKING. Nelson's breath increases. The three boys double back, looking up into the tree at Young Nelson... back-lit by the sun.

One of the boys is Billy Mahoney.

BILLY

Hey, it's a raccoon! C'mon down,
little raccoon!

173 EXT. UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

173

Labraccio's van charges onto campus.

174 NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

174

Young Nelson climbs higher as the boys search for rocks.

BOY #1

C'mon down, raccoon!

The boys wind up and begin tossing rocks up into the tree. Young Nelson dodges frantically, ducking his head and climbing higher.

YOUNG NELSON

No! Stop! I'm sorry, Billy,
I'm sorry!

A rock hits him in the head, drawing blood. Another hits his shoulder, he loses his footing, hanging by his hands.

(CONTINUED)

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114.

174

CONTINUED:

174

YOUNG NELSON

Billy, I'm sorry. God, I'm sorry.
Please, please forgive me. Why
did you have to be so pathetic?
Why couldn't you fight back, just
once. I wasn't that tough. I
was just as scared as you were.

Young Nelson's crying. Billy just smiles.

BILLY

Alright, little raccoon --

Billy winds and throws, the rock hits Young Nelson square
in the back, causing him to lose his grip and fall, fall,
fall --

YOUNG NELSON

Aaaahhh!

He crashes through branches, bounces off limbs, then
slams to the ground as an adult. Dead.

175

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

175

Labraccio throws open the door and turns on the lights.
Nelson lies there peacefully.

STECKLE

Oh, God.

Labraccio grabs the IV.

LABRACCIO

Randy, 02. Joe, heat up the
defribs.

Labraccio begins immediate mouth-to-mouth.

176

NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

176

White limbo, so bright that it seeps into the complexion
of the adult Nelson. He looks up. The fall has not
killed him. He looks over to Billy. Billy smiles benev-
olently. Nelson looks tentative, then smiles back.

177

INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

177

"WHAM." Nelson's body bucks from the debribs. The group
works furiously.

(CONTINUED)

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115.

177 CONTINUED:

177

JOE

C'mon, Nelson!

STECKLE

Please, Nelson! Please!

178 NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

178

Nelson and Billy begin to chuckle. Two pals sharing a secret. It feels so wonderful, so comforting that Nelson begins to relax and let go.

179 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

179

The group pulls together like a precision team. Complimenting rather than competing with each other.

STECKLE

Eighty-eight degrees.

LABRACCIO

I can't wait.

Labraccio zaps Nelson again.

STECKLE

Nothing.

JOE

C'mon, Nelson. C'mon.

180 NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

180

Nelson is now laughing with Billy. Billy giggles and light surrounds them.

181 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

181

"WHAM." Labraccio zaps Nelson again.

LABRACCIO

Keep counting, Joe.

JOE

(beat)

Nine and eight and seven --

182 NELSON'S JOURNEY - NOW

182

Billy laughs.

(CONTINUED)

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116.

182 CONTINUED:

182

It must be a good joke because Nelson is laughing also. Surrounded by light and wonder and unmistakable grace. Nelson is deeply moved.

183 INT. DOG LAB - NIGHT

183

"WHAM." Nelson's body jolts one last time. The group is quiet.

JOE

Nine and eight and --

Silence. Their eyes meet. Nelson is lost to them.

LABRACCIO

Good luck, Nelson.

RACHEL

No!

The weight on their shoulders is enormous. Then, suddenly, out of nowhere --

"BLIP." The EKG.

All eyes turn to the EKG monitor.

RACHEL

Nelson?

LABRACCIO

C'mon, Bud.

BLIP.

JOE

(screams)

We got him!!!

STECKLE

It can't be... can it?

BLIP. Labraccio begins to laugh. Rachel joins him.

LABRACCIO

02.

Steckle steps forward with the mask.

The heart picks up a steady beat. Joe wheels the defribs away and Nelson's eyes begin to flutter.

(CONTINUED)

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117.

183

CONTINUED:

183

BLIP. BLIP.

Nelson's eyes open, surveying the room, full of wonder.

NELSON

(softly)

Hey, Labraish, I'm back.

LABRACCIO

Yeah, you sure are, buddy.

Nelson is more serene, untroubled than we've ever seen him. There is a glow of tranquility, contentment about him. His gaze goes to Rachel.

NELSON

I did it, Rachel, I was there.

RACHEL

Don't try to talk too much.
You're still very weak.

JOE

Your central nervous system's
kinda on overload, you know what
I mean?

NELSON

It doesn't matter. I saw it all.
I was there.

Nelson is starting to fade.

LABRACCIO

You'll have plenty of time to
explain...

NELSON

I just wanted all of you to know
that it's all right. Everything.
Even the mistakes. The regrets.
It's all all right. It is
beautiful, Rachel -- you were
right.

LABRACCIO

Please, hold on, Nelson...

NELSON

(getting weaker)

And, Labraish? Harry Houdini
sends his regards. He was having
too much fun to call home.

(CONTINUED)

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118.

183

CONTINUED: (2)

183

Labraccio smiles. So does Nelson. Suddenly Nelson is gone.

SIDE OF HIS HEAD

The blood stops pulsing in his temple.

HIS LEFT ARM

spasms.

Nelson collapses into a coma on the table.

The CAMERA STARTS PULLING AWAY SLOWLY. Labraccio, Joe and Steckle rush to their equipment as Rachel picks Nelson up in her arms. The young men work feverishly, trying everything they can. It is obvious that it's no use. Steckle starts to faint. Joe holds him.

The CAMERA MOVES FURTHER AND FURTHER BACK, so now the unfinished mural behind them forms a backdrop to the scene.

WIDE SHOT

The group. The tableau. The mural seems finished with them all in front of it now. Complete.

BEHIND

and just for a couple of beats, it seems like the hall stretches beneath them and becomes water and the walls behind the mural become clouds.

There is a larger hand at work here than any of ours.

(NOTE: Or possible V.O. ending)

STECKLE (V.O.)

Nelson's experiment had begun as a quest for fame, and ended with the gift of redemption. It had cost him his life, but who knows? Maybe there is a larger hand at work here than any of ours.

FADE OUT.

THE END