

FOURTH DRAFT
AUGUST 30, 1991

H E R O

a screenplay by

David Webb Peoples

from a story by

Alvin Sargent, Laura Ziskin, and David Peoples

A handwritten signature, likely of David Webb Peoples, is located to the right of the main credit block.

Property Of:
Laura Ziskin Productions & Columbia Pictures
Sony Studios
10202 W. Washington Blvd.
Tracy Bldg./2nd Floor
Culver City, CA 90232

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

1

JUDGE GOINES turns to the Jury FOREMAN.

JUDGE GOINES
Mister Foreman, have you arrived
at a verdict?

FOREMAN
We have, your honor. We find the
defendant guilty of all the charges.

TITLES BEGIN OVER THE SCENE

ANGLE ON THE DEFENDANT, BERNIE LAPLANTE

Forty, rumpled, cheap suit, cheap haircut. He reacts, turning
to the jury, indignant.

His attorney, DONNA O'DAY, rises. She's twenty-four, looks
younger.

DONNA
Your honor, may I approach the
bench?

As BERNIE fumes, the JUDGE, DONNA and the youthful clean-cut
PROSECUTOR engage in an earnest, inaudible discussion.

Frustrated, Bernie is watching them when he notices something
that distracts him from his anguish.

Donna's wallet is lying in her open attache case. The open top
of the case screens the wallet from the view of the JURY, THE
JUDGE, COURT REPORTERS, etc.

Bernie looks around, checking the spectators section.

No spectators.

TITLES CONTINUE

Bernie gets the wallet to his lap. In between cautious glances
toward the bench where the conference continues inaudibly, he
surreptitiously selects some of the twenties and some of the
tens from the wallet.

AT THE BENCH

The conference breaks up, DONNA heads back toward the defense
table.

The wallet still concealed in his lap under the table, BERNIE
is indignant.

BERNIE
What's going on? "Guilty"! What
is this?

DONNA
I got your bail continued.

BERNIE
Bail, for Chrissake! I'm innocent!

The JUDGE gavels for order as BERNIE slips DONNA'S "lightened"
wallet back into her attache case unseen.

JUDGE GOINES
Mister LaPlante, I have been
persuaded in view of your continued
employment and your lack of prior
convictions, to continue your bail
under the same conditions
heretofore, pending sentencing six
days from now. In the meantime you
will make an appointment with the
probation officer who will make a
recommendation to me regarding your
sentence. I urge you to use these
six days to set your personal
affairs in order in anticipation
of incarceration.

THE TITLES CONCLUDE

INT. CORRIDOR/HALL OF JUSTICE - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

2

BERNIE and DONNA are hurrying along the crowded corridor outside
the courtroom.

BERNIE
"Anticipation of incarceration"?

DONNA
(upset)
He means prison, Mr. LaPlante.

BERNIE
I know what he means. I'm not a
prison kinda guy, Miss O'Day. Look,
you're not doin' your job here,
you're sposed to be gettin' me off.
Last time my lawyer got the charges
dismissed.

DONNA
I think that's why the District
Attorney is being so hard-nosed this
time.

BERNIE

What about an appeal, what about...?

DONNA

We don't have grounds for appeal, Mister LaPlante. What we have to do is focus on the Probation Officer's Report...

BERNIE

He gives a good report and I walk?

DONNA

I think a suspended sentence would be unlikely...

(consulting her notes)

You still have your job, right?

BERNIE

Yeah, I been calling in sick. They think I got the flu.

DONNA

And a son by your ex-wife? Joseph.

BERNIE

A son, yeah. What about him? Joey.

DONNA

Are you pretty involved in his upbringing?

BERNIE

Involved! Christ! She attached my goddamn paycheck! Child support. Why do you think I can't afford a lawyer?

(then...)

You know what I mean. Why I got a court appointed lawyer instead of a, uh, more experienced...

DONNA

I understand. How often do you see your son?

BERNIE

The kid? Christmas the year before last. No, maybe two years ago, Christmas. She hates for me to see him, she thinks I'm a bad influence.

DONNA

I think you should visit your son.
And try and get your boss to write
a note about your performance on
the job. You need to create the
impression of a responsible, decent
citizen with familial
responsibilities who happened to
slip up once.

BERNIE nods, looking exactly like the sleazebag loser he is.

DONNA

(with difficulty)

Uh, I know you're having financial
difficulties, Mister LaPlante, but
I wonder if...I mean, the money I
loaned you...

BERNIE

Some of it. Right here. I got some
of it. I'll get the rest as soon
as I can.

BERNIE pulls out the crumpled bills he took from Donna's wallet
and hands them to her.

EXT. LION CAGES/ZOO - ANOTHER DAY

3

A LION lies glumly in his cage, staring balefully through the
bars at BERNIE who stares balefully back, contemplating the iron
bars. At BERNIE'S side is a ten year old boy, JOEY, whose neat,
scrubbed appearance is in sharp contrast to BERNIE'S rumpled,
slightly soiled look.

JOEY

Wow! Look at that one!

JOEY is indicating the next cage where a BLACK PANTHER is pacing
restlessly to and fro.

JOEY

If you were in there, he'd kill you,
wouldn't he...Dad?

As Bernie looks at the PANTHER, the muscular beast looks right
into BERNIE'S eyes with the furious yellow stare as if to say
"I'm waiting."

BERNIE

Yeah, yeah, something like that.

INT. MACDONALD'S - AN HOUR LATER (DAY)

4

BERNIE and JOEY facing each other in a booth, eating burgers.

BERNIE

This guy, this "friend" your mother's seeing, he's a fireman, huh? He ever... spend the night, whatsisname?

JOEY

Sometimes. His name's Elliot. He saved a guy's life one time. In a fire.

BERNIE

Oh yeah? A hero, huh?

(a beat, then...)

It's his job for God sake! He's a fireman, that's what he's paid for! Was he in the 'Nam, this guy Elliot?

JOEY

"The Nomm"? What's that?

BERNIE

It was this war. Viet Nam. Doesn't matter.

JOEY

Were you in it? In the war?

BERNIE

You never saw that picture, huh?

JOEY

What picture?

BERNIE

Me in my uniform. Used to be on the bookcase.

INT. MEN'S ROOM/MACDONALD'S - TEN MINUTES LATER (DAY) 5

Deserted except for BERNIE and JOEY side by side at the urinals.

BERNIE

What I don't like about public restrooms is how you're always standing in piss. It don't matter to you, you got those sneakers but I'm standing in piss in very expensive shoes. It's a breakdown in custodial services.

JOEY steals a glance at BERNIE, sees him "shake it off" and zip up. JOEY does likewise.

JOEY

Are you gonna take me somewhere next weekend?

BERNIE

I'm working on that. It's just I got some business problems and... whatsa matter?

JOEY is heading for one of the stalls. He reaches underneath and pulls out a wallet.

JOEY

Somebody lost a wallet.

BERNIE is extremely interested, takes the wallet JOEY holds out and glances inside.

Cash. A couple of fifties.

INT. MACDONALD'S - SECONDS LATER (DAY)

6

BERNIE and JOEY exit the Men's Room and head for the door to the parking lot, BERNIE explaining...

BERNIE

You give it to the manager, he pockets the dough, throws the wallet away. Mosta these people... I'm not saying all... are crooks.

JOEY casts a hasty glance at the innocent looking TEENAGERS and SENIOR CITIZENS staffing the MacDonald's. They don't look like crooks.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

7

A BAG LADY pushing two shopping carts through the parking lot spots BERNIE and JOEY crossing her path...

BAG LADY

Excuse me, sir, could you spare...?

BERNIE

No way, lady, not a chance.

BERNIE hurries past her, notices JOEY looking back at the miserable woman.

BERNIE

You gotta resist the urge to be nice to those people, they're con artists, they take advantage of the soft heart.

(more)

BERNIE (Cont'd)

Thing is, a lotta of 'em got
property, it's a scam, they're
better off than the rest of us.

Arriving at an ancient, battered Toyota, BERNIE searches for
his keys and then fusses with the lock.

BERNIE

What I'm gonna do on this wallet
thing is, Monday, day after
tomorrow, I'm gonna have my
secretary phone this guy up from
the name on his driver's license.
Let the guy come and get his wallet
and make sure he pays a reward for
you. You want a reward, doncha?
Gwan, get in.

INT. TOYOTA/MOVING/FREEWAY - TWENTY MINUTES LATER (DAY) 8

BERNIE is at the wheel, the car is gasping, struggling.

BERNIE

Whatcha gotta do, you gotta look
out for number one. It sounds
harsh, but it's a goddamn jungle
out there, kid. And most important,
you gotta keep a low profile! Got
that? A low profile! It's where
you don't give nobody nothin' to
shoot at, you know what I mean?
Don't tell 'em your name, they'll
use it against you.

JOEY is looking for the right exit sign. He spots it.

JOEY

Here. Get off here.

BERNIE

(a look at Joey)
Thanks. Thanks, pal.

JOEY looks pleased.

EXT. SUBURBAN ST.(EVELYN'S HOUSE)/INT. TOYOTA - LATER - DAY 9

BERNIE is turning onto a suburban street, checking the houses.

BERNIE

Listen, buddy, I'm really enjoying
this relationship we got going here.
(more)

BERNIE (Cont'd)
I been missing out on not knowing
you better. Thing is, I got all
this business stuff...

JOEY
Friday night. You could take me
to a movie.

BERNIE pulls the car up in front of a single story two bedroom
house.

BERNIE
Here we are. Yeah, that's a
possibility. A movie. Now you gwan
in, tell your mother I got you back
on time. Point that out to her.
She was always on my case for stuff
like that. She's still like that,
right?

JOEY
(a little grin, his
first)
Yeah.
(getting out)
I'll see ya... dad.

JOEY gets out and runs toward the house. BERNIE watches him
go. Then he pulls out the wallet, thumbs the cash, glances at
the credit cards.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

10

The bored, fiftyish bartender, CHICK, is watching the TV mounted
over the bar in this unfashionable, nearly-deserted joint. He
looks up when the door opens.

CHICK
Bernie! Where ya been, Pal?

Arriving at the bar, BERNIE surveys the dimly lit room, checking
the booths and tables for customers. Not many.

BERNIE
Some guys been looking for me,
Chick? Spanish kinda guys.

CHICK
Spanish kinda guys!

BERNIE
Business thing. Gimme a seven and
seven, willya?

BERNIE checks his watch, takes a seat, puts a twenty on the bar.

CHICK

What is it, five days now I don't see you!

BERNIE

'Cause I'm up to my ass in shit is why. I'm broke, plus I got legal problems... Nobody was asking for me, huh?

BERNIE looks around nervously, peering into the shadowy booths and rear tables as CHICK puts a drink in front of him.

CHICK

Nope. Legal problems, you gotta have a good attorney.

BERNIE

My attorney, she's just outta law school, about a couple of years older than my kid, for Chrissake.

CHICK

You gotta kid? How old's your kid?

BERNIE

Nine. I think. Maybe ten. Yeah, ten. Nice kid.

CHICK

You got a ten year old attorney, Bernie?

BERNIE

I can't afford no better. My ex, she attached my pay check for child support payments.

(turning)

You looking for Bernie LaPlante by any chance?

A MAN who's just entered the lounge shakes his head no and heads for a table where he's greeted by the COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

CHICK

I didn't even know you had a kid.

BERNIE

(thoughtful)

The thing about kids is, they're so... young! They don't know nothin' yet. When you're a kid, you think you're gonna grow up an' be a "wonderful person" instead of an asshole, like everybody else.

CHICK
We're all assholes, Bernie?

BERNIE
(ignoring him)
When I was a kid, I thought I was gonna be this fantastic wonderful heroic human being.

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S)
You Bernie Planta?

BERNIE turns.

Two Latinos are right behind him, low lifes, ESPINOSA and VARGAS.

BERNIE
LaPlante. Bernie LaPlante. You the guys Bunny called, huh?

INT. BACK BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

11

Credit cards are being inspected. ESPINOSA, seated between VARGAS and BERNIE, in a booth in the nearly deserted lounge, looks the cards over dubiously.

ESPINOSA
Three hours is old, man. Very old.

BERNIE
Hey, he might not of reported 'em at all yet. He might not know for a couple hours.

VARGAS
You pick his pocket?

BERNIE
Yeah, more or less. Trust me, these are very very fresh.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

12

JEFFREY BROADMAN is standing against the granite facade of a downtown office building. Three thousand dollar suit, Hermes tie, expensively cut silver grey hair ruffling slightly in the breeze.

BROADMAN
To be honest, I can't make sense of it either, Ms. Gayley.
(more)

BROADMAN (Cont'd)

My business situation has just taken a turn for the better, the SEC problems have turned out to be nothing much, at last things seem to be looking up again...

TV reporter GALE GAYLEY is standing close to BROADMAN, microphone in her hand. She's thirty, attractive, dignified. Walkie Talkies CRACKLE nearby and sirens WAIL in the distance.

GALE

Mister Broadman, perhaps if you considered...

BROADMAN

I feel great sympathy for all the people who care for me but I think, in the end, a person's first responsibility is to look out for "number one." I'm really grateful to you for letting me share this moment with your viewers.

A little smile as he drops RIGHT OUT THE BOTTOM OF THE FRAME!

ANGLE ON GALE

Looking down, horrified.

GALE

Oh my god! Chucky, tilt down. Did you get it?

(then, doubly horrified)

Jesus, did I say that?

Her cameraman, CHUCKY, twenty-five, is already urgently tilting his vidpak as WE REVEAL that he and GALE are standing on a ledge sixty stories above the street. He keeps his eye on the finder as he responds.

CHUCKY

Yeah, I got it. Sports training. You learn to follow the ball.

(looking up at Gale)

You know what I don't get? Why's a guy who's gonna jump off a tall building ask to talk to a TV reporter first?

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER (DAY)

13V

(NOTE: This scene becomes a VIDEO IMAGE at some point to be determined)

Mike in hand, GALE narrates as an ambulance pulls away from the front of the building. ONLOOKERS, HOMELESS among them, stare.

GALE

According to various sources, Jeffrey Allan Broadman had been despondent about his fortune which had shrunk in recent months from more than 400 million dollars to less than ten million. The tragedy of his suicide, the 170th this year in the city, was almost compounded when his plummeting body narrowly missed landing on Elvira Chrissey a woman who makes her home in the streets.

ANGLE ON ELVIRA CHRISSEY,

a bag lady, being interviewed.

ELVIRA CHRISSEY/VIDEO

It's bad enough out here on the streets. You break a bone or fall down, nobody's gonna pick you up nobody cares. Now we gotta watch out for these falling millionaires too.

ANGLE ON GALE

speaking to CAMERA...

GALE/VIDEO

I turned to others among the homeless for their reactions to a man who killed himself presumably because his fortune dwindled to a mere ten million dollars.

ANGLE ON HOMER JONES,

a sad looking wino, speaking to GALE...

HOMER JONES/VIDEO

Well, I can see where it could depress you, I can see where there might be an element of despair there. Happiness, see, doesn't come from what you got or don't got so much as which direction you're moving in. More or less. Up or down. You see what I mean? If I score a ten dollar bill I'm zooming, where this fellow was, plummeting, so to speak.

GALE

I didn't say I thought we should have saved him..

WALLACE

You didn't?

GALE

I said I wished it had at least occurred to me to consider saving him.

DEAKINS

What good would that do?

GALE sits on Deakins' desk.

GALE

It would make me feel like a human being instead of a cynical, hardbitten newswoman. I really liked the way that homeless man talked about sharing as a way of fighting desperation.

DEAKINS

We're running a news program, not a soap opera.

GALE

(dryly)

Every now and then a ray of hope in the general despair and misery is a good thing, Chief.

DEAKINS

(dryly)

Is that from your speech? You're sitting on your ticket.

GALE finds an envelope on the desk under her butt.

WALLACE

Ticket! Speech! What's going on?

DEAKINS

She's flying to New York. She's been nominated for a Silver Mike...

WALLACE

A Silver Mike! You're covering us in glory!

GALE

I haven't won it yet.
(studying ticket, to
Deakins)
I notice you've got me scheduled
on a flight back an hour after the
ceremony.

WALLACE

An hour after...! Deak, for
Heaven's sake! Let's give her a
night in New York City. We'll put
her and her boyfriend up at a good
hotel...

DEAKINS

She broke up with her boyfriend.
(to Gale)
Listen, babe, we needja. You gotta
follow up on the jumper...

GALE

(to Wallace)
If the Station's gonna put me up
at a good hotel...

WALLACE

(a look toward Deakins)
Absolutely!

DEAKINS

Okay, hell with it. Party hearty...
is that what they say? I'll give
it to someone else.

GALE gives DEAKINS a look, suspicious, then starts out.

GALE

Thanks. I better write my speech,
just in case I actually win.

DEAKINS

(once she's gone)
She's just pretending she's a
person. She's really a reporter.
Fifty bucks she's on the first
flight back.

CHUCKY

You know what I don't get? I don't
get why a guy who's gonna jump asks
to talk to a TV reporter?

EXT. STREET/CITY CIVIC CENTER - AFTERNOON

15

HORNS BLARE as a FORD VAN cuts off a CAB and squirms into a parking place marked "HANDICAPPED ONLY."

The side of the van reads GUMLEY'S SUPER CARPET CARE and features a cartoon logo and a phone number.

BERNIE, wearing Gumley overalls, jumps out of the van and hurries up the steps to an imposing municipal building.

INT. CIVIC BUILDING - TEN MINUTES LATER (AFTERNOON)

16

A door reads "PROBATION DEPARTMENT." MOVE IN ON THE DOOR.

INT. OFFICE/PROBATION - DAY

17

Sitting across the desk from the stone-faced, balding PROBATION OFFICER, BERNIE is speaking in what he thinks is a persuasive manner, at once ingratiating and patronizing...

BERNIE

Whatcha gotta do here, is see my point of view, sir. I mean, this is kind of a technical thing. A more experienced lawyer woulda got me off, the police case was very screwed up to say the least. Understand? I shouldn't of been found guilty in the first place, never mind sending me down for...

PROBATION OFFICER

(patient, in charge)

That's not our purpose today, Mister LaPlante, to retry the case. A jury found you guilty and what I need to determine is...

BERNIE

(agitated, interrupting)

Hey! Do I have a record? Have I ever done time? I mean I been arrested a few times, who hasn't? Parking tickets for Chrissake! Suspicion of stuff! Have I ever been convicted of anything?

PROBATION OFFICER

Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE

Do I hit anybody? You see me shoot anybody? Hey, drugs!
(more)

BERNIE (Cont'd)

Do I sell drugs? Jesus, I don't belong in prison. It's a drain on the taxpayer. I'm a family man.

The PROBATION OFFICER shows neither sympathy nor surprise.

BERNIE

Look, I got this kid. We got a goddamn relationship! I'm takin' him to a movie tonight! He worships me. If I go down, what's this do to my son? I'm his goddamn role model for Christ sake!

INT. BALLROOM /N.Y. HOTEL - NIGHT

18

JOURNALISTS are applauding vigorously as GALE stands at the podium holding a Silver Microphone of real size. Flushed and flustered, she's obviously just received the award. As the applause diminishes she begins.. a little nervous, a little shy, not the on-air personality...

GALE

You're all professionals so I don't have to tell you what an important role my News Director, the Station Manager, and my cameraman played in winning this award. Uh, I'm not a speech kind of person, but I know when you win one of these you have to make a few, uh, remarks, like about the role of the television journalist in today's world. Sort of sing for your supper.

(a beat)

My cameraman, Chucky Decker, asked me a question today. We had just covered a tragic story... a man who was in the act of committing suicide wanted to give an interview... for television. Then he jumped to his death. And Chucky said to me, "Gale, why would a man who is going to jump off a building ask to talk to a TV reporter first?" It was puzzling and I thought about it on the flight here. The answer came to me. Very simply, how would he know he jumped if it wasn't on TV? Because, in a very real sense, if it's not on the Six O'Clock News, it didn't really happen. We make it real! Us, with our mikes and our vidcams.

(more)

GALE (Cont'd)

If we ignore it, it's not there.
And if we report it, we're not just
reporting the truth, we're creating
it. We may not want that
responsibility, but it's ours...

The JOURNALISTS listen with appropriate sobriety.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. SKID ROW STREETS - DAY)

19V

As GALE narrates, the CAMERA TILTS DOWN from the 40 story office building and DISSOLVES to a MONTAGE of HOMELESS PEOPLE.

GALE'S VOICE/TV

If there's despair in the penthouses
and the executive suites, we can
only guess at the courage it takes
to survive forty or fifty stories
below in the dog eat dog world of
the homeless.

WINSTON'S VOICE (O.S)

Shitty color! Looka the skin tones.

REVEAL: THE TV SET IS IN BERNIE'S APARTMENT

INT. LIVING ROOM/BERNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

20

WINSTON, fifty and fat, is scowling at the image on the TV screen in BERNIE'S spartan and tasteless three room apartment. BERNIE grabs the remote from WINSTON'S pudgy hands.

BERNIE

Chrissake! Homeless people are
supposed to have shitty skin tones.
Look!

BERNIE points the remote at the screen where GALE is now addressing the CAMERA, mike in hand, from skid row...

GALE/TV

In this last grim decade of the
twentieth century, I'm Gale Gayley
reporting for Channe...

ON THE TV SCREEN

21V

CLICK! A gunfight replaces GALE ON SCREEN, then a sitcom, an old movie, MTV, and finally a slick commercial featuring a sexy bikinied BLONDE.

BACK TO SCENE

BERNIE

There you go! Skin tones! Listen, you gotta fish or cut bait. I wouldn't even do this if I didn't have these legal problems. Two fifty. That's it. I gotta get outta here, I gotta take my kid to the movies tonight, I'm late.

WINSTON stares at the lithe thighs ON THE SCREEN as BERNIE starts rummaging urgently in his closet.

WINSTON

I'll go two hundred.

BERNIE

Two hundred! How about some tools? You want to buy some tools?

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

22

The engines drone as we look into the sparsely populated main cabin of the "baby Boeing". Among the many empty seats, a MR. FLETCHER reads a magazine while his ten year son RICHIE plays a pocket video game.

LESLIE SUGAR, one of the two Flight Attendants, is serving a drink to MR. SMITH, a businessman while FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant, is giving a pillow to an ELDERLY WOMAN.

We DISCOVER GALE, cradling a phone to her ear while she awkwardly fishes in her purse and pulls out the Silver Mike Award.

GALE

It's very nice actually.

(reading the
inscription)

"For Excellence in the Pursuit of Truth." Uh, listen, I just wanted you to know I got a seat back on the early flight after all so... What?

Reacting to what she hears on the phone, GALE overturns the purse in her lap and the contents -- wallet, comb, lipstick, notepad, etc. -- spill on the floor.

GALE

What do you mean you gave it to Conklin? Conklin wasn't on that ledge! Conklin wasn't...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/CHANNEL FOUR - NIGHT

23

DEAKINS is grinning into his phone, winking at WALLACE who's standing beside his desk.

DEAKINS

Gale, you were gonna do the town, remember? Fancy suite at the station's expense, see a show, get laid maybe. What was I supposed to do?

Still grinning, he breaks off and listens to Gale's faintly audible response while holding out his palm to WALLACE in a triumphant "pay me" gesture. Then he speaks into the phone...

DEAKINS

Okay, okay, you get back tonight, doll, and I'll take Conklin off your suicide. Fly carefully... and congratulations on the award.

DEAKINS hangs up and smugly pockets the fifty WALLACE has fished from his wallet, chuckling gleefully...

DEAKINS

What'd I tell ya! They're all like that, the good ones. They're junkies for the story. They can't let go.

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

24

The eight-year-old, KELLY, seated next to GALE is helping GALE pick up the contents of her purse from the floor.

GALE

Thank you. Very much.

KELLY beams. And GALE gives a look to KELLY'S mother SUSAN who's seated on the other side of KELLY.

SUSAN

There's another credit card on the floor.

GALE reaches down to pick up her Visa card from the floor.

GALE

Thanks.

GALE inserts the Visa Card in her wallet with the other cards.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

25

Rain comes down in curtains as BERNIE'S Toyota chugs and farts through curtains of water.

INT. MOVING CAR/CITY STREET - NIGHT

26

BERNIE is at the wheel, trying to see through the rain swept windshield. He's talking to himself as he drives...

BERNIE

I know why it's raining. I coulda predicted this. It's raining because my wipers are fucked up. If my wipers were okay, the fucking sun would be shining right now. At night!

INT. COCKPIT/727 - NIGHT

27

Engines DRONE monotonously. The Flight Engineer is looking at a magazine while the PILOT and CO-PILOT, surrounded by glowing instruments, stare into the blackness ahead... until something catches the bored PILOT'S eye. A red light on the control panel. He frowns and looks closer.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/FREEWAY - NIGHT

28

Looking for exit signs, BERNIE can barely see through the sheets of rain that his malfunctioning wipers do little to clear.

Suddenly a sign looms into view and disappears before he can read it.

BERNIE

Damn!

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

29

The engines drone. The cabin is peaceful, most PASSENGERS dozing or talking softly as GALE glances up from her magazine, sees SUSAN reading while KELLY sleeps peacefully, her head in SUSAN'S lap.

PING! The electronic tone. Gale looks up, sees the "Fasten Seat Belt" sign illuminated.

GALE looks toward the dark window. No sign of any lights below. No city. No airport. Strange.

The P.A. SYSTEM comes to life and the CAPTAIN'S mellifluous VOICE murmurs soothingly...

P.A. SYSTEM

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain. We're experiencing a high reading on one of our indicators. Ten to one, it's a malfunction in a gauge, but just as a precaution I'm going to ask you to fasten your seat belts while the Flight Attendants run through some safety procedures with you. I apologize for the necessity and the inconvenience.

Murmurs in the cabin. What does this mean? SUSAN looks a question at GALE, puzzled as Flight Attendants LESLIE and FREDDY take their positions to demonstrate safety procedures.

LESLIE

First make sure your seat belts are fastened securely. Then brace your arms against the seat ahead of you and put your face...

KELLY

(waking up)
Mommy, what's going on?

SUSAN

Everything's going to be fine, honey.

GALE'S eyes meet SUSAN'S eyes. Fear. Brave smile.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/EXIT/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

30

Pulling off the freeway, BERNIE peers at the signs that greet him as he slows to a stop at the foot of the exit.

Unable to read them through the windshield he has to open the door and stand in the rain.

Even then, the sign is obscured by torrents of rain.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

31

All eyes are on LESLIE as she continues her instructions...

LESLIE

-- when you reach the bottom of the chute you should immediately move as far away from the plane as possible in the event of a fire on the aircraft.

Glancing around, GALE glimpses pale, strained FACES.

She sees the ELDERLY WOMAN holding the arm of a man, her SON.

She sees a MRS. BROWN squeezing a MR. BROWN'S hand tightly.

Looking back down the aisle she sees MR. FLETCHER putting his arm around RICHIE'S shoulder, father and son united against fate.

Beside her she sees SUSAN trying to comfort KELLY.

LESLIE

Those of you who can should help
others who may be unable to move
quickly.

GALE is acutely aware that everyone around her is comforting someone else. Only she is alone.

INT. TOYOTA/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

32

Back at the wheel, BERNIE is turning right onto an unlit highway, his single headlight stabbing weakly at the storm ahead while his useless wipers clatter loudly and the engine chugs... farts... misses.

BERNIE

I'm late already! Don't quit on me
now, for Chrissake! This ain't the
time!

The engine struggles, continues.

BERNIE

Come on, come on !

The engine surges to life again... then begins to throb with downright vigor.

BERNIE frowns. It's getting louder.

AND LOUDER! AND LOUDER! IT'S ROARING.

BERNIE'S eyes bug with the realization that either he's about to take off...OR THAT ISN'T HIS ENGINE THUNDERING, THUNDERING.

A great shadow blurs in the rain ahead.

BERNIE brakes hard, skidding, sliding wildly.

BAWHOOOOOOOOM! HUGE NOISE. IMPACT! GRINDING!

BERNIE skids to a halt, eyes shut tight to prevent himself from dying.

But he's not dead. He opens his eyes. Stares out the windshield.

A blank wall greets him, bouncing back his headlights in a blur of rain.

BERNIE

Now what?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

33

BERNIE gets out of his car. Everything is spooky quiet.

The tail section of a huge aircraft blocks the road directly in front of Bernie's car. He skidded to a stop two feet short of ramming the twenty-five foot high vertical fin. The rest of the craft is sprawled off the low bridge and into the water, lost for the most part in the darkness.

Suddenly, a VOICE calls out... from somewhere forward along the fuselage.

VOICE

Hey! Help! Somebody! Help.

BERNIE frowns. Helping is not his instinct. Approaching the edge of the bridge, he peers into the darkness.

The plane is corkscrewed through the bridge at such a freak angle that the tail rear doors are wedged shut by the metal super-structure, the wing exits are blocked by the up-bent wing stubs, and the right forward doors are canted hopelessly toward the sky while the left exit is partially jammed in the mud near the river bank in three feet of water.

VOICE

Please! Help us. We're stuck.
Hello! Anybody!

BERNIE

Whatsa problem, pal?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 AT REST - NIGHT

34

Engulfed in darkness except for strings of floor lights leading to the exits, the cabin is a confusion of GROANS, COUGHS, CRIES and the piercing WAIL of a screaming BABY. The floor lights seem to be on the walls, high on one side and low on the other, as the cabin is dramatically canted, making movement along aisles nearly impossible.

LESLIE, battered from the impact, her uniform torn, is struggling to open the forward emergency exit. Angled downward, the door will only open six inches before being blocked by mud. Water pours in around her ankles as she shoves furiously.

LESLIE

Somebody give me a hand.

A VOICE
We're on fire.

LESLIE
Let's stay calm, everybody.
Everybody, stay calm, please.
Please stay calm. Everything will
be all right if we stay calm.
Somebody give me a hand with this
door.

Her flashlight stabs the darkness, reveals frightened FACES.

Slumped, motionless forms.

LESLIE
Help the people around you,
everybody. Please help each other.

AAAAAAAHAH! SCREAMS as the plane suddenly shifts violently from
the interior movement, canting further.

ANGLE ON GALE

Staggering from her seat. WHAM! Hand luggage slams into her
from an overhead rack. As GALE goes down, a PASSENGER lands
on top of her, catching her arm at an angle, breaking it. The
PASSENGER climbs off her and struggles down the slope.

GALE realizes she can't get up, her leg is wedged in the
framework of a seat. PASSENGERS are climbing past her, heading
forward.

SUSAN is fighting her way out of her canted seats, clutching
the terrified KELLY to her.

GALE
I...I can't move. I'm caught.

SUSAN glances at her and their eyes meet. Eyes full of fear.

KELLY is screaming.

SUSAN turns away from GALE and half-carries KELLY toward the
exit, leaving GALE alone, trapped, in pain and fear.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

35

BERNIE is climbing cautiously down the undercarriage of the
bridge toward the water, as OTHER VOICES call out from the
twisted fuselage.

BERNIE
Hold on there, hold on there. Just
a minute.

BERNIE is awkward and... very careful... climbing down, not brave or dashing. He doesn't notice that, behind him, where the plane is corkscrewed through the bridge a BOUQUET OF ORANGE FLAMES IS BLOSSOMING IN THE FUSELAGE OF THE JET.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

36

Thick smoke is oozing through the cabin. PASSENGERS are stumbling over each other, clogging the canted aisles while OTHERS slump in their seats, immobilized.

RICHIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Daddy! Daddy! Daddy, wake up!

LESLIE'S VOICE
Keep calm! Everybody, keep calm.

ANOTHER VOICE
Someone's coming!

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

37

Having reached the riverbank, BERNIE is reluctant to step in the water. He hesitates, then he takes off his shoes, looks in the darkness for a place to leave them.

VOICE
Help us! Help, please.

BERNIE
Hold on, buddy. I got hundred dollar shoes here.

More cries. BERNIE steps cautiously into the water. Up to his ankles. Deeper.

BERNIE wades along the huge fuselage, toward the VOICES, stumbling, landing on all fours in the water.

BERNIE
Jesus Christ!

Struggling to his feet, hands muddy, he blunders toward the Emergency Exit and finds it canted into the water, jammed into the mud so that it only opens a crack.

MR. BROWN is wedged in the crack, trying to force the door open without success. Glimpsing BERNIE'S hands in the crack, he pleads.

MR. BROWN
Help us, please. We can't get out.

BERNIE makes a tentative attempt to open the door. He has no effect whatsoever.

MR. BROWN
Push it! You gotta push hard.

BERNIE
Whaddaya (grunt) think I'm (grunt)
doing?

Reluctantly BERNIE digs his feet into the mud, puts his shoulder into the door and shoves with all his might. Because he has a better angle on the door and better purchase, he's actually able to move it several inches.

MR. BROWN
Harder. Push it harder.

BERNIE leans back into the door again and pushes with all his might. It gives ever so slightly. Another inch. MR. BROWN is trying to squeeze out.

MR. BROWN
Again! Harder. Come on.

BERNIE
(grunting with effort)
I'm...pushing...it, buddy.

MR. BROWN
Harder!

BERNIE
I'm... pushing... it... asshole!

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

38

PASSENGERS stumble over each other while a flashlight makes panicky stabs at the darkness, RICHIE cries out for FLETCHER to wake up, the BABY screams.

Someone's trying to get out the overhead exit, others are hammering at an aft exit.

GALE slumped in her seat, fades in and out of consciousness. Above her, across the canted aisle, SUSAN is calling out for help...Then, GALE'S eyes flicker with awareness at the sound of an urgent shout...

VOICE
THERE'S A GUY OPENING THE DOOR.
HE'S OPENING IT!

A sudden shadowy surge of movement in the darkness, PASSENGERS urgently scrambling over seats toward the exit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

39

BERNIE gives a great heave and goes down in the river face first.

He's opened the door just wide enough for MR. BROWN to squirm through the narrow opening, then pull MRS. BROWN through.

BERNIE, sputtering, is trying to get to his feet when the BROWNS knock him down again in their frantic rush to get as far away from the burning plane as they can.

As BERNIE struggles to his feet yet again, more PASSENGERS are oozing out the door. They brush him aside, splashing toward the river bank, while orange flames are flickering wildly now in the tail section.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

40

LESLIE is beside the exit, using her flashlight to guide people. Her face is bruised and bloody, her uniform torn, but she is courage itself...

LESLIE

Once you're outside, immediately
move as far away from the aircraft
as you can. If you see someone who
needs help...

Scared PASSENGERS are struggling to get over the seats that are close to where the floor ought to be.

LESLIE

Please, everybody, one at a time.
Please, one at a time.

Just then the young RICHIE, caught in the surge of PASSENGERS, bumps into her.

RICHIE

Please, Miss, my father can't move.
He can't move.

LESLIE grabs him and shoves him bodily out the narrow exit as she speaks urgently...

LESLIE

We'll try and help him, you wait
outside. Get as far away from the
plane as you can.

Just then LESLIE sees the bloody PILOT and CO-PILOT staggering toward her.

She helps them out the narrow opening, half pushing them.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

41

BERNIE'S face is smeared with mud! He staggers out of the water in the flicker of firelight and starts searching for his shoes on the muddy riverbank.

PASSENGER

Don't stop!

BERNIE

You gonna buy me a new pair a shoes, pal?

The sound of approaching SIRENS cuts through the rainy night.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

42

RICHIE is outside the plane, struggling in chest deep water. He looks back at the plane, sobbing...

RICHIE

Dad! Dad!

He doesn't know what to do.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

43

Muttering curses, BERNIE is floundering around on the riverbank when a hand clutches at his sleeve.

BERNIE whirls, his face a mask of mud. Finds himself facing RICHIE.

RICHIE

Sir! Please, sir. Sir, my father can't move.

Where? BERNIE looks around.

RICHIE

He's in there! He's hurt!

In the plane? In there? BERNIE looks at the plane, reacts...

BERNIE

In there? Listen, kid, the cops are coming... and the firemen. They, uh, they got equipment and stuff for this kinda thing, they're, uh, experts.

The sound of SIRENS, still a ways off. RICHIE clutches at BERNIE.

RICHIE

Please, sir! Please! It's on fire.
He can't move.

BERNIE stares into the desperate face... and suddenly,
recklessly, BERNIE loses it, forgets he's BERNIE, acts like
someone else.

BERNIE

Where is he?

YOUNG BOY

Inside! He's in the plane, he...

BERNIE

I know he's inside. Which way?
What's his name?

INT. NEAR THE EXIT/MAIN CABIN/727 - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT) 44

Chaos and confusion. The smoke is thicker, LESLIE is upset...

LESLIE

Sir, you can't go back in. Sir,
you're blocking passengers. Sir,
no...

BERNIE, his muddy face unrecognizable, is pushing his way into
the plane, shouldering coughing PASSENGERS aside.

BERNIE finds himself standing in the choking darkness,
PASSENGERS pushing past him. Holy smokes! This is ridiculous!
What's he doing here? Thicker smoke, can barely see anything,
VOICES cry out in pain and fear. Just then he spots something.

A flashlight lies on the floor sending a useless knife of light
into the smoky darkness. He grabs for it, drops it urgently.

BERNIE

Jesus Christ!

The light is in a hand! He reaches again, snatches the light
and points it revealing FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant,
lying semiconscious on the floor, bloody, GROANING.

BERNIE hesitates. Then he leans down, still gripping the light
and half hauls FREDDY toward the nearby exit where LESLIE is
supervising PASSENGERS.

BERNIE

Hey, somebody, grab him, willya?
Help this guy, willya, goddamnit!

A MAN reluctantly turns and, with the help of LESLIE they manage
to shove FREDDY out the exit. LESLIE instructs the MAN...

LESLIE

Get him away from the plane, help him.

LESLIE turns back in time to see BERNIE heading back into the darkness, struggling around the stream of PASSENGERS.

For half a second, LESLIE'S face reveals her amazement at seeing somebody go back into the the nightmare a second time. Then she's helping the next passenger out...SUSAN and KELLY...

SUSAN

There's (cough cough) a woman back there. She's caught.

LESLIE

Get as far away from the plane as you can.

Urgently LESLIE shoves them through the door.

INT. "UP THE SLOPE"/MAIN CABIN/707 - NIGHT

45

BERNIE is struggling aft, up the steep slope of the nose-down plane, coughing and cursing in the dark, calling out...

BERNIE

MISTER FLETCHER! HEY, MISTER
FLETCHER! MISTER FLETCHER, HEY
BUDDY, WHERE ARE YA, GODDAMNIT?

BERNIE pans the flashlight ahead of him. The blade of light only cuts a few feet through the thickening smoke, revealing only empty seats.

BERNIE

FLETCHER! HEY (cough cough) HEY,
FLETCHER, SPEAK UP, WILL YA? DON'T
BE AN ASSHOLE!

No answer.

BERNIE pans the light, turns and...

A SHARP GROAN!

BERNIE stumbles. He stepped on someone.

BERNIE

Fletcher?

Pans the light down.

BERNIE

Shit!

A woman! GALE. Semiconscious, in pain, she opens her eyes.

GALE P.O.V.: BERNIE'S MUDDY FACE

Looking up, all GALE can see is a vague vision of a muddy face dimly visible in the spill of the flashlight.

BACK TO SCENE

GALE
My leg's caught.

BERNIE points the light toward her leg, overpans the leg, the blade of light discovering her purse. Then he corrects the beam back to reveal her leg wedged between two seats.

GALE
Can you... can you get me out of here?

BERNIE pans the light back to the purse again.

BERNIE
Yeah, sure. I think.

BERNIE puts down the light and struggles her leg loose while GALE groans in pain. Her head is near the floor lights, her eyes open.

For a moment BERNIE'S face passes through the stationary beam of the flashlight and GALE gets a glimpse of a smoky, muddy face leaning close to her...AN OBSCURE VISION!

BERNIE
Okay, lady. I'm not
Schwartzenegger, you gotta make an
effort here, you gotta help.

BERNIE retrieves the flashlight lying near her purse. It's out of her line of vision, behind her head. He only hesitates for half a second before his hand shoots out for the purse, conceals it under his jacket, and gets to his feet.

INT. EXIT/AREA/MAIN CABIN/727 - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT) 46

LESLIE is helping ANOTHER MAN out the exit.

LESLIE
Get away from the plane quickly.
It may explode.

Now she's alone. Heroically she turns back and probes the smoky interior with her flashlight.

The blade of light is blunted by the smoky darkness. There's nothing.

LESLIE hesitates. Should she run, save her own life or...?

Suddenly BERNIE steps into the beam of her light, emerging from the thick smoke hauling GALE over his shoulder, his face smudged, unrecognizable, AN HEROIC VISION SHE'LL REMEMBER!

BERNIE

Gimme a (cough cough) hand, willya,
honey?

EXT. BRIDGE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

47

SIRENS scream and lights FLASH as more Emergency Vehicles join the ones already parked close to the bridge at a safe distance from the burning tail of the plane. A FIRE CAPTAIN shouts "Move that piece-a junk" at three FIREMEN who are already pushing BERNIE'S Toyota off the bridge and away from the airplane while a confusion of PARAMEDICS and POLICE hurry to the aid of dazed PASSENGERS in torn and bloody clothing.

FIREMEN train hoses on the fiery tail of the plane while the FIRE CAPTAIN shouts...

FIRE CAPTAIN

GET 'EM BACK! GET 'EM BACK!

ANGLE ON RICHIE

Staring at the smoking plane in horror when a hand grips his shoulder. Turning he finds himself looking up at the MAN whose back we saw LESLIE push out of the plane... FLETCHER!

RICHIE

DAD! OH, DAD!

FLETCHER

Son! Thank God! I couldn't find
you. I was terrified...terrified.

They're hugging.

INT. EXIT AREA/727 CABIN - NIGHT

48

LESLIE and BERNIE are awkwardly pushing GALE'S limp body out the exit to a FIREMAN in an asbestos suit just outside.

FIREMAN

(to Leslie)

You too, miss! Right away!

LESLIE turns to BERNIE.

LESLIE

I've lost (cough) lost count. I
think (cough) everybody's out.

But BERNIE isn't there! He's disappeared into the smoke. As she stares in dismay, she hears him yelling...

BERNIE'S VOICE
HEY, FLETCHER! SPEAK UP, WILL YA?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

49

Coughing and choking BERNIE struggles through the cabin, his light nearly useless now.

BERNIE'S VOICE
HEY (cough cough) FLETCHER!

Nothing! Darkness. BERNIE can see orange in the black near the tail. Fire!

This is crazy! Time to turn back! He's turning toward the exit when suddenly...

A VOICE
Here! Over here! Help me, please.

At last! BERNIE waves the light in the direction of the VOICE and stumbles that way through the smoke.

BERNIE
Where the (cough cough) hell are ya, buddy?

VOICE
Over here. My leg's broken (cough cough). I need help.

BERNIE finds an injured MAN crawling along the floor.

BERNIE leans down and grips him under the armpits.

BERNIE
Fletcher, right?

The MAN cries out in pain as BERNIE half drags him over seats.

MAN
Aaaaaaaah! Smith!

BERNIE
You're not Fletcher?

BERNIE lets him go.

SMITH
Please help me. My name's Smith.

BERNIE looks around with the light.

Thick smoke. Flames back toward the tail.

BERNIE
I'm looking for Fletcher! HEY,
FLETCHER!

BERNIE waves the light at the darkness and...it goes out.

BERNIE
Shit!

BANG! BANG! BERNIE bangs the flashlight against a seat.

SMITH
Don't leave me. Please don't leave
me.

BERNIE
Awright, awright.

Angrily BERNIE grabs him and hauls him urgently toward the exit while SMITH cries out in pain.

BERNIE
Don't count yer chickens here,
Smith. I can't see shit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

50

A dazzling worklight shining down from the bridge illuminates the fuselage and the partially opened exit as TWO FIREMEN in asbestos fire suits splash through the water carrying GALE from the plane.

A THIRD FIREMAN stands at the narrow exit, too narrow for him to enter in his bulky asbestos suit, and shouts through his helmet.

THIRD FIREMAN
You've gotta come outta there, miss.
Right now! This thing's gonna go.

LESLIE squeezes out of the exit, looks back...

LESLIE
There's another...

THIRD FIREMAN
(grabbing her)
RIGHT GODDAMN NOW! COME ON!

As LESLIE and the FIREMAN splash the ten yards to the riverbank flames eat their way toward the wings where the fuel is stored.

Suddenly BERNIE'S VOICE cuts through the chaos...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
HEY! GIMME A HAND HERE. HEY YOU!
IN THE BUNNY SUIT.

LESLIE looks back and sees BERNIE awkwardly pulling SMITH out of the narrow exit.

The THIRD FIREMAN slogs back to BERNIE.

FIREMAN
I'll help him, buddy, you run for it.

The FIREMAN tries to grab SMITH but BERNIE won't let go.

BERNIE
I got this guy, you go get the guy who's still in there.

The FIREMAN is lifting SMITH bodily.

FIREMAN
Get out of here, pal, she's gonna blow.

BERNIE
You're not goin' in? There's a guy in there! You got a fucking suit.

FIREMAN
SHE'S GONNA EXPLODE, YOU DUMB SHIT.

The FIREMAN starts to stagger away from the plane, carrying SMITH.

BERNIE looks back at the plane, sees the fury of flames and suddenly he splashes through the water after the FIREMAN.

EXT. RIVERBANK - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT)

51

The FIREMAN is staggering up the slope carrying SMITH when he glances back.

He sees BERNIE poking around at the edge of the riverbank.

FIREMAN
HURRY UP, BUDDY!

In the orange glow of the fire, BERNIE gives a delighted grunt as he finds half of what he's looking for...a single shoe.

FIREMAN
COME ON, YOU STUPID SHIT!

BERNIE
I LOST MY GODDAMN SHOE!

GALE

I'm okay. Please, I'm okay, I'm
a reporter, I...OW!

PARAMEDIC

Lady, you're not okay.

GALE gets off the stretcher in spite of their efforts and
staggers a few feet, grabs one of them for support.

PARAMEDIC

Miss, please, you've got a broken
arm.

GALE

It's my leg. My leg hurts...
(suddenly shouting)

CHUCKY! OVER HERE, CHUCKY! CHUCKY!

ANGLE ON CHUCKY

Taping SURVIVORS, when he hears GALE'S voice and looks around
for her.

CONKLIN, the reporter with him, spots her first.

CONKLIN

Holy shit! It's Gayley!

ANGLE ON THE AMBULANCE

Where GALE is half on the stretcher as CHUCKY and CONKLIN rush
up to her.

CONKLIN

Gayley! You were on the plane?

GALE

This is my story, Conk. I did the
research.

PARAMEDIC

Please, she's injured, she's gotta
go to the hospital...

CHUCKY is already pointing the vidcam at her, taping as the
PARAMEDICS shove her onto the stretcher and into the ambulance
with her talking all the way.

GALE

Get the Flight Attendant, the one
who manned the door. Also some guy,
a passenger, pulled me out. Talk
to him. Then get down to the
hospital and I'll do an interview
and an intro and close. Make
sure...

BANG! The PARAMEDICS slam the door behind her.

CONKLIN shakes his head as CHUCKY lowers his camera and the ambulance pulls away.

CONKLIN

She's a real piece of work!
Unbelievable! "It's my story, I
did the research."

CHUCKY

You're not going to believe the shot
I got back there. Major Awards!

ANGLE ON BERNIE

wearing only one shoe he limps right past CHUCKY and CONKLIN, unnoticed in the confusion of FIREMEN, PARAMEDICS, and SURVIVORS.

ANGLE ON RICHIE AND FLETCHER

Standing between an ambulance and a firetruck, father and son are hugging each other warmly. They don't notice Bernie trudging past them and he doesn't notice them.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

reacting with sudden horror at something he sees.

ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE

The spot where BERNIE left his car. FIREMEN are spraying retardant on the fiery fuselage of the plane. No sign of the car!

BERNIE

Christ! My car! Where's my car?

BERNIE lets out a great groan and suddenly a PARAMEDIC appears at his side.

PARAMEDIC

Where's it hurt, sir?

BERNIE

Huh? What? Me?

PARAMEDIC

Can you make it to the ambulance over there, sir? Let us check you out.

BERNIE

I don't need an ambulance, I need a new car.

PARAMEDIC

A new car!

BERNIE

It musta burned up for Chrissake!

The PARAMEDIC tries to take BERNIE by the arm.

PARAMEDIC

Let me help you, sir. Everything's
going to be okay. You weren't in
your car, you were in an airplane.
The airplane...

Just then an HYSTERICAL WOMAN rushes up and clutches at the
PARAMEDIC...

HYSTERICAL WOMAN

Can you help my husband, please?
He's in pain.

As the PARAMEDIC turns to her, BERNIE spots something.

BERNIE'S POV OF HIS CAR

Virtually unrecognizable, moved to the side of the bridge,
buried under a mountain of fire retardant foam.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Limping up to his car, wiping the foam off the windshield.

BERNIE

This shit has gotta be great for
the paint job!

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

56

The door swings open violently, revealing EVELYN standing in
the doorway looking furious. She's thirty-five, tough, plain,
not ugly.

EVELYN

He waited for you three hours!

BERNIE

You are not gonna believe this,
Evelyn! Absolutely fantastic! I'm
on my way --

EVELYN

I am so tired of your bullshit,
Bernie.

BERNIE

Ev, it's not my fault! I'm trying
to tell you this incredible --

EVELYN

It's never your fault, Bernie!
Never ever! You screwed up my life,
now you're gonna screw up Joey's
life, but you're never gonna accept
responsibility for anyth--

BERNIE

Is he here, your friend. The
fireman? Why doncha let me in so
we don't wake everybody in the
neighborhood?

EVELYN

He had an emergency call...a real
emergency.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

57

Wearing headphones JOEY is surreptitiously watching TV
when the program is interrupted with a news bulletin. 58V

Uninterested JOEY pulls off the headphones and clicks off the
TV with the remote. He's about to settle under the covers when
he hears the sound of raised VOICES from below. He frowns, gets
up, tiptoes to the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

59

Suburban. Inexpensive furniture. EVELYN and BERNIE ranting...

BERNIE

Willya lemme talk for Chrissake?
I'm trying to tell you what
happened. What happened is...

EVELYN

The same thing that always happens!
You blew it! And this time you
broke your son's heart instead of
mine! He was so proud, looking
forward to going to a movie with
his father... and you let him down!
Like you let everybody down, always!
What did you do, take a mudbath?

ANGLE ON JOEY

eyes wide, crouched at the top of the staircase in his pyjamas,
spying on his parents in the living room below.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

That's what I'm trying to... to...
okay, nevermind. Just lemme talk
to Joey to... to apologize.

EVELYN

He's in bed! You're not gonna wake
him and make him crazy, do you
understand? He comes home from the
zoo, he wants to know if Elliot's
a "war hero" like you... he wants
to know how many people you
killed...

BERNIE

"Elliot"? The heroic goddamn
fireman?

EVELYN

I had to explain your tendency to
"exaggerate". How you were actually
"in country" all of two weeks and
how you killed about as many people
as the other clerk-typists in your
outfit, no more, no less...

BERNIE

Three weeks, Ev. I didn't tell him
I killed anybody...

EVELYN

Maybe not,... but you let him
believe it! And then I gotta
explain about the homeless...

BERNIE

The homeless!

EVELYN

How not all of them own apartment
complexes, how not all of them play
the stock market, how not all of
them rent babies when they're
panhandling. He's ten years old,
Bernie! Impressionable!

ANGLE ON JOEY

Watching from the staircase.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

Listen, it's important, Ev, I gotta see him, I got my reasons, very goddamn important...

EVELYN

Use the phone, Bernie, call him tomorrow, he'd like to hear from you. Where's your other shoe? Never mind! I don't want to know. Some fantastic adventure, right? Something really crazy.

BERNIE

I was giving him some advice is all. Preparing him for life. You don't want him to grow up soft, Ev, it's tough out there, it's a goddamn jungle.

EVELYN

(firmly, opening the door)

Back to the jungle, Bernie. Good night.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

60

BERNIE steps out and the door slams hard behind him. He pauses, sighs, starts toward his car...

EXT./INT. BERNIE'S TOYOTA/PARKED - A MOMENT LATER (NIGHT) 61

As BERNIE gets in the car he notices the purse sticking out from under the passenger seat where he hid it. He reaches down, takes the purse, rummages in it, pulls out the Silver Mike, glances at it, might be worth something, pockets it moves on to the wallet, the credit cards, the cash... some hundreds, fifties, twenties...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT) 62

EVELYN is shutting off the last of the lights and starting up the stairs when the doorbell rings. EVELYN scowls. She's furious.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

63

The door opens and EVELYN stands there scowling.

BERNIE holds out a twenty dollar bill.

BERNIE

Sorry, Ev, to bother you again.
This is for Joey, his reward... for
this wallet he found. When I, uh,
returned it I told the guy he hadda
give my kid something for finding
it, for the honesty. So the kid
would learn how honestly pays.

Eyes meet. She doesn't believe it for a moment and he knows
it.

BERNIE

Just give it to him, okay, Ev?

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER (NIGHT)

64

An AIRHORN BLARES, a truck thunders past BERNIE, who's pushing
his Toyota to the side of the road, steering one-handed from
outside.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER YET (NIGHT)

65

A blonde GIRL tosses an empty beer can from the window of a
speeding car full of laughing TEENAGERS.

The can clatters to the road beside BERNIE who lowers his
"hitch-hiking thumb" as the car speeds off leaving him alone.

EXT. HEAVY TRAFFIC/FREEWAY - DAWN (HOURS LATER)

66

Rush hour! Bumper to bumper TRAFFIC oozing toward the city.
We HEAR A VOICE!

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)

You actually went into it? A
burning airplane?

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

"Into it"! "Into it", for
Chrissake! I was practically living
in the goddamn thing... every time
I turned around, some other person
wants me to save 'em.

Looking for the VOICES, we MOVE IN on a single lane of crawling
traffic and finally FOCUS ON a battered, rusted 76 Chevy with
a crumpled fender, a trunk tied closed and cracked windows...

INT. CHEVY/MOVING/FREEWAY - DAWN

67

BERNIE is sitting on bare springs and tatters of upholstery in
the passenger seat, muddy, rumped, weary...

BERNIE
(continuing)
Couldn't see a fucking foot in front
of me, smoke... then boooooom! It
explodes! I could be dead!

JOHN BUBBER is at the wheel, a shabbily dressed, tired, haunted
man. He gives BERNIE a look. Should he believe?

BUBBER
And you pulled people out?
You're... a hero.

BERNIE
Nah, I fucked it up. I was tryin'
to impress this kid, don't ask me
why. I was gonna rescue his old
man, but I couldn't find the poor
bastard. He musta blew up.
(then...)
I got the hell outta there. I
didn't have the nerve to face the
kid.

BUBBER
(thoughtful, serious)
A lotta people wouldn't have tried.
It was pretty brave even trying...

BERNIE
Try stupid.

BUBBER brakes for traffic and a cardboard box from the back seat
hits BERNIE and cascades crushed cans all over him.

BUBBER
Sorry about that. Just toss them
in back.
(very serious)
A lot of people would say that's
what heroism is... stupidity. Doing
something that if you thought about
it, you wouldn't do it, it's not
in your... interest.

BERNIE indicates the clutter of cans.

BERNIE
You got a drinking problem or what?

BUBBER
I sell them at the recycling center.
Gives me a little for gas and food.

BERNIE
(considering the back
seat)
You live in here, huh?

BUBBER
In bad weather, yeah. Mostly I camp
out in the woods. I thought maybe
you were down on your luck too when
I picked you up.

BUBBER indicates BERNIE'S muddy, torn clothes, stocking foot.

BERNIE
Down on my luck! Hey, I toldja,
a goddamn plane fell on me outta
the sky. In America, for Chrissake!
See this shoe! Hundred dollar pair
of shoes. One shoe!

BUBBER glances at the shoe BERNIE'S waving.

BUBBER
I know this guy only has one leg.

BERNIE drops the shoe on the floor, shakes his head, disgusted.

BERNIE
I got a job, nice apartment. I do
okay.

BUBBER
If I had a radio we could listen
to the news, hear about the crash.
They interview you or anything?

BERNIE
Hey, do I look crazy? I don't go
for that shit... interviews, media.
They're manipulators. "Keep a low
profile," that's my motto.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAWN

68

The Chevy inches forward as the traffic moves again, heading
slowly toward the city.

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
(continuing, grandly)
Besides, I got these legal problems.
My attorney don't want me giving
statements to the press.

Traffic is still crawling.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

69

GALE sits up in bed in spite of an I.V. in one arm and a cast on the other. There's a big bandage across the bridge of her nose and her left leg is also heavily bandaged...

GALE

I don't understand. You can't find him?

She stares incredulously at DEAKINS, CONKLIN and CHUCKY who are standing at the foot of her bed while a NURSE bustles about.

DEAKINS

There's a lot of confusion around what went on last night, it's not clear...

GALE

You said all the passengers were accounted for...

DEAKINS

Apparently the guy who pulled you out wasn't a passenger...

GALE

A paramedic? A fireman? He didn't have a uniform...

CONKLIN

From what we could get, there's a kind of... sort of... "mystery guy"... involved.

DEAKINS

We're piecing together different accounts and...

GALE

A "mystery guy!" "Not a passenger." Who?

CONKLIN

We don't know who he is, he...

DEAKINS

He disappeared.

GALE

(incredulous)

A non-passenger, non-rescue-worker went into a burning plane and pulled me out and... disappeared?

GALE starts to get up, struggling with covers, I.V., etc.

CONKLIN

Not just you. Apparently this guy is the one who opened the emergency exit from the outside...

DEAKINS

Everybody! He saved everybody on the plane! Because of him, no fatalities! I don't think you're supposed to move around like that, Gale. You're attached there...

GALE is getting out of bed, the I.V. still inserted in her arm.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

70

LESLIE looks directly into the camera as CHUCKY tapes her over GALE'S shoulder.

LESLIE

And all of a sudden, this... "civilian"... rushed into the plane. Next thing you know he's hauling Freddy... he's the other flight attendant... out and then he goes back in.

(a beat, a tear,
then...)

That's what gave me the courage to hang in there even though I knew the plane could blow any minute...

GALE

What did he look like?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

71

MR. SMITH is being interviewed in his bed. He's emotional...

MR. SMITH

It was just this face, all dirty, it just appeared. I really thought I was going to die.

GALE

Did he say anything to you?

MR. SMITH

He... asked if I was "Fletcher."

INT. OFFICE/CARPET CARE - DAY

72

A man named ROBINSON, fifty, sloppy, screams apoplectically...

ROBINSON
ONE WORD! ONE WORD, LAPLANTE, AND
YOU'RE FIRED! GOT THAT? ONE WORD!

Exhausted, shoeless BERNIE follows ROBINSON in the cluttered
Carpet Care Office...

BERNIE
Bill, I...

ROBINSON
DON'T SAY "BILL," BERNIE! DON'T
SAY ONE WORD! DIDN'T I SAY "ONE
WORD AND YOU'RE FIRED?"

BERNIE
I...

ROBINSON
YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE IT'LL BE AN
EXCUSE! IT'LL BE "BERNIE LAPLANTE
EXCUSE NUMBER FOUR THOUSAND ONE
HUNDRED AND SIX." NO, FOUR THOUSAND
ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE. THAT'S HOW
MANY EXCUSES YOU HAVE GIVEN ME, I
KEEP TRACK OF THEM ELECTRONICALLY.
I HEARD THEM ALL, BERNIE.

BERNIE
Bill, I got some legal problems and
I...

ROBINSON
THAT'S IT! YOU TALKED! YOU'RE
FIRED! OUTTA HERE! GET OUTTA HERE!

BERNIE
Bill, listen...

ROBINSON
OUT! I TOLDJA. JESUS CHRIST, I
GOT CUSTOMERS WAITING! AN' YOU WERE
GONNA GO OUT LIKE THAT? AN' MEET
THE PUBLIC IN STOCKING-FUCKING-FEET?

BERNIE
Bill, I got financial problems
and...

ROBINSON
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS,
I'M GONNA THINK ABOUT MY PROBLEMS.
YOU'RE ONE A MY PROBLEMS. GET OUT!
OUT! OUT!

EXT. CITY STREET - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

73

BERNIE is trudging wearily up the busy sidewalk, dirty, tattered and shoeless, BERNIE doesn't notice BUBBER staring in the window of an electronics store where dozens of television screens show the burning fuselage of Flight 104.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - DAY

74

CHUCKY shoots over GALE'S shoulder as she interviews FLETCHER in his living room, RICHIE looking on.

GALE

He was asking for Mr. Fletcher...

FLETCHER

(a glance toward Joey)

My son and I got separated in the confusion and smoke. The very courageous stewardess at the exit told me my boy had got out so I got out too. But my son had already told this... man that I was still in there.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE/CITY STREET - DAY

75

Disheveled, in stocking feet, BERNIE trudges wearily up the front steps of the shabby apartment house where he lives, enters.

INT. RICHIE'S ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

76

Posters, youthful icons. CHUCKY shooting GALE interviewing RICHIE.

RICHIE

I thought my dad was still... still in there. So I asked the man to save my father.

GALE

What did the man say, Richie?

RICHIE

He said... uh... he said...
(not sure, thinking,
then...)

"I'll save him." He said, "I'll save your father."

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

77

The door opens and BERNIE enters the spare room, more spartan even than before now that the TV's gone. He pulls the contents of GALE'S wallet from his pocket and tosses them on a table... the plastic windows full of credit cards and cash. Then he pulls off his jacket, ruefully inspecting a tear in the muddy sleeve. He's about to toss it on the ratty sofa when he notices it feels funny. He reaches in another pocket and pulls out the Silver Mike Award, considers it for a moment. What's it worth?

Sitting on the sofa, he leans back... and starts to doze off.

VIDEO IMAGE/EXT. "EXPLODING" PLANE - NIGHT

78V

FRAME BY FRAME the image inches forward, sweeping off the fire that fills the screen to the riverbank... frame by frame... fire ... fire... fire... then faster as the riverbank is darkening the frame and then LESLIE and the THIRD FIREMAN sweep into the foreground as the camera discovers them...the dramatic shot we remember of them coming up the riverbank.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Back. Go back. You missed it.

Zip zip zip the image highspeeds back to the exploding plane.

Again the screen is filled with fire...

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Now. Go forward again.

Frame by frame the blossom of fire blooms consuming the plane.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Keep going.

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

79

REVEAL: GALE in an editing bay at Channel Four, peering intently at the fiery scene on the video monitor while the young tape editor, JOAN, operates the controls.

CONKLIN, DEAKINS, PARKER, CHUCKY flank GALE.

GALE

There! Right there.

ON THE SCREEN (EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT)

80V

A tiny silhouetted FIGURE appears in the far right corner of the frame. Then, as one more frame clicks off, the FIGURE appears near the center of the next frame of the pan.

The picture freezes there, a startling dramatic image of an UNRECOGNIZABLE FIGURE (BERNIE) in silhouette, dwarfed by the gigantic explosion. IT'S AN AWESOME IMAGE. NO ARTIST OR AD MAN COULD DO BETTER...A TINY, ANONYMOUS FIGURE, ALONE, AGAINST A GIGANTIC MOUNTAIN OF PURE FIRE. AND FROM NOW ON IT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "THE IMAGE."

BACK TO SCENE

DEAKINS

That's him?

GALE

Who else? We've accounted for everyone else. That's our hero!

She stares at "The Image." It's powerful, stirring.

CHUCKY

I didn't see the guy when I shot it. I thought I was getting the last survivors when I panned over.

DEAKINS

Any chance we could do some kind of electronic enhancement, you think? Get a clear picture, identify him?

JOAN

(peering closely at the screen)

There's no face really, nothing to work with. Big dots, that's all you'll get.

GALE

Look at the guy! He just saved fifty people. Now he's going to disappear. Who is he?

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

81

UUUUHHHHOOOOOOW! BERNIE snores loudly, asleep on his sofa, still in his rumpled, torn clothes. He SNORES again.

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREENS IN BARS, HOMES, TV STORES

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

82V

ON THE SCREEN, RICHIE is talking directly at the CAMERA, the interview in his room on videotape...

RICHIE/TV

He said... uh, he said... "I'll save your father."

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

83V

LESLIE appears ON SCREEN, her interview...

LESLIE/TV

-- all of a sudden, this...
civilian... He rushed into the
plane.

VIDEO IMAGE: FREDDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

84V

Freddy appears talking directly at the CAMERA...

FREDDY/TV

I woke up in an ambulance. Leslie,
the other flight attendant, told
me the guy dragged me to the exit.

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

85V

Leslie appears ON THE SCREEN again...

LESLIE/TV

"Here, give this guy a hand," he
said. The next thing I knew, he
was going back in there, into all
that smoke...

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

86V

MR. SMITH appears ON THE SCREEN...

MR. SMITH/TV

I was crawling around on the floor.
I thought I was a goner!

OFF THE SCREEN/MONTAGE

87

YOUNG PEOPLE, OLD PEOPLE, RICH PEOPLE, POOR PEOPLE, CONVICTS,
DENTISTS, BLACK PEOPLE, BROWN PEOPLE, WHITE PEOPLE, CHINESE
PEOPLE are watching the report in...

- | | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 1.) | HOME | A87 |
| 2.) | BARBERSHOP | B87 |
| 3.) | ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM | C87 |
| 4.) | BAR | D87 |
| 5.) | JAIL CELL | E87 |
| 6.) | SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY | F87 |
| 7.) | SHADOW LOUNGE | G87 |
| | CHICK watching the report. | |
| 8.) | CLASSROOM | H87 |
| | JOEY watching the report in a classroom. | |
| 9.) | EVELYN'S KITCHEN | J87 |
| | EVELYN watching the report in her kitchen. | |
| 10.) | ALLEY | K87 |
| | BUBBER is listening to the report on a radio in an alley. | |

ON THE SCREEN

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

88V

GALE, bandaged, casted, stands in front of a BLUE SCREEN.

GALE/TV

-- out of the darkness... out of
the smoke and the fear... came a
man with no name... no uniform...
but an abundance of courage.

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY on GALE and simultaneously DISSOLVES
SLOWLY TO... "THE IMAGE". It fills the screen as GALE narrates
VOICEOVER...

GALE'S VOICEOVER/TV

A man who was thinking not about
himself but about others, risking
his own life for ours...

(a beat then...)

He's out there now somewhere...
and... whoever you are, I, and the
other survivors of Flight 104, say,
"Thank you! God bless!"

MUSIC SWELLS as the CAMERA ZOOMS IN on "THE IMAGE" emphasizing
the tiny FIGURE alone in the frame surrounded by fire...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

89

Flanked by GALE and CHUCKY, DEAKINS is watching the preceding
material on the monitor.

DEAKINS

Not bad. But if you gotta wear a
cast, you oughtta feature it more
it's parta the story.

(seeing Wallace enter
the room)

Network's taking everything we give
'em. They want a feed off our six
o'clock whether we find the mystery
guy or not. We're very big
nationally.

WALLACE

It's a wonderful piece. Emotional.
I love it.

DEAKINS

We're gonna feature Gale's cast
more. The trick is gona be keeping
the upper hand on this piece.

(more)

DEAKINS (Cont'd)

As long as we have Gale and there's no mystery guy, we're the center of the story. But if he shows up and somebody else gets him first or exclusive...

WALLACE

What about a reward for coming forward?

DEAKINS answers a RINGING phone. GALE frowns, frets.

GALE

There could be problems with something like that Mister Wallace. What if...?

DEAKINS

(into phone)

WHAT? IT'S HIS FOR SURE?

Everybody looks at DEAKINS who slams down the phone and bellows.

DEAKINS

CHUCKY! GALE! THE CRASH SITE!
GET OUT THERE RIGHT NOW!

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

90

Ignoring the open schoolbook on the floor in front of him, JOEY is sprawled on the floor, eyes on the TV screen.

ON THE SCREEN: EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

91V

A CLOSE-UP of a muddy shoe WIDENS to REVEAL the shoe nestled in GALE'S sling on top of her cast. She addresses the camera from a spot directly in front of the crash site while behind her WORKMEN comb the wreckage under bright halogen lights.

GALE/VOICEOVER/TIV

A quick phone check of passengers has revealed that the size 10B shoe does not belong to any of the crew or passengers. Since it clearly hasn't been out in the elements very long, it must be the shoe witnesses say the unknown hero known as "the angel of Flight 104" was looking for on Sunday night...

EVELYN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Joey! Dinner! Now! Turn that thing off.

BACK TO SCENE

ELLIOT is at the table with EVELYN as JOEY joins them.

JOEY
He lost a shoe!

EVELYN
Who lost a shoe? Wash your hands.

JOEY
The "unknown hero." They found his shoe right beside the plane crash.

ELLIOT
Superman, you mean? Lost a shoe! What next?

EVELYN
Elliot! The man saved hundreds of people!

ELLIOT
Fifty-four! I was there, remember? You know why I didn't rush into that plane? Because I'm a trained fireman, that's why! Part of a team! A disciplined team. We take risks all the time, save people. But we don't take crazy chances. This guy does something really dumb and he lucks out. So the media go crazy about his shoe for god's sake! What kind of message are they giving to youth?

EVELYN
(indicating Joey)
What kind of message are you giving to youth? Sneering at someone for sticking his neck out. You sound like my ex for heaven's sake... Mister Cynicism.

ELLIOT gets up, shrugs.

ELLIOT
So maybe the man's not all bad.

ELLIOT walks over to the TV and turns it on, leaving JOEY and EVELYN alone. JOEY is excited.

JOEY
My father didn't have his shoes on when he... when he came here.

EVELYN
(surprised)
You were in bed. Weren't you?

JOEY
I... I saw him out the window.

EVELYN frowns, hesitates a moment. Was the kid listening?
Then...

EVELYN
You think your father would do
something like that? Rescue people?
(sadly)
Your father is Bernie LaPlante,
Joey. It's against his religion
to stick his neck out.

ANGLE ON THE TV (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

92V

Where an ANCHORMAN speaks from a news set.

ANCHORMAN/TV
-- where the leader of a religious
group claimed today that the
mysterious hero is, in fact, an
angel who is anticipated in
scripture.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

93

Washing glasses behind the bar, CHICK is watching the same show
on the TV over the bar when he turns to see BERNIE enter
(wearing a brand new pair of cheap running shoes.)

CHICK
Bernie, how'sa kid?

BERNIE
You don't wanna know, Chick, you
don't wanna know. Those guys been
in here?

CHICK
(pouring a 7&7)
You in business with those guys or
what? I wouldn't want a problem
for the establishment, Bern.

BERNIE
You couldn't have a problem, Chick,
because I personally have got them
all. I cornered the whole goddamn
market. You wouldn't believe...
Oh, how ya doin'...?

ESPINOSA and VARGAS have entered the bar. They have another guy with them, MENDOZA.

ESPINOSA

We bring our frenn this time, okay?

Something about MENDOZA spells trouble. it's almost palpable. BERNIE doesn't notice, but CHICK does. He looks worried.

BERNIE

Excuse me here, Chick, I gotta do these guys a little favor.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

As BERNIE, MENDOZA and ESPINOSA slide into a booth intent on business, ESPINOSA looks around for VARGAS and spots him lingering back at the bar watching the TV.

ESPINOSA

(calling out to Vargas)

Hey, vato! Vamos.

ANGLE ON THE BAR

Where VARGAS and CHICK are staring at the screen.

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN: INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT

94V

Where an ANCHORMAN is introducing WALLACE who stands there in a suit and tie looking ill at ease...

ANCHORMAN/TV

-- bring you a special announcement from Channel Four Station Manager, James Wallace.

Framed alone now, WALLACE smiles awkwardly at the camera.

WALLACE

Good evening. We at Channel Four, like you, have been stirred by the courage and...

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hombre! Por aqui!

ANGLE ON VARGAS

Eyes lingering on the TV, backing toward the booth.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

BERNIE has spread GALE'S credit cards on the table in front of ESPINOSA and MENDOZA. ESPINOSA examines them, questions BERNIE...

ESPINOSA
How many you got there? Eight?
Ten?

VARGAS slides into the booth before BERNIE can answer.

VARGAS
They offer him a million dollars
reward.

MENDOZA
Who?

VARGAS
The "plane crash guy".

ESPINOSA
(to Bernie)
Is that all of them? Eight?

BERNIE
(distracted)
What "plane crash guy"?

VARGAS
The one-shoe dude who saved all
those people, man. Channel Four
gonna give him a million for an
interview.

ESPINOSA tries to turn BERNIE'S attention back to "business."

ESPINOSA
Come on, hombre, we doin' business
here. You got more or not?

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching the TV

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

95V

Where WALLACE is concluding...

WALLACE/TV
The offer is absolutely
unconditional. All he has to do
is satisfy our reporter, Gale
Gayley, and the other passengers
who had contact with him that he
is indeed the brave man who...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
(yelling)
HEY! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? WHAT'S
GOIN' ON HERE?

BACK TO SCENE

ANGLE ON CHICK

Turning, seeing a commotion at the booth.

ANGLE ON THE BOOTH

Where MENDOZA is handcuffing the outraged BERNIE while ESPINOSA reads him his rights...

ESPINOSA

You have the right to remain silent,
you have the right to --

BERNIE

Hey, this is bullshit! Do you guys
know who I am? You know where I
got the goddamn plastic? I got a
million bucks coming. I'm the guy
who...

ESPINOSA

(continuing)

You have the right to the counsel
of an attorney...

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching BERNIE being hustled out of the bar, handcuffed,
protesting loudly.

BERNIE

CHICK, CALL MY ATTORNEY! THIS IS
BULLSHIT! ENTRAPMENT! I GOT A
MILLION BUCKS COMING, FOR CHRISSAKE!

MONTAGE: PRINTING PRESSES - DAY

96

Newspapers roll off the presses one after another.

THE TIMES features "The Image" with a headline over the firey
scene trumpeting "AN ANGEL FOR FLIGHT 104?"

THE MIRROR is tighter on the image featuring an enlargement of
the silhouette of Bernie with a headline asking "WHO IS HE?"

THE HERALD features a full page photo of the single muddy shoe
with a headline supered over it announcing "SEARCH FOR MR.
CINDERELLA!"

and finally THE TRIBUNE screams in massive black letters "ONE
MILLION DOLLAR REWARD!"

EXT. STREET CORNER/CITY - DAY

97

A NEWS VENDOR is waving a paper and shouting...

NEWS VENDOR

ONE MILLION DOLLAR REWARD TO THE
UNANIMOUS HERO! ONE MILLION BUCKS
FOR THE "ANGEL" WHO SAVED FIFTY
PEOPLE AND TOOK OFF!

A WOMAN walks by with a tee-shirt featuring "The Image." The
spectacular picture looks great on the contours of her chest!

EXT. TV STATION - DAY

98

PARKER, the youthful Channel Four gofer/runner, moves along a
seemingly endless line of WANNABE HEROES that stretches along
the sidewalk outside Channel Four and disappears around the
corner. He's addressing them at the top of his lungs...

PARKER

PLEASE, IF YOUR FOOT ISN'T A SIZE
10-B, DON'T REMAIN IN LINE. WE'RE
ONLY SEEING SIZE 10-B "HEROES."

GROANS and CATCALLS from the WANNABES as we MOVE ALONG the line,
eavesdropping on various WANNABES...

AFRICAN AMERICAN

Thass a racist perspective, assuming
that because something heroic was
done that a white man done it. A
man with mud on his face could be
a man of any color, most likely was,
which is true in this case cause
it was me! With mud all over me.

Two other WANNABES are squaring off to fight...

1ST FIGHTER

You call me a liar, I'm gonna kick
your ass.

2ND FIGHTER

Hey, it's not just me sayin' you
ain't no hero. Everybody in the
goddamn line says you ain't the
hero.

ANOTHER WANNABE

Can you believe this? Must be more
than a thousand phonies after my
reward.

A WANNABE with mud smeared on his face spots GALE approaching the front door of the station, a look of amazement on her face at the length of the line.

MUD-FACE WANNABE
HEY, MISS GAYLEY! HEY, GALE!
REMEMBER ME? I'M THE GUY! I SAVED
YOUR LIFE! REMEMBER --

Rolling her eyes good naturedly, GALE walks briskly up the steps to the front door of the station, passing PARKER who's measuring a TALL WANNABE'S feel. The TALL WANNABE calls out to her.

TALL WANNABE
My foot's only eight and a half but
I wear a ten B for the comfort.
I swear!
(she keeps walking)
Hey, Miss Gayley, I saved your life!

Just as GALE is about to enter the TV station, PARKER catches up to her.

PARKER
Hey, Miss Gayley, there's a cop
looking for you. From Robbery
Detail, Inspector Jenkins. He wants
you to call him.

GALE
What about?

PARKER
I didn't ask him.

GALE
Call him back. Ask him.
(indicating the line)
I'm a little... busy.

GALE disappears into the TV Station.

EXT. OVERHEAD VIEW THRU WINDOW/LINE OF WANNABES BELOW - DAY 99

Looking down from the window of the station at the line of WANNABES snaking around the block.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

100

WALLACE is looking down at the line, we REALIZE THE P.O.V. was his.

INT. VISITING ROOM/JAIL - DAY

101

BERNIE is facing DONNA, his attorney, through a thick Plexiglas security partition, speaking to her through a telephone handset.

BERNIE

It was a total set-up, I'm telling you. Entrapment! But it don't matter, I got everything whipped. You're not gonna believe this. I got a million bucks coming. Channel Four, this plane crash thing. All you gotta do is get me bail so I can go to the TV station and pick up my check.

DONNA

(incredulous)

You're telling me you're the "Angel of Flight 104"?

BERNIE

"Angel"! "Angel's" a little strong. All we gotta do is explain to the judge...

DONNA

Mister LaPlante, you just got arrested selling stolen credit cards while awaiting sentencing on another charge. The judge is not going to be sympathetic to crazy stories. I really want to help you! Really! But you're making it very difficult.

BERNIE

(interrupting urgently)

Look, I know you're trying to help me. You're doing very good actually. And I know I, uh, owe you some dough. It's just a matter of getting the goddamn Judge to let me outta here to...

INT. COURTROOM - A LITTLE LATER (DAY)

102

THE PROSECUTOR is addressing JUDGE GOINES...

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, at the time of his arrest the defendant was awaiting sentencing on a previous charge of stolen goods...

JUDGE GOINES glances toward the Defense Table where BERNIE is seated.

MENDOZA, ESPINOSA and VARGAS are watching along with a black detective, JENSEN.

JUDGE GOINES
I'm familiar with Mister LaPlante...

PROSECUTOR
In light of that fact, your honor,
the People request that his bail
on this new offense be set at
twenty-five thousand dollars.

DONNA
(protesting)
Your honor, my client --

BERNIE
Excuse me, your honor. I got no
problem with that. In fact you
could double it...

The JUDGE, DONNA and the PROSECUTOR look at BERNIE, startled.

BERNIE
(on his feet, cocky)
Fifty thousand for "the people,"
your honor! A tip! If you could
just let me have a half hour to...

BANG! BANG! BANG! JUDGE GOINES gavels angrily...

JUDGE GOINES
Sit down, Mister LaPlante. Your
attorney will speak in your behalf
unless the court recognizes you.

Just then BAILIFF CLAY hurries into the courtroom and starts
to whisper excitedly to the SECOND BAILIFF and Court Reporter
DETAGLIO. JUDGE GOINES bangs his gavel angrily while BERNIE
sputters ineffectually to get his attention.

JUDGE GOINES
DAMNIT! I SAID I WANTED ORDER!

CLAY
Sorry, your honor...

SECOND BAILIFF
We got carried away!

DETAGLIO
They found him!

JUDGE GOINES
Found who?

CLAY

The "Angel of Flight 104"!

JUDGE GOINES

The Angel! How do you know?

CLAY

It was on the news! Just now! He's gonna be on Channel Four at noon!

The JUDGE sneaks a hasty look at his watch as BERNIE reacts, jaw sagging in disbelief...

INT. SHOES/TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

103

Both Bernie's shoes! On SOMEBODY'S feet!

SOMEBODY'S VOICE (O.C.)

I was out there in the woods, and I heard this huge crash.

TILTING UP from the shoes along the torn pants and the cheap shirt WE DISCOVER the man who gave Bernie a lift, JOHN BUBBER. He speaks sincerely, just awkward enough to appear honest, believable, and likable.

BUBBER

I saw flames not too far away. So... so... I went over there and then... and then...

BUBBER is speaking to GALE in the studio in front of cameras, surrounded by TECHNICIANS.

BUBBER

(continuing)

...and then... the rest of it, I mean, a lot of it is kind of a blur... you know, smoke, screams... like a flashback to Viet Nam... I was actually relieved it was just a plane crash and I could help out a little... but I don't have a detailed, uh, memory of it, it was too scary.

ANGLE ON VIDEO MONITOR - A VIDEO IMAGE

104V

The interview continues, a video image.

GALE

Tell us why you disappeared, John.

BUBBER

Well, uh, at first I didn't know I was a... a hero. I didn't realize the boy's father survived. I thought I'd failed and I couldn't face the boy. Then, later, well... I been down on my luck, homeless. I didn't feel presentable.

GALE

But finally you did come forward. Why?

BUBBER looks her right in the eyes, gives a sheepish grin.

BUBBER/TV

The money, Gale. I wouldn't have come forward at all if it wasn't for the reward.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Cut right there, right on that look!

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

105

REVEAL GALE in an editing room looking over editor JOAN'S shoulder as JOAN freezes the image and makes a note.

JOAN

You didn't mention he was cute.

GALE is staring intently at BUBBER'S modest, humble face frozen on the screen.

GALE

He saved my life.

INT. DAY ROOM/JAIL - DAY

106

Seeing the humble, honest face of BUBBER staring down from the wall mounted TV in the day room, BERNIE is infuriated.

BERNIE

The guy's a fake, for Chrissake! He's a goddamn homeless bum. He ain't no hero, trust me on this, buddy.

PRISONERS, standing in a group under the TV turn from the screen to BERNIE, like "who's this asshole?" A BIG PRISONER glares at BERNIE ominously...

BIG PRISONER

"Trust you"!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

107

The office has become command-central. REPORTERS hurry i and out, tearing off faxes, answering the phones, chattering at each other, GALE among them. WALLACE is fretting to DEAKINS...

WALLACE

I thought they'd all go "It's him!
It's him!" and hug the guy or
something.

DEAKINS

Relax, Wally. He had the shoe and
the shoe checks out.

WALLACE

Does this mean I can stop worrying?
Where'd we put him?

DEAKINS

Drake Hotel, Penthouse Suite. Never
stop worrying. I figure we'll do
a sidebar on what it's like to go
from sleeping in your car and
collecting cans to sleeping in the
poshest suite in town. Also Gale's
onto something, digging into his
background.

PARKER rushes up to GALE...

PARKER

Excuse me, Ms. Gayley. That guy
Inspector Jensen... he's recovered
a bunch of your credit cards and
he wants...

GALE

Who?

PARKER

Inspector Jensen, the cop from
Robbery Detail who was looking for
you. They caught the guy who stole
your credit cards trying to sell
them and he wants...

GALE

Nobody stole my credit cards. They
burned up in the crash. Which
reminds me, did you get me cash?
And what about the reservations?

PARKER

(pulling out cash)
Two at eight at the Perigord. Here.

DEAKINS
(overhearing)
The Perigord? \$400 for dinner?
You're back with that jerk again...?

PARKER
She's taking Mister Bubber to
dinner.

GALE is on her way out the door as DEAKINS reacts...

DEAKINS
Bubber? To dinner?
(then...)
Hey, that's a great idea! Chucky,
Chucky, come here...

GALE
No way, Chief. This is private and
personal.

DEAKINS
He's a news story for Pete sake.

GALE
(exiting)
He saved my life.

CHUCKY
(arriving)
What's up?

DEAKINS
Dinner for two at the Perigord.
Gale and Bubber... and you're not
shooting it.

CHUCKY
How come? I love the light in fancy
restaurants.

DEAKINS
It's "private."

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - DAY

108

An extravagant gift basket bulging with goodies. The card indicates it's "To John Bubber from Barbra Streisand." A hand reaches into the basket and pulls out a fat pear.

WIDENING we DISCOVER JOHN BUBBER standing in the vast two story living room of his Drake Suite surrounded by hundreds of elaborate gift baskets...gift baskets spread across the vast oriental carpet, overflowing the overstuffed chairs, piled on the wet bar and across the grand piano.

BUBBER considers all this with amazement as he chews hungrily on the pear.

MONTAGE: BUBBER IN THE SUITE

BUBBER touches the silk wallpaper with the butterflies, testing reality.

IN THE BEDROOM

BUBBER touches the huge super-king-sized bed.

AT THE WET BAR

BUBBER stares at an array of bottles.

IN THE BATHROOM

BUBBER considers the gigantic jacuzzi and the marble appointments with disbelief.

INT. BATHROOM/SUITE - LATER (NIGHT)

109

BUBBER luxuriates in the bathtub, lathers himself with expensive soap, as the CAMERA MOVES TO REVEAL a closet where several Armani jackets hanging with a note attached. It reads.

"Dear John,
These clothes will have to do until
you have an opportunity to go shopping.
See you this evening.

Gale Gayley"

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

110

TVs and loud VOICES reverberate as we read graffiti scratched in the institutional puke green paint of the jail wall.

"ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION: HOW COME I AM
HERE? HOW COME MADONNA IS NOT MY GURLFRIEND?"

BERNIE considers the graffiti with a glum expression.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

111

Affluent PATRONS of this elegant restaurant rise to their feet, applauding vigorously.

BUBBER, the object of their attention, looks terrified as he and GALE are lead to their table by the obsequious MAITRE D'. GALE, in spite of her bandages and cast, looks almost glamorous in evening wear that emphasizes the feminiity she normally downplays in her professional activity.

BUBBER looks handsome but uncomfortable in a nice fitting suit.

INT. RESTAURANT - MINUTES LATER

112

SNAP! A WAITER snaps out a napkin and, to BUBBER'S alarm, places it on BUBBER'S lap. Unnerved, BUBBER glances around nervously.

At other tables, PATRONS avert their eyes or stare unabashedly.

BUBBER whispers to GALE.

BUBBER
They're all looking at us.

GALE
(amused)
Not "us," John. And they're used to celebrities here. It'd be much worse at MacDonald's.

GALE is watching BUBBER, charmed by his innocence and sympathetic to his discomfort. He seems very agitated.

BUBBER
Listen, uh, Miss Gayley...I...

GALE
Gale.

BUBBER
(flustered, stumbling)
This isn't... I mean what I wanted... the reward... I didn't think...
(trying again)
I was feeling pretty... desperate. See? I just wanted a square meal, maybe a bath, a night between clean sheets. I wasn't after a million dollars! Twenty would have been fine. Maybe fifty. What's a guy like me to do with a million dollars?

Suddenly the CAPTAIN arrives with enormous leatherbound menus which he thrusts in front of them...

GALE
Take a look at these prices and then say that.

BUBBER stares in amazement at the elaborate menu.

INT. COMMON ROOM/JAIL - NIGHT

113

Surrounded by the jailhouse cacophony, BERNIE stares glumly at a plate of shit on a shingle in front of him while close at hand a TOUGH PRISONER snarls at ANOTHER PRISONER...

TOUGH PRISONER

You mess with me, I'm gonna cut yer heart out and eat it.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

114

The CAPTAIN finishes scribbling and seizes the menus.

CAPTAIN

Very good, sir. It's a special privilege to serve you.

BUBBER smiles uneasily as the haughty CAPTAIN glides away.

BUBBER

Uh, er... I...

GALE

(amused and charmed)

You were saying you don't want a million dollars.

BUBBER

(blurting)

Well, I'm not entitled to a million dollars. I... I... didn't expect... I didn't expect...

GALE

All the adulation? It makes you feel like a fake, doesn't it?

BUBBER

Uh, actually... yes... I... should never have come forward and presented myself as --

Just then a distinguished MILLIONAIRE on the way to his table barks gruffly at BUBBER...

MILLIONAIRE

You're a credit to the goddamn human race. Coulda been me in that plane. Or my family.

BUBBER

Uh, thank you.

GALE

Instant celebrity is overwhelming to anybody. You've known John Bubber all your life, you're used to him, you know you're the same human being you were before all the excitement. So you feel like a fraud, unworthy of the adoration.

BUBBER

Yeah, I see what you mean, but actually it's not --

A bluehaired MATRON, extravagantly bejeweled, pauses to loom over BUBBER on her way out.

MATRON

I'm going to donate a half million to charity in your name. Would small animals be all right?

BUBBER

(startled)

Uh, "small animals"?

MATRON

(delighted)

I knew a man like you would adore small animals. God bless you, Mister Bubber.

(to Gale)

And you, my dear, you do so much for women.

And then she's gone in a swish of silk, leaving BUBBER stunned.

BUBBER

Is she...serious? A half a million dollars? In my behalf?

GALE

You're a celebrity, John. People are going to want to please you... or use you... or both.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

115

As the door to the restaurant opens, BUBBER finds himself blinded by winking electronic flashes and sun guns. A CROWD OF FANS and MEDIA engulf him and GALE. It's overwhelming. WE SEE EAGER FACES and BLINDING FLASHES from BUBBER'S P.O.V. and HEAR the CACOPHONY OF QUESTIONS.

GALE too is adrift in a churning sea of MEDIA and ONLOOKERS.

POLICE OFFICERS move close to help guide GALE and BUBBER to a waiting limo.

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S P.O.V.

Again we see the chaos from BUBBER'S P.O.V., A POLICEMAN is reaching to help him. Just then BUBBER glimpses something else... beyond the CROWD in the fringes... HOMELESS PEOPLE in the shadows, some applauding him, too shy to come forward. In particular, BUBBER'S eyes fall on an ungainly MAN, his own age, dressed in rags and carrying a big garbage bag and another net sack full of cans. IT'S A STUNNING IMAGE! It's as though BUBBER is looking at himself!

The door to the limo is open. GALE and several POLICEMEN are trying to get BUBBER into the limo and out of the clutches of the enthusiastic CROWD.

GALE

Come on, John.

But BUBBER isn't paying attention to her. He's turning to face the eager CROWD, raising his arms.

BUBBER

Hey, hey, uh, take it easy.

ANGLE ON GALE

looking alarmed, then amazed.

The CROWD is still alive and buzzing, but they're respecting BUBBER'S space as he accepts an autograph book from a young woman, SYLVIA, and speaks shyly.

BUBBER

You, uh, want me to sign this? Uh, what's your name?

SYLVIA

(weak in the knees,
smitten)

S-sylvia.

BUBBER

(almost shy)
Hey, if I sign this, will you do
me a favor?

Her COMPANIONS are already teasing her as they thrust pieces of paper, magazines at him to sign.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching in disbelief.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

signing one after another as he addresses all those close to him.

BUBBER

What I'd like is...

(addressing the group)

-- maybe some of the rest of you
could help Sylvia here -- what I'd
like is if you'd scrounge up some
blankets -- used ones, fifty maybe
-- and take 'em to the folks down
at the corner of Fifth and Grand.
Pass 'em out.

Cameras are rolling, GALE watches, amazed.

FAT KID

Fifth and Grand!

SKINNY KID

He means the homeless people. The
bums.

BUBBER

It gets cold down there at night.
And you'll feel warmer for every
person you give a blanket to.

GALE'S knits her brow, trying to reconcile this performance with
the apparent yokel she had dinner with a short time ago.

INT. LIMO/MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

116

BUBBER looks back at the CROWD as the limo pulls away.

BUBBER

I'll bet they do it. I'll bet they
get some blankets.

GALE looks at BUBBER, reevaluating him.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER - NIGHT

117

As BUBBER and GALE cross the luxurious lobby, again the center
of attention, a GORGEOUS BLONDE, very leggy, practically
plasters her plunging neckline against BUBBER.

GORGEOUS BLONDE

Uplifting! What you did was so
uplifting! You're a saint, John
Bubber!

BUBBER has trouble untangling his eyes from her tits.

BUBBER

Uh, no. But I, uh, wonder if you could up support... support a program to help the needy and...

GALE

(hackles raised)

John, I'm sure she could support just about anything.

(steering him away)

I think I'll see you to your room. A sort of bodyguard. Make sure no harm comes to you.

GALE ushers the dazed BUBBER toward a bank of elevators and prevents others from joining them in the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

118

GALE'S mood changes to amusement as she and BUBBER ascend alone. Giggling, she "points" her chest at BUBBER.

GALE

Uh, if you could, just, uh, support, uh, a small airfield...

BUBBER

(embarrassed)

It's been some time since, uh, I received any, uh, of that kind of, uh... attention. A couple of... years.

GALE stops giggling. Their eyes meet. A charged moment.

GALE

Years?

(then...)

There are going to be lots of... opportunities.

BUBBER

Gale... you're a very nice person. I wouldn't want to hurt you... in any way...

They're struggling against an embrace that seems inevitable...

GALE

I... I know that, John...

BUBBER

You... you think I saved your... life. I can't take advantage....

GALE

You did save my life! And it's me!
I'd be taking advantage of you! I'm
a reporter, John, an experienced
professional... I...

Inevitably they embrace, KISS, can't help themselves.

BUBBER disengages suddenly, distraught.

BUBBER

I... no... I don't have the right...
I...

GALE

No, I don't have the right. You're
a news story!

BUBBER

Uh, right. A... news story.

She pushes him out the elevator door.

GALE

A national hero! You didn't just
save me, you saved a lot of people.
I can't steal you...

BUBBER

(struggling, in crisis)
I'm kind of torn here, Gale. You
know how people... how people...
fantasize... about helping other
people... ending racism... helping
make a... better world...?

GALE

You're a wonderful human being,
John. Believe in yourself...

BUBBER

That's just it, Gale...

GALE

I know the truth, John. I'm flying
in some guys from your unit in
Vietnam tomorrow. Interviewing them
live on network hookup!

BUBBER

(stunned)
Vietnam!

GALE

You were a hero there too, weren't
you?

BUBBER

Uh, well, I mean I didn't get any medals or anything. I just... just...

GALE

(misty eyed)

---just acted heroically.
Goodnight, John.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE

119

BUBBER wanders into the bedroom of the fabulous suite... in a daze. He stares at BERNIE'S shoes, freshly polished, beside the bed. He shakes his head as if to clear it.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. TERRY WELLS' LIVING ROOM - DAY 120V

A fortyish black man, TERRY WELLS, appears on the screen...

TERRY/TV

Next thing I know, I'm in this medical unit an' I see the other dude, the one who was with me when we got jumped, the one who I thought was dead. There he is in the next bed. I says "How'd we get here, brother? We dead or what?" He says, "That crazy white brother, Johnny Bubber, he come back for us, hauled us out." He shoulda been wrote up, got a medal, but it was fate. Wasn't no officers around to observe it or nothing.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. FRONT YARD/BACON HOME - DAY

121V

A fortyish redneck type, CHARLIE BACON, is speaking to camera.

CHARLIE/TV SCREEN

The sonofagun goes out in the paddies, pulling us outta there, one after the other, six guys. Hey, it don't surprise me one bit it was Johnny Bubber went into that plane!

BERNIE VOICE (O.S.)

Fifty bucks says the asshole was never even in Vietnam.

INT. DAY ROOM JAIL - DAY

122

BERNIE is furious, glaring at the TV, surrounded by PRISONERS.

TOUGH PRISONER

Shut your face, dirt bag. That
guy's a goddamn hero and you're
nothin' but a cynical little turd.

ON THE SCREEN (INT. DEAKINS OFFICE - DAY)

123V

BUBBER is embracing WELLS, CHARLIE and several other VETERANS
as GALE narrates...

GALE/VOICE OVER/TV

After an emotional reunion, Bubber's
fellow veterans watched as station
manager James Wallace presented
Bubber with a check for one million
dollars...

Surrounded by applauding MEDIA TYPES, SPECTATORS and VETERANS,
BUBBER is accepting the check...

GALE/TV

No sooner had Bubber reacted to his
sudden wealth, than word came that
Congress had voted him the
Congressional Medal of Honor for
his heroism in Vietnam more than
20 years ago, heroism that was not
acknowledged at the time because
it was not witnessed or reported
by a ranking officer. Later I
talked with him...

BUBBER appears fullscreen, head and shoulders, interview
footage. He's shy and awkward at first... tentative... then
gaining confidence as he speaks...

BUBBER/TV

Well, the money... that's too much
money for one person. I'm going
to give half right off to the
Association of Homeless Veterans
and I'm going to start some programs
with the rest... to help people.
The hotel people are gonna let me
use the suite for offices free and
some other kind people have
voluntered their time and their
skills. What I'm doing here is...
trying to save my own life... be
a useful person. As far as the
medal goes, well... that medal's
for something me and my buddies did
almost twenty years ago. So if I'm
a war hero today then I was a war
hero last week when I was selling
cans and sleeping in my car...

(more)

BUBBER/TV (Cont'd)

I guess the only way you find out
you're a hero is when somebody gives
you a medal... or points a TV camera
in your face...

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREEN AND VIEWERS

BUBBER'S INTERVIEW appears on screens in...

- | | | |
|------|---|------|
| 1.) | HOME | A124 |
| 2.) | MOTEL ROOM | B124 |
| 3.) | WHITE HOUSE | C124 |
| | The PRESIDENT watching. | |
| 4.) | BAR | D124 |
| 5.) | JAIL CELL | E124 |
| 6.) | CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY | F124 |
| 7.) | SHADOW LOUNGE | G124 |
| | CHICK watching. | |
| 8.) | JAIL | H124 |
| | BERNIE watching. | |
| 9.) | EVELYN'S LIVING ROOM | J124 |
| | JOEY, EVELYN, and ELLIOT watching. | |
| 10.) | PRISON | K124 |
| | INMATES, their tough faces momentarily solemn, watching. | |
| 11.) | WINSTON'S APARTMENT | L124 |
| | WINSTON smacks the TV he bought from Bernie to adjust
the color... | |

BUBBER/TV

But I know the real hero... uh, the
real heroes... are right out there
watching on TV... people who do
heroic acts every day only there's
nobody around to take their picture
or decorate them. It doesn't take
machine gun fire or, uh, a burning
plane to make a person a hero.
Little things can be heroic.
Helping someone day in and day out,
giving up your life a little every
day instead of all at once... to
help.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE

125

GALE, her editor, JOAN, DEAKINS, WALLACE, CHUCKY, PARKER, and
CONKLIN are crowded around the monitor staring at the screen.
JOAN catches GALE surreptitiously hiding a tear and whispers
to her...

JOAN

Is he like that in real life? So
gorgeous?

GALE

He's pretty... remarkable.

JOAN

(eyes widening at the
thought)

You didn't... get it on with him?

GALE

Don't be ridiculous. I'm a reporter.

JOAN

Reporters don't have hormones?

GALE

Reporters... have to... rise above
their hormones.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

126V

BUBBER/TV

Don't get me wrong, I'm not
ungrateful for the medal. I just
think maybe there ought to be more
of them because I happen to think
there are a lot of people out there
who deserve them. Not just
veterans, lots of people. People
who'd help if they could but they
can't because they need help. And
those of us who can, we've got to
help them. And then we're all
hereos, every one of us! All hereos
together!

MONTAGE - DAY

Across the nation solemn FACES reflect the glow of the TV screen.
YOUNG FACES, OLD FACES, BLACK, WHITE, BROWN, YELLOW...

1.)	HOME	A127
2.)	BARBERSHOP	B127
3.)	ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM	C127
4.)	BAR	D127
5.)	JAIL CELL	E127
6.)	SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY	F127

INT. DAY ROOM - JAIL - DAY

128

...And BERNIE LAPLANTE'S FACE. He's glaring at the screen in
the Day Room of the Jail, sputtering helplessly...

BERNIE

We're all heroes, huh? Asshole!

Just then a GUARD enters the Day Room and belows...

GUARD
LAPLANTE, BERNARD. LAPLANTE?

BERNIE
Me?

GUARD
Ya made bail, Ace. C'mon, let's
go.

BERNIE looks startled.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE HOTEL - DAY 129

BUBBER reclines on a sofa watching TV.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY) 130V

A SHOT of BUBBER smiling as GALE narrates VOICE OVER...

GALE/TV (V.O.)
The Mayor has announced plans for
a city wide send-off for Bubber as
well as a ceremony at the airport
when Bubber leaves for Washington
Friday to receive the Medal of Honor
from the President.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER - DAY 131

DEAKINS and WALLACE walk, deep in conversation, WALLACE upset.

WALLACE
Upset! What's he upset about?

DEAKINS
Said he's not an actor.

WALLACE
He's not supposed to be an actor,
that's the whole point. He's a real
life hero, all he has to do is act
like a real life hero. That's the
beauty of the concept, the whole
freshness of it. Did she call him
back?

DEAKINS
She's talking to him now.

WALLACE
We paid him a million dollars.
You'd think he'd want to cooperate
a little, help our ratings.

DEAKINS responds eagerly to GALE entering the office.

DEAKINS

How'd it go?

GALE

He'll do it.

(to Wallace)

You really should have talked to him first.

WALLACE

He might have said no.

WELLESIAN VIDEO - TV SCREEN

132V

AGGRESSIVE MUSIC! News coverage of the crash and photos of Bubber are ZOOMED, DISSOLVED, WHIRLED and SPUN into a glittering promo while a stentorian WELLESIAN VOICE brays excitedly...

WELLESIAN VOICE/TV

Watch for it! Thursday night! Out of the darkness, out of the fire, out of a nightmare of fear... came The Angel of Flight 104. John Bubber saved fifty four people. This is his story and theirs. A real life drama featuring the real participants showing what they really did. No make-up, no music, no actors. This is the real thing. Thursday night. Channel Four. Be there!

INT. WAITING ROOM/HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

A133

BERNIE charging through the crowded Waiting Room having just been released on bail. He doesn't actually shove the WOMEN and CHILDREN waiting to visit inmates out of the way, but he doesn't slow down either as he weaves rapidly among them with DONNA on his heels, barely able to keep pace. He doesn't look back as he speaks rapid-fire. He's really pissed.

BERNIE

Whaddaya mean they didn't reduce the bail? If they didn't reduce it, how'dja spring me?

DONNA

(a deep breath,
embarrassed)

I took a loan on my car and my computer.

BERNIE
(actually stops, faces
her)
You whaaaaaat? You paid it? You
gave a bondsman ten percent?

DONNA
I was inspired by the hero, how he
stuck his neck out for others, how
he took a chance...

BERNIE
(apoplectic)
That fake inspired you to loan a
guy who's been fired off his job
twenty-five hundred goddamn dollars?
A guy you say is probably gonna do
time! You're s'posed to be an
attorney for Chrissake! You're
s'posed to have good judgment!

DONNA
(fighting tears)
Well, as you like to point out,
Mister LaPlante, I'm relatively
inexperienced. My naivete may have
worked to your benefit in this
instance.

BERNIE frowns at that, starts walking again.

BERNIE
Well, you're right, I'm glad you
got me out, I appreciate that.

BERNIE charges out the door, exiting the building with DONNA
right behind him.

EXT. HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

133

Hurrying down the steps, BERNIE barks over his shoulder at
DONNA.

BERNIE
Listen, now that I owe you
twenty-five hundred bucks plus, how
about loaning me twenty for cab
fare?

DONNA
So you can call me "naive," Mister
LaPlante.

BERNIE

Hey, you could call me "Bernie,"
forget the "Mister LaPlante" stuff.
(seeing Donna open her
wallet)
You are naive.

DONNA

I read the probation report. It's
not good. I think you're going...
going to prison, Mister... Bernie.
I know that scares you but..

BERNIE

TAXI! HEY, TAXI!
(turning on her)
Well, at least I'm gonna get my
goddamn million bucks.
(screaming at a cab)
TAXI FOR CHRISAKE!

A cab pulls to the curb and BERNIE jumps in, talking.

BERNIE

I seen on the TV where that
do-gooder asshole's gonna go visit
sick kids at three-thirty.
(to the Cabbie)
Children's Hospital, on the double.

DONNA

(alarmed)
You mean John Bubber?

BERNIE speaks out the window of the cab as it pulls away.

BERNIE

(then, through the
window)

That bozo don't just owe me a
million bucks for my shoe, he's a
goddamn menace! Look what he done
to you! He's makin' people insane.
He's a whacko, he's gotta be stopped.

Stunned, DONNA watches the cab disappear in traffic with BERNIE
raving from the open window.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - LATER (DAY)

134

Limos are parked out front of the hospital and there is a
gathering of TV vans as BERNIE exits a cab and charges toward
the entrance of the hospital, a tiny figure dwarfed by the huge
building. He disappears inside.

INT. CORRIDOR/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

135

We discover BERNIE wandering around, lost. A NURSE gives him a glance in passing and BERNIE suddenly is aware that his appearance is unusual. Disheveled. Unshaven. He tries to smooth his hair a little as he turns into a doorway.

INT. SPECIAL CHILDREN'S WARD/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

136

Stepping through the door BERNIE is immediately horror stricken.

Rows of beds. A room full of seriously SICK CHILDREN. Palsied. Eyes out of sync. Motor disorders, spasms. Terrifying paraphernalia... tubes, machines, monitors, bags of fluid. A place of suffering. To BERNIE it's a vision of a leper colony!

A SEVEN YEAR OLD spots him, clutches at him with clawlike hands, jerky movements.

BERNIE recoils in horror, backing away.

A FIVE YEAR OLD, "blinded" by the gauze wrapped around his face "looks" toward BERNIE and speaks.

"BLIND" CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Is that him? Is he here yet, Miss
Roberts?

An EIGHT YEAR OLD with a bandaged arm responds, looking at BERNIE.

EIGHT YEAR OLD

Naw, it's just some guy.

A nurse MISS ROBERTS, appears from behind a curtain suddenly and restrains the SEVEN YEAR OLD as she addresses BERNIE...

MISS ROBERTS

Excuse me, sir. Can I help you?

BERNIE

Uh, well I... what I...

Looks "wrong," acts "wrong." Looks like a child molester!

MISS ROBERTS

You'll have to leave, sir. This
ward is off limits. If you want
to arrange a visit...

Just then a couple of CAMERAMEN back through the door shooting. It's the head end of an entourage of REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN, HOSPITAL PERSONNEL and a couple of SECURITY GUYS that are traveling with BUBBER.

BERNIE is bumped backward by a CAMERAMAN just as he sees BUBBER enter surrounded by MEDIA PEOPLE.

BERNIE'S P.O.V.

seeing BUBBER unhesitatingly reach out to the grotesque SEVEN YEAR OLD and lift him into his arms, eyes shining with warmth, smiling genuinely like he likes picking up hideous looking kids.

ANGLE ON MISS ROBERTS

tapping one of the SECURITY OFFICERS on the shoulder and indicating BERNIE to him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

remembering why he's here. It's not going to be as easy as he thought. He starts to move through the entourage looking very out of place.

BERNIE

Excuse me, pal. Uh, couldja lemme through here? Thanks I...

THE SECURITY OFFICER is suddenly between BERNIE and his destination.

SECURITY OFFICER

You gotta press pass, sir?

BERNIE

Press pass? Uh, hey, I lost it. Listen...

ANGLE ON BUBBER

holding the SEVEN YEAR OLD. Smiling broadly, the child radiates joy in the warmth of BUBBER'S embrace, his grotesqueness miraculously minimized by his mood.

BERNIE

(O.S., diminishing)

GETCHER GODDAMN HANDS OFFA ME. ALL
I WANNA DO IS TALK TO THE GUY.

BUBBER and everybody turn toward the sound of the commotion.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.

of an unidentified MAN (BERNIE), obscured by the bodies of the two SECURITY OFFICERS who are hurriedly hustling him off the ward.

BERNIE (O.S.)

HEY, HOLD ON, BUDDY. THIS IS
AMERICA FOR CHRISAKE! I GOT
RIGHTS!

BUBBER

is frowning when a DOCTOR reassures him...

DOCTOR

All under control. An unfortunate man. Security will look after him.

BUBBER nods and turns back to SICK KIDS who seem transfigured from BERNIE'S gruesome vision to children radiant with hope. Much of their appearance, at least, was attitude, despair.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

A solitary figure.

INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY

137

A 14 year old ALLEN lies comatose in an intensive care room, tubes in his nose, arms, and chest, monitors all around him, his arms and legs in casts and traction.

BUBBER leans over the unconscious boy speaking intensely while a DOCTOR hovers next to him and REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN jockey for position at the foot of the bed.

BUBBER

Listen, kid, you gotta hang on. I know you're scared, we all get scared, but that's when you have to fight...

DOCTOR

I'm afraid he can't hear you. He...

BUBBER

He can hear me...

As he leans closer to ALLEN, BUBBER puts a hand out without turning away from the boy and waves away CHUCKY who has oozed in close with his camera. This is private. Understanding, GALE puts a hand on the lens and pushes the camera aside as she listens to the intimate and barely audible words that BUBBER speaks with soft intensity to the unconscious child.

BUBBER

Listen...

(eyes flicking to

Allen's I.D. bracelet)

Allen, you're in the darkness there and it's scary. The doctors are working on you but the tough part is for you. You can't quit! You're a hero! It's up to you. We're all counting on you, kid.

(more)

BUBBER (Cont'd)

A hero never quits. Never. We're
all together in this. The doctors
can't do it! You gotta do it for
all of us!

Did an eyelid flicker? Did the boy hear?

GALE'S eyes glisten with emotion.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

138

A CROWD is waiting for BUBBER, MEDIA PERSONEL among them.

BERNIE comes up behind a TV CAMERAMAN and taps his shoulder.

BERNIE

Hey, buddy, you're with the media,
right? I got a story for you.
Something fantastic. That guy
Bubber, he's a fake, he...

THE CAMERAMAN is turning to consider BERNIE when there's a
sudden EXCITEMENT. The CROWD surges toward the hospital
entrance. VOICES cry out "He's coming! Here he comes!"

THE CAMERAMAN turns toward the doors leaving BERNIE helpless,
caught in a surging tide of people.

BERNIE

HEY! WATCH OUT! HOLD ON! FOR
CHRISSAKE!

INT. LOBBY/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

139

BUBBER and his entourage of DOCTORS, MEDIA PEOPLE and SECURITY
GUARDS are surging toward the front door of the hospital like
an excited amoeba. GALE is close to BUBBER in the crush.

GALE

(emotional)

You were... very... inspiring.

BUBBER

I'm not sure I have a right to...
say some of the things I say, Gale.
What's this?

GALE is handing BUBBER a manila envelope.

GALE

The script. For the show. You just
keep saying those things, John.

BUBBER
(alarmed)
A script! I thought we just walked
through everything...

GALE
Read it. It'll be fine.

They're being swept through the front door of the hospital, the
whole amoeba. A CHEER GOES UP.

EXT. FRONT STEPS/HOSPITAL - DAY

140

BERNIE is being tossed about like a cork in stormy seas.
Buffeted about by happy ONLOOKERS full of good will, only BERNIE
is surly, obnoxious.

BERNIE
Quit shovin', lady. Hey, watch yer
elbow. YOU'RE ALL NUTS FOR CRYING
OUT LOUD! WHATSA MATTER WITH YOU?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

being jostled as his BODYGUARDS are shoved back into him,
CAMERAS push toward his face, HANDS reach out desperately for
him. But, in a dramatic contrast to BERNIE, BUBBER thrives on
the energy, laughing, reaching out to touch the hands that reach
for him, thriving on the vibe.

TEENAGE GIRL
I LOVE YOU, JOHN BUBBER!

BUBBER
HEY, WE ALL LOVE EACH OTHER, DON'T
WE?

OLD WOMAN ONE
GOD BLESS YOU, JOHN! GOD BLESS YOU!

BUBBER
GOD BLESS US ALL!

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
FAKE! YA GODDAMN PHONY!

BUBBER stiffens imperceptibly. Did he hear that right? Was
there a discordant note in the cacophony of VOICES singing his
praises from every direction?

BUBBER'S POV

A sea of shining faces filled with love and admiration surges
in front of him. And yet, that VOICE again, a sour note of
contraction...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
BUBBER, YA GODDAMN FRAUD! THAT'S
MY SHOE AND MY MONEY!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Hearing it, looking around urgently, but all he sees are ADMIRERS thrusting at him as he's borne, as if on a tide, toward his limo. Nobody else seems to have noticed BERNIE'S VOICE.

INT. WAITING LIMO

141

As the door slams shut, the cheering is suddenly faint. BUBBER sinks back in the opulent seats while FACES distort themselves against the smoked glass, trying to peer into the sanctuary.

Then, as the limo pulls away, BUBBER hears the VOICE again muffled by the thick glass. He turns, looks out the rear window. He sees the CROWD receding behind him, a confusion of SPECTATORS and... is that that hitchhiker (BERNIE) being restrained by a COP?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Shaken and frowning with concern, he turns away from the scene now out of view behind the moving limo.

Alone in the luxurious leathered sanctuary, he realizes his hands are shaking as he reaches for the manila envelope GALE gave him and tears it open.

He stares at the script titled THE ANGEL OF FLIGHT 104.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

142

As the happy CROWD disperses, an enraged BERNIE is facing a COP.

BERNIE
Don't tell me what I can and can't
say. This is America.

COP
(laughing)
Hey, suit yourself, buddy. If it
makes you feel better to insult a
man who's worth about a thousand
of you, go ahead. Like he says,
"We're all heroes," pal. Even you.

BERNIE
Bullshit! What a lotta bullshit!

COP
Okay, have it your own way: you're
not a hero.

INT. LIMO/MOVING - DAY

143

BUBBER is staring at the script.

ANGLE ON THE PAGE

"NARRATOR: Flight Attendant Leslie Sugar vividly recalls the harrowing sequence of events that began when the 737 plowed into the Sachem Bridge."

As we read LESLIE'S subsequent dialogue on the page, we HEAR her VOICE saying the words aloud, echoey and full of emotion, with the SOUNDS of the crash scene muffled in the background...

LESLIE'S VOICE

(O.C., echoey)

I was terrified. I could see the port exit was useless... I tried to open the starboard exit, but it wouldn't budge and...

INT. MOVING BUS - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

144

BERNIE slumped in the seat of a city bus, halfway between rage and despair, looks out the window.

BERNIE'S P.O.V.

Through the window he sees a passing bus, the whole side of the bus featuring a smiling face of BUBBER in conjunction with The Image, an advertisement for "CHANNEL FOUR'S HEROIC NEWS."

ANGLE ON BERNIE

turning away, his eyes fall on the discarded newspaper lying on the seat beside him. More BUBBER news.

Across the aisle, BERNIE sees a man reading Time Magazine... with BUBBER on the cover.

Just then a BUBBER POP SONG comes from a radio as two TEENAGE GIRLS move past BERNIE'S seat toward the back of the bus...

RADIO

"Then out of the smoke and out of the fire came a man with a dirty face..."

BERNIE stares glumly at the BUBBER T-SHIRTS the TEENAGE GIRLS are wearing. He is in some version of hell.

INT. LIMO/MOVING/CITY STREET - DAY

145

BUBBER is still reading Leslie's account of the crash and we HEAR her VOICE and, in the background, the CRIES and MOANS of the passengers of Flight 104.

LESLIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

He pushed by me, he was walking
right into the plane. The smoke
was so thick he just... disappeared.
People were crying out and choking.
Then he just... appeared again...
carrying Freddy, the other again
Flight Attendant.

BUBBER is reacting to the vividness of the description when another VOICE interrupts loudly...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

(echoey)

FAKE! GODDAMN PHONY!

Startled, BUBBER looks up from the page, looks around urgently, looks out the window...

The city passes by. No one yelling. He must have imagined it!

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

146

Behind the deserted bar, CHICK looks from the TV set as BERNIE enters, weary and bedraggled, the strut gone. Bernie holds up his hands defensively.

BERNIE

Hey, I don't blame you for bein'
sore. I know I screwed up gettin'
busted in here. You got a right
to throw me out.

CHICK

I'm not gonna throw you out, Bernie.

CHICK is fixing a seven and seven. He puts it on the bar. BERNIE hesitates, then steps to the bar, takes a drink.

BERNIE

Thanks, Chick. I appreciate it.

REPORTER/TV (O.S., VOICEOVER)

The doctors who had believed the
boy had little or no chance for
survival, now predict a slow but
complete recovery.

CHICK glances up at the TV screen and BERNIE looks too.

ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY)

147V

news footage shows young ALLEN in his hospital bed, still engulfed in tubes and life support equipment, but conscious now, smiling bravely for the CAMERA while a REPORTER narrates.

ANGLE ON CHICK

eyes on the TV, shaking his head in wonder.

CHICK

Helluva guy, ain't he? Vietnam,
plane crash, now miracles.

BERNIE stares at the screen lost in thought.

EXT. VIDEO STUDIO - NIGHT

148

A sign over the door says "STAGE ONE/BIG CITY STUDIOS." Further down, on the door itself a sign says "NO ADMITTANCE/ AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY."

UNIFORMED POLICE linger around the door, surrounded by FANS and BUBBER'S limo waits at the curb, his DRIVER lounging by the door.

JENSEN (we saw him earlier in the courtroom), is making his way through the knot of ONLOOKERS and MEDIA PERSONNEL gathered around the limo and in front of the entrance.

Approaching as if to enter, he is confronted by one of the several UNIFORMED POLICEMEN guarding the doorway.

POLICE OFFICER

Sorry, sir. Closed to the public.

(Jensen is reaching for
his fold)

No media either, sir, they're taping
a show and... Oh, right. Sorry
about that, Inspector.

JENSEN is flashing his badge fold as the POLICEMAN hastily opens the door for him.

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

149

JENSEN enters the sound stage and sees the mock-up bathed in hot light in the middle of the darkened stage, surrounded by shadowy cameras and TECHNICIANS. The SURVIVORS are visible in the skeletal plane, rehearsing.

JENSEN settles in the shadows, out of earshot, watching.

ANGLE ON FREDDY AND LESLIE

Standing by the rear exit of the mock-up, watching BUBBER make his way among the seats with difficulty while CAMERAS follow his moves. FREDDY whispers...

FREDDY

It really works, the re-enactment, you know? I mean, I was unconscious so I wasn't really "there." So now I'm really "seeing" it for the first time. Appreciating how really brave he was.

LESLIE

(bothered)

He wasn't that... graceful. Not that night.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Approaching GALE who's lying "helplessly" among the seats. He looms over her, his face obscured by "mud" make-up, hesitates. She whispers helpfully...

GALE

Now you lean down and free me from the seat. I was caught and... that's it. Good.

BUBBER bends down, starts to "free" her, a troubled look on his face. He is struggling with something emotionally.

GALE

Now you help me up. Boy, you seem... taller. It must be psychological... now that I know you saved my life...

BUBBER

(lifting her)

Gale! I can't go through with this! It's... it's all wrong!

GALE

You're doing fine. You didn't actually lift me though. It was more like you supported me.

BUBBER

(supporting her)

That's not what I mean...

GALE

There, like that. Kind of, uh, sexy.

(more)

GALE (Cont'd)
(with meaning)
You can support me anytime, John.

BUBBER
Gale...

GALE
(giggle)
I just remembered. You were cursing
and talking about Arnold
Schwarzenegger.

BUBBER
Schwarzenegger!

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE booms over the speakers from the booth.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)
WE DON'T WANT ACTING, AS I SAID.
BUT WHEN WE DO A TAKE, GUYS, PLEASE
DON'T LAUGH, OKAY? IT HAS TO PLAY
SERIOUS. IT WAS A VERY SERIOUS
THING.

(a beat, then...)
UH, ALSO, JOHN, MAYBE YOU COULD LIFT
HER MORE, SORT OF CARRY HER. I KNOW
THAT MAY BE BENDING REALITY JUST
A TEENSY BIT, BUT IF YOUR
JOURNALIST'S INTEGRITY CAN HANDLE
IT, GALE, I THINK IT WOULD "PLAY
BETTER" ON THE SCREEN.

ANGLE ON JENSEN

Watching, impassive.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Lifting GALE, uncomfortable.

BUBBER
It's not right, Gale...

GALE
(misunderstanding again)
It's no big deal, it just looks
better carrying me. Oh, you mean
because I wasn't carrying my purse
at the time.

GALE has a purse under one arm.

GALE
(suddenly serious, eye
contact)
You're an inspiration, John. You're
making us better human beings. Less
cynical. More open, more giving.
Do you realize that?

BUBBER starts to say something again, but the moment for
confession has passed, they're approaching LESLIE who is
applauding along with the other SURVIVORS, tears in her eyes.

LESLIE
You leave her here... and you (sob)
go back in again.

BUBBER nods and starts grimly back up the slope, trapped in his
heroic role.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

150

BERNIE is sitting moodily at the bar while CHICK washes glasses
and the TV DRONES. BERNIE is wrestling with a thought. He
breaks the silence finally.

BERNIE
What wouldja say if I toldja I ran
into a burning plane an' saved a
buncha people, Chick, an' risked
my goddamn life?

CHICK
You mean like Bubber? The hero?

BERNIE
Yeah, like that. Same thing.

CHICK
Well... I mean... what am I supposed
to say here, Bern? Is this a riddle
or what?

BERNIE
I mean, if I said it, wouldja
believe me?
(then...)
Ya wouldn't, would ya?

CHICK
It's a character thing, Bernie.
I mean, you wouldn't do it. No
offense. Me neither. I mean a guy
like Bubber, he's a certain kinda
guy. Heroic. You and me, we're
not... heroic. It's not our nature.
(more)

CHICK (Cont'd)

It don't mean we're bad or nothing.
We're just not so inclined. What
about it?

BERNIE

Nothin'.

CHICK

I wouldn't be depressed about it,
Bern. A guy don't have to be heroic
to be a human being.

BERNIE

The thing is, Chick. I'm goin'
down.

CHICK

Down. You mean jail? For that
credit card stuff? For Chrissake,
Bernie, your lawyer...

BERNIE

Not jail. Prison. And not that
credit card bullshit, that's
nothin'. I got a conviction.
Sentencing tomorrow. Some cases
of paint I got involved with. I
see this parole officer, he writes
a report to the judge says I'm
"anti-social."

CHICK

Jesus, Bernie. Jesus. Hey, where
do these guys get this stuff?
"Anti-social." Yer not anti-social.
We pay taxes for this?

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

151

JENSEN unnoticed among the shadows, as the YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR
addresses the assembled SURVIVORS. JENSEN focuses on GALE.

YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR

That's a wrap, guys. I want to
thank you all. I think we did
something very important here this
evening.

As a MAKE-UP ARTIST wipes BUBBER'S "muddy" face clean with cold
cream, BUBBER looks around for GALE, spots her fifteen yards
away.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.: A BLACK MAN (JENSEN)

is showing GALE something, a badge fold, saying something to her.

BUBBER

disengages from the MAKE-UP ARTIST, starts toward GALE but... SUSAN suddenly blocks his way, holding up a DOLL, a shy KELLY in tow.

SUSAN

Mister Bubber... uh, John... Kelly wants you to sign an autograph for John Jr.

BUBBER finds himself facing a JOHN BUBBER DOLL, sees KELLY peeking up at him hopefully. What can he do? He's a patsy.

ANGLE ON GALE

as Jensen speaks to her.

JENSEN

Won't take more than ten minutes. Fifteen at the most. I'll buy you a cuppa coffee down the street.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Handing the autograph to KELLY and looking toward the spot where GALE was.

Gone! No GALE. No JENSEN. His eyes go to the studio door.

EXT. STUDIO ONE - NIGHT

152

BUBBER rushes out the door in hot pursuit of GALE and finds himself engulfed by MEDIA PERSONNEL and AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS, cameras in his face, FANS pressing in eagerly.

BUBBER'S POV

He can see GALE getting in JENSEN'S Ford.

BUBBER

GALE!

BUBBER'S cry is lost in a chorus of REPORTERS' questions and AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS pleas.

He can see JENSEN'S Ford pulling away.

BUBBER

looks like he's seen defeat and despair.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

153

CHICK is drinking now too.

CHICK

Christ, Bernie, we got killers an' rapists all over the place, we got thieves in high places... it kills me seein' a standup guy like you goin' down on some bullshit rap.

BERNIE

(he's had a few)
Like maybe you get what you deserve, you know? Like it all catches up with you, all the bad shit you done. Being a shitty father, aggravating your old lady...

(an awkward pause,
then...)

I gotta go, Chick. I appreciate about the tab. I'll do what I can. You're a goddamn straight shooter.

BERNIE gets off the bar stool just a tad wobbly.

CHICK

(choked up)
Christ, Bernie... Jesus Christ.

BERNIE

Hey, maybe I'll buy summa them fancy sneakers, join one of them prison gangs, be a tough guy.

BERNIE exits bravely, leaving CHICK shaking his head sadly.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER (EVENING)

154

Credit cards are spread out on the formica table top in the booth where GALE and JENSEN face each other.

GALE

How... how does this, whatsisname, the "sleazebag," say he got my cards?

JENSEN

LaPlante? Ha! Which version? This bozo has more stories than a newspaper. In one of them, he's "the angel of Flight 104!" He pulls you off the plane, saves your purse for you, but forgets to return it. That's Version 63.

(more)

JENSEN (Cont'd)

In Version 64, he kept it to pay for his "hundred dollar shoes." The guy's a bullshit artist, he's already got a sentencing pending for dealing stolen goods.

(leaning forward,
whispering)

Listen, I know this is pretty off the wall... that guy, the hero, Bubber... he was a homeless guy, right? Down on his luck? He couldn't have swiped the wallet, could he? While he was rescuing you? And sold it to this guy LaPlante?

GALE

(raised eyebrows)

John Bubber risks his life to save me and fifty-four other people and... swipes my purse?

JENSEN

Too far-fetched? I mean, I'm not trying to make problems for John Bubber, I just want to make sure this creep LaPlante does some meaningful time. If we can't figure out how he got the cards, it makes it more difficult.

GALE

Tell me more about him.

JENSEN

LaPlante?

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

155

JOEY is sprawled on the living room floor, surrounded by homework, his eyes on the TV set.

EVELYN, on the sofa, looks up from her book and catches JOEY watching the TV.

EVELYN

Homework. You're doing homework, remember?

The phone rings and EVELYN gets up and goes for it.

EVELYN
(to Joey)
Homework, homework, homework! No
homework, no zoo trips, no movies.
(into phone)
Hello.
(then, very cold...)
He's doing his homework.

JOEY looks up from his homework.

INT. PHONE BOOTH/STREET - NIGHT

156

BERNIE is talking into the phone urgently...

BERNIE
Look, I'm going away, I just wanna
say goodbye to... never mind where.
I just wanna say... He can't call
me back later, my phone's
disconnected...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

157

EVELYN covers the mouthpiece and turns to JOEY...

EVELYN
It's your father. If you don't talk
to him, he's going to call all
night.

INTERCUT/PHONE BOOTH AND EVELYN'S HOUSE

BERNIE
Hey, Joey, how ya doin', pal, it's
me. Your old man. You get the
twenty dollars? What?
(listens...)
Well, she's right on that, Joey,
that's the best place for it, a
college fund. I was gonna tell ya
that myself. Look, about how I
didn't show up the other night I...
what?
(he listens)
Yeah, one shoe, right. You seen
me out the window, huh?

BERNIE
You did? You thought it was me?
(listens)
Yeah? What'd she say? -- Oh yeah.
"Against my religion." huh?
(more)

BERNIE (Cont'd)

(he struggles, then...
decisive)

Well, you know Joey, this kinds
stuff, we gotta talk about it some
time, man to man. But I gotta go
off on this -- this damn business
trip now... for a while. So...
so I won't be seein' you. What you
gotta do, you gotta listen to your
mother, she's smart, very smart,
knows what's best for you and...

(reacting)

No, no, no, it ain't 'cause I don't
like you, Christ! I mean, not
"Christ," you know... I mean I don't
wanna go on this business thing,
I love you Joey, but I gotta!
That's part of growing older, all
these goddamn (pardon my French)
business things you have to do.
Which reminds me, this "hero"
business... one of the things you
learn as you get older is that life
gets very complicated... weird
actually... people aren't exactly
like they seem... nothing is...
life gets unbelievable... this is
normal as you grow older and...
huh? I was talking to Joey

EVELYN

Your son actually wants to spend
time with you. If you let him down
this time after popping back into
his life...

BERNIE

Ev, you gotta understand, it's
this... this goddamn business trip,
no wait, don't hang up, Ev, just
a sec, listen, I just wanna say one
thing, okay? One thing!

(with some effort)

I know I kinda act like an asshole
sometimes. I know that. I know
you were a good wife. I know I
fucked it up. I had a good thing
an' I blew it. I just want you to
know I know that, okay? I gotta
go now. Business trip. It's gonna
be a while.

BERNIE hangs up.

EVELYN stares at the phone as though it had changed into a piece
of fruit before her eyes! Bernie said that?

She shakes her head to see if she's dreaming.

OMIT
OMIT

158
159

EXT./INT. CHANNEL 4 NEWS VAN/MOVING/CITY STREETS - NIGHT 160

GALE is using the car phone while CHUCKY drives.

CHUCKY

If this bozo doesn't answer, why
are we going to his apartment?

GALE

He's not "not answering." His
phone's been disconnected.

INT. HALLWAY/APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT) 161

WINSTON (who bought Bernie's TV) has opened his door just a
crack to address GALE and CHUCKY. It says "Manager" on the door.

WINSTON

LaPlante! That asshole! I don't...
Hey, is that you, from the tee vee?
In person?

GALE

We're from Channel Four, yes. We'd
like to find --

WINSTON

"This is Gale Gayley for Channel
Four News!" Incredible.
Unbelievable! For Bernie LaPlante!
He's a celebrity now? 'Cause he
stole paint?

GALE

We couldn't find his name on the
buzzer or on the mailbox, but...

WINSTON pushes past them out the door and into the corridor.

WINSTON

"Low profile." That's his big
motto! He don't put his name on
anything. The guy's an asshole,
what can I say? Come on, we'll go
look.

GALE sees WINSTON trundling down the corridor toward the
stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

162

WINSTON waddles up the stairs with GALE and CHUCKY on his heels.

GALE

Shouldn't we have buzzed him to let him know --

WINSTON

Half the time he don't answer even if he's home. Know why? 'Cause he don't want no bill collectors to find him. I don't mean to be judgmental, but he's a scumbag. He don't have no friends. Who's gonna like a creep like LaPlante? I was doin' him a favor on the TV outta kindness, and he screwed me. You know what color skin you get on my set, Miss Gayley? Purple! That's what color skin you got on the tee vee LaPlante sells me!

During the climb, GALE'S BEEPER goes off. She shuts it off.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR/APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

163

BANG! BANG! BANG! WINSTON pounds on the door to 5A while GALE and CHUCKY hover behind him anxiously.

WINSTON

Bernard! Bernard! Hey, LaPlante, open the door. Television Interview! Fame and fortune. Open up, Bernard.

WINSTON pulls a ring of keys from his belt and unlocks the door.

WINSTON

Hope the silly bastard didn't kill himself. He's all upset about this sentence he got. He's going to prison.

(to Chucky)

That a camera you're carrying? If he killed himself, you could take pictures.

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT

164

WINSTON, GALE and CHUCKY enter the tiny charmless living room. As WINSTON disappears into the bedroom, GALE glances around, notices something.

A cheap commercial photo of BERNIE with JOEY at the zoo.

WINSTON
HE'S GONNA JUMP! BUBBER'S GONNA
JUMP! IT'S ON CHANNEL ELEVEN!

CHUCKY
Eleven!

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT)

165V

Weirdly distorted colors. A shaky long lens shot (news camera) reveals a bright green BUBBER standing on a ledge forty stories up while a REPORTER narrates urgently...

REPORTER (V.O.)
-- say that they cannot rig a net
below him because they are afraid
it will trigger his decision to
jump. Bubber has said repeatedly
he will only talk with Gale Gayley
a local television reporter.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Oh my God!

REVEAL: INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT

166

Where GALE, flanked by BERNIE, CHUCKY, and WINSTON, is staring in horror at the lurid color image on the TV BERNIE sold to WINSTON.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE - NIGHT)

167V

REPORTER/TV
(continuing)
So far, attempts to reach Ms. Gayley
have not succeeded.

ANGLE ON GALE

GALE
(to Winston)
Your phone! Quick.

As WINSTON shows her the phone, BERNIE scowls at the TV.

BERNIE
He's green for Chrissake!

As GALE punches digits on the phone, WINSTON turns back to BERNIE.

WINSTON
No shit! You took advantage of me,
LaPlante. It's a piece of shit.

BERNIE
You gotta tune it, ya bozo. You
gotta adjust it.

BERNIE is adjusting the television color.

REPORTER/TV
Meanwhile a crowd has gathered here
at the hotel, many of them in tears,
pleading aloud with John Bubber not
to jump.

ANGLE ON GALE

speaking urgently and privately into the phone.

GALE
For God's sake, tell him I'm on my
way.

(she slams down the
phone)
Let's go, Chucky. A police escort
is gonna pick us up en route. You
too, LaPlante.

BERNIE
Me!

GALE
You're part of this. Let's go.

BERNIE
Damn right I'm "part of it." But
I haven't seen any "green" yet, have
I?

Disgusted GALE yanks out a wallet and slaps a wad of cash at
him.

GALE
You mercenary bastard! A man's life
is at stake, LaPlante. That's all
I've got.

GALE exits leaving BERNIE to stare at the cash amazed.

BERNIE
A couple hundred bucks for
Chrissake! Are we serious here?

BERNIE starts out the door after her, calling out.

BERNIE
You media people think you can just
buy people. Cheap!

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

168

SIRENS SCREAM. An escort of POLICE MOTORCYCLES precedes the speeding Channel Four van through the dark streets.

INT. SPEEDING CHANNEL 4 VAN - NIGHT

169

CHUCKY is at the wheel of the van, GALE beside him. BERNIE sits back in the confusion of equipment and monitors that show the news coverage of Bubber on the ledge. BERNIE is addressing GALE indignantly, trying to be heard over the SCREAMING of the SIRENS.

BERNIE

My fault! My fault! This nut case goes out on a ledge and it's my fault?

GALE

If anything happens to John Bubber, Mister LaPlante I'm going to see you prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

BERNIE

What, is everybody in love with this, bozo? I don't get this. What about...?

GALE

Yes, everybody is in love with John Bubber. The whole country, in fact. And they're not going to be happy if he jumps to his death because he was harassed by a lousy little money-grubbing low-life fence...

BERNIE

"Harassed." Cause I yelled at him when he's riding in his limo? The guy's a thief, he took my...

GALE

(erupting)

He had one tiny, uncharacteristic moment of weakness. That's not the same thing as a lifetime of petty crime...

BERNIE

(stung)

Hey, lady, I got faults, I know I'm not perfect but I don't get this at all, your attitude. I saved your...

GALE
(interrupting)
A lifetime of petty crime climaxed
by your sleaziest accomplishment
yet... blackmailing a national
hero...

BERNIE
-- saved your... whaaaaaaat? What?
Blackmailing...?

GALE
You think I haven't figured it out?
Just because the cops aren't on to
you yet doesn't mean you're home
free. I'm a veteran reporter. I've
seen your kind before, the
underbelly of crime.

BERNIE
Underbelly!

GALE
In all that smoke and fire, John
had a moment of weakness. He'd been
down and out, destitute, living in
his car. It was just an impulse,
stealing my purse.

BERNIE looks thunderstruck. CHUCKY too.

CHUCKY
Swiped your purse! While he was
saving you? You gotta be kidding!

GALE
(a triumphant look at
Bernie)
And sold it to Mister LaPlante, the
fence, who's now trying to blackmail
poor John.

BERNIE is too stunned to speak.

CHUCKY
He's gotta be a nut! He saves all
those people and swipes a purse?

GALE
(emotional)
Because he was a real hero, Chucky.
He was acting out of a deep
instinctive decency, not out of some
ego thing. He didn't expect the
media to lionize him. He didn't
expect a million dollar reward.
(more)

GALE (Cont'd)

He saved fifty-four people because something inside him, some fundamental love for his fellow man, made him rush into that plane when "good sense" told him otherwise. He was willing to settle for some credit cards he sold to LaPlante....

(to Bernie)

For how much, LaPlante? A couple of bucks? Did you give him enough for a decent meal?

BERNIE, who's been listening to the description of his own deeds with slack-jawed amazement, is too taken aback to answer.

The van zips past dark city streets populated by DERELICTS and HOMELESS PEOPLE as GALE continues her emotional outpouring.

GALE

All this is off the record, Chucky, because if John Bubber lives, Mister LaPlante is going to give him his assurance that there will be no more "misbehavior" on his part. What's more he's going to apologize.

BERNIE

I'm going to apologize to Bubber?

GALE

I could deny I had those credit cards on the plane with me, LaPlante...

BERNIE

(amazed)

Lie, you mean.

GALE

Well, maybe I wouldn't lie...but I could tell the story the way I did just now, so that people could understand that John is even more of a hero, and that you... you're the lowest thing that ever crawled. Your name will be synonymous with cynical opportunism and blackmail. You won't get a cent.

BERNIE

(alarmed)

I got a kid, you know. I'm a person, for Chrissake.

GALE

Well, for your child's sake, show
some decency then, rise above your
sleazy instincts.

(a sob)

You may have already killed him!

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

170

POLICE buck the tide of the excited CROWD, making a wedge to
get GALE, CHUCKY, and BERNIE to the hotel entrance. A COP grabs
BERNIE, thinking him a specator.

GALE

No! He's with us, Officer.

A REPORTER, on the fringe of the crowd, addresses a camera.

REPORTER

Police are escorting Reporter Gale
Gayley to the fortieth floor where
she will be able to talk to Bubber.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

A tiny figure on a narrow ledge forty floors up.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

171

GALE rushes into the suite now jammed with POLICE, FIREMEN, and
DIGNITARIES and heads straight for the open window, dragging
BERNIE with her. CHUCKY follows, Vidcam raised.

At the window she encounters the POLICE CHIEF and a PRIEST.

POLICE CHIEF

He'll only talk to you, Ms Gayley.
Just lean out and we'll hold you
from behind.

EXT. LEDGE/FORTIETH STORY/DRAKE HOTEL

172

Alone on the ledge twenty feet from the open window, BUBBER is
looking down at the CROWD below. They're chanting...

CROWD

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

BUBBER has tears in his eyes. He turns at the sound of GALE'S
voice and sees her leaning out the window, calling to him.

GALE

John! Don't do it! Everything's
okay.

Pulling an envelope from his pocket, BUBBER moves a couple of steps toward GALE and bends down to place the envelope on the ledge.

BUBBER

Gale! This is for you. I want you to know I never meant to hurt you. This will explain everything.

GALE

John, I know all about it.

BUBBER

(horrificed)

You do?

Straightening up, he... LOSES HIS BALANCE!

CROWD

NNNOOOOOOOOOOOO!

GALE

It's all right, John! It's nothing! A little mistake. Everybody will understand!

BUBBER

"A little mistake"!

GALE

No, John, you're too hard on yourself. I've got the creep here, the guy who's...

GALE breaks off as BERNIE suddenly shoulders his way to the window..

BERNIE

Hold on! Hold on! Lemme talk to him for Chrissake!

INT. SUITE/DRAKE

173

BERNIE pushes past the astonished GALE and scrambles awkwardly out onto the ledge, kicking back at the FIREMEN who vainly grab at his ankles.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

174

BUBBER stares in amazement as BERNIE emerges onto the ledge on all fours, yelling toward him.

BERNIE

Hey, Bubber, c'mere! I gotta talk to you, buddy.

BUBBER

LaPlante!

BERNIE

Come on, John, don't be an asshole.
I don't like heights.

Hastily, BUBBER backs further from the window (and the envelope lying on the ledge).

BUBBER

Listen, LaPlante, I'm really sorry.
It's all in my letter to Ga ...uh,
Miss Gayley. I was all wrong.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE

175

CHUCKY is wedged beside GALE in the window, pointing his vidpak at BERNIE'S ass. Suddenly BERNIE turns and GALE glimpses his face as he snaps at CHUCKY...

BERNIE

Turn that thing off! You want him
to jump?

As GALE steps back from the window, BERNIE is crawling toward BUBBER. Amazed, GALE looks toward a TV monitor to see what she can't see without sticking her head out the window again.

GALE'S P.O.V.: TV IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - FROM BELOW - NIGHT) 176V

The REPORTER narrates while the SHAKY CAMERA FOCUSSES on BERNIE, a tiny figure crawling slowly along the ledge toward BUBBER, forty stories up.

REPORTER/TV (V.O.)

It looks like someone is out on the
ledge with John Bubber... yes...
moving toward him. We can only
presume this is a rescue specialist
of some kind from the police or fire
department. He does not appear to
have a safety rope tied to him and,
as we've explained, the fire
department has been unable to rig
a net.

BACK TO GALE

Ironically, she's "seeing the events" happening fifteen feet from her on a monitor showing a camera angle 40 stories below, a SHAKY ZOOM attempting to isolate BERNIE on the ledge.

Her face shows surprise at BERNIE'S courage. Did she misjudge?

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

177

BERNIE is muttering angrily as he inches his way toward BUBBER.

BERNIE

I just wanna talk with you for a minute. Then you can jump. You can jump twice for all I care.

BUBBER

Talk from there. You can talk from there.

BERNIE

In private. They got cameras and alla that crap in there. Microphones.

On all fours, BERNIE reaches the letter that lies on the ledge, picks it up, and continues toward BUBBER.

BUBBER

That's for Ga... Ms. Gayley.

BERNIE

What am I, a goddamn postman? I'm way the fuck up here, I'm scared a heights, and you want me to deliver a letter? Put a stamp on it for Chrissake!

BUBBER

That's close enough. It's a confession. The truth. Jesus, I'm sorry, LaPlante. I had the shoe, you said you didn't want publicity because of your legal problems.

BERNIE

I don't recall saying I didn't want a million bucks...

BUBBER

I never really thought they'd go for it. And then... you didn't come forward, they investigated my war record... I kept expecting you to show up and expose me...

BERNIE

I was in the can, for Chrissake.

BUBBER

The bathroom! For two days?

BERNIE

Jail! Listen, Bubber...

(looks down, forty
stories)

This is crazy. We could fall off
of here.

BUBBER

You should go in. You're risking
your life again...

BERNIE

(sweating, trembling)

I'm beginning to... be aware of
that, John. Listen, I'm not gonna
do nothing heroic here, you can
trust me on that, buddy. Whaddaya
say we just sit down for a while.
I don't have no tricks, I'm not that
smart. You could, like, rest up for
the jump.

BUBBER considers the situation, relaxes, lowers himself till
he's sitting beside BERNIE. Then he helps BERNIE off his knees
into a sitting position so they're sitting side by side on the
ledge. BUBBER shakes his head sadly.

BUBBER

What have I done? I was dirt poor
and useless... but I was honest.

BERNIE

Lighten up, John. You think you
got problems for Chrissake?

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL

178

In front of the hotel in the midst of the confusion of emergency
vehicles, POLICE, and ONLOOKERS, a cherry-picker has arrived
and a TV CAMERAMAN is riding in the rising pulpit.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL P.O.V. - NIGHT)

179V

A shaky long lens shot from forty stories below shows BERNIE
sitting beside BUBBER on the ledge while the REPORTER narrates
urgently...

REPORTER/TV (V.O.)

-- still don't know why John Bubber,
hero to the nation, stepped out onto
the ledge forty stories above the
street more than an hour ago.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

180

JOEY, wearing pajamas and headphones, is staring breathlessly at the TV from the bed in his darkened bedroom.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT) 181V

REPORTER/TV (V.O.)

(continuing)

But we now have the identity of the man who has been talking to him for the last fifteen minutes at great personal risk. He has been identified as Bernard LaPlante, former employee of Gumley's Carpet Care.

ANGLE ON JOEY

JOEY'S jaw sags and he sits up in bed as the REPORTER continues on the TV.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. LEDGE FROM BELOW - NIGHT) 182V

the lens ZOOMS TIGHTER, and therefore SHAKIER, offering a jerky image in which BUBBER and BERNIE are semi-identifiable as they sit on the ledge.

REPORTER/TV (V.O.)

There is speculation that LaPlante is an old friend of Bubber's, perhaps a war buddy.

BACK TO SCENE

JOEY has already sprinted out of the room, leaving the TV playing to his empty bedroom.

JOEY'S VOICE (O.S.)

MOM! MOM! IT'S MY FATHER! MOM!

INT. DRAKE/PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

183

GALE is giving way at the window to CHUCKY who's leaning out to try and get a shot. Jammed in by the CROWD, her view blocked, she glimpses a TV monitor nearby.

GALE'S POV - TV MONITOR/VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT) 184V

The SHAKY CLOSE-UP of BERNIE'S face fills the screen. For just a moment he looks a little like he did when he rescued GALE from the crash!

BACK TO GALE,

stunned.

EXT. LEDGE/FORTIETH FLOOR/DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

185

Spotlights illuminate BERNIE and BUBBER as they sit on the ledge and converse, like a couple of guys on a park bench somewhere, oblivious to the CROWD below.

BUBBER
(flabbergasted)
You stole her purse! While you were
saving her?

BERNIE
What's the big deal? You decided
to pretend you were me. A little
moment of weakness, right? So I
sorta swiped her purse. I got feet
of clay too, buddy.

BUBBER
And she thinks you're blackmailing
me?

BERNIE
Right.

BUBBER actually sees humor in this but BERNIE is thinking...

BERNIE
Which don't sound like such a bad
goddamn idea, John.

BUBBER
Huh? Whadda you mean?

BERNIE
Well, we gotta work this thing out,
John. It's a goddamn mess an' I'm
halfway to doing serious time in
the joint an' the TV lady's so stuck
on you she don't want it to come
out you stole her purse because it
might break the heart of millions
(indicating the chanting
crowd below)
Looka those maniacs, willya? They
love you for Chrissake!

BUBBER
I don't need to be a hero, LaPlante,
but I can't face people... the looks
in their eyes... after the trust
they put in me!

BERNIE
Great! You make this big goddamn
mess, then ya jump. Beautiful!
(more)

BERNIE (Cont'd)

Listen, John, I was there at the hospital today, I seen you with those kids...

BUBBER

It was you! I thought I heard...

BERNIE

I'm not saying I hate sick people or anything but I hate being around them if you know what I mean. Christ, I mighta vomited on that poor sick kid or something. Instead of inspiring him. Plus the cameras. They stick cameras in your face, poke at you, and you... you smile. All that kinda Saint-heroic-shit comes natural to a guy like you, you like it...

BUBBER

You got those people out of the plane, not me.

BERNIE

You woulda gone in there, you wouldn'ta thought twice... Trust me on that, that's the kinda guy you are. For a guy like me, it's a momentary loss of sanity. I wasn't thinking clearly. Listen, I'm no hero, John. I just want some dough and maybe a little favor. How much didja spend already on all that do-gooder bullshit? You didn't spend it all didja?

BUBBER

Well, I donated a lot to different causes, uh... La...

BERNIE

Bernie. Call me Bernie.

BUBBER

--but there's a lot of it still left, uh, Bernie. Almost half.

BERNIE'S eyes glitter with interest.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/TV STATION

186

Several monitors show a variety of coverage of the drama on the ledge on their screens while, nearby, WALLACE hovers anxiously over DEAKINS' shoulder as DEAKINS rants into the phone...

DEAKINS

Whaddaya mean what do I wanna know?
I wanna know everything. Who's this
screwball LaPlante for Pete's sake,
what the hell's he doing out there,
auditioning for the priesthood?
You're supposed to be on top of
this, Gale, don't...
(he stops, listens,
explodes)
"Quit!" You can't quit! It's
unprofessional!

WALLACE

(alarmed)

Quit? She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

(ignoring Wallace)

Listen, Gale, I know you're
emotionally involved. Don't be
emotionally involved, be
professional.

(listens, then...)

No, Gale, you are not a hardbitten,
cynical hard-ass, you just think
you are. You are a goddamn cream
puff! Try and be a hard-ass!

DEAKINS hangs up the phone angrily and faces WALLACE...

WALLACE

She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

She can't quit.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

187

EVELYN is staring dumbfounded at the TV screen, the volume full
now, now longer coming through the headphones.

EVELYN

My God! It... it is him!

JOEY

Wh-why's he... why's he up there,
mom?

EVELYN looks pale and stricken. Instead of answering, she makes
a decision...

EVELYN

Where's your coat? Get your coat!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

188

DEAKINS and WALLACE are watching a CHANNEL FOUR REPORTER on one of the monitors.

REPORTER'S VOICE/TV

189V

-- just learned that LaPlante is a convicted felon due to be sentenced tomorrow for trafficking in stolen goods. According to our sources, LaPlante knowingly purchased six cases of stolen latex paint which he subsequently sold to...

ANGLE ON DEAKINS AND WALLACE

DEAKINS

Gale shoulda aired that bit first, she's the one who found this clown LaPlante! She let Channel Seven get a beat on us.

WALLACE

(worried)

Listen, Deak, what if Bubber has got something to hide? What if he's the wrong guy, not really the hero...?

DEAKINS

Helluva story!

WALLACE

(suddenly firm)

No, Deak, not a great story. We backed this guy, he's our boy! We gave him a vote of confidence, we gave him a million dollars.

DEAKINS is chastened. He "gets it." Just then, excitement from the monitor.

DEAKINS

Now what?

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

190

Excitement in the CROWD, looking up, yelling. Something's happening. CONKLIN is speaking into his mike even as the surge of the CROWD engulfs him...

CONKLIN

-- still sitting on the ledge but
Bubber is motioning to someone in
the window, he seems to be calling
out to them and now... now he's
holding up two fingers. He's
signalling something, holding up
two fingers.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

191

A Ford station wagon speeds toward the city.

INT. MOVING FORD/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

192

EVELYN is at the wheel, JOEY beside her, the RADIO on...

EVELYN

If I gave you the impression I hated
him I didn't mean to. I... I hate
the way he behaves... he's selfish
and self-centered and cynical...

JOEY

What's "cynical"?

EVELYN

It's when you say, "Everybody else
cheats why shouldn't I?"

(emotional)

But I don't -- I don't hate -- him.
I... loved him once, Joey. Very
much. I just got... tired. Maybe
it wasn't all his fault. He...
What's happening? Oh, my God...

EVELYN is reacting to the live radio broadcast, a sudden urgency
in the REPORTER'S VOICE, CROWD SOUNDS...

RADIO

-- FIREMEN LEANING OUT THE WINDOW!
THEY HAVE WHAT APPEAR TO BE LONG
POLES AND THEY'RE REACHING THE POLES
TOWARD THE TWO MEN ON THE LEDGE,
JOHN BUBBER AND HIS COMPANION,
BERNARD LAPLANTE!

EVELYN

What's happening? What are they
doing...?

RADIO

(continuing)

LAPLANTE AND BUBBER ARE REACHING
FOR THE POLES! THERE'S SOMETHING
AT THE TIP OF THE POLES. THEY'RE
TAKING SOMETHING FROM THE POLES!
IT LOOKS LIKE -- IT LOOKS LIKE...
I THINK IT'S... WAIT A MINUTE, I
HAVE A REPORT HERE...

EVELYN and JOEY are breathless, mesmerized, waiting to hear...

RADIO

COFFEE! IT'S COFFEE! WE'RE TOLD
THAT BUBBER AND LAPLANTE ASKED FOR
TWO CUPS OF COFFEE.

EVELYN

(relief)

Coffee! Just like your father to
request something totally
inappropriate. Thousands of people
watching and he wants a cup of
coffee.

(remembering)

I remember when you were in the
hospital, when you had the
appendicitis, your father stayed
all night by your bed... and he
hates hospitals, always thinks he's
going to catch something... and then
that time when your Uncle Howard
got hurt... It seems like your
father is at his best in a crisis...
when things go really wrong or
there's some kind of emergency, your
father forgets to be Bernie LaPlante
and acts sort of like... a human
being.

There are tears in her eyes as she drives. The RADIO continues.

RADIO

We've learned that the devices the
firemen used to "deliver" the
coffee... I described them as
"poles"... are, in fact, oversized
tongs used by the hotel staff to
change difficult-to-reach
lightbulbs...

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

193

BERNIE and BUBBER are distant figures sitting on a ledge as if
it was a park bench, sipping coffee and visibly negotiating as
in a pantomime.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

194

Closer now, we can hear BERNIE and BUBBER wrapping up the deal.

BERNIE

You got it? Four year scholarship to a top college, plus Medical School or Law School or whatever Joey wants; pay off the \$2,500 to my attorney, plus pay her fee in full, plus my annual consulting fee...

BUBBER

And give a deposition to the judge.

BERNIE

(sudden thought)

Listen, John, you better double my attorney's fee. She's very inexperienced, but she done a great job for me. And give her your autograph. She thinks you're some kinda holy man.

BUBBER

On the deposition for the judge, Bernie... I mean there's no way I can promise anything. I can't tell him what we're up to...

BERNIE

You'll tell him I talked you out of jumping, right? Just keep me outta prison.

BUBBER

I... I'll do the best I can, Bernie.

BERNIE

That's good enough for me. You better take that "letter" there and get rid of it.

BERNIE indicates the envelope on the ledge and BUBBER slides the envelope into his pocket surreptitiously.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

195

GALE is watching the action on a TV monitor, trying to figure out what's going on.

GALE'S P.O.V./TV MONITOR (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT)

196V

BERNIE and BUBBER are shaking hands. Then they start to get cautiously to their feet.

REPORTER/TV (V.O.)
They're getting to their feet.
They're standing up!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

197

The CROWD reacts to the action on the ledge.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

198

BERNIE is on his feet, unsteady, terrified of the drop.

BUBBER, much more graceful, not as wobbly, is speaking to him.

BUBBER
After what I did, how do you know
I'll come through? How do you know
you can trust me?

Shakily, BERNIE indicates the CROWD far below...

BERNIE
'Cause, bottom line, John, I ain't
no different than all those dumb
assholes down there. We all trust
you for Chrissake! We...

ANGLE ON THE DROP/BERNIE'S P.O.V.

199

Straight down, forty floors. A CROWD of "ants." The firetruck.

BACK TO SCENE

Suddenly BERNIE starts shaking like a leaf, trying to smear his body against the side of the building as he inches along the narrow ledge toward the window with BUBBER right behind him.

BERNIE
Th-this was really dumb, coming out
here.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

200

As the CROWD looks up breathlessly, WE DISCOVER EVELYN pulling JOEY through the CROWD toward the hotel steps, their eyes on BERNIE and BUBBER.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

201

BUBBER is leading BERNIE toward the window.

BUBBER
Slow and easy, Bernie.

BERNIE takes a cautious step. BUBBER tries to distract BERNIE from the drop by talking to him.

BUBBER

What made you do it, Bernie? Go
in the plane?

Another cautious step.

BERNIE

I dunno. It was... an impulse.
Me, wearing my good shoes.

BUBBER

Same with me, pretending I was you.
An impulse. I had this shoe. Why
not?

BERNIE

There was this kid there saying,
"Go in there and save my father,
mister." And I'm thinking about my
boy Joey and this goddamn fireman
my wife's seeing. It was like I was
supposed to save myself.

BUBBER

Yeah, and with me it was like I was
supposed to pretend the shoe was
mine.

BERNIE

So now you gotta wear it, you poor
bastard. Everyday you gotta be
everybody's hero. People watching
you all the time.

BERNIE glances down to indicate the CROWD and... takes a
misstep.

EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

202

A single audible gasp from the CROWD below as BERNIE, forty
stories up, staggers.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

203

BERNIE struggles to regain his balance.

BUBBER reaches out to help him.

BUBBER

Easy does it, partner. It's gonna
be fine.

BUBBER'S hand remains on BERNIE'S shoulder.

Is it possible he's going to push BERNIE? What an opportunity!

ANGLE ON GALE

Watching from the window, holding her breath.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Sweating, pushing his foot cautiously forward.

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)

Don't look down. Keep your eyes...

BERNIE looks down!

BERNIE'S P.O.V.

204

AHHHHHHHHHH! He sees the tiny PEOPLE below and he STARTS TO FALL.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Wobbling unsteadily, arms flailing, falling.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

His eyes! He's looking down.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.:

He sees BERNIE clutching the ledge with one hand, looking up at him with pleading eyes as he dangles forty stories above the ground.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

It's slipping! He can't hold!

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S EYES!

Staring at BERNIE'S hand. It must occur to him that life would be better without BERNIE.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching from the window, terrified.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

205

EVELYN and JOEY are looking up, love and fear in their eyes.

BERNIE

Oh my God! Bernie!

JOEY

Dad!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

206

A FIREMAN is leaning out the window, reaching for BUBBER.

FIREMAN

Get in here, buddy. You can't help him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

Slipping.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

BUBBER is looking into BERNIE'S eyes as BERNIE'S hand slips.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

Leaning out the window, holding a pole out toward BUBBER.

FIREMAN

Grab this. Now!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

He sits down on the ledge.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

His hand slipping, his eyes full of fear.

ANGLE ON GALE

Screaming urgently from the window...

GALE

John, you can't...

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

losing his grip... when BUBBER'S HAND suddenly grabs his wrist.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Looking up into BUBBER'S eyes. Their eyes lock.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Holding BERNIE with great effort.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

Rope in hand, crawling out the window.

FIREMAN

I'm gonna put this rope around you.

BUBBER

(straining, indicates
BERNIE)

Put...the...rope...on...him.

BUBBER leans back against the building, struggling to keep
BERNIE from plummeting forty stories.

FIREMAN

You can't hold him, he's gonna pull
you off.

BUBBER

Rope...on...him...or...no...rope.
If he doesn't make it... I...
don't... make it. Got it?

FIREMAN

(impressed)
Yessir! I got it! Loud and clear!

A MONTAGE OF DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND TV SETS WITH COVERAGE

INT. THE SHADOW LOUNGE

207

CHICK stares at the screen incredulously...

CHICK

Bernie? Bernie?

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT

208

The television set shows the drama in garish otherworldly colors
featuring bright purple firemen as WINSTON mutters...

WINSTON

LaPlante, you crazy bastard!

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT

209

A stunned DONNA is in bed with her BOYFRIEND, stares at the TV.

BOYFRIEND

He's one of your clients?

INT. JUDGE GOINES BEDROOM

210

JUDGE GOINES frowns at the TV set, tries to place that name...

JUDGE GOINES
LaPlante. Mmmmmmmmm. LaPlante.

MONTAGE

211

A SERIES OF TV SETS AND WATCHING FACES ALL OVER AMERICA, YOUNG, OLD, BLACK, WHITE, EVERYBODY IN AMERICA IS STARING AT THE SCREEN, MESMERIZED...

- 1.) A HOME
- 2.) MOTEL ROOM
- 3.) CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY
- 4.) BAR
- 5.) JAIL CELL

A211
B211
C211
D211
E211

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL - NIGHT

212

TWO FIREMEN have almost secured a rope around BERNIE while BUBBER continues to hang on to BERNIE, speaking to him through gritted teeth.

BUBBER

Looking... good, partner. Hang in there.

BERNIE

(eye contact)
Y-you're a g-god damn saint, John.

INT. LIVING ROOM/DRAKE SUITE - LATER (NIGHT)

213V

The suite is jammed with MEDIA PERSONNEL, many standing on sofas, tables, and chairs, all of them (and their cameras) focussed on JOHN BUBBER who's standing behind a bank of mikes making a "statement" that sounds sincere (perhaps because it is halting, awkward, painful...)

BUBBER

It was a moment of terrible weakness. I was feeling... I guess you'd call it "overwhelmed" by all the pressures and... the expectations of... fame... celebrity. I just didn't feel... adequate... to everybody's image of me... so... I took my despair out on that ledge with the intention of... jumping...

ANGLES ON REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN

a collective reaction, breathless silence.

ANGLE ON GALE

jammed among REPORTERS near the bedroom door, her eyes on BUBBER, frowning...

BUBBER

(continuing)

In doing that I endangered the lives of hardworking policemen and firemen who attempted to rescue me, not to mention the life of my dear friend, Bernard LaPlante...

BUBBER pauses and the room erupts in a chorus of REPORTERS' VOICES...

REPORTERS

Who is Bernard LaPlante? Did you know that LaPlante is a convicted criminal? What is your relationship with Bernard LaPlante...?

ANGLE ON GALE

glancing at the bedroom door guarded by a UNIFORMED COP.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

taking a deep breath, answering...

BUBBER

Bernard LaPlante is a close friend who came to me in a time of need... at considerable risk to himself.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

214

BUBBER is continuing on the TV set in the bedroom while BERNIE, all alone in the huge bedroom, stares at the TV.

ON THE TV (INT. SUITE/HOTEL - NIGHT)

215V

BUBBER/TV

(continuing)

As for his record, I know he's made mistakes and I know he regrets them as I regret mine. I hope we can all forgive him his transgressions and leave him in peace to live the private life he wants to lead.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

glances idly at the TV remote control... and pockets it almost automatically, still watching TV.

ON THE TV

REPORTERS erupt again in a CACOPHONY of QUESTIONS.

REPORTERS/TV

What'd he say to you? What'd you talk about?

BUBBER/TV

(a hesitation, then...)

Bernie reminded me none of us are perfect and the most important thing is that each of us has to do more good than harm in this world. He said that I had an obligation now to stand in the spotlight not for myself, but as a symbol of the heroism we all share... for deeds that so often go unsung... unrecognized.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

raises his eyebrows. I said that? On impulse, he pulls the remote from his pocket to return it. He's setting it down when he turns suddenly to find he's not alone.

BERNIE

Hey! How'd you get in? Nobody's supposed to come in here!

GALE has just entered the room. Did she see his action?

GALE

I snuck in.

BERNIE

You media people, you think you can just go anywhere you want, spy on people.

GALE

Listen, Mister LaPlante... uh, Bernie... Who... are... you?

BERNIE

Who am I? You're asking me? You're the big expert for Chrissake! I'm what? The "scumbag," right? The sleazebag something or other, the blackmailer, the...

GALE

(very intense)

Was it you? In the plane? Who saved my life?

BERNIE

(rattled)

Me? Listen, I don't give no interviews. That was John Bubber. You wanna ask me questions, you could talk to my attorney, Miss O'Day.

GALE

(imploring)

Mister LaPlante... Bernie... I... just for a few moments... I want to be a human being, not a reporter. I'm somebody who was going to die in a burning plane and I looked up and some man came out of the smoke, his face smeared with mud and soot and... and he... saved my... life. Was it you? Off the record. And if it was, why would you deny it? Because you took my purse? Why?

BERNIE looks at GALE. She looks very human, very real, the reporter's veneer completely gone! He hesitates. How can he not tell the truth at a moment like this? He takes a deep breath...

BERNIE

Lady, do I look dumb enough to run into a burning plane and save a bunch of strangers? I ain't the type.

GALE stares at him. BERNIE tries to hold her look, daring her to doubt him. But he can't. His eyes "run." He's not a good liar this time. But just then the excited tone of the REPORTER'S VOICE on the TV distracts both of them.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

216V

An excited TV REPORTER is hovering over EVELYN and JOEY who are standing in a pool of TV lights while a CROWD presses close around them...

REPORTER/TV

-- standing here in the lobby of the hotel with Evelyn LaPlante who says she is the wife of the mysterious Bernie LaPlante who was rescued from a fortieth story ledge twenty minutes ago by John Bubber.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND GALE

BERNIE

Oh shit! Ev! Joey! For Chrissake!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTER/TV

(continuing)

Mrs. LaPlante just told me that Bernard LaPlante spoke to her earlier today about "going away on a long trip" and wanting to say "goodbye" to his ten-year-old son, Joey.

EVELYN/TV

I didn't know he'd try and jump off a building. I didn't understand. I just thought he was up to his old... I mean, I didn't even know...

BACK TO SCENE (INT. BEDROOM/HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

TV! Christ Almighty! You cannot believe one word on TV! Not one goddamn word!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTER/TV

What kind of man is your ex-husband Mrs. LaPlante?

EVELYN/TV

(bursting into sobs)

Bernie LaPlante is a wonderful decent human being. Deep down. You just have to know him...

ANGLE ON BERNIE

BERNIE

It's all bullshit! I swear to God!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTER/TV

I guess you love your father too, Joey?

ANGLE ON BERNIE

BERNIE

LEAVE MY BOY ALONE, YOU ASSHOLE!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

JOEY
Yeah, my dad's great. He took me
to the zoo.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

BERNIE
(big love)
JOEY!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTER/TV
How did you feel, Joey, seeing your
father up there on that ledge?

JOEY/TV
I was scared but... but... but...

REPORTER/TV
But what, son?

JOEY/TV
But I knew John Bubber would save
him!

MONTAGE: INT. PRESSES ROLLING - MORNING

217

Newspapers blur off the speeding presses with photos of BERNIE
hanging from the ledge and BUBBER holding him underneath various
bold headlines.

HERO THREATENS SUICIDE, SAVES FRIEND

HIGH DRAMA! BUBBER AND BUDDY!

HERO HEROIC AGAIN!

MONTAGE: EXT. NEWSSTANDS - MORNING

218

Newspapers are being bought eagerly. More headlines:

ATTEMPTS SUICIDE, RESCUES MAN

BUBBER DOES IT AGAIN!

EXT. MONKEY CAGE/ZOO - DAY

219

A MONKEY is making a "speech" while other MONKEYS clap their
hands, apparently applauding.

BERNIE and JOEY appear, passing in front of the monkey cage,
deep in conversation...

BERNIE

-- so I'm gonna tell it to you, but it's gotta be in confidence, understand? Between you and me, okay? But before I tell it to you, I gotta explain some stuff about life. Life gets very complicated when you get older. Nothin's like it seems like it is, everything's screwed up. Now for example, the TV... what you see on the TV ain't always... the truth. But it ain't always a lie either. What it is...

BERNIE pauses, considering. JOEY is all ears. The MONKEYS are going crazy...

BERNIE

(continuing)

-- what it is is what's... acceptable. What we all want to see. See, sometimes we're not exactly... "ready" for the truth so we have this layer of... bullshit. For example, the President comes out, he smiles, he tells you about his great new plan for the goddamn economy. He don't tell you he got it from his wife and she don't tell him she got it from her hairdresser. Now what would happen if the goddamn truth came out? Who wants to know the President's wife's hairdresser knows more about the economy than anybody else? An' who's gonna believe it anyway? See what I mean?

JOEY'S VOICE

Uh, no.

BERNIE

Mmmmmmm. Well, anyway, I was on my way to pick you up and it was rainin' like a sonofabitch, pardon my french...

THE END