



CAROLCO

ISOBAR

draft by
Steven E. de Souza

NOTICE: This script and its contents are **CONFIDENTIAL**. It is not to be reproduced or xeroxed without the expressed permission of Carolco Pictures.

CAROLCO PICTURES INC.
8800 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90069
(213) 850-8800

SECOND DRAFT
December 1, 1990

Copyright 1990

ISOBAR

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A BEAUTIFUL VISTA OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES.... which is REVEALED to be an old BILLBOARD when the CAMERA BEGINS TO MOVE.

Now the horrible reality intrudes as CAMERA PANS a strange DESERT where between ROCKS and DUNES we see tantalizing GLIMPSES of a BURIED CIVILIZATION. Gusts of WIND drive BLACK RAIN and SPIRALS of SAND in crazy patterns... and moving amidst them are TWO FIGURES suddenly visible in a crash of PURPLE LIGHTNING.

CLOSER

Wrapped from head to toe in thick industrial cloth, primitive AIR FILTRATION SYSTEMS on their backs, and looking vaguely like Arabian bedouins, these are URBAN BEDOES: The 21st Century's HOMELESS NOMADS of the city wastelands.

The OLD BEDOE is pushing a SHOPPING CART which has been tricked out like a trail bike/camper: It has knobby wheels, a SOLAR POWER ARRAY, a headlight, and a battered TARP on a windowshade roller. Whenever a HACKING COUGH overcomes him, he takes a long pull of clean air from his tank.

The YOUNG BEDOE is a boy of 16. He has a rusty TRAIL BIKE similarly equipped, with CAMPING GEAR on the rear pannikin.

The ACID RAIN SINGES the bedoes' clothing. They struggle to keep their faces and gear covered by their hoods. As they move, the old man uses vivid GESTURES and body language that is almost poetic. He SPEAKS in SIGN LANGUAGE to his younger companion, GIBRAN.

GIBRAN

Yes. More desert every day.

(off another gesture,
perhaps politely bored)

Yes, old one. I know it was green,
once.

(off another gesture)

Before the sun burned the land. Before
the rain burned the skin.

He's stuck on an unfamiliar "phrase." The old Bedoe moves his AIR FILTER, revealing cracked ozone battered skin and a SCAR where the filter mask touches his cheek.

OLD BEDOE

(his voice a dry croak)

Before the city shrank, and hid behind
its walls.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Another CRACK of PURPLE LIGHTNING. And then the RUMBLE of MACHINERY. The kid WHIRLS, a TELESCOPING STAFF appearing in his hands. The old man calms him, turns towards

A BATTERED LIGHT RAIL STATION

just steps away, BOARDED UP, with signs reading, "CONDEMNED - ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT AGENCY 6-30-2001."

SAND covers half the platform. And yet, even now, MECHANICAL DOORS are OPENING, revealing a cunning SEAM in the "CONDEMNED" sign. LIGHT spills out.

A MONORAIL SHUTTLE whooshes to a HALT. There's a HISS and the side DOOR opens and two NEW ARRIVALS get out.

Their gear for this toxic wasteland is the slick version of the bedoes' improvised costumes: Tight fitted coveralls with velcro seams, sturdy gloves - and pilot like clear plastic OXYGEN MASKS which along with their tinted goggles pretty much disguise the lower half of their faces. They have HALOGEN BEAM LANTERNS and SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT on their backs. When they speak, their voices are AMPLIFIED electronically.

The old man gestures. The boy "translates." Lardner is startled; Essicker accepts it.

GIBRAN

(translating)

I am old Gibran. This is young Gibran.

(showing a device)

It was good I gave the signal, yes?

LARDNER

(taking the device)

You're one hell of a night watchman,
Gibran. Lead on.

CUT TO:

THE FOUR MEN

move from the rail station across what used to be a street. The BEAMS of their LIGHTS illuminate the TOPS of SIGNS and MONUMENTS of the late 20th century: A piece of a McDonald's, a gas station. All buried in fifteen feet of SAND.

CAMERA PRECEDES them to a SMOULDERING, WRECKED BUILDING. Of hi-tech MODERN DESIGN, its foundation on SAND PONTOONS, it is clearly a recent addition to the landscape.

Lardner and Essicker REACT. Essicker turns to the Bedoes.

ESSICKER

You stay here.

INSIDE THE BUILDING

Surprisingly slick and hi-tech, but now quickly deteriorating in the cruel environment. Cables dangle, chemicals bubble. The ACID RAIN comes through in places where the roof is breached. The men move through the room, their lights almost immediately falling on first one CHARRED CORPSE, then ANOTHER - the latter with a hand on a SWITCH.

ESSICKER
Hamilton... and And Cortez. Looks like an overload. Whole place must have gone up.

LARDNER
Over here!

NEW ANGLE

Showing a large metal BOTTLE which is seamed down the middle and open. HOSES and DIALS connect to this, and they are still OUTPUTTING OXYGEN AND CHEMICALS which drip down the container onto the floor.

LARDNER
Shit! It's gone!

ESSICKER
Maybe not.

Essicker shines his light on

A SHELF IN THE METAL BOTTLE

Where some GOO bobs, viscous. PAN a drop of it to the floor, where we see a SNAIL-LIKE TRACK meandering across the floor.

BACK TO SCENE

Essicker signals for the other man: Careful, now.

ESSICKER
(whisper)
The containment bottle.

Lardner unslings a bulky cylinder from his back. They slowly follow the slime trail.

Suddenly something CLATTERS in the corner of the room. Both men nearly jump out of their skin.

LARDNER & ESSICKER
(ad-lib)
There it is, by the monitors - you watch it - I'll cut it off - !

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

They jump around, trying to keep up with something small and slithery and quick. CAMERA PANS the room as they try and run interception.

OUTSIDE THE RUINED BUILDING

The younger Gibran has found a niche where he can peer inside. He sees enough of the action inside to be intrigued before his Uncle pulls him away.

INSIDE

Essicker deliberately tips over a work table in the path of the thing. There's a HISS and SQUEAL as whatever it is collides with this object and a SPLATTER of enraged goo.

ESSICKER

Chill it, now!

Lardner swings one end of the cylinder to Essicker and as both hold it he hits a button. The cylinder OPENS, VIOLET LIGHT spilling out while clear panels FAN OUT and SLAM to the floor creating a biological TENT.

ON THE FLOOR

As SAW TOOTH EDGES dig into the floor we get a fleeting glimpse of a strange slithering, tentacled thing. Then the two men DROP the cylinder straight down.

The panels COLLAPSE and the container SEALS. There's a HISS and the violet light SHUTS off.

Essicker and Lardner breath a sigh of relief.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

The bedoes are whispering to each other, exchanging sign language for emphasis. They stop when the men come out with the cylinder. The old Beloe gestures.

GIBRAN

(translating)

There is the matter of payment: The Hamilton promised oxygen.

(desperate, but with some pride)

Two bottles only. It's so hard to breathe out here.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

ESSICKER

(with a shrug)

All you need is an extra nostril.

And he draws a pistol, FIRES point blank into the old man's face.

GIBRAN

REACTS, stunned -

NEW ANGLE

The old man DROPS. The two city men whirl, the second already drawing his gun. But they're suddenly alone.

LARDNER

Where is he?

Nothing visible in the beams of Crawler and flashlights but whirling sand and rain. And then something LUNGES FORWARD from the gloom - it's the kid on his trail bike, doing a wheelie forward -

WIDER

He knocks Essicker on his ass, drives straight for the building, SLAMS into a curved pontoon and goes UP AND OVER IT. Recovering, the two men BLAST away into the air -missing.

LARDNER

Shit. We gotta find him.

ESSICKER

Screw him. Who's he gonna tell out here? He's nothing.

(indicating the canister)

This is everything.

CUT TO:

THE ABANDONED LAB

A CONTRAIL of FLAME and then it EXPLODES.

ANGLE ON THE LIGHT RAIL STATION

Essicker, a TOW MISSILE launcher on his shoulder, FIRES AGAIN. ANOTHER EXPLOSION.

INT. SHUTTLE

Lardner connects the containment bottle to a LIFE SUPPORT system. Essicker gets back inside. Both men remove their breathing apparatus, revealing their faces to us. Lardner hits a button and the outer doors CLOSE and the shuttle HUMMS forward.

OUTSIDE THE LIGHT RAIL STATION

As the shuttle leaves and the doors are about to close, they suddenly JAM.

CAMERA TILTS DOWN and we SEE that Gibran has used his collapsable SHAFT to create a space wide enough for his body to slip inside. He waits until the shuttle has moved off, then rolls into the tunnel. The doors SHUT behind him.

HIGH ANGLE

We see the BURNING LAB... and we see the shuttle moving rapidly in its glass tunnel towards distant LIGHTS.

It is LOS ANGELES of the the future.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - 2016 - NIGHT

We PAN the city. Outside the giant WALLS are ABANDONED BUILDINGS not yet covered by the growing desert. Inside, empty streets where buildings were razed for the mighty foundation of the mighty ROOF where GIANT AIR PURIFIERS PUMP AWAY.

We SEE a mix of new buildings and old ones we might even know. Moving elevated SIDEWALKS carry more pedestrians than Old L.A. used to have. Several hanging MONORAILS cross open avenues. There are many, many PEDICABS, and here and there a purring compact ELECTRIC CAR, most of these official vehicles.

As the CAMERA CONTINUES, we see giant letters on a hill: "WOOD": "HOLLY", just outside the glass, has crumpled into acid-eaten rust. Then CAMERA PUSHES to a FABULOUS TRAIN STATION, at once futuristic and retro.

INT. NEW LOS ANGELES STATION - DAY

CLOSE on an ELECTRONIC MAP showing THE WORLD, with bold letters above: "I.S.O.B.A.R." In smaller letters under that: "INTERCONTINENTAL SUPERCONDUCTOR OSCILLOMAGNETIC BALLISTIC RAILROAD." The topography shows that OCEANS HAVE RISEN and DESERTS HAVE GROWN. WE FAVOR the NORTHERN HEMISPHERE where the COUNTLESS TRAIN TUNNEL ROUTES abundantly cover the United States - which, we see, has GROWN to include MEXICO and CANADA, now reduced to its western prairie provinces, while QUEBEC is finally on its own.

The brightest Isobar line takes a great circle route northeast from NewLay, goes under the great Lakes, and then over Greenland, Iceland and then to England.

We WIDEN and see PHOTOGRAPHERS and MEDIA PEOPLE taking pictures of the map.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

A NEWSCASTER

(as CAMERA PASSES)

--here at Newlay's Union Station, where the Isobar Maglev line is about to usher in a new era of travel: The first non-stop transit to Europe since the banning of jet travel twelve years ago by the United Nations Ozone Authority -

2ND NEWSCASTER

- and not just the stock market has reacted: so have the other Maglev lines, all of whom have announced they intend to compete in this new arena, extending their existing tunnels and monorail lines -

3RD NEWSCASTER

- a dazzling array of world famous passengers taking advantage of the latest and greatest form of luxury travel -

INT. UNION STATION - SWEEPING CRANE SHOT

WIDEN TO REVEAL the INTERIOR (UNDERGROUND) of UNION STATION.

It has grown since the Twentieth Century in the only direction it could - downward. Now it is three times the size of Grand Central Station in New York. WALL TO WALL PEOPLE fill the entire area, some coming and going into LIGHT RAIL SUBWAY CONNECTIONS, others arriving or departing for the great Isobar gates.

AT A LIGHT RAIL GATE

A SECURITY GUARD at an "In" turnstile REACTS as Gibran bursts out from a cart filled with luggage and disappears into the crowded station.

*
*
*

GUARD

Hey!

CUT TO:

ON THE MAIN PLATFORM

Where the ISOBAR MAGNETIC LEVITATION TRAIN sits cradled in its "track". The train is over TWO STORIES TALL. The track is an OPEN-BOTTOMED TROUGH with the classic gravel bed twenty feet below. The trough extends beyond the front and back of the train into TUNNEL OPENINGS.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

The LEAD CAR is a GIANT LOCOMOTIVE, with an ENGINEER'S CABIN bulging on top like a 747's cabin. The NOSE of the locomotive is an OBSERVATION LOUNGE, two stories tall, except where the cabin cuts into the height. We can SEE elegant STAIRWAYS through the nose glass, more reminiscent of an ocean liner than a train.

Next in line is the CLUB CAR, also two stories, with a handful of tables hugging a GLASS VIEW DOME, and many more tables below in a nightclub environment.

Next, is the SLEEPER CAR, two stories of lush rooms and suites; then the BAGGAGE CARS, then A MEDICAL CAR, then a KITCHEN CAR that services the two PUBLIC ACCESS CARS behind it.

Behind these government dictated cheap seats is a long line of FREIGHT CARS marked with Industrial blazons.

ON THE STATION PLATFORM

Reporters tag behind HEDDA CAUFIELD, a striking OLDER WOMAN with a bodybuilder escort (TONY) on one arm and a FIFTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL (LISA) on the other. Tony is talking on a cellular phone. He's oblivious and Lisa is unhappy.

REPORTER

Mrs. Caufield, is it true that you're going to London to arrange a stock merger?

HEDDA

(a glance at the girl)

Merger yes: Stock, no.

She pushes past OTHER REPORTERS who gather around a distinguished MAN in a classic camel hair coat.

2ND REPORTER

Dr. Wainscott, what do you think about the reports of the melting glaciers?

WAINSCOTT

I'm wondering how I'll get ice for my next whiskey.

(over LAUGHTER)

Seriously, Ladies, Gentlemen, the glaciers have melted before, and thank God they did, or we'd all be running around on the frozen tundra being chased by saber tooth tigers like our ancestors.

EXT. PLATFORM - CONTINUE ACTIVITY

we see CONDUCTORS guide the ROUGHER LOOKING PASSENGERS to the narrow folding stairs that lead up to the Public Access seats.

These people drop their BAGS and BUNDLES on a CONVEYER BELT which roughly BOUNCES them into one of the baggage cars, with CLUMSY MECHANICAL ARMS herding the wayward ones.

(At the same time, good ol' HUMAN REDCAPS deferentially take the FIRST CLASS LUGGAGE and put it in the other baggage car.)

CAMERA MOVES to the MEDICAL CAR. where a LOADING BAY is open. The Train's two DOCTORS - (SCANLON and RUBY) SUPERVISE as a TWELVE FOOT LONG HYPERBOLIC CHAMBER is moved from platform to train, all of its READ-OUTS BLINKING and its LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS PERCOLATING.

RUBY

Easy, easy - damn it, keep it level,
that's a patient, not a suitcase!

PASSENGERS moving by watch this, curious. The rugged looking Scanlon turns to glance with appreciation at

A PAIR OF LONG LEGS

Seamed stockings a bit more retro than most of the fashions we've seen on legs that could be a ballerina's - except the clipped pace and dead-straight trajectory are more like those of a drill sergeant.

CAMERA MOVES up to reveal SARI MC COY, 30, Purser of the Newlay to London Isobar run. She's flanked by a JUNIOR OFFICER dressed like her and a rugged looking MAN (HOUK) in the wash n' wear suit that usually means Security.

Sari's elegant skirted suit has subtle almost nautical touches of braid.

It can't hide either her athletic body or her ramrod-straight spine.

And "ramrod" is the right word, because now her pretty face DARKENS as she notices a KITCHEN WORKER pushing a CART with some dangling sides of MEAT in PLASTIC.

SARI

Wait a minute.

She yanks a knife from the kitchen cart, slices the plastic. Scowls.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

This is for the First Class dining car, not the Hartz mountain kennels. You're obviously under the delusion that this is people food. Get it out of my sight.

Sari sidesteps PORTERS moving some WORKS OF ART in cases marked "VICTORIA & ALBERT ANNEX - LONDON - FRAGILE." We recognize WINGED VICTORY even through the crate slats and bubble wrap.

Sari's eyes aren't on the art: They're on the FUSELAGE of the train, where she now runs a WHITE GLOVED FINGER.

SARI

Is this car supposed to be clean?

She turns, looks down the tracks at the ground crew - puts her fingers in her mouth and WHISTLES loudly.

SARI

Yo! Maintenance! Get your ass up here!

CUT TO:

PLATFORM - FURTHER BACK

Where REGGIE ROSSITER, 50, a barrel chested self-made man, hurtles along, cutting through anything in his path.

Clicking behind him on high heels and long legs is his 25 year old girlfriend, DEBBIE, who doesn't need the flashy clothes she's wearing to be noticed. Trailing them are two PORTERS and a pile of designer luggage.

DEBBIE

(gushing, seeing the train)
Geez, Reg, it's like a dream... London in twelve hours... and then I meet King Charles and Queen Di.
(worried)
Geez, do we cursty to 'em or what?

REGGIE

After giving two hundred grand to that Limey charity they oughta cursty to me-

Suddenly a neat little MAN (KORBALD) intercepts them.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

KORBALD

Excuse me.

(very quickly showing ID)
Wellington, Isobar Internal Security.
Your tickets, please?

Reggie takes out his tickets, two slivers of CRISP PLASTIC with bar code imprints and computer punches.

REGGIE

Is something wrong?

KORBALD

(reading)

No, not at all. Mr. Rossiter, we've been plagued with the theft of some expensive luggage lately. With your permission, I'd like to tag your bags with this micro-mini homing device.

He displays a tiny gleaming red SPECK. Before they can react (or examine it), he puts one on each of their bags.

REGGIE

Well, I don't know about -

Now Korbald's putting one on the train case in Debbie's arms.

KORBALD

- in return for your help in apprehending these miscreants, Isobar Lines would like to give you 10,000 Regular Railer miles -complementary, of course.

REGGIE

Wellllll, I don't see why not.

Korbald smiles, takes out a little checkbook sized GIZMO. He slips the couple's tickets into it, and it BEEPS.

KORBALD

Wonderful. I'll just program your account with those 10,000 miles right now.

(returning tickets)

It's people like you who make my job easier.

CUT TO:

PLATFORM - STREET TUNNEL

A FIGURE steps through VAPOR rising from a vent. CAMERA PUSHES IN. RUSS PRINE is a man in his late 30's with a trenchcoat, a hat, and a world-weary expression worthy of Bogart. He holds a LOCKED BRIEFCASE with too much concern. His wire rims give him a bookish look that somehow complements his fit body.

Now, a sinisterly SLIM CORPORATE AIDE with a briefcase identical to Prine's comes over to him.

AIDE

"I have to get over the hill and into Happy Valley with my toys for all the good girls and all the good boys."

PRINE

"I think I can I think I can I know I can."

AIDE

This way, Mr. Prine.

INT. VIDEOPHONE BOOTH IN STATION

WIDEN from Prine's OPEN BRIEFCASE as the AIDE reaches in from outside the booth handing Prine various items... Items which are TICKED OFF by a short (and short tempered) executive visible on the SCREEN named L.L. DUPREE.

DUPREE

Electrovan license. Water ration card.
Dome Pass. EEC-NorthAM Passport.
Your false identity should hold for
24 hours. Electronic recorder...
Henley! Hop to!

AIDE

(holding up a WATCH)
This button for voice - 4 hour
capacity. Camera lens, here.

PRINE

(taking it, putting it on)
Mr. Dupree, what if someone aboard
blows my cover?

DUPREE

The only way that'll happen, Prine,
will be if you screw up. Now get
moving. Remember we're playing for
big stakes: The country. The company.
The future.

He DISCONNECTS. Prine MUTTERS back to the static:

PRINE

And my ass.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH

The Aide has already disappeared into the crowd. Prine gets out of the booth, very mysteriously, very suave. He lights a cigarette - and notices the STORE TAG on the cuff of his suit. *

He quickly discards it, puts his coat over his arm and heads for the train. CAMERA DRIFTS PAST HIM, HOLDS on the news kiosk as two men buy holo's and discs.

They are Essicker and Lardner - the two men who killed the old bedoe!

As they EXIT towards the train, CAMERA PUSHES to the GIANT LOCOMOTIVE, settles on the ENGINEER'S CABIN.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGINE CONTROL ROOM

BERTRAND, a portly middle-aged ENGINEER sits in his throne-like swivel seat, checking over a staggering array of control panel instruments along with the 2ND ENGINEER. The room is full of brass and analog - not digital - dials, all very nautical in flavor. Even Bertrand's cap is a blend of luxurious modes of travel, with the scrambled eggs of a ship captain and the pinstripes of a classic train engineer.

SARI is here, going over the itinerary on a computer screen that now rises from the onyx work station. It's almost as if the Isobar line hides its tech, which in fact is the case.

SARI

(at the screen)

Great. The "Dawn of a new era" is late at the starting gate.

BERTRAND

Sounds like the old era to me.

SARI

(into a MIKE)

Attention, passengers and crew. Attention. This is the final boarding call for the Isobar Great Circle Route Transpolar Flyer. Crew members will secure all doors and ramps and prepare for Maglev elevation. Thank you.

(to Bertrand)

Bertrand. Ya know how ta whistle, doncha?

BERTRAND

(grinning)

You got it, babe.

And he PULLS, yup, an old fashioned CORD -

EXT. STATION

As the AIR WHISTLE gives a SCREAM, half old time railroadin' half electronic sampling.

STATIONMASTERS steer the crowd and lookie-loos behind BARRIERS. GATES start to go UP. LOX STEAM BUILDS and BOILS.

LOCOMOTIVE - UPPER LEVEL

Sari comes out of the engine room and moves rearward. She passes the train office and crew quarters and comes down that WIDE GALLERY worthy of an Ocean Liner. On the wall above the carpeted stairs are OIL PAINTINGS of great classic RAILROAD SCENES going back to George Stephenson's Liverpool "Rocket" of 1830.

LOWER LEVEL - FIRST CLASS OBSERVATION CAR

an elegant SALON where people mill and socialize.

PA VOICE

(a recording)

Passengers will take their seats and fasten safety belts. Isobar personnel will secure all loose metal items.

Sari continues on into

FIRST CLASS CLUB CAR - DAY

Sari steps into the spacious area, with a clear central area and enormous padded RECLINER SWIVEL CHAIRS at the cocktail lounge style tables. STAIRS lead up to a 2ND FLOOR where a single row of tables rings the SKYLIGHT.

Both Passengers and crew here respond to the ANNOUNCEMENT. Sari smiles at the efficiency - and then REACTS to.

PRINE - HER POV

He's at the elegant BAR, which is decorated with various ANTIQUES, including an early STOCK TICKER. But it's Prine who is ticked off, because -

BARTENDER(LESLIE)

Sir, I'm sorry, I cannot serve you now until we've reached cruising speed-

PRINE

(winking)

Well, let's just cruise this into your pocket...

He starts to aim a folded bill at the Bartender's pocket, but Sari neatly intercepts it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI
(to Prine, returning the
money)
Sir, can I help you?

Prine shrugs... gives her the bill.

PRINE
Sure, honey. Get me a bloody Mary
but with vodka from real hydroponic
potatoes, not that soybean sludge.
And not with a canned mix - from
scratch, with a celery stalk.

SARI
(stiff)
I do not serve drinks, sir. I am the
Purser. The people who serve drinks
work for me.

PRINE
(a glance at the bartender)
Not lately, they don't. Look, I've
waited patiently. Maybe if you had
two bartenders for this crowd, I
wouldn't have had to wait at all?

Another ALARM.

SARI
(to the bartender)
Leslie, go strap in.

The bartender is happy to exit.

SARI
Sir, you must return to your seat.
As soon as we reach cruising speed
I'll send you a drink - it'll be our
treat. Our way of
(almost choking on this)
apologizing for the little mix up.

PRINE
Well... in that case... fine.
(turns; pauses)
Don't forget the celery stalk.

He goes to his seat. CAMERA FOLLOWS her as she goes into the
front car where Leslie and other staff are strapped in. *

SARI
Leslie. Is 22-A an ejection seat?

CUT TO:

ALONG THE PLATFORM - SAME TIME

As the train begins to RUMBLE and HUM and the ground crew prepares for Maglev, we see Reg Rossiter in full dudgeon while Debbie watches, worried.

REGGIE

Whaddya mean, it's a blank ticket?

CONDUCTOR

(with code reader)

There's no data on here at all.

(reaching for a phone)

I'm going to have to check with security.

REGGIE

Security? I'm working for your security chief! Look - he put a, whaddya, a micro mini homer on all our bags!

The conductor looks at Debbie's bag. Pulls off the red thingie.

CONDUCTOR

Sir... this is a thumb tack.

REGGIE

A thumb tack?

ALARMS ring. STAIRWELLS start to FOLD.

DEBBIE

(panicked)

Reggie! The train! London! Chuck! Di!

A FINAL BOARDING CALL and ALARM SOUNDS.

REGGIE

(making up his mind, to the conductor)

Screw it. Gimme two new tickets, I'll sort it out later!

CONDUCTOR

First class is fully booked, sir... all I have left is Federal Public Access -

Another WARNING. Reggie peels off 500 DOLLAR BILLS.

REGGIE

There's two grand. Keep the change.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

CONDUCTOR

(huffy)
Sir, I cannot take cash -

REGGIE

No?

He GRABS the conductor by the collar, shoves a bill in his face.

REGGIE

See that? "Legal Tender for all debts
public and private." Now gimme two
Goddamn tickets!"

Terrified, the conductor forks them over. Sweating and juggling
their bags, Reggie and Debbie dash into the Public Access cars
just in time.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - ON SARI - FIRST CLASS

She grabs a microphone, speaks into it.

SARI

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are about
to get under weigh. Until the maglev
lifting field is at full power and
stabilized, there will be magnetic
field fluctuations. Please secure
all small metal objects. Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Most of the items here have ship-like securing hooks. Now, as
some loose knives and tools begin to WOBBLE on the tables the
cooking staff stows them.

INT. CLUB CAR

Two EXPERIENCED PASSENGERS are playing with COINS on their table,
enjoying it as one by one they FLY against the cabin wall and
STICK.

INT. FIRST CLASS SLEEPER SUITE - DAY

As luxurious - and large - as a New York hotel, and done in the
same century: The nineteenth.

Hedda REACTS as her CANE starts to lean towards the wall. She
wrestles it back upright beside her knee, only to have an EARRING
fly against the wall.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

This makes Lisa crack her first smile.

TONY
(into cellular phone
-Italian accent)
- I don't want excuses! The gym opens
in London tomorrow. I'll be there
and if 5,000 T shirts aren't I'm suing
your ass! Hello?
(banging it)
Goddamn magnets!

CUT TO:

INT. UNION STATION - ON THE MAGLEV RAILS

They glow BLUE with increasing POWER. A SUB WOOFER HUM rattles
the station. ALARM BELLS RING. Workers on the platform SCATTER,
not in panic, but with routine care of safety drills. *

INT. CLUB CAR - DAY

As the staff goes about their business, Prine is nonchalantly
taking PICTURES with his hidden camera.

FRONT OF CAR - SARI

Her back to the PASSENGERS, she takes a deep breath, puts on a
big, bright and very phony smile.

Turns for the lamest portion of her workday.

SARI
Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome aboard
the Isobar Transpolar Flyer. Today's
trip marks the first nonstop connection
to Europe since the end of Jet Travel
almost twenty years ago. Many of you
have taken domestic Maglev trains and
you will find this one very similar.
In the event of an emergency the cabin
alarm will sound -

She ACTIVATES it for a second: It's a loud KLAXON.

SARI
(cutting it off)
Oooh, I should have brought my
earplugs!

LAUGHTER from the passengers -

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

where MARSHA, a stewardess, is doing the same routine:

MARSHA

-gosh, I should have worn earplugs!

(over laughter)

If you hear this sound, return to your seat and put on your seat belts. Now, our main safety feature is the survival pod... These will automatically deploy in case of a subsonic collision or other accident...

CUT TO:

SARI - IN CLUB CAR

Now in her staff seat. She hits a button.

COMPUTER VOICE

10-9-8-7 -

SARI

(turning it off)

When you hear that countdown, keep your arms and legs close to your body to avoid injury when the pod closes - like this -

Hitting a button, she makes the POD CLAMSHELL APPEAR from BELOW THE FLOOR. "Ooohs and ahhs" from the passengers as it starts to enclose her in its well cushioned interior.

SARI

(as it disappears again)

When the train stops and is secure, the pod will open and you may exit.

(standing)

Since most of our journey will be in Ozone alert areas or depressurized subtunnels, you will need the personal oxygen booster under your seat to exit the train.

She shows this; it's like the ones we saw earlier in the urban desert.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC ACCESS CAR

Where a LAME and CHEAP ANIMATED CARTOON on a video screen plays in lieu of a live human. The car is PACKED with ROW AFTER ROW of the POOR, the DISENFRANCHISED, the DESPERATE. RACKS for their cheap LUGGAGE run overhead. Several SLEEP in HAMMOCKS.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

UGLY SERVICE 'DROIDS prowl the aisle. The whole thing is like a cross between a bad New York Subway and steam steerage circa 1890 -and Debbie and a boiling mad Reggie are in the middle of it. Now, Debbie looks around as a BABBLE of third world LANGUAGES maintains a steady din as passengers TRANSLATE the safety broadcast for each other.

DEBBIE

First class to London, huh? Gonna treat me like a real fucking lady. Ha!

REGGIE

Maybe when you talk like one... or look like one.

Hurt, she buries her face in her compact mirror.

CARTOON VOICE

- the emergency exits are located in the side panels of the flexible corridors at each end...

BACK TO SARI

Now at the end of the car next to the flexitunnel, DEMONSTRATING exactly what she's describing.

SARI

Pull this lever and push or kick out the striped panel. If you exit on a monorail section of track, use Duranet ladder below the exit to descend to the ground. Thank you for your attention and we hope you enjoy your trip on the Isobar Transpolar Flyer.

She hangs up the microphone with a "finally" expression. Starts to leave the car. When -

PRINE

Excuse me - ?

SARI

Sir?

PRINE

Could you go over the part about the safety pods again?

Pause. She can't believe this.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

If you'd like to review, sir, it's on the safety card on the nearest seatback.

PRINE

I'm sorry but...

(shrug)

I don't have my glasses.

SARI

(suspicious)

Weren't you wearing them before?

PRINE

I forget where I put them. Are you worried about the passenger's memories, or our safety?

She stares at him, sees everyone is watching. She sucks in her breath, returns to the safety pod and RAPIDLY repeats that part:

SARI

The passengers safety pods automatically deploy in any subsonic accident.

She CLOSES and OPENS the demo pod for a split second -

SARI (cont'd)

Please keep your arms and legs close to your body to avoid injury. When the train is secure, the pod will open and you may exit.

The passengers APPLAUD this bravura performance. She does a little curtain call, meanwhile GLARING at Prine -

-who just SMILES.

THE TRAIN

The very AIR above the tracks starts to glow an eerie LIGHT GREEN, faint at first, getting brighter.

Accompanying this is an electronic BUZZ that gets louder. The air starts to CRACKLE and HAIR on all the retreating people's heads STANDS ON END. The station staff begins to shove people back.

The entire Isobar train, of inestimable tonnage, RISES and LEVITATES fully THREE FEET above the track. It begins to move forward, slowly, and glides through the forward TUNNEL OPENING. The entire BOTTOM of the train is a series of CURVED MAGNETIC PLATES, sliding, adjusting.

THE MEDIA ON THE PLATFORM

Filming, flashes popping, REACTING to the NOISE and VIBRATION-

INT. CLUB CAR

The steel support posts in the concrete tunnel walls CREEP SLOWLY BY. They're spaced about a hundred feet apart.

They begin to move by faster and faster. Prine swivels his seat so his back is to the other passengers and raises his watch to his lips, ACTIVATING it.

PRINE

Entry one 8 August. Under weigh five minutes twelve seconds behind schedule. Purser McCoy Sari ID 1134-A displays fluctuating interpersonal skills.

PA VOICE

(recording)

Attention. Cabin shutters will close for subterranean entry. Do not be alarmed. Do not be alarmed.

SLAM SLAM SLAM. METAL SHUTTERS THUD DOWN over the windows.

Prine is one of the very few who don't flinch.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISOBAR TUNNEL

The train rapidly picks up speed, faster and faster, the METAL SHUTTERS closing all along the sides in sequence. Wind in the tunnel HOWLS. BLUE FLAMES appear around the train's perimeter. The BRIGHT GREEN GLOW stays DIRECTLY UNDER THE TRAIN. AIR DUCTS along the tunnel walls SUCK with a WAIL.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

The train ROCKETS FORWARD, the SHUTTERS here closing just as we get a breathtaking sensation akin to HYPERDRIVE.

INT. A STORAGE HOLD

full of Isobar equipment. A large CABINET SLIDES on the floor a few feet and SLAMS into the wall.

GIBRAN'S VOICE

Ow!

The cabinet OPENS. Gibran GETS OUT.

PASSENGERS - VARIOUS CARS

REACTING to the powerful yet smooth ACCELERATION. Some look at the cabin SPEEDOMETER, which clicks off the speed, faster and faster: 100 MPH. 150. 200. 250. 350. 500 -

EXT. EMPTY SECTION OF ISOBAR TUNNEL - EDGE OF NEWLAY DOME

A dim GREEN LIGHT in the distance. An instant later, the SCREEN FILLS with the TRAIN -- a BULLET shooting by -- and, instantly, it's GONE. PAN TO view tunnel in other direction -- a dim green light DISAPPEARS.

INT. ENGINE BOOTH

Bertrand watches the MPH reach "1000." He adjusts dials. "CRUISING SPEED" lights up. Bertrand hits a button.

PAN BACK THROUGH CARS

As the "fasten seat belt" light goes out. Passengers GROAN with relief, the take-off pressure lifted. FIRST CLASS has SPEEDOMETERS on both levels showing "1000 MPH."

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB CAR

WIDEN as a WAITER lights a CIGAR for Korbald. Tony, Hedda and Lisa enter the car... Lisa very depressed. Tony heads right for a seat next to a retro-styled train phone, puts in his credit card.

We recognize OTHER FIRST CLASS PASSENGERS from the terminal.

KORBALD

(inhaling)

Ah, excellent. If I'm not mistaken, terrestrial leaves?

WAITER

Yes, Mr. Rossiter. We warehoused some of the very last open air tobacco for our patrons.

KORBALD

I'd like a half dozen sent to my cabin. Just put it on my tab...

(signing; adding a figure)

And that's for you.

WAITER

Very good, Mr. Rossiter.

The waiter leaves and Korbald swivels in his chair.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

KORBALD

The only way to travel, yes, Mr-?

PRINE

Prine.

(lighting his cigar,
savoring it)

Yeah. It sure beats everything else.

TONY

There is nothing else. Pedicabs good
for what, ten blocks? Damn toy cars
they got today go 50 miles on their
little girlie batteries.

(into phone)

What do you mean, my posters aren't
ready? Do I have to come down there
and kick your ass myself?

A KID comes over with a copy of an EXERCISE BOOK with Tony flexing
on the cover. Tony AUTOGRAPHS IT without even looking at the
kid.

HEDDA

You handled those reporters very well,
Doctor Waincott.

WAINSCOTT

Thank you, Madame. All I did was tell
them the truth.

A no-nonsense businesswoman named DAPHNE leans forward.

DAPHNE

Well, don't do it in London.

(winking)

They got a scientist there who says
if the ice melts London will flood
even worse than now.

(winking)

I intend to do some serious shorting
in the Market there.

Prine listens only distractedly to the conversation, his
curiosity aroused by

HEDDA AND LISA

in animated DISAGREEMENT.

BACK TO SCENE

WAINSCOTT

(raising his glass)

Certainly. Here's to panic and its resultant profits.

Lisa suddenly jumps up, teary eyed. Leaves the car. Hedda follows.

PRINE

(to Daphne)

You know, the market in my neighborhood has had hydroponic oranges five days in a row? When you're talking about Vitamin C, nothing compares to the real -

WAINSCOTT

I believe the lady was referring to the stock market.

PRINE

Ah. So - so was I. Vitamin stocks. Very big. Very... healthy.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE MEDICAL CAR

The two "Doctors" loosen their medical whites, Ruby revealing a bit of very unmedical underwear. She lights a cigarette. Scanlon glances at the big HYPERBOLIC CHAMBER - a bit nervously.

SCANLON

We don't have to feed this thing, do we?

RUBY

Nah. Instructions are, we just goose it every hour for twenty seconds.

(checking watch)

I'll show you.

She moves over to the oxy cooled cabinet. Hits a BUTTON. A PANEL SNICKERS DOWN, revealing a FROST COVERED GLASS WINDOW.

INSIDE

We SEE a barely visible ORGANISM the length of a man's forearm. One end of the thing is emerging from what resembles the tentacled pod we saw scrambling on the floor of the wrecked laboratory.

Extending from this is a new GROWTH, less primitive, with even the semblance of a crude "face" and rudimentary "limbs".

BACK TO SCENE

Ruby checks connections that tap into the train power on a panel. Then she throws a SWITCH and there's a powerful SURGE of electricity. The lights in the car FLICKER.

Ruby watches a big READ-OUT counting the SECONDS: 1 -2-3-4-

There's a high pitched SQUEAL from the container, as faint and pathetic as the death cry of a rabbit.

CUT TO:

INT. A SLEEPING COMPARTMENT

Not as lavish as Hedda's, but still elegant.

Essicker and Lardner, are here, grabbing a smoke. They REACT to the flickering light.

ESSICKER
(checking his watch)
Right on schedule.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL CAR - FAVORING THE "BOTTLE"

The little organism's "mouth" is open in agony. It SMOKES. Ruby watches the read-out: 17-18-19-20. Cuts the power. The organism, tense with pain, goes SLACK. Ruby looks at it.

HER POV

The torso/stalk of the thing begins to SPLIT where it has been charred. There's some OOZE and then NEW GROWTH begins to PUSH OUT.

BACK TO SCENE

RUBY
Everything a growing boy needs.

SCANLON
(a little weirded out by
the demonstration)
Reminds me: How about some dinner?

RUBY
You go.
(on second thought)
Just get me veggies.

SCANLON
Just veggies.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Somehow that strikes both of them as funny.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC ACCESS CAR - DAY

A SERVICE 'DROID - as boxy and simple as the ones used to deliver mail back in the 80's - clunks along the wire strip in the corridor, PUSHING its way through the human sea.

It has GLASS PANELS in its side with SANDWICHES and CANNED DRINKS visible.

It STOPS at Reggie's side, BEEPS.

SERVICE DROID

Please insert beverage token and make selection. Thank you.

(beep)

Please insert beverage token and make selection. Thank you.

That's it. Reggie flips. He PUNCHES the thing, stands, KICKS it for good measure.

FOOD flies out. Other passengers grab for it, starting a commotion.

REGGIE

Screw this, man! I made 30 million last year, I want a human being with white fucking gloves kissing my ass and calling me sir!

He grabs his bags, yanks Debbie out of the seat and starts forward.

FRONT OF CAR

A CONDUCTOR outside the car sees them coming through the glass window. He steps inside to block them.

CONDUCTOR

Sorry, Sir - First Class only - Sir?

Reggie turns, starts flinging CASH from his pockets behind him. The public access passengers REACT, start to SCRAMBLE for the money, TRIPPING the conductor before he can stop Reggie.

CUT TO:

INT. HEDDA'S TWIN COMPARTMENT

Lisa, teary-eyed, is dressing for bed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

HEDDA

Darling, listen to your grandmother.
I am not a snob.

Lisa looks around at the lush cabin - LAUGHS.

HEDDA

And I am definitely not prejudiced.
I don't care about petty things like
religion or family or national origin.
My grandmother went on endlessly about
those things, but that was a simpler
time. Now, any boy you like who has
an Air and Water Gold card, an in-dome
condo and a negative on the Federal
Blood Test is positive with me.

LISA

Where am I going to meet someone like
that?

HEDDA

You don't have to meet him. All you
have to do is marry him.

She opens a pocket Holo frame, extends it forward. Lisa looks
with dismay at

THE FLOATING HOLO

of her betrothed, ROTATING, smiling and waving.

Clearly, the chinless wonder is not an endangered species in the
21st century.

LISA

Oh, God. He's a total decoy.

HEDDA

The son of the head of British Petrol
is not a "decoy", he is a "catch."

(holding Lisa's shoulders)

Lisa, you are the heir to Consolidated
Water.

(smiling at the Holo)

And baby, oil and water do mix.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB CAR

Scanlon comes into the cabin, whispers to a WAITER. A moment
later the waiter produces a nice ROOM SERVICE CART.

ON THE GROUP OF GOSSIPS

DAPHNE

That's one of the doctors from the private car.

KORBALD

(musing)

Ten thousand dollars for a first class ticket. What's it cost for a whole car?

PRINE

(authoritatively)

Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Actually, that's a 32 per cent discount from the per capita fare for a full car, in case you were wondering -

Nobody's wondering.

ANOTHER PASSENGER

I heard it's one of those deposed Sheiks. Going to London for a heart implant.

WAITER

(authoritatively)

I heard it was Michael Jackson. He's going to Europe for those youth treatments.

DAPHNE

Michael Jackson? He must be what, sixty years old?

WAINSCOTT

No, his monkey's sixty. He's only fifty six...

TONY

You're crazy. It's some big art collector. Same guy who filled up the baggage car. He's dying and he's taking all his stuff to some museum. Must be 20 million worth of stuff back there.

CAMERA TIGHTENS on Korbald thinking about this... then he gets up, slowly following Scanlon.

CAMERA follows him then picks up Sari, coming the other way.

PRINE

Excuse me, Stewardess -

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

Ah. 22A. Sir, I'm the Purser,
remember? I can get you a steward-

PRINE

Not if they're as incompetent as the
last one.

(pointing to his plate)
What does this look like to you?

SARI

Chicken with rice pilaf, endive salad
with herb italian dressing garnished
with pine nuts.

PRINE

You read the menu.

SARI

I wrote the menu.

Prine startles her with the speed with which he whips one out,
stabbing a finger at a phrase like Emile Zola.

PRINE

Did you write this part where it says
"passengers are welcome to choose a
low cholesterol meal?"

SARI

Yes. Our low cholesterol meal today
is a soy patty with cabbage slaw.
Would you like that?

PRINE

God, no. Who would?

SARI

Then what -

PRINE

What I want is this prepared in a low
cholesterol manner. That means no
skin on the chicken, no oil in the
dressing.

SARI

Sir, these meals are pre-prepared.
If you want a low cholesterol meal,
you have to take the one we've planned.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE

Then your menu shouldn't say,
"Passenger may choose low cholesterol
meal." It should say "Purser gets
to choose a low cholesterol meal which
passenger must accept whether he wants
it or not."

Long Pause.

SARI

(defeated, finally)
Sir... I'd love to fix your bird.

As she moves off with it, Prine SPEAKS into his watch.

PRINE

Subject 1-A, update: Low patience
threshold. Poor voice modulation.
Barely hidden hostility.

He clicks off the record button.

PRINE

(watching her leave)
And a great ass.

CUT TO:

INT. LISA'S STATEROOM - NIGHT

WIDEN from the rotating holo of her betrothed. We see Lisa look
at with dismay. Then she SLAMS it shut, throws it under the
mattress.

She starts to take off her silken robe. But as her her taffeta'd
bottom hits the bed, so do a pair of puttee wrapped FEET.

She turns and GASPS as Gibran drops from the ceiling maintenance
panel.

LISA

Hel-

But his hand is already over her mouth. She tries to struggle but
he holds her tightly and speaks in an oddly soothing WHISPER.

GIBRAN

I will not hurt you. I will not add
to the pain you already feel because
you are a prisoner.

(as she REACTS)

Yes. You go on a journey against your
will, your own wishes are ignored.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Gradually these direct psychological hits sink in. Her eyes relax a bit and instantly he removes his hand.

LISA

How do you know I won't scream?

GIBRAN

I know.

LISA

(skeptical)
You read minds.

GIBRAN

I read bodies.

LISA

(suddenly self conscious)
Excuse me?

GIBRAN

(flushing)
I meant no disrespect. It is our way:
To speak - out there - is to let the
air in your throat. It burns. Scars.
In time, it kills. So we cover our
faces and watch gesture, movement.
It tells much.

LISA

(intrigued)
You're a city bedouin.

GIBRAN

(courtly - almost a bow)
Yes. But we call ourselves the Heirs.

LISA

Airs?

GIBRAN

No, Heirs. The Inheritors.
(explaining)
Of the cities you have abandoned.
(modestly)
I myself own Burbank.

LISA

Burbank?

GIBRAN

You have heard of beautiful downtown
Burbank? It was my Uncle's fief.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

GIBRAN (Cont'd)

Now he is murdered. And I?

(expansive)

Now I am wealthy and pursued by enemies.

LISA

That makes two of us.

GIBRAN

(shaking his head)

Though she frustrates you your Grandmother means you no harm. But my enemies would see me flayed by acid rain.

LISA

I don't think that's the penalty for hitching a ride.

GIBRAN

I followed my Uncle's murderers to the station. I fear they are aboard this train... along with something worse.

HEDDA'S VOICE

Lisa, turn off the 3-D and go to bed! You're not going to that reception with circles under your eyes!

GIBRAN

Do not fear: I will protect you. We shall escape our traps -perhaps together.

He grabs the fruit from the table, notices the bedtime chocolate on the pillow, takes that, too.

GIBRAN

(exiting, with a flourish)
May Gaia grant you shade.

He's gone.

She's fascinated.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR

A FIGURE moves along the passage way. Through metal CAGES that hold the serious valuables we SEE the storage compartments, foam cushioning and straps that protect luggage, artifacts, even a pet or two.

As the figure moves through the light, we SEE it is Korbald, dressed like an Isobar Steward and holding a pass key.

The LIGHTS FLICKER. He doesn't think much of it.

INT. THE MEDICAL CAR

Ruby is eating and reading. Scanlon is throwing the power switch, watching the countdown: 1 -2-3-4-

The car door slowly OPENS. Korbald comes in. His footsteps are muffled by the CRACKLING of electricity, and the equipment blocks his view of the "doctors" and their view of him.

He moves to the bottle - and REACTS to the MOVING ORGANISM INSIDE. Amazed, Korbald moves CLOSER. He reaches out to WIPE away the frost - REACTS as the ultra-cold BURNS his hand. Then his MOUTH drops OPEN as he SEES -

THE CREATURE

writhing in PAIN.

BACK TO SCENE

Korbald GASPS - starts to back away - right into Scanlon, who GRABS him, slams him against the wall.

Korbald tries to fight, is hopelessly overpowered.

RUBY

Jumps up from her magazine, watches. CAMERA PANS to the read-out. We're PAST 20 seconds. 21-22-23 -

SCANLON

Takes out a very unsurgical KNIFE - PLUNGES IT into Korbald's belly. Korbald's SCREAM segues into

CUT TO:

OMITTED

INT. DINING ROOM CAR - NIGHT

Prine SNEEZES violently...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE
No, this is definitely not -
(SNEEZES again)
Definitely not -

Another SNEEZE. He hands what he's been sneezing into to Sari.
Alas, it's not a handkerchief.

PRINE(cont'd)
- a hyperallergenic pillow.

SARI
So?

PRINE
(whipping out his ticket)
So, my ticket clearly states in the
little box marked Medical Alert,
"Passenger Highly Allergic." There
should have been a hyperallergenic
pillow on my seat waiting for me.

SARI
(tight smile)
I'll see what I can do.
(turning, sotto)
Maybe get a real big one and smother
somebody with it -

PRINE
(suddenly)
Oh, stewardess -

SARI
(turning, through her teeth)
That's Purser.

PRINE
Sorry. What color are your pantyhose?

SARI
E-Excuse me?

PRINE
What color are your pantyhose?
Actually, they're not pantyhose,
they're stockings, right?

SARI
Rrrright. You noticed the seams.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE

Well, I couldn't miss the crooked one.
Would you say that color was "Desert
Sand" or "Beige Blossom?"

SARI

Beige, smeige, what do you care?
(remembering herself)
It's "Beige Blossom" sir, thank you
for noticing.

She turns up the volume of his headphones (a bit too much?), gives
him a stiff smile, walks away.

The moment her back is turned he whispers into the watch:

PRINE

0500 hours. "Beige Smeige". Possible
sarcasm.

SARI

Just before she goes into the next car, she straightens her
stockings. She sees Prine looking at her - glares at him -exits.

BACK WITH PRINE

PRINE

Definite sarcasm.

The car lights suddenly DIM. There is a DRAMATIC MUSICAL STING.

INT. CLUB CAR - WIDER

PA ANNOUNCEMENT

And now our Dinner Show: LEGENDS IN
HOLOGRAMS.

LIGHTS GO DIMMER. The carpeting SLIDES OPEN in the center of the
room like a swimming pool cover, revealing the variegated CD-like
GLEAM of a HOLO FIELD that covers almost the entire car.

The laser HOLO BEAMS intersect and we see several FIGURES "BUILD"
from the feet UPWARDS.

Finally we SEE that they are MARILYN MONROE, ELVIS PRESLEY -and
JUDY GARLAND.

As far as likeness and voice performance, these simulations are
perfect: But there is a subtle "Generational gap" and even a hint
of scanning lines that REVEALS these are ILLUSIONS.

But what illusions! Now they begin a Vegas like MEDLEY within
which they do SOLOS of their greatest moments.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL CAR

Korbald's body slides down the wall onto the floor, dead. CAMERA ADJUSTS as Ruby comes over to Scanlon as he wipes off his knife. *

RUBY *

Who is he?

SCANLON *

He's a major fuck up, that's what he is. Maybe I can dump him out a window or something -

RUBY *

At 600 miles an hour? Afraid not. Just hide his body somewhere. By the time they find it we'll be cashing our checks.

He takes off his white coat. Moves to lift the body. Drags it to the door. Checks outside. Okay. He goes out.

CAMERA PANS BACK to Ruby, worried. Then - she REMEMBERS. She whirls and LOOKS at the READ OUT. We RACK FOCUS to it: It is over 3 MINUTES and COUNTING. She turns it off. Runs towards the *

HYPERBOLIC CONTAINER

and STOPS because it is OPENING and something BIG and HORRIBLE is GETTING OUT. As her face pales in TERROR we

CUT TO:

THE DANCING HOLOGRAMS

They are INTERACTING in the cliché manner of aging troupers -now, "Elvis" waves his hand, "changing" his clothes from the Elvis of the 50's to the white clad "lounge" Elvis of the 70's (without the weight.)

Not to be outdone, "Marilyn" switches from the famous blowing skirt of "Seven Year Itch" to the tattered tights of the "Bus Stop" chanteuse.

"Judy" switches from "Easter Parade" to "Born in a Trunk."

THE CLUB CAR AUDIENCE

Applauds this lame shit.

PRINE

taking advantage of the darkness, he's trying to dictate more notes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

(It's hard with a very convincing MARILYN MONROE right in his face, VAMPING HIM like Jessica Rabbit coming on to Bob Hoskins.) He notices the meal tray he spoke of earlier.

PRINE

(in mid-speech)

-in addition to not noticing a medic alert on a boarding pass, staff neglected to remove food and beverage detrius

(checking watch)

twelve minutes and 30 seconds after cessation of meal service.

A CLATTER at the cart makes him turn.

QUICK SHOT

As a HAND snatches what's left of the chicken from the table.

BACK TO SCENE

Prine REACTS as the cart ROLLS into his chair.

The DOOR to the next car is SWINGING and a long trailing ROBE snickers out.

PRINE

(into watch)

Addendum: Possible 32-11: Unticketed transient fare. Investigating now.

He gets up, shoots his cuffs suavely - STUMBLES into the footrest of his chair which has swiveled around since he rose.

He looks at the people in the car - composes himself - exits the car.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR

Prine comes in, looks around the shadows. Without the carpeting and hangings of the other cars, the regular SNICK of the magnetic lifters is more audible here.

Prine hugs a wall, moves along. REACTS TO some shadowy MOVEMENT and SOUNDS. Scraping. Dragging. Breathing.

Prine leaps forward, cocky.

PRINE

Okay, clown. Let's see your ticket-

Puzzled, he stops as he SEES -

NEW ANGLE

Scanlon - barely recognizable in the dim light -struggling to close a luggage locker. *

PRINE
I'm sorry. I thought you were a
stowaway. I was going to ask you for
your-

Prine BREAKS OFF, seeing -

A PUDDLE OF BLOOD

beneath the luggage locker.

BACK TO SCENE

Before he can even glance back up he's BACKHANDED by Scanlon. Staggered, his glasses flying off his face, Prine gets introduced to the cabin wall with a THUD. *

NEW ANGLE

Prine tries to get his balance. But the bigger man is already stepping in. A KNIFE appears in his hand - Prine turns just in time to dodge it. The blade SLICES the wall padding.

PRINE
Whoa, hey - WHOA -

Another slash, this one catching Prine's suit.

PRINE
Fuck!

Prine catches the guy's arm on the next charge and they both CRASH into the gate of the valuables cage. The lock BREAKS and an ALARM rings as they roll over on the floor inside.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN

Sari REACTS as the beeper goes off. She looks at the read-out: "SECURITY BREACH - LUGGAGE CAR".

She turns to head that way, sees Houck, reacting to his own beeper.

HOUCK
Security breach. Great.
(as they move)
What are you smiling about?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

At least it's not that asshole in 22A.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR

That asshole from 22A is trying with both hands to keep a knife from his throat. Then he sees the bubble wrapped form of Winged Victory in its crate. Desperate, he KICKS OUT, shattering the box and making the statue TOPPLE.

NEW ANGLE

The heavy statue sideswipes Scanlon and knocks him away from Prine. The knife goes flying. *

PRINE

Sucks in his breath as the statue falls across him, the wings preventing him from being crushed even as they CRACK.

He rolls aside, gets to one knee - just in time to get BLINDSIDED by Scanlon swinging a long, graceful and very heavy Giacometti, which BREAKS across Prine's back. Prine somersaults over, KICKS up desperately - and gets the guy right in the balls. *

RESUME FIGHT

Scanlon turns green, drops to one knee - and then sees his knife - he reaches for it, but Prine's foot CRUNCHES his hand. *

Enjoying it more than he should, Prine SMASHES the guy with a right, knocking him against the accordion cage door. Then Prine dives on him, pinning him and SMASHING the flexible metal grid of the door into the man's face, again and again.

NEW ANGLE

His face now marked like a waffle, Scanlon HOWLS, tries to get free. Suddenly a CLATTER and a shaft of LIGHT makes Prine turn - *

FRONT END OF CAR

Houck and Sari have just come into the car.

BACK TO SCENE

Scanlon takes the moment of distraction to get an elbow up and back into Prine's face. Prine DROPS, stunned, and Scanlon bolts. *

Houck comes forward, the laser gunsight of his drawn gun illuminating the area.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

HOUCK

Hands on your head where I can see
'em.

SARI

(recognizing him)

Mr. 22A. Are we through with our
surprises for the evening?

The vertical luggage container Scanlon was fooling with CREAKS
OPEN. Korbald's BODY falls into SARI and then onto the FLOOR.

PRINE

Apparently not.

As Sari YELPS we

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL CAR

Scanlon comes back into the car.

SCANLON

Okay, Ruby, we're covered. By the
time they find him we'll be - Ruby?

He REACTS to

THE CAR - HIS POV

Signs of a STRUGGLE. And - that OPEN HYPERBOLIC CHAMBER.

BACK TO SCENE

He WHIRLS, even before the SHADOW of the THING falls on him.

A HIDEOUS TENDRIL twists around his NECK. A FAN LIKE APPENDAGE
covers his FACE like a DEATH MASK - PICKS HIM UP -there's a
horrible SOUND even worse than his muffled SCREAM -

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN OFFICE

Prine paces, alone in the office. He GROANS, feeling his wounds
from the battle. He notices a RIP in his suit.

PRINE

Damn!

(into watch)

0845. Expense account notation:
Invisible mending, possible
replacement-

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

The DOOR opens. Sari and Houck enter, cold and hard expressions on their faces.

Houck's jacket is deliberately open, the silent display of badge and gun making their point.

PRINE

What's going on?

HOUCK

The train - without you.

SARI

We're making an unscheduled stop in Salt Lake. That's where
(checking manifest)
the late Mr. Reggie Rossiter gets put on ice, and where you get charged with murder, assault, credit fraud and theft.

PRINE

I don't think so. I'll just call my lawyers.

SARI

You know how big Isobar is? Our lawyers can lick your lawyers.

PRINE

My lawyers are your lawyers.
(presenting a card)
Russell Prine, Executive Vice President, Consumer Relations.
(with a smile)
I work for Isobar, too.

SARI

(skeptical)
Doing what? Killing extraneous passengers to make room in the club car?

She trails off, examining the card.

PRINE

I report directly to L.L. DuPre.

SARI

The CEO?

PRINE

(crossing fingers)
We're like that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

HOUCK
So this trip, you're what... on
vacation or something?

PRINE
Certainly not. I'm working.

SARI
You're telling me Isobar Lines pays
you to ride First Class and make a
royal pain in the ass out of yourself?

PRINE
(thinking about it)
Yeah. That's pretty much it.

As they REACT, we

CUT TO:

INT. ESSICKER AND LARDNER'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

They REACT as the train begins to SLOW.

LARDNER
We're stopping.

Essicker takes out a COMMUNICATOR, speaks into it.

ESSICKER
Ruby. Scanlon. Secure the medical
car. Something's up.
(pause)
Ruby? Scanlon?

Both REACT to the STATIC.

CUT TO:

INT. SALT LAKE CITY ISOBAR STATION - NIGHT

The train SLOWS with a HISS of LOX STEAM. With a GROAN of
GENERATORS, the maglev lifters WIND DOWN and the giant steel snake
SETTLES on the curved tracks with a mighty GROAN.

LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS

watch the train STOP. MORGUE ATTENDANTS are with them. At the
head of the group is NOAH YOUNG, a tough and efficient
plainclothes detective too close to retirement to lose either
his temper or his wits.

CUT TO:

INT. VIDPHONE BOOTH - SALT LAKE CITY

TIGHT on a little bottle in a paper bag: Maalox. We WIDEN, see it's in Prine's hand - and below the VIEW of a pissed off L.L. Dupree on the VIDSCREEN.

DUPREE

(in mid-rant)

Hold the train? Question the
Passengers? Delay the Inaugural run
to London? The other lines will love
that, Prine, and so will the
stockholders. But I'm not worried.
I know how well you perform under
pressure, so you're going to solve
this in 30 seconds or you're fired.

PRINE

T-thirty seconds - ?

DUPREE

Twenty five now. Feel inspired yet?

PRINE

The train can't stay here. Absolutely,
definitely can't stay.

DUPREE

Hold that thought and I'll hold the
count. Twenty seconds.

PRINE

(vamping)

We have a schedule to keep - our
reputation - uh, the reputation of
the American people - workers welding
the train - hands across the sea of
international - this is big, giant,
bigger than any one individual...dead
guy?

(on DuPree's dark look)

Don't say dead guy?

(another try)

Ex-passenger?

(approval nod)

Who of course Isobar Transit bears
no legal responsibility for-

DUPREE

You've sold me, Prine. Now sell it
to the Mormon Mafia and get my train
to London! In the meantime...
consider your termination... on hold.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE
Thank you, Mr. DuPree. You won't
regret -

The screen goes blank. Prine sucks in his breath.

PRINE
I'm hyperventilating.
(closing eyes, hands to
forehead)
Biofeedback, biofeedback -

A KNOCK on the booth glass. Somebody else wants it. Prine sighs,
exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATFORM - DAY

As PHOTOGRAPHERS and NEWS PEOPLE record the event, Korbald's BODY
is ZIPPED into a bag.

A TAG is put on it: "ROSSITER, REGINALD. DOA".

SARI'S VOICE
- you can't pull the passengers off
this train - there's four hundred and
fifty people aboard -

CAMERA ADJUSTS to show her arguing with Young. In the B.G. the
uniformed cops take NOTES from Houck.

YOUNG
(indicating the passing
BODY)
Four hundred forty nine.

PRINE

crossing the station, running lines through his head:

PRINE
This mighty engine, a ship of state
- Hey!

He's REACTED to the sight of Lisa, bag in hand, trying to run
from the train. But Tony has grabbed her roughly by the wrist.

TONY
What's wrong, honey, you don't like
wedding cake?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE
(coming over)
Mister, you want to ease up on the
young lady? She's a passenger.

TONY
And you're a pest.

Tony SWINGS at Prine, who dodges, gets hit a glancing blow. Prine
PUNCHES Tony hard in the stomach. Tony GASPS, but staightens -
GRINS. Standoff.

But at least he's released the girl.

LISA
I'll... just get back on the train.
(aside to Prine)
Thanks.

Tony lingers... CHUCKLES at Prine. When Prine's alone, he WINCES,
feels the knuckles of his hand.

PRINE
God, I hate this job.

SARI AND YOUNG

still deadlocked -

YOUNG
- I don't give a rat's ass about your
precious schedule -

PRINE
(arriving)
Ah, excuse me, Officer?
(extending hand)
Russ Prine, Executive V.P. Consumer
Relations, Isobar lines.

YOUNG
(shaking hands)
Captain Noah Young, Salt Lake City
P.D.
(indicating Sari)
You her boss?

PRINE
Yes -

SARI
No -

Prine takes a breath, the lines he's rehearsed in his running on
his mental teleprompter.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

There's more here than just a schedule, Captain. This train is a symbol of American perseverance: The first nonstop trip to Europe since the jets were grounded.

(indicating the media)

The whole world is watching. This could be the first step in this Nation's climb back up to the summit of International status and respect. Japan and Europe had enough headlines. Tomorrow I want the world to say -

(gesturing a marquee)

America's back!

(new tone)

Not - America didn't show up.

Long pause. Young eyes Prine for a moment.

YOUNG

(finally)

That's the biggest pile of horseshit I ever heard in my life.

PRINE

(reading him)

Yes, sir. I guess it is.

YOUNG

(pulling him aside)

What is it? Your ass on the line on this one?

PRINE

Pretty much, Captain.

Young sighs, signals one of his uniforms.

YOUNG

(to cop)

I'm releasing this train on my authority. I'll conduct the investigation aboard it between here and the Canadian border.

Sari's already turning, shouting ORDERS.

PRINE

(relieved)

Captain Young - you don't know what this means to me.

Saying this, he takes a chug from his bottle of Maalox.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

YOUNG

Wanna bet?

And he pops some Pepto Bismol tablets. As both men GRIN at each other, we

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TRAIN

ZOOMING out of the station, ENTERING the transcontinental tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN OFFICE - DAY

Young's here with Prine, Sari and Houck. Young's making notes.

YOUNG

- so you followed this stowaway and he attacked you?

SARI

(interrupting)

Alleged stowaway. If one were really aboard it would be a serious violation of Isobar policy.

PRINE

(dryly)

That makes a total of eight this trip.

(back to Young)

I don't think the stowaway jumped me. He looked like a wiry kid. No. The man who jumped me was bigger than me, two hundred pounds... I think brown hair, it was pretty dark back there.

HOUCK

There's about five men in First Class that fit that description.

SARI

They were all ID'd when they bought tickets. I'll check the computer.

She goes to a console, hits a switch. A hidden COMPUTER is revealed behind the mock wood.

YOUNG

(aside to Prine)

Hey, is Michael Jackson really on board?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI
(at the screen)
Here we go.

CLOSER

as several SUSPECTS come up on screen. Among them are TONY, ESSICKER and SCANLON.

PRINE
(pointing to Tony and
Essicker)
These two were in the club car so you
can eliminate them.

Young points to the "Isobar Staff" label on Scanlon, turns to Sari.

YOUNG
I assume you can vouch for him -

SARI
(shaking her head)
Never met the man. Both Doctors were
assigned to me this morning.

All exchange a look -

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - BAGGAGE CAR

Young, Prine, Sari and Houck head for the medical car. Sari whispers to Prine.

SARI
What was that crack about eight
violations?

PRINE
(ticking them off)
Late departure, poor bar service,
rushed safety briefing, failure to
note medical alert, failure to provide
alternate meal, failure to clear same,
stowaway on board and Beige Blossom
pantyhose instead of Desert Sand as
called for in Isobar Dress code.

SARI
I got a run in my last pair of Desert
Sand! But almost all the others -they
were your fault!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

You mean, because I was a difficult passenger?

SARI

Difficult? You were the worst passenger I've ever seen!

PRINE

(sincere)
Thank you. Do you think you could put that in your report at your employment review? It would look really good on my record.

They're at the medical car door. Young tries it. Locked.

HOUCK

I'll get it.

He uses his electronic pass key and it snickers open.

INT. MEDICAL CAR

They step inside, REACT to the DISARRAY.

SARI

Dr. Hanlon? Hello?

CAMERA RISES as they fan out.

PRINE

(aside to Houck)
Looks like a hell of a fight here.

HOUCK

Hey, Mr. VP, stick to the pencil pushing.

(to Young, kissing ass)

Looks like a hell of a fight in here.

SARI

Notices the open HYPERBOLIC CHAMBER. CAMERA ADVANCES TOWARDS IT WITH HER.

She can't see inside... puts one hand on the edge to stand on toes... a HINGED PANEL RELEASES -

NEW ANGLE

As Ruby's WITHERED, PUCKERED AND SHRIVELED BODY falls OUT. It BREAKS INTO PIECES when it hits the floor.

CONTINUED

THE CREATURE

REELS at the bullet hits, starts to RETREAT DOWNWARD, its attack organs still whipsawing -

PRINE

As one tendril whips close, the end OPENS and SNAPS, revealing an inner tip BARBED like an arrow and a CLAMPING RIM capable of grabbing prey. Prine HOOKS the gurney with his ankle and ROLLS it forward just in time to block the attack.

YOUNG

He lowers his aim as the thing DESCENDS, but then its tendrils GRAB him by the ANKLES.

He's YANKED off his FEET and dragged towards the hole.

He SCREAMS in AGONY, keeps SHOOTING.

HOUK

Can't get off a shot without hitting Young, who is half HIDDEN by the dervish motion of the thing.

YOUNG'S ANKLES

More and more TENDRILS grab hold, RIPPING away CLOTHING and some FLESH. BARBS dig in. We hear a SICKENING NOISE, half SLURP, half CRUMBLE.

Young's legs SHRIVEL like AUTUMN LEAVES, parchment skin CLINGING to the BONE.

THE OTHERS

watch in horror -

BACK TO SCENE

Young is DRAGGED downwards, SCREAMING, CURSING and FIRING HIS GUN at the thing WITHOUT EFFECT.

Then he SEES the dessication SPREADING past hips, waist, and chest.

With horror he watches his LEFT ARM WITHER and then with his last moment of sanity -

HE BLOWS OUT HIS OWN BRAINS WITH HIS NEXT BULLET.

SARI

SCREAMS as blood flecks the counter where she's hiding.

WIDE SHOT

The creature and Young's body are GONE into the darkness of the bilge.

Young's bloody pistol SPINS on the slick floor like a TOP, finally stops.

Long pause.

SARI
Wha - what was that?

PRINE
I don't know...

He pauses, looks at the empty hyperbolic chamber.

PRINE(cont'd)
But it sure wasn't Michael Jackson.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB CAR

Their luggage strewn about, Reggie and Debbie have finally made it to first class - that is, the first class bar. Reggie chugs his drink, slams it down. *

REGGIE
Another. Hey!

Leslie the bartender is preoccupied with the credit card reader, which is BEEPING strangely. *

LESLIE
Sir, ah - this card isn't any good.

REGGIE
Bullshit. That's Platinum, 100 grand limit.

LESLIE
It still won't go through. *

REGGIE
Do you know who I am? Reggie Rossiter! I'm on the Goddamn stock market. I can buy this fucking train and fire you, okay? So give me my Goddamn drink!

LESLIE
Sir. I don't know who you are, but this computer is never wrong.. *

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

He swivels the little monitor around so that Reggie can read it.

LESLIE
- and Reggie Rossiter is dead.

CLOSE ON MONITOR SCREEN

It reads "ROSSITER, REGINALD. ACCOUNT CANCELED AND VOID.
CARDHOLDER DECEASED 8 AUG 2016 AS PER SALT LAKE CITY P.D.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR - NIGHT

Prine, Houck and Sari rush in here, CLOSE the electronic door with a THUD. They start towards the next car. Prine adjusts his clothing.

SARI
Worried about your corporate image?

PRINE
I don't want to panic the passengers.

SARI
(thinks, fixes herself)
I should have thought of that.

PRINE
Yes, you should have.

She glares at him. They go into the sleeper car.

INT. SLEEPER CAR - NIGHT

They close and lock the forward baggage car door, move through the flexitunnel into this car. Prine, still holding Young's gun, puts it in his own waistband.

HOUCK
I'll bunk here and stand watch -

PRINE
Watch for what? That thing punched
right through a metal panel and bullets
didn't do any good.

SARI
Yeah... and it's three hours to Quebec.
What if it feels like another snack
before then?

PRINE
Maybe we can stop, evacuate the train?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

In two minutes we'll be in the middle of what used to be the great plains before the ozone layer went. Now it's a 1,000 mile desert with air as thin as the top of Mount Everest. Our oxygen supply won't last until the rescue teams arrive.

PRINE

I should have thought of that.

SARI

Yes, you should have.

As he glares at her, they move FORWARD, leaving Houck on guard. CAMERA TRACKS them past a compartment door slightly AJAR.

INT. ESSICKER & LARDNER'S COMPARTMENT - DAY

They've heard everything. As Lardner closes the door, Essicker takes out his communicator.

ESSICKER

This is Essicker. It's out.

As the door SHUTS we go to

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT AMERICAN DESERT - QUICK CUTS - DAY

A TWO HEADED SNAKE REACTS as the SAND VIBRATES, panicking it.

A SICKLY LOOKING SAGOURO CACTUS

loses a LIMB as the ROARING GROWS.

ROCKS

tumble down a SLOPE.

THE ISOBAR TUNNEL

With a SONIC BOOM the Isobar Transpolar Flyer EMERGES from the ground, GLEAMING in the harsh thin air of the 21st Century.

INT. ENGINE ROOM

BERTRAND

Stand by for surface mode. On my mark.

The CO-PILOT begins hitting SWITCHES.

EXT. TRAIN - VARIOUS CUTS

SPOILERS and FINS DEPLOY. SENSORS RISE from the FUSELAGE. WINDOW COVERS snick BACK. The 3/4 MAGLEV PANELS which formerly repelled the lower tunnel walls now REDIRECT downwards for added lift.

VERY LONG SHOT

the train LEAPS ahead at dazzling speed, a BULLET crossing the painted desert on a gleaming silver WIRE.

CUT TO:

INT. HEDDA'S STATEROOM SUITE - NIGHT

CANDLES have been lit in various parts of the room. We PAN towards VOICES.

GIBRAN'S VOICE

There is little food, little water.
Days pass without the sight of another
human being.

CAMERA FINDS Gibran and Lisa seated, knees together. She's fascinated.

GIBRAN

But there is purple lightning, and
a moon that bathes the desert with
a glow as blue as your eyes. And
space! An endless horizon and all
of it yours.

LISA

I've never even seen the horizon.
I've spent my entire life in one dome
after another.

GIBRAN

It must be frightening to always be
within walls, under a roof. But there
is always food... always water?

LISA

Always... loneliness.

Long look between them. Their lips start to meet - her eyes are closed... he suddenly jerks back. She BLINKS when she doesn't make face contact. Looks at him curiously.

GIBRAN

No. This is forbidden, until one is
betrothed.

LISA

I don't understand.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

GIBRAN

To make love is to uncover. To be exposed. To air that bites, to rain that burns. It is too profound to be hurried.

LISA

Wow. That's beautiful.

GIBRAN

But there is something else...
(on her look)
A... ritual.

As she reacts, interested, we

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN OFFICE - DAY

Sari hits a button and a GLASS ETCHED PANEL rises into view with a HOLOGRAM of the entire train. She points to various sections.

SARI

Public Access seems secure... but this bilge area runs through the rest of the entire train... so does this crawl space above and below the First Class flexitunnels. If it gets in there...

PRINE

It can get anywhere. We'd better get all the First Class Passengers in one place and then seal off these areas.

SARI

I'm the Purser. I'll make the announcement.

PRINE

I'm a Corporate VP. I'll make it.
(as she starts to object)
Look, do you really want to tell the passengers that there's a monster on board that can shrivel them up until they look like a giant raisin?

SARI

You're right, that's pretty unbelievable bullshit. Definitely your speciality. I'll make the announcement... you'll do the briefing.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

He nods. She goes to a console, hits the PA button.

SARI

Attention, all passengers and crew.
Attention. An emergency situation
has arisen aboard the TransPolar Flyer.
Although there is no immediate danger,
we request that all first class
passengers proceed forward to the club
and observation cars. You may bring
one piece of hand luggage. Public
Access passengers are to stay in their
compartment until further notice.
Isobar personnel will give you further
instructions when you arrive.

INT. TRAIN - SEVERAL CARS

People REACTING to this, nervous... starting to comply.

INT. HEDDA'S STATEROOM SUITE - NIGHT

Hedda comes in on the run with Tony.

HEDDA

--don't be alarmed, just evacuate your
room? That's a crock of shit, Tony.
And at these prices you'd think it
would be a better crock -

She breaks off, REACTING TO -

LISA AND GIBRAN - HER POV

Lisa's supine on the stateroom floor, Gibran hovering over her
exposed belly.

HEDDA

Sweet Jesus!

Lisa sits up, her hair and face damp. Gibran jumps to his feet.

GIBRAN

Please, Grandmother of Lisa - it is
not what you think -

BACK TO SCENE

HEDDA

Not what I think? That's the last
virgin in North America, you son of
a bitch! Tony! Rip his lungs out!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

LISA
Grandmom, wait -

Tony's already stepping in with a savage grin, muscles bulging. He CHARGES - Gibran whips out that FLEXIBLE STAFF we saw before from the folds of his robe. WHACK! He smacks Tony dead center in the forehead. Tony GRUNTS like a bull - teeters - the SWEEPING blow that follows at his feet flips the big jock ass over elbows.

As Tony CRASHES into a table, BREAKING it, Gibran KISSES Lisa's hand, and DASHES past Hedda - stopping only to give her a courtly BOW before he disappears. Hedda runs to Lisa, REACTS to her damp body.

HEDDA
That Bedoe filth, he raped you!

Lisa grabs Hedda's hand, puts it on her own face - shows her a nearby glass.

LISA
Grandmom, get a life! We were just doing the Bedoe water ritual -the liquid of life, on mind, heart -
(at her damp navel)
- and loins.

HEDDA
OhmiGod. Please. Pleaseplease, don't say it -

LISA
Grandmom - I love him.

HEDDA
ARGGGGGH!

Hedda WAILS, turns on Tony as he sits up, GROANING. Hedda starts to BEAT him with her shoe.

HEDDA
You useless gob of steroids! Some bodyguard you turned out to be!

TONY
(dodging blows)
I'm not a bodyguard, I'm an entrepreneur!

HEDDA
Entrep manure is more like it! Get our bags and take them forward!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

LISA
Forward? What's happening?

HEDDA
There's some kind of emergency. If we're lucky we'll all be killed before this gets in the gossip columns.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB & OBSERVATION CAR

People, packed in. Everyone's hanging on Prine and Sari's briefing.

PRINE
We don't know what this thing is, or where it came from. It's already killed three people -
(over the alarmed reaction)
- right now it's barricaded in the medical car, and if it gets out of there it has two baggage cars ahead of it before it gets to us.

HEDDA
Dear, would you mind telling me who's responsible for this? Because you will hear from my lawyers.

DAPHNE
Yeah. Mine too.

SARI
Let's survive first and sue later, okay? Now, the plan is very simple: Keep this creature bottled up until we reach the next station. That's Quebec

(checking watch)
in less than three hours. The authorities will take over from there.

PRINE
We don't know if this thing's smart enough to figure out how to move around the train, so we're going to post guards at every crawl space and access hatchway just in case. Our only security officer is watching the medical car, so we're going to need some volunteers.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

DAPHNE
(stepping forward)
If you want something done right, you'd
better do it yourself. I'm in.

HEDDA
(poking Tony)
Make yourself useful.

TONY
(raising his hand)
Your creature? Its ass is grass.

WAINSCOTT
(raising his glass)
As long as there's no heavy lifting
and a coffee break or two..?

PRINE
(amused)
We'll see what we can do.

Essicker and Lardner exchange a look.

ESSICKER
I'm in.
(shaking hands)
Ted Essicker.

LARDNER
Me, too. Bill Lardner.

Towards the back of the car, Debbie's trying to restrain Reggie
from moving forward.

REGGIE
(pushing forward)
I got nothing to lose, I'm already
dead.

On Prine and Sari's reaction, he extends his hand.

REGGIE
Reggie Rossiter. The real Reggie
Rossiter.

SARI
Oh, right.

PRINE
(shaking his hand)
I found your body.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

A beat, then Reggie laughs - it catches on and there's a general GIGGLE FIT - which HIDES another SOUND: The RATTLE of an OVERHEAD VENT.

Sari hears it first.

SARI

Prine. Prine!

She points.

NEW ANGLE

General PANIC as everyone backpedals from the vent. With a CRASH the cover DROPS and a FIGURE swings down.

It's Gibran.

GIBRAN

I, too would like to volunteer.

SARI

(to Prine)

Your stowaway?

PRINE

(with a shrug)

He obviously knows his way around the crawl spaces.

HEDDA

(stepping forward)

I want that - vagrant - arrested!

SARI

Sure. Same day we all sue each other, okay?

Gibran glides over to Prine.

GIBRAN

I would speak to you.

(pause)

Alone.

NEW ANGLE

Essicker and Lardner watch as Gibran, Prine and Sari head for the office.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

GIBRAN

The man you fought tonight was no friend of mine.

PRINE

You'll have to do better than that... "Younger Gibran".

GIBRAN

We have the same enemies, I think. Though your worst one is you.

PRINE

We're not talking about me.

SARI

Don't be so touchy, Prine: I thought that last part was very insightful.

GIBRAN

(to her)

And you are the same.

(to him)

You work hard to be strong... and never use your strength. So your body consumes itself... here.

He pokes Prine's stomach.

GIBRAN

(to her)

You are full of power and anger... but are forbidden to use either because you cater to fools. All you city people are the same. At least my people can take off our masks.

PRINE

Let's save the group therapy for later.

Prine sees the kid glance at the food and pushes it towards him. Gibran digs in immediately and continues to eat voraciously for the rest of the scene.

GIBRAN

I do not know the one you fought but the other two? I have seen them kill.

Big reaction from Prine and Sari.

SARI

Other two?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

GIBRAN

(nodding, eating)

The ones who killed my Uncle in
Burbank. They paid him to watch their
building. In food, water, oxygen.
But he did not like the sounds that
came from the beasts they took there.
He called it the house of pain.

PRINE

(interested)

Whoa, back up. What was that about
beasts?

GIBRAN

They took animals there. Plants, too.
In covered glass cages. And
instruments and chemicals.

SARI

A laboratory?

PRINE

An illegal laboratory: Burbank's in
the forbidden zone outside Newlay:
Totally toxic.

Gibran pushes the food away, straightens, angry.

GIBRAN

(stiffly)

You insult my fief? I am the Mayor
of Burbank, and I demand redress.

PRINE

Easy, your Honor, I meant no harm.
You say they're aboard? Can you
identify them?

GIBRAN

I'm... not certain. Their faces were
covered when I saw them. But their
bodies: I have recognized them once.
I could again, when I see their forms,
their movements, the nuance of their
gestures.

SARI

Give me a break...

PRINE

No, wait, I've heard this. The bedoes
have a gift for it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE (Cont'd)

(to Gibran)
All right, kid. You're on the payroll.
Keep your eyes open.

Gibran grins - stuffs hidden pockets in his robe with what's left of the food - and slips out the door.

SARI

Weird kid.

PRINE

Polite, though.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR - NIGHT

Reggie is at a RailPhone with a handful of change. In the B.G. other passengers watch a HOLOGRAM NEWS BROADCAST - basically a smaller less amazing version of the technology we saw in the "Legends" show: This is a modest sized 3-D display that "floats" over a special CONSOLE.

REGGIE

(pissed, dialing)
I'll have my accountants
straighten this out...
Shit! This thing only
takes credit cards!
(slamming it down)
I find that little bastard
who ripped us off, I'll
tear him a new asshole...

HOLO NEWSCASTER

(in mid-broadcast)
-and in New Los Angeles,
police raided a drug
laboratory, seizing
200 kilos of the sensation
altering drug called
"Crosswire". But the big
story tonight is
financial...

He turns to a woman exiting the bathroom. At the same time, Debbie glances at the newscast.

REGGIE

(to the woman)
Hey, honey, you want to
make fifty bucks?
(on woman's look)
No, wait, I mean, you make
a credit card call for me,
see, and-

HOLO NEWSCASTER

(cont'd)
Salt Lake City Police
have reported that the
controversial entrepreneur
Reginald Rossiter died
earlier today aboard the
Isobar TransPolar Express.

DEBBIE

(tugging Reggie's sleeve)
Uh, Reg...Reg? You wanna look at this?

Reggie turns in time to see a FILE SHOT of his own face floating beside the newscaster.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

HOLO NEWSCASTER(cont'd)

Unconfirmed reports say the self made millionaire was murdered.

REGGIE

Murdered - ?

FAVORING THE BROADCAST

Reggie and Debbie watch dumbfounded as the PICTURE CHANGES. Now we SEE the SCENE in Salt Lake where the covered body was removed. Next we SEE Reggie and Debbie coming out of a restaurant and getting into an electrolimo. He lays out massive tips to the doorman, the driver, even some startled passer-by on the sidewalk.

HOLO NEWSCASTER

Rossiter, seen here with an unidentified companion -

DEBBIE

(indignant)

Unidentified companion -!

HOLO NEWSCASTER(cont'd)

-made headlines and a fortune from the controversial "Kids R' Us", a private orphanage chain in the U.S. and Canada...

PICTURE CHANGES to Reggie with a baby in each arm at a ribbon cutting of a Kids R' Us - then CHANGES AGAIN to Reggie being interviewed at the same location later.

REGGIE

(on HOLO)

- I dunno why people are so worked up. I'm just helping people. Say your sperm don't swim. Say your old lady's laying 1,000 year old eggs. You want a kid, but do you know what you're getting on the open market? Crack babies, retards, you name it. But I guarantee all my babies. I use only choice Canadian and Minnesota farm girls for mothers and I feed 'em granola, vitamins, oat bran, the whole schmeer, for nine whole months-

DEBBIE

(suddenly inspired)

The guy, the guy who took our tickets!

REGGIE

(looking around)

Where?

DEBBIE

No, no, I mean, he musta died. He had your ticket, your stateroom, so it got in some computer somewhere. That's how come they think it's you.

REGGIE AND DEBBIE

NEWSCASTER

Reaction on the stock market was immediate -

REGGIE

Oh, no - here it comes -

HOLO NEWSCASTER

- as "Kids R' Us" stock went up 5 points in heavy trading.

REGGIE

Up? Up?

CUT TO:

INT. REAR KITCHEN CAR

Empty now. Prine has a map of the train. With him are Essicker, Lardner, Tony, Gibran. Houck comes forward.

HOUCK

Baggage car door's beat to hell but it's holding.

PRINE

Okay. Uh - Lardner, right? You relieve the sentry in Public Access.

LARDNER

(already moving)

Right.

PRINE

Essicker. You take the engineer's cabin. They got enough trouble driving without watching their backs.

ESSICKER

On my way.

He ~~EXITS~~ along with Houck. Prine looks at Gibran... Gibran wags his hand... he's not sure about Lardner. Prine looks down at the floor.

PRINE

We'd better check the bilge.

TONY

(reaching for a control)

I'll get it -

PRINE

No, just the observation panel-!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

But Tony has already hit the TRAPDOOR CONTROL. It SLIDES OPEN and

The MONSTER comes ROARING UP! A tendril WHIPS around Tony's ankle, DRAGS him towards the hole! He SCREAMS as his foot WITHERS. Gibran DIVES for him, grabs him by both hands.

In the split second that Tony's progress slows, Prine VAULTS over the creature itself. A tendril GRASPS at his clothing -

NEW ANGLE

Prine SLAMS into the wall, half his jacket in the creature's grasp behind him. He SLAPS at the controls and the trapdoor SLAMS SHUT, SEVERING the tendril holding Tony.

CLOSER

Hesitant, Prine SWATS the tendril away. It twitches, then as FLUID oozes out, it DRIES. Prine RIPS Tony's trouser leg open as the man continues SCREAMING.

His foot is SHRIVELED to the shin.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Gibran and Prine, helped by others, put Tony on the largest sofa. Wainscott, already alerted, comes over, drink in hand. He takes a quick look... and a quick swallow.

PRINE

(to Wainscott)

What, gangrene?

WAINSCOTT

(shaking his head)

Clinical tissue death. It'll have to come off.

TONY

(hysterical, struggling)

Little girlie men! Want me to be half a man like you - !

DAPHNE

(a little too eager)

I was a medic in the 2nd Gulf War.
I can assist.

Sari comes over with a SILVER TRAY full of KNIVES and SERVING FORKS.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

WAINSCOTT
(to Sari, RE his drink)
Aside from this, is there any
anaesthetic?

SARI
(dryly)
Sure. Back in the medical car.

PRINE
Then we'll have to knock him out.

TONY
(panicked)
Wait, wait - I - I'm holding.

He takes out a LITTLE GLASSINE PACKET OF POWDER. Reactions all
around.

PRINE
Crosswire?

TONY
Yeah.

Hedda - pouring LIQUOR over the silverware - looks up, stunned.

HEDDA
Street drugs? But... he's on the
Governor's Fitness Council!

TONY
Hedda... stick it in your ear.

WAINSCOTT
I'm unfamiliar with the dosage -

TONY
I'll make it easy for you.

WINCING at the pain it causes him, he elbows himself up to the
bar, grabs a glass. He dumps the powder in a glass, adds a shot
of water - thinks again, adds a shot of liquor.

Immediately gets a glazed, spacey look.

WAINSCOTT
(reaching for liquor
bottle)
If we're going to use dining utensils
I need some more of that...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE
Wait a minute. Houck, give me your gun.

Puzzled, Houck complies. Prine takes out the clip, clears the chamber. Pulls the trigger.

The LASER makes a beam.

WAINSCOTT
Yes... if only you could focus it...

SARI
(snapping fingers)
The holo field. There's three hi density lenses.

LISA
I'll get them..!

She tips open the cabinet, pulls one of the lenses out, brings it forward.

Prine slips it over the laser end. It's loose.

LISA
Here.

She takes an elastic from her hair. That does it. Prine holds the gun away, tries it. BURNS a hole in a sofa cushion with the now BRIGHTER BEAM.

Looks all around.

PRINE
Ready?

WAINSCOTT
(taking another drink)
Ready. Hold him down.

Everybody grabs a limb or a shoulder. Waincott TURNS ON the LASER. Starts CUTTING.

TONY
OH! OH!

Waincott STOPS, hesitant.

TONY
(almost coyly)
Don't stop...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (3)

WAINSCOTT
(to Prine, dryly)
Interesting drug...

He resumes CUTTING. As Daphne hands Waincott SERVING FORKS, CAMERA MOVES past all their faces. Some shocked, some sickened - Hedda fighting tears - while all the while Tony CRIES OUT ECSTATICALLY.

TONY
Oh, yes, yes, yes! Give it to me
BAY-BEE! This is better than a PUMP!
OhGOD ohGOD oh GOD - !

CAMERA is tight on SARI and Prine. A coil of SMOKE twists past his nose.

PRINE
Damned if it doesn't smell like
steak...

SARI
Thanks, Prine. You just ruined red
meat for me forever.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - LONG SHOT - SUNSET

The one upside of the vanishing Ozone layer is the brilliant SUNSET. Dramatically BACKLIT, we SEE the Transpolar Express TRANSFORM again to TUNNEL MODE.

CLOSER

With a ROAR and WHOOSH it disappears beneath a mountain range.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR - NIGHT

PAN from Tony's EMPTY TROUSER LEG to his face.

He SMILES in his sleep like somebody having a wet dream. CAMERA PANS the others, all grabbing some sleep.

Reggie and Debbie are sitting side by side, not looking at each other. Each nursing a drink.

REGGIE
(to himself)
Up. I died, and the stock went up.
I don't get it. I built that company.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

DEBBIE

(to herself)
"Unidentified Companion." That's all I am. And after I stood by ya, when they said you were takin' advantage of the women who couldn't have babies and the teen-agers who could. And what do I get?

REGGIE

(he's finally heard her)
You get everything you want! Those clothes, those condos, a fucking ticket to a fucking charity ball.

DEBBIE

(sotto)
Yeah. I got everything except respect.

REGGIE

(introspective again)
Why did the stock go up?

DEBBIE

(turning on him)
Because you're an arrogant, temperamental bully who doesn't listen to nobody. How many vice presidents did you fire this year? Four? Five? That publicity guy, he told you not to give no interviews no more and you go right out on TV and talk about swimming sperm. You know why the stock went up? 'Cause now they'll finally get some decent management, that's why!

Reggie BOILS during this but it sinks in. Long Pause.

REGGIE

(quietly)
Why didn't you ever say this to me before?

DEBBIE

'Cause until you died... you never listened to anything I said.

He looks at her as that sinks in... and then the entire train TILTS, throwing them to the floor. The SEAT BELT LIGHTS go on. There's a GROAN OF METAL.

PRINE AND SARI

Sari loses balance, falling against Prine, who grabs her instinctively.

OTHER CARS

People SCREAM, react. Those with the wit strap in even before the ALARM rings.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN CAR

PAN from the bilge trapdoor, now BENT and TWISTED AWAY.

The creature has RIPPED the car's DECOR apart with some inhuman design in mind. We see that it has yanked a PIPE away from the fuselage wall and WATER is coming out at HIGH PRESSURE.

EXT. ISOBAR TRAIN - IN THE TUNNEL

It continues to ROLL, the green GLOW of the side maglev lifters FLICKERING as they lose contact with the curved rail.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

Everyone recovers. Prine helps Sari to her feet, inadvertently copping a feel in the process.

PRINE

Sari, sorry - uh, sorry, Sari -

Ignoring him, she runs to a comm panel, hits it. The woodtone panel opens to show Bertrand, worried.

SARI

Bertrand, what's happening?

BERTRAND

(on screen, struggling with controls)

We're losing trim and lift.

(hitting switches)

I'm trying to adjust ballast but it won't respo - Shit! Now pressure's dropping in the starboard ballast tank - !

Bertrand and the co-pilot STRAIN at the controls. Now they're rolling back the other way.

BERTRAND

We're - losing - it -!

EXT. TRAIN - IN THE TUNNEL

It rolls COMPLETELY OVER, exposing all three MAGLEV TRACKS. Suddenly without any dorsal lift, the train SLAMS into the tracks and SKIDS, raising SPARKS and SCREECHING like 1,000 cars piling up on a freeway.

INT. TRAIN

Poseidon Adventure II. Furniture FALLS towards the "ceiling", along with people.

THE CREATURE

ROCKS as the train SHUDDERS. It puts out LIMBS which THWACK to the fuselage, steadies itself - and continues tapping the water.

PRINE

Hitting HARD and rolling down a wall and then to the new "floor", doing a painful imitation of Astaire in Royal Wedding. He looks up at the floor - sees Sari hanging on to a chair up there - losing her grip - Prine DIVES forward in time to break Sari's fall with his own body.

EXT. TRAIN

It continues ROLLING, goes back on its SIDE, very roughly. As it starts to RISE on the magnetic lifters it "cracks the whip," undulating UP AND DOWN.

INT. CLUB CAR

The HOLOGRAM FLOOR SHOW FLICKERS on, SIZZLING DEFECTIVELY.

ELVIS has MARILYN'S BODY. JUDY has ELVIS's, and whoever the other mishmash is, it's UPSIDE DOWN.

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

Sari doesn't thank the battered Prine - just climbs over his back to the commlink, just as the VIDEO goes out. She grabs a dangling phone, SHOUTS into it.

SARI

Bertrand! What the hell's happened?

INT. CONTROL CABIN - INTERCUT

BERTRAND

When we rolled, we lost mag lift!
One more like that we'll break up and
derail!

SARI

You have to stabilize us!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

BERTRAND
No shit!

PRINE
(suddenly)
Tell him to speed up.

SARI
Speed up? Are you insane?

PRINE
I know the train specs. It's the only chance. Tell him.

SARI
The Pencil pusher says to speed up.

BERTRAND
(thinking about it)
Shit. It might work.

He hits the throttle. The counter FLICKS past Mach 2.

EXT. TRAIN - IN TUNNEL

As it lurches forward the "whip-cracking" SUBSIDES. But the train still ROLLS from side to side.

INT. TRAIN - WITH PRINE

Prine grabs the phone.

PRINE
Bertrand. This is Prine. Where's the ballast leak?

BERTRAND
(checking meters)
The rear kitchen car.

SARI
The creature - ?

PRINE
(nodding)
And it's between us and Public access.
If we can cut the train in three pieces
- the public access cars -us - and
that monstrosity -

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

(getting it)
- the people will be safe till they're
rescued and that monster will be
isolated. Perfect.

PRINE

Was that a compliment?

SARI

(ignoring him, into phone)
Bertrand, uncouple everything behind
the dining car. Wait ten seconds,
then drop the dining car. At this
speed they'll roll to a stop twenty
miles apart.

BERTRAND

You're kidding.

SARI

I'm serious. Do it.

BERTRAND

Stand by.

He hits switches. Nothing. Checks a readout.

BERTRAND

Better think of a new plan, boss: The
electro couplers got smashed when we
rolled.

SARI

We can't uncouple?

BERTRAND

Only if somebody wants to get out and
do it manually.

SARI

I'll do it.

Her voice is more confident than her face... while Prine's
expression is suddenly... resigned.

BERTRAND

Nice thought, but you can't. The
manuals have a thumbprint lock for
security. I think we're out of luck.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE

(odd tone)

Reminds me of those good news - bad news jokes.

SARI

Yeah? I could use a laugh.

CAMERA closes on him.

PRINE

The good news is, there's somebody on board with a thumbprint the computer will recognize. The bad news is...
(resigned smile)
it's me.

CUT TO:

INT. FORWARD BAGGAGE CAR

Prine is strapping himself into a harness. Houck's got a long coil of rope which is attached to Prine, who also carries a SPARE ROPE with a grappling hook on it. Both have chin communicators. Prine has an emergency kit on his belt, an oxygen booster on his back. He adjusts the mask around his face.

PRINE

(into mike)

Testing. You there?

SARI - IN FIRST CLASS AT AUXILIARY PANEL

SARI

(into commlink)

Yeah.

The train SHUDDERS again. She checks the ballast readings. Lower yet.

SARI

So is that thing. Must have a hell of a thirst.

PRINE

(struck by a thought)

Yeah...

(shaking it off, to Houck)

Let me out slow.

Houck hits a button. A HATCH in the roof SLIDES OPEN, creating a MINI WINDSTORM in the car. Houck adjust his own oxygen mask, steadies his big body as Prine climbs up.

EXT. TRAIN - BAGGAGE CAR - IN TUNNEL

Prine slowly sticks his head out. Almost immediately his hair is plastered back and the skin on his face is shuddering like jello from the SLIPSTREAM. He REACTS to the vertigo-inspiring BLUR as the tunnel walls WHOOSH by scant feet away. Then he starts to climb out, hugging the fuselage of the train, the cable taut behind him. Suddenly there's a LURCH. He grabs hold.

SARI - FORWARD

SARI

Fifteen degrees off centerline! Prine, if we're pitching like this when we go above ground again, we'll smash to pieces!

PRINE - UP TOP - INTERCUT

hearing this through the commlink, looks ahead at

THE TUNNEL - IN THE DISTANCE

A PINPOINT of light far ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

Prine waits for the train to stabilize. He rotates his body until his feet are towards the rear of the train. Then he slowly crawls backwards, quickly leaving the roof of the baggage car, crossing over the next baggage car, then the kitchen car.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST CLASS

Lardner comes in, FIGHTING the movement of the train. Obviously he's heard all this on his volunteer's communicator. He crosses with difficulty to Essicker, who's wedged himself in a nook in the bar where he's stable enough to grab a smoke.

LARDNER

(whisper)

They're going to try and cut the public access cars loose.

Essicker jerks his head towards the obvious: Sari's across the room working on just this problem.

ESSICKER

We know, Lardner. It's a good idea. Might save some lives.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

LARDNER
(finishing it)
Then they're planning to cut the
Kitchen car loose... along with our...
friend.

ESSICKER
And our bonus.

He gets out of the nook, looks up towards the cockpit.

ESSICKER
There's been a change of plans.

Lardner nods. He EXITS towards the rear of the train.

CUT TO:

PRINE

Prine has crossed the kitchen car to the first Public Access car.
He looks at the stenciled labels on the roof.

PRINE
(into intercom)
I'm at the first Public Access car!
Starting manual disengagement!

Carefully, he works his way down until he is BETWEEN CARS. Below
the little footholds he has found is a BLUR of MOTION and DEATH.

Trying not to look down he uses a tool from his belt to flip open
the coupling control panel at the top of the car. Because it flips
up it is difficult from this position; he really should have done
it from above. Finally it's open and a read-out screen presents
the words: PLACE THUMB ON PAD AND ENTER I.S.O.B.A.R. ACCESS CODE.
He extends his hand -There's a BZZZ and the word ID ACCEPTED.
A PLATE slides away, revealing a LEVER.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

Everyone preoccupied with the train's violent MOTIONS.

Too preoccupied to notice Essicker slowly working his way up the
TILTING and pitching STAIRS.

SARI
(into mike)
Attention, all Public Access
passengers. Attention. Secure all
loose items. Prepare for separation.

INT. PUBLIC ACCESS CAR

PANICKED REACTIONS. Prayers. ALARMS BEEP.

SARI'S VOICE

Remain calm. A rescue engine is already on its way to tow you to safety.

CUT TO:

PRINE - BETWEEN CARS

He's released the SAFETY BOLTS that hold down the lever. Now he THROWS the LEVER. There's a HISS of escaping PRESSURE and then the FLEXITUNNEL RIPS AWAY as the car PULLS CLEAR. Half his foothold gone, Prine grabs on to the lead car just in time. He DUCKS as SCRAPS of the torn Flexitunnel plastic FLAPS around his head while the rear cars DWINDLE instantly behind him.

PRINE

(into intercom)

Rear cars away! I'm moving to the kitchen car! Is the thing still there?

SARI - FORWARD

SARI

(into phone)

Bertrand?

BERTRAND'S VOICE

Something's sure as hell sucking up that ballast water.

SARI

It's still there!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN CAR

GROANS of metal as the creature turns up the sheet metal of the floor, creating a bin of sorts.

We see it has linked together the SPRINGS of the destroyed upholstery, creating a bizarre sculpture, half Rube Goldberg, half Watts towers. WATER is pouring into the leaky "bin" its created. The creature hovers over it, tests the depth with one tendril.

Not enough. Its sensing stalks turn towards the wall before it does. It RIPS another pipe free. More WATER sprays the room.

ON THE ROOF OF THE TRAIN

Prine feels the train shift, spreads his arms and legs out like a tick trying to hang on to a dog. Worried, he checks the grappling hook and extra loop of rope on his harness.

IN THE BAGGAGE CAR

Houck has the line around a support strut which he's using as an improvised pully. He carefully lets out more slack.

FOCUS CHANGE to the forward door. Lardner is there. He AIMS his gun. SHOTS. The bullet goes in Houck's spine and exits his heart. He DROPS on his face. Lardner steps quickly forward over the body, considers the TIED OFF SAFETY LINE.

ON THE TRAIN ROOF

Prine is nervously looping up cord.

PRINE
(into intercom)
Houck, take up some of the slack, I'm
coming forward. Houck?

Suddenly HOUCK HIMSELF comes BOUNCING ALONG THE ROOF, and SLAMS into Prine!

NEW ANGLE

the lifeline now a deathtrap, Prine TANGLES in it as Houck's body SLIDES BACKWARDS across the train, dragging Prine! The body FALLS off the back of the train, BOUNCES on the tracks!

PRINE

About to be dragged over by the WEIGHT of the BODY which is being BATTERED on the tracks. At the last second he SNAGS a SENSOR with the grappling hook. Now all he has to do is stop CHOKING from Houck's line, which is AROUND his neck. Gasping, Prine CUTS the rope -

HOUCK'S BODY

VANISHES in an instant behind the train.

BACK TO SCENE - SIDE OF TRAIN

Prine DANGLES precariously on his short line, BANGS repeatedly into the side of the train, stunned and bleeding.

CAMERA PANS AHEAD IN THE TUNNEL, past the locomotive. The BLUE LIGHT of the NIGHT SKY is closer now.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST CLASS

SARI
Prine? Prine, what's happening?
Houck, where is he?
(hearing static)
Damn! Bertrand! Where's Canada!

BERTRAND'S VOICE
In a minute you can spit on it. We
have to switch to surface mode.

SARI
Not yet! Prine's still out there!

BERTRAND'S VOICE
I'll put it on automatic. That'll
buy him about twenty seconds.

CUT TO:

PRINE - STILL DANGLING

Slowly, he comes to: Blinks. Feels the blood running from his nose. Sees his broken and useless communicator. The dangling and empty tool belt. He adjusts his oxygen mask, wipes his now bloody hand on his shirt, tests the rope. Starts to climb up.

THE CREATURE - INSIDE THE TRAIN

Satisfied with the water level. It reaches out with the thickest tendril and TIES THE WATER PIPE IN A KNOT, cutting off the flow with a METALLIC GROAN OF PLUMBING.

SARI

REACTING as her panel readout changes and the train ROLLS AGAIN.

SARI
The leak stopped! Compensate!
Compensate!

BERTRAND

along with the copilot he throws his weight at the controls, fight to stay in their seats.

PRINE

as he starts to climb up the side of the car he realizes it is rolling DOWN and he is going to be CRUSHED.

Desperate, he's a man going up the down escalator. His feet lose contact with the train and he almost touches the electrified rail. With a groan he pulls himself up hand over hand.

BERTRAND

painfully RIGHTS THE TRAIN.

PRINE

gets yanked like a trout back up top. He composes himself, works his way to the edge of a car and prepares to get between them again. This time he's smart enough to open the first panel from above.

THE TRAIN - QUICK CUTS

The train begins to TRANSFORM for SURFACE TRAVEL.

PRINE

REACTS as a SPOILER above his head begins to PIVOT INTO POSITION. It's on the verge of DECAPITATING HIM!

He HUGS the surface, ROLLS away, almost losing his grip. It MISSES him. He BREATHES a sigh of RELIEF. Then he SEES

THE EDGE OF THE TUNNEL

A lip of ROCK rushing forward, SILHOUETTED against the moonlit sky

-

BACK TO SCENE

He DIVES headfirst between cars, CATCHES the bottom edge of the control panel!

EXT. CANADA TUNNEL - NIGHT

The train ROARS UPWARDS, GLEAMING in the moonglow -

THE OPEN PANEL HATCH

above the train's skin, it CATCHES on the tunnel lip. With a SCREAM OF TEARING METAL, a section of the car's forward roof PEELS BACK like a sardine can! Prine FALLS.

SIDE ANGLE

Gravity saves him: The train's UPWARD CLIMB means that the HOLE in the car is under him instead of the tracks.

INT. KITCHEN CAR

PRINE CRASHES through the hung ceiling, taking panels and a light fixture down with him. Prine SLAMS onto the floor, the impact KNOCKING over a seatback.

He GROANS, a bloody lip adding to the injured nose. He gropes in his shirt pocket for his glasses. One lens is shattered.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

He puts them on... and realizes where he is. He turns and SEES THE CREATURE at the other end of the car, busy at the ballast piping.

Prine freezes. It hasn't seen him, because the materiel it has stripped from the car is now erected in a crude lattice like STRUCTURE which blocks a clear view down the car: This structure has a mindless - yet instinctual - design like a beaver's dam or a bird's nest.

As Prine backs away on the floor, he eyes this, curiously. He PEERS over the edge, REACTS to

INSIDE

WATER sloshes around. Upholstery strips criss cross it.

PRINE

Puzzled, he backs away - JARS the construction with a RATTLE-Oops. The Creature WHIRLS, the tendrils that were drinking DRIPPING. There's a RIPPING SOUND as it MOVES.

ITS MOTIVE LIMBS

DANCE forward like tentacles, CLAWING into the floor. Yet at the same time

THE REARMOST MOTIVE LIMBS

already attached, BREAK OFF and PULL LOOSE, leaving a SLIME TRAIL.

PRINE

RUNS for the forward pneumatic door. HITS the switch.

It DOESN'T WORK. He looks back over his shoulder.

THE CREATURE

The whipping, quick UPPER BODY bats away a work counter. Its sucking tendrils reach out for him.

But the slow movement of its lower limbs delays its arrival.

BACK TO SCENE

Prine breaks an armrest from a chair and SMASHES the wall around the door electronics. Again. Again. Finally he reveals an edge of fuselage and he puts both hands on it, the raw metal CUTTING HIS PALMS.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Oblivious to his bleeding hands, he puts all his strength into bending the metal back - puts one foot on the wall for leverage -the metal GROANS -

THE CREATURE

Closer - closer -

BACK TO SCENE

Finally a Medusa's coif of ELECTRICAL WIRES is revealed.

Desperate, Prine starts shorting pairs, ignoring the SPARKS and SHOCKS he gets, trying to get the door open. BUZZ. ZAP. Prine turns on THE BAR BLENDER, then CABIN MUZAK, then the SAFETY VIDEO on the monitors.

THE CREATURE

REACTS a bit to these little distractions, but now it's almost in tendrill reach.

BACK TO SCENE

Another try. A big SHORT and then Prine WINCES as the dark cabin is flooded with LIGHT from the CENTERMOST OVERHEADS -The only ones not ripped apart by the creature in its activities.

THE CREATURE

TURNS 180 DEGREES to look at the FLICKERING LIGHTS. Starts to look back at Prine - but it's almost as if it can't tear itself away from the light. It ducks its head - HUMMS - and opens "WINGS" to soak up the light - wings that are perversely, beautiful.

BACK TO SCENE

Prine is so amazed by this that he loses his grip on the wires he has held together. There's another SPARK and then the lights GO OUT.

The creature SNAPS its multicolored canopy CLOSED, turns back towards Prine, who desperately tries another wire.

The first tendrill DELICATELY SNAKES OVER TO HIS SHOULDER.

PRINE

Fuck it.

He grabs ALL THE WIRES in BOTH FISTS. There's a flash and then he TWITCHES as he gets an agonizing JOLT.

But the door SNICKERS OPEN! He DIVES THROUGH IT as the tendrills WHIP for his head.

NEXT CAR

Prine somersaults through, hits the yellow emergency lever. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT, SEVERING two tendrils, which TWITCH on the floor and then lie still.

There's a THUD as the creature HITS the door but it HOLDS. As tendrils FLICKER in fury against the glass window, Prine goes limp on the floor.

PRINE
I really hate this job.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

Hedda is bandaging and taping a barechested Prine. She puts Young's gun aside on a table.

HEDDA
I patched my first husband up like this once.

PRINE
He must have played football.

HEDDA
No, he played footsie with the wrong tootsie.

She suddenly WINCES. He looks at her with alarm.

PRINE
I think you need the doctor.

HEDDA
What I need are my pills.

Gibran, with Lisa, REACTS.

WAINSCOTT'S VOICE
Mr. Prine. Look at this.

Prine crosses to

SARI AND WAINSCOTT

At a banquet where Wainscott has SLIT the tendril Prine brought forward and pinned it down to the leather with push pins, exposing the leathery insides.

PRINE
Looks like the inside of a zucchini.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

Great, Prine. First you ruin red meat for me, now zucchini. What are you going to leave me with - tofu?

WAINSCOTT

Children, please.

(the teacher)

These striations here are like animal muscle tissue -probably incredibly powerful -but these -tubes -they're not blood vessels... like Mr. Prine has pointed out, they're -

PRINE

More like something in a plant?

WAINSCOTT

(surprised at his grasp of it)

Yes.

PRINE

That thing is a plant - at least, as much plant as it is animal. You know what it did, with all that water it tapped from the ballast tanks? It built a fucking greenhouse, Waincott -latticework, tanks, plumbing -everything.

WAINSCOTT

(stunned)

That's impossible -

PRINE

Maybe. But I think it's back there right now planning on a little impossible family.

SARI

You're saying this thing is intelligent?

PRINE

No. It almost had me when the lights went on. Then it turned, like it couldn't help itself -and then these - wings -fanned out and it just stood there, like it was hypnotized -

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

WAINSCOTT

Of course! It's phototrophic...
(almost to himself)
it would have to be, it's so obvious,
how did we miss it!

SARI

You mean, it likes light?

WAINSCOTT

It doesn't just like it... it's
desperate for it. When it's near it,
all other instincts take a back seat.

PRINE

Then we can catch it.
(as they turn)
We can kill the lights in different
cars, turn them on in other ones.
We pin it down where we want it. When
we get to Quebec the authorities can
nuke the mother fucker while it's
working on its tan.

WAINSCOTT

Prine, it's brilliant. I couldn't
have done better myself.

Prine takes Sari's arm, pulls her aside.

PRINE

I just want you to hear this: Houck's
dead.

SARI

Oh, Jesus. He had four children.
That - that - Goddamn thing -

PRINE

It didn't do it: He was shot.

SARI

Shot? You're sure?
(on his nod)
And the man who impersonated Reggie
- he was stabbed -

PRINE

We've got two killers on this train.
And one of them is human.

Pause as that sinks in. then she goes to the comm panel.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (3)

SARI
 Bertrand. There's been a new
 development.
 (pause)
 Bertrand?

Static. As concern crosses their eyes -

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER LEVEL - OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM

As they run up the stairs, Essicker, on guard duty, straightens.

ESSICKER
 What's wrong?

SARI
 We were going to ask you.

He tries the door. Locked. He looks at Prine, who KICKS it in.

INT. CONTROL CABIN

Prine and Essicker come in, Sari framed behind them. She GASPS: The room is utterly DESTROYED as if after a violent STRUGGLE. Controls SIZZLE and SMOKE. Two BODIES, hideously TORN and SLASHED are in the wreckage. The only thing working in the room is the overhead MACH READOUT.

Prine carefully steps forward, aims his flashlight around the room. CABLES dangle from the ceiling. Prine's BEAM - joined by Essicker's - PANS up to a gaping HOLE in the ceiling.

ESSICKER
 (seemingly rattled)
 I didn't volunteer for this shit...

Prine takes a slug from his bottle. Stands on a console... PEEKS quickly into the opening.

HIS POV - FLASHLIGHT PANNING

Struts, wiring, conduit, air vents.

No monster.

BACK TO SCENE

He jumps down.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

It's not there.

(indicating the controls)

Sari, can we get this working?

Sari steps into the room, composes herself. She avoids looking at the bodies, eyeballs the equipment. Tries a control. It SIZZLES, dying.

SARI

(moving around)

It's all fried: The mains, the auxiliaries, the back ups, hell, I don't even see the decelerator motherboard.

PRINE

(indicating the readout)

We're locked in at Mach 2 -cruising speed. 1200 miles an hour... and we can't slow down. We can't stop in Quebec.

SARI

Then... what happens when we hit London?

PRINE

(aware of the irony)

We hit London.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

Our group gathered again.

REGGIE

No Quebec?

PRINE

No Quebec.

WAINSCOTT

No brakes?

SARI

No brakes.

HEDDA

Surely someone has a plan -

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

There is one way to stop this train.
And that's by wrecking it.

HEDDA

(sotto)

I had to ask.

Prine moves over to the wall where there's a decorative map of the route.

PRINE

We short out the maglev system when
the train is above ground and on an
upgrade.

(tapping the map)

The best place is here... the Iceland
Incline after we come out of the Hudson
Bay Tunnel. That's after Quebec.
The last burst of the lifters will
raise the train off the track and throw
it clear.

DEBBIE

Excuse me - excuse me? But if we go
flying off the track, don't we all,
like, get squished?

SARI

We'll all be in the safety pods when
we hit.

WAINSCOTT

(after a moment)

Might I order a drink?

Suddenly Daphne grabs the gun from the table where Hedda left
it, aims it shakily. Everyone backs off.

DAPHNE

I've had enough of this shit! First
they let that thing on board and now
this cow and her boyfriend want to
fucking drown us!

SARI

He's not my boyfriend - and -
(reacting)
Cow?

PRINE

Let's take it easy, Daphne -

Daphne moves to cover Prine.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

DAPHNE

Okay? Who's with me? Come on! We're taking over the train - !

As Daphne watches Prine, Sari STEPS FORWARD, BELTS Daphne with a right cross that DECKS her.

Daphne sails into the bar, sinks to the floor, out cold.

PRINE

Good shot.

SARI

(disbelieving, looking at still clenched fist)
I hit a passenger...

PRINE

You had no choice.

SARI

(quiet voice, as it sinks in)
I hit a passenger. Right in the mouth. With all my strength.
(suddenly chortling)
God, I've wanted to do that for years!
(turning on the room)
Okay, any other complaints? Somebody want a pillow?

The other passengers AD-LIB, no, we're fine, perfect, couldn't be better, etc. Sari CALMS, turns to the bar.

Prine comes over, pours her a drink.

SARI

Prine, I think the pressure's getting to me. You don't know what it's like in this job. You get spoiled up there at the top, playing Virtual Golf with L.L. DuPree.

After reflection, Prine pours his own drink.

PRINE

I never even met the man.

SARI

Huh? You said you were this close.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (3)

PRINE

Yeah, when we're each three inches away from our video screens. I've never even seen him face to face.

SARI

Still... you get to ride First Class all over the country..?

Prine smiles slightly, nurses his drink. It burns when it hits his belly but he relishes it nonetheless.

PRINE

Once, every eighteen months. The rest of the time I sit in a little cubicle with a little calculator keeping track of light bulb replacement ratios, meal to microwave co-efficients, crew rotations and pantyhose inventories. I punch numbers all day and then I go to the gym and punch a bag so I don't drop dead of a heart attack when I'm thirty eight like my brother.

SARI

How old are you now?

PRINE

(concerned)

Thirty-seven...

SARI

(sudden insight)

Thirty-seven?

SARI

(shaking her head)

You had me convinced you had the greatest job in the world.

PRINE

I had myself convinced, too.

SARI

Any great perks you forgot to mention?

PRINE

(thinking about it)

I got an ulcer.

(pause; new tone)

And I got to meet you.

And as they look at each other, we

CUT TO:

INT. QUEBEC ISOBAR STATION - DAY

Normal activity here. CAMERA PUSHES to a CONTROL BOOTH above the terminal.

INT. ISOBAR CONTROL ROOM - QUEBEC

The same sort of MAP here we saw in NewLay, with a blinking LIGHT indicating the position of the Transpolar flyer. A CONTROLLER notes the position on the map, reacts with concern.

CONTROLLER

(French accent)

Attention Transpolar run. You are past deceleration fail safe. Begin your deceleration now. I say again, Transpolar run... you must decelerate to subsonic speed before you reach this station.

STATIC on the system. The BLIP of the Isobar train KEEPS MOVING.

CONTROLLER

Mon Dieu... Runaway!

He hits an ALARM.

INT. TERMINAL

KLAXONS. People RUN for cover.

PA SYSTEM

Attention. Attention. Supersonic incursion is imminent. Supersonic incursion is imminent. Take cover. Take cover.

THE ISOBAR TRAIN

HURTLING out of darkness of the tunnel towards the GLOW of the station.

INT. QUEBEC STATION

The SONIC BOOM arrives first, RATTLING and CRACKING the MASONRY WALLS and the GLASS windows.

Then the TRAIN ITSELF ROARS PAST AT MACH 2, its passage EXPLODING THE WINDOWS, overturning FURNITURE, PEOPLE, DISPLAYS.

Then it's gone, its SLIPSTREAM creating a TORNADO which blows back into the tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR - NIGHT

The BAGGAGE CAR SECURITY CAGE is no longer VISIBLE, and the valuable cargo it once contained has been rudely pushed against the walls.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

While Waincott stands at an open ELECTRICAL PANEL, Prine and Sari hand out FLASHLIGHTS to ESSICKER, REGGIE, LARDNER, and DAPHNE.

REGGIE

(trying his)

Really think this will fool it?

PRINE

Who the hell knows? We're talking about a carnivorous carrot.

SARI

I would have thought you'd say celery stalk.

WAINCOTT

(to Prine)

I'll just use the overheads, they're most like sunlight. And in sequence, remember - two, two one - two, two one - then I'll kill them all -

SARI

Bad choice of words, Doc.

(to Gibran)

How's the bilge hatch coming?

GIBRAN

working together with Lisa, he looks up from the center of the car where he has cables and pulleys rigged up to the bilge doors.

GIBRAN

It is completed. I have used such to capture the green mutant hens of the wastelands.

SARI

(sotto)

Great. There goes chicken.

HEDDA'S VOICE

Let me through, let me through -

NEW ANGLE

Hedda barges up to Prine.

HEDDA

Mr. Prine, I understand you've organized a hunting expedition. I'd like to volunteer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

It could get rough -

HEDDA

After what's happened so far on this trip, that's the understatement of the year. I've had experience, you know: My second husband was a big game hunter.

SARI

This thing isn't an animal. It's a plant.

HEDDA

No problem. My third husband was a vegetable.

She takes a flashlight, lines up with the others - scowling as Girban kisses Lisa and then joins Prine.

Prine surveys the group: Wainscott at the panel; Lisa and Debbie near him, Lisa handling a rope leading to the bilge hatch and Debbie with another rope leading up to something on the ceiling. All the others are poised to go into the other car.

PRINE

Everybody ready?

Affirmative GRUNTS.

PRINE

What a bunch of liars.

He nods at Wainscott, who TURNS OFF THE LIGHTS IN THIS CAR. Then Prine hits the DOOR CONTROL. It SLIDES OPEN, the KITCHEN CAR DOOR moving in tandem beyond it. WATER spills into the car from the Kitchen car. Prine leads the way into -

INT. KITCHEN CAR - NIGHT

DARK, the EIGHT INCHES OF WATER on the floor REFLECTING the little light there is.

At Prine's signal, they spread out. Move slowly forward into the wrecked car towards the strange SHADOWS at the far end. Halfway there, Prine WHISPERS into a walkie talkie -

PRINE

We're in, Doc.

WAINSCOTT - IN BAGGAGE CAR

Stand by.

WAINSCOTT

He SHORTS a wire.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN CAR

The OVERHEADS FLICKER - ONCE, TWICE - pause.

With a GREAT RUSTLING, the CREATURE RISES and TURNS in time to be ILLUMINATED by the THIRD FLICKER of the LIGHTS.

The people here who never saw it before GASP and RECOIL at the sight.

PRINE

Steady - it's big but it's slow -

He doesn't seem convinced.

WAINSCOTT

peering through the glass of the baggage car door, he SHORTS the wires again -

IN THE KITCHEN CAR

FLASH. This time it's the lights in the CENTER of the car. The CREATURE UNFURLS its "FAN", lumbers forward. FLASH. Pause. FLASH. Then - DARKNESS.

THE GROUP

Pause. Then -

PRINE

Now!

They all TURN ON THEIR FLASHLIGHTS. The CREATURE REACTS, puzzled - then FOCUSES on the smaller MOVING LIGHTS, darting from side to side.

PRINE

Back, now - if it gets close kill your light -

SARI

Bad choice of words, Prine -

They slowly LURE the creature across the length of the car, slowly and step by step.

THE BAGGAGE CAR - NIGHT

Wainscott tenses as they enter, the creature FOLLOWING.
Frightened, Lisa and Debbie look at each other, tighten their grip on the ropes.

FAVORING LARDNER AND HEDDA

A few yards apart. The CREATURE'S LEAD TENDRILS drift towards them. Lardner turns off his light. Hedda fumbles with hers.

LARDNER

(panicked)

Christ, t-turn it off - !

HEDDA

It's jammed -

Terrified, Hedda HUGS the wall as the TENDRILS come closer -then a HAND trades flashlights with her -

It's Sari - the CREATURE SHIFTS to follow the light -

SARI

Prine! Hot potato - !

She THROWS the FLASHLIGHT to him - Prine REACHES OUT - but a TENDRIL

CATCHES the FLASHLIGHT in MID-AIR!

THE SCENE

Sudden SILENCE as the CREATURE FUMBLES with it, the LIGHT DARTING everywhere - and then it LOCKS PRINE IN THE BEAM.

Held in the light, squinting, he stands still for a moment. He tries to side-step out of the light beam.... but the CREATURE PANS the light to follow him.

PRINE

Everybody - lights out.

SARI

But -

PRINE

Do it!

They OBEY. Now he's a bright target for the thing.

PRINE

Where's the trap door?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

LISA

Four feet behind you and to the right!

Prine backs away like a gunfighter, the CREATURE FOLLOWING. Prine looks up at

THE BAGGAGE CAGE WALLS - HIS P.O.V.

FOLDED BACK and CLAMPED against the CEILING - the ROPE leading to Debbie waiting to be triggered -

BACK TO SCENE

Prine's FEET drift towards the trap door - but then the CREATURE SCRAMBLES SIDEWAYS and Prine has to do the same - CAMERA PUSHES FORWARD as the creature moves OVER THE TRAPDOOR.

LISA

GROANS as the rope goes taut.

LISA

It's - too heavy! I - can't -

Immediately several people move to help her - and then the rope SNAPS!

DAPHNE

DIVES for the end and GRABS it, loops it on a wall clamp -but that puts her in reach of a thick tendril. She is SNATCHED UP from the ground. We HEAR her RIBS CRACK and she SCREAMS before she is FLUNG the length of the car.

THE CREATURE

Its attack on Daphne has moved it away from the trap door.

PRINE

Jumps onto the trap door and flicks on his flashlight!

PRINE

Over here, motherfucker!

The creature WHIRLS, CHARGES!

PRINE

Drop them!

As the thing FILLS THE FRAME

DEBBIE

YANKS the ceiling cord

THE CEILING CAGE

DROPS downwards -

SARI

frees the line Daphne tied and gets YANKED off her feet -

PRINE

FALLS through the trap door, his weight dragging Sari at the end of the line along with him! He grabs her and they both disappear just as the creature SLAMS DOWN right where they were!

IN THE BILGE

Prine and Sari and several hundred gallons of water FALL into the bilge! Above them the hatch CLOSES and the floor BUCKLES under the weight of the creature.

INT. BAGGAGE CAR - WIDE

The metal walls CRASH DOWN around the thing. Instantly, the other volunteers run in with lengths of CHAIN and PADLOCKS. They CIRCLE the impromptu cage and start to LASH IT to the FLOOR RINGS.

THE CREATURE

Its MOMENTUM carries it with a CRASH into the cage wall. The cage TILTS.

THE PASSENGERS

together they heave loops of chain around all four sides of the cage, lashing it to strong floor rings. They STRAIN to haul the cage wall downward even as the creature's TENDRILS snake out, and then they PADLOCK the chains.

THE CREATURE - WIDE SHOT

ROARS, FLINGS itself at the cage. It BUCKLES, but holds as everyone darts forward into

INT. SLEEPING CAR - NIGHT

Wainscott hits controls. Through the glass we SEE the REAR CRASH DOOR SLAM DOWN at the back of the baggage car and then our VIEW is BLOCKED as the same thing happens at this end.

INT. BILGE

Dirty water sloshes about.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

WAINSCOTT'S VOICE

(static-y)

Prine! Prine, we've got our trophy!
Are you alive down there?

Prine and Sari sit up in the shallow water. Prine fumbles for the communicator.

PRINE

Technically, I'd say so.

WAINSCOTT'S VOICE

Bravo! Work your way forward and I'll
meet you for cocktails.

PRINE

(grinning)

Roger.

He disconnects, puts his hand out for Sari. But she's staring at the darkness, the low ceiling.

SARI

It's like a coffin. A traveling
coffin.

PRINE

Come on, we'll be up top in a minute-

SARI

I mean up top. It's just a coffin
on tracks that we've turned into a
palace. And we spend our lives going
from one dying city to another but
hey, we have stereo and 3-D and pre-
drought vodka so it's okay -

PRINE

(with an edge)

Stop it!

And we realize he means it - that like her, like everyone, he's
tried to block the reality of these times from his mind -

SARI(cont'd)

- and as long as we stay underground
and indoors we don't have to see the
sky and we can pretend we don't know
about that big hole they found in it
over the South Pole-

(quieter)

- and how one day we're going to wake
up - and there won't be any sky
anymore-

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

PRINE
I don't want to hear this!

And he SLAPS her. Not because he's brave and she's scared and he wants to snap her back to reality.

But because he's as afraid as she is, and she's making him face it.

SARI
(quietly, looking at him)
I don't want to say it.

He looks at her, and then he breaks, too, grabs her, his eyes wet, not just with bilge water.

PRINE
Oh, God... Oh God...

He covers her face with kisses the way one would kiss a feverish child.

PRINE(cont'd)
I'm sorry, I didn't mean it... the things you said, I've been afraid to think...

She nods, understanding.

SARI
You know, Prine, I'm a very lucky girl: I'm one of the twenty per cent of the urban population that's still fertile, and healthy, you know? And I, I can have a baby, but I'm afraid to, because-

PRINE
(finishing it)
- because the future isn't what they promised us?

She nods...and they both go into each other's arms, two frightened and desperate people who've been alone for years.

CUT TO:

INT. ISOBAR CONTROL ROOM

We SEE the confusion in the Quebec terminal through the window. The SUPERVISOR here paces, calls out to TECHNICIANS.

SUPERVISOR
Anything?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

CONTROLLER

Nothing. All the bands to the Flyer are dead.

SUPERVISOR

If they couldn't stop here, what happens in London when they run out of tunnel?

They all know. But nobody wants to answer. CAMERA FOCUSES on a somewhat NERDY technician who isn't wearing earphones but is watching an OSCILLATOR.

NERDY TECHNICIAN

(after a moment)

Chief... you want to look at this?

The supervisor comes over. The Nerdy tech points to a LINE that keeps PEAKING on top of the steady Maglev wave.

SUPERVISOR

Christ. Maglev failure?

NERDY TECH

No, this is the Maglev wave, steady as she goes. But this interference... it's not even a watt... and's it almost like - like...

Inspired, the nerdy tech SNATCHES headphones from a nearby tech, jacks them into the oscillator.

All REACT to the steady CLICKS which are in sync with the peaking wavelength.

SUPERVISOR

A signal?

CUT TO:

INT. FORWARD BILGE - DAY

The massive MAGLEV MOTIVATORS run the length of the car as far as we can see, the tell-tale MAGLEV BLUE GLOW visible at the differential connections every twenty feet.

Prine, cleaned up now, is sitting here. He has the STOCK TICKER from the club car display in his lap. WIRES lead from it to the Maglev motivators. Above him in the open hatch we see Leslie and Sari, watching him as he TAPS at the ticker key.

LESLIE

Careful with it, sir, it's an antique.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI
You sure this will work?

PRINE
(still at it)
It'll work. Whether anybody notices
is another thing. Just hope somebody
else was an eagle scout.

A SPARK flickers on the motivator with each tap.

CUT TO:

ISOBAR CONTROL ROOM - QUEBEC - SAME TIME

All LISTEN to the tap or else watch the matching WAVE on the
screen.

NERDY TECH
It's Morse code. You got a history
buff on board.
(listening)
C-O - M - M - end of word - O - U T
-
(realizing)
Communications out!
(listening)
No... brakes... no...controls...

SUPERVISOR
Jesus Christ!

NERDY TECH
Intend to... derail... Icelandic...
Incline... repeat, intend to derail
Icelandic Incline...

SUPERVISOR
(disbelieving)
Derail on the Icelandic Incline?

The Supervisor looks at the map.

SUPERVISOR
(thinking about it)
Derail on the Icelandic Incline..?
(suddenly understanding)
Derail on the Icelandic Incline!
(whirling)
Get me Polar Rescue - NOW!

CUT TO:

INT. BILGE - DAY

Prine and the others grow depressed in the growing silence. And then - the stock ticker CLICKS back!

PRINE
(shushing their CHEERS)
U-n-d-e -
(getting it)
Understood! S-t...Stand by -

INT. ISOBAR CONTROL ROOM - CANADA - INTERCUT

Where a similar GROUP hovers over the nerdy tech, who has a KNIFE SWITCH ripped from one control panel connected to wires spilling from another one. It's not elegant, but it works.

SUPERVISOR
(dictating)
Rescue teams will be there...

PRINE
(decoding)
Rescue teams will be there... Good luck. Over.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUDSON BAY TUNNEL - DAWN

The Transpolar Flyer TRANSFORMS again, DIVES into the earth.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST CLASS - NIGHT

Ignoring her own pain, which makes her WINCE from time to time, Hedda mops Tony's brow.

Tony, meanwhile, is half in the bag, happily anesthetizing himself with booze.

TONY
'Gonna... get a new leg... state o'
the art prosti... prostitute?
Proscrustacian, whatever... top o'
the line showroom model with FM and
a CD...

HEDDA
Since it does all your thinking, maybe
they can transplant your dick to your
brain at the same time.

She rocks back on her knees, feeling the worst ATTACK yet. Lisa catches her, holds her.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Suddenly, with a THUD, Gibran drops down from the ceiling in one of his trademark entrances. As one of the other passengers checks the crawl space, then closes it, Gibran gathers his robes and his dignity, comes over to Lisa and Hedda. He holds up Hedda's MEDICINE.

GIBRAN

For the Grandmother of Lisa.

HEDDA

(stunned)

You... went back there? With that thing wandering around, you went back there for my pills?

LISA

(proudly)

I told you he was special, Grandmom.

HEDDA

(touched)

You... risked your life... for me?

GIBRAN

It is our way among the Bedoes. The old are valued...

Hedda smiles a bit at the flattery, though the word "old" makes her squirm. But the squirming has only started.

GIBRAN(cont'd)

...valued, for the knowledge they carry within their tired bodies... for the wisdom of their many decades... we honor the countless years of struggle that crease their faces with the wrinkles of time -

HEDDA

Okay, enough with the poetry!

(grabbing it)

Give me the Goddamn prescription.

Lisa brings Hedda a glass of water so she can take her pill.

HEDDA

He reminds me of my fourth husband.
He couldn't shut up either.

LISA

(pointedly)

But you married him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

HEDDA

In addition to a big mouth he had 8000 acres in Montana and a hell of a stock portfolio. What's Omar the tentmaker got?

LISA

He happens to be the Mayor of Burbank.

Hedda CHOKES for a moment on the pill.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAR

The creature has bent the CAGE WALLS completely out of shape, with little effect. Now, it considers its position - and it suddenly turns UPSIDE DOWN, HANGING on the top of one wall. That does it. The WEIGHT makes the ceiling bolts POP and the cage wall CRASHES DOWN.

NEW ANGLE

The creature shambles through the destroyed art collection, considers the massive STEEL DOOR... then LUNGES at it.

It holds.... for now.

INT. ISOBAR - TRAIN OFFICE

Prine has disassembled the coffee machine, rigs a circuit board to it.

SARI

I'm gonna miss this, Prine. It made a great cup of coffee.

PRINE

Trust me. When this blows the maglev motivators, you won't need the caffeine to wake you up.

A burst of STATIC makes them turn.

NEW ANGLE

The wall VIDEO SCREEN has flickered on. It's full of SNOW but we recognize -

PRINE

L.L. DuPre.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

(reacting)
L.L. DuPree!?

She hastily fixes her uniform. Prine puts out his hand, stops her.

DUPREE

(as the AIDE brings him
a DRINK)

We picked up your pathetic little
signal over the rails, Prine. Lab
boys pumped this signal back. I don't
know what happened out there,
but...congratulations.

(beaming)

You're twenty minutes ahead of
schedule!

PRINE

Ahead of schedule? Ahead of schedule?
Where is that fucking desk you're
sitting behind, on Mars? You Goddamn
excuse for half of a human being, do
you know how many people have died
today on this little flying dick of
yours?

DUPREE

Prine! Get a grip!

PRINE

(obscene gesture)

A grip? Hey, grip this!

SARI

(sotto)

Prine! You're pissing off the boss...

PRINE

Piss him off? If he was here, I'd
piss on him - !

DUPREE

Prine, you're fired. And after the
inquiry into this fiasco I hope to
see your sorry ass in jail!

PRINE

Yo, why wait for jail? You can see
it right now.

DUPREE - IN HIS OFFICE

CHOKES on his DRINK as Prine (on TV) MOONS him. (Sari's reaction
is almost as good at DuPree's.)

INT. TRAIN OFFICE

Prine DISCONNECTS the call as Gibran enters.

GIBRAN

I wasn't certain until I saw him with fear upon his face, back there with the creature: The one called Lardner is one of those we seek.

SARI

Then Essicker is probably the other one. They killed the man who took Reggie's ticket... and Houck...

PRINE

Maybe more.

(on her look)

Essicker was on guard duty when the crew was killed. Remember the cockpit? Blood all over...

SARI

I'll never forget it -

(realizing)

Blood.

PRINE

Remember Young, the other bodies? They looked like - mummies, dried leaves in a book - every time that thing attacked, it was the same.

SARI

(getting his point)

Then...why would it kill the crew a different way?

PRINE

Maybe it didn't kill them.

(to Gibran)

Get someone you can trust - Reggie, one of our guards. Find Lardner and lock the son of a bitch up.

GIBRAN

(exiting)

It is done.

PRINE

How much time until we hit the Icelandic Incline?

SARI

(checking map readout)

Nineteen minutes, 30 seconds.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Prine sets this time on the gizmo, hands it to Sari.

PRINE
Put this on the motivator circuit the
way I showed you.
(exiting)
I'm going to spend some quality time
with Essicker.

CUT TO:

LARDNER - IN THE SLEEPER CAR

Coming out of a rest room in the sleeper car, he REACTS. Did he hear something? He moves along carefully... suddenly Gibran LEAPS out, K.O.'s him with his staff.

Reggie catches the body.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB CAR

Essicker stands guard. Prine comes in.

PRINE
(casual)
Anything?

ESSICKER
Don't worry. You'll hear me scream
if it shows up.

PRINE
(tight smile)
I don't think you're the screamer type.
Bet you've been in some serious spots.
Never made a peep.

ESSICKER
I guess.

PRINE
Don't be modest. Like when you killed
the train engineers. All that blood?
All those cuts, to make it look like
some monster did it? Lot of guys
would've tossed their cookies. Not
you, huh?

ESSICKER
You been snorting crosswire? What
is this?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

Yeah, what is it? Smashing the equipment is like committing suicide. Unless you have a way to stop the train we don't know about... like say, a missing decellerator motherboard.

Essicker reacts, exasperated - turns - and then suddenly CHARGES, driving Prine backwards. There's a quick EXCHANGE of blows, but Prine begins hammering away at Essicker's midriff, and we might remember his earlier remarks about his gym workouts.

But Essicker has been killing people as long as Prine's been punching bags, and now he KNEES Prine, then SMACKS him with a vase from one of the tables. As Prine falls, Essicker dives on him.

Prine REACTS in time to flip Essicker over his head. Both men get up at the same time, but Prine KICKS Essicker in the face, DRIVING him into the corner of the car. Prine jumps him there, begins the body punching again, clearly winning.

CLOSER

Essicker manages to get his right hand over to his watch and grabs a knobby protrusion there. SNICK. A wire GAROTTE pulls out, and he FLINGS this over Prine's head, HEAD BUTTING him at the same time. As Prine REELS, Essicker gets behind him, starts to STRANGLE him.

NEW ANGLE

Prine struggles desperately, and the two men ROLL OVER, but Essicker's on him like a leech and it's clear Prine has only seconds.

As his eyes start to GLAZE, Prine notices the nearby CONTROL CONSOLE. He reaches out - misses the first time - then HITS a button.

ELVIS PRESLEY appears, SHIMMERING nearby.

ELVIS

(in mid-ROUTINE)

- ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time -

NEW ANGLE

Startled, Essicker breaks concentration to look. Prine SPINS, drives an elbow into Essicker's NOSE with BONE CRUNCHING IMPACT. As Essicker goes off balance, Prine stands and winds up - SMASHES the other man across the room and into a table.

Prine stands gasping, turns to Elvis.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE

Thanks, King.

Elvis does a pre-programmed but very appropriate "Hey" in Prine's direction.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR

TIGHT on the wall as Prine comes in at a furious rush, SLAMS Essicker against the bulkhead. Prine isn't the little man who sits in a cubicle all year anymore: He's a man who's almost died three times and now he has one of the men responsible in his hands.

Essicker SPITS in Prine's face. Prine KNEES him.

NEW ANGLE

Revealing Lardner under guard by Reggie and Gibran. The others watch.

PRINE

We're going to play "Jeopardy", Essicker. I'll ask the questions and you'll be in Jeopardy until I get one right, okay?

ESSICKER

Fuck you.

PRINE

Wrong answer!

He SLAMS his head against the wall.

PRINE

I say you and Lardner are working for some Biotech firm -probably one of the big International ones. Your head office was doing some illegal biological engineering out in the toxic zone where no prying eyes might see you at your all night vivisection parties. How am I doing?

ESSICKER

You're dead, Prine. You're dead and buried.

PRINE

(slamming him again)
Ooops. Sorry. Must be rigor mortis.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Feeling something in Essicker's breast pocket, Prine pulls it out. It's the missing computer part, now cracked.

SARI
The motherboard. Shot.

PRINE
We stick to the plan.
(continuing, to Essicker)
Something went wrong. The whole place went up. But you managed to save a specimen - a specimen that's so important that you were willing to kill anybody who sees it, anybody who knows about it. And you brought it aboard the train, didn't you, you bastard? You brought it aboard the train and you screwed up and you let the genie out of the bottle.

By now Prine's fury is awesome and Essicker is totally battered. Essicker finally throws up his arms, fends Prine off, conceding.

ESSICKER
All right, all right, you got it all, give yourself a fucking medal!

Prine backs away, satisfied. Essicker wipes blood from his lip, glares up at his interrogator.

PRINE
Not all, Essicker. Why is it so important? Why is it worth all our lives?

ESSICKER
I don't know! I'm just doing what I'm paid for! You don't ask questions in my business!

WAINSCOTT'S VOICE
It was over his head. No need for him to know.

PRINE
Yeah. You're probably right about-

Prine stops. Something about the... certainly in Waincott's voice.

NEW ANGLE

Revealing that Waincott is holding a very stylish, very classical and very deadly pocket pistol on Prine.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Reg and Gibran both step forward - but Lardner has already recovered his weapon and moves quickly to cover them.

SARI

My God. But... you helped us. We trusted you.

WAINSCOTT

And I, you. Please don't feel abused. Everything I did I did sincerely. After all, our goals did coincide to a point: We didn't want to crash, and we didn't want the Boromez to eat us.

PRINE

Boromez?

WAINSCOTT

Yes, I got the name from Jorge Luis Borges. The Book of Imaginary Beings. It was a creature half plant, half animal, with a voracious appetite. You see why I had to borrow the name.

HEDDA

You made that thing? Why?

WAINSCOTT

To save a dying planet, my dear lady. Think about it: The rain forests gone, the plankton all but gone, the atmosphere that isn't sucking out that awful Antarctic hole turning into nothing but carbon dioxide without any plant life to cleanse it. The world needed a new life form... one with the vitality of an animal and a plant's ability to absorb CO2. Soon it will reproduce... spread all over the deserts. Turn them green again.

GIBRAN

You mean red. With blood.

HEDDA

You want to fill the world with those... monsters? Then you're a greater monster.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

WAINSCOTT

Our unfortunately vicious cargo is only passing through a momentary ungainly stage... like your granddaughter's adolescence.

(when no one laughs)

You know, like tadpoles, before they become frogs... anyone remember tadpoles?

(a shrug)

It shouldn't have reached this size until we got it to BioDyne in London... obviously there was an error. But when it makes the final change and begins to spore, it will lose its animal qualities... become an immobile, simple and quite benign growth... spreading its leaves and roots across the dead wastelands for generations to come. You see, I'm really quite a philanthropist.

REGGIE

Bullshit. You're doing it to make a buck.

WAINSCOTT

Ah, Reggie. You see through me. I confess there is a profit to be made here... surely the man who gave us Kids 'R Us can understand that?

PRINE

So you'll make the world live again. For a price.

WAINSCOTT

One country at a time, a billion dollars at a time.

(annoyed by their expressions)

Oh, come on! I'm no different than the people who made that Aids drug, AZT. Did they give it away? Bloody hell they did. Fifty dollars a pill. Anyone here been in hospital lately? A thousand for a CAT scan. Insulin, little diabetic girl? Sorry, mum and dad have to pay.

(cold)

It's the way of the world. And when the whole world is the patient... the doctor bill can be very steep.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (3)

PRINE

And what about all of us? We've seen
your little scientific breakthrough.
If we talk...

WAINSCOTT

(finishing the thought)
I lose my competitive edge. No, I'm
afraid that in the world of biological
research, we'd have to call all of
you...

(finally)
...an unfortunate side effect.

The ALARM rings.

SARI

(realizing)
The Icelandic incline!

WAINSCOTT

And Bon Voyage.

Wainscott and the others back away and exit the car, SLAMMING the
door behind them.

Prine, Reggie and Gibran rush it. It's locked. The ALARM rings
again.

SARI

We have to get into the pods.

PRINE

(at the door, edgy)
You heard what he said. This isn't
over. He's planning something -

SARI

Prine, come on!

She runs to the microphone, speaks into it.

SARI

Attention, all passengers and crew.
Attention. Proceed to the nearest
Safety Pod and secure your seat belt.
Stand by for emergency procedures.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARCTIC CIRCLE - (MINIATURE)

The Transpolar Flyer ROARS upwards out of the Arctic Circle end of
the Canadian Tunnel.

THE TRAIN - SEVERAL CUTS

As it TRANSFORMS again from SUBTERRANEAN to SURFACE MONORAIL MODE.

THE TRAIN

In its new configuration it PICKS UP SPEED.

ATLANTIC COASTLINE

On the shore we see several WHALE SKELETONS. The train LEAVES the ground supported monorail and heads OUT TO SEA.

WIDE SHOT - ARCTIC CIRCLE

The train begins to cross the ARCTIC OCEAN on a MONORAIL which is supported by GIANT PYLONS like offshore OIL RIGS. The pylons and monorail stretch to the HORIZON.

As the train ROARS past, we see that the GLACIER on the shoreline is "CALVING": It is SHEDDING mountain sized CHUNKS which CRASH into the SEA with the SOUND of an ARTILLERY BARRAGE.

It's true, then: The poles are melting.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON - DAY

CAMERA PANS a LONDON which is as recognizable - and as strange - as the Los Angeles where we began. The Thames has RISEN THIRTY FEET, lapping just below the span of the now useless Tower Bridge.

New SIDEWALKS and TRAMWAYS have been erected at the higher levels of the taller buildings. CAMERA PUSHES to a late 20th century one with a logo: BIODYNE.

WAINSCOTT'S VOICE

(filtered, over shortwave)

Come in, Fly Rod. Come in, Fly Rod.

INT. BIODYNE OFFICE - DAY

TILT UP from a classic TABLE TOP MAP like the ones in every Battle of Britain movie. But this one is of the NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, and the young woman moving a marker isn't a Wren, she's a tough looking MERCENARY in battle trousers and a black T-shirt that shows some serious pecs and 'ceps.

A half dozen OTHER MERCENARIES are sitting around, drinking coffee, playing cards.

From the atmosphere and the map, it is clear that these people have been monitoring the entire Transpolar run. O'BANNON - a battle-hardened IRA killer - is at the transmitter here.

O'BANNON

This is Fly Rod. We read you. Over.

INT. WAINSCOTT'S STATEROOM - INTERCUT

While Waincott uses a briefcase SHORTWAVE, Lardner and Essicker have rolled up the carpet and opened a hatchway into the bilge. They're CUTTING CABLES down there.

WAINSCOTT

Roger, Fly Road. Trout requires extraction. Repeat, Trout requires extraction before Game Warden shows up.

IMMEDIATE REACTION from the Mercenaries: All right! Action! O'Bannon waves for silence, signals the woman at the map.

WAINSCOTT(Cont'd)

(checking his own map)
Co-ordinates will be approximately
ummm.... 19 degrees Longitude, sixty
degrees ten seconds N. Latitude...

At the table top map, the female merc runs marker ribbons in, intersecting the model Isobar monorail.

MERC GIRL

Got it. South Central Iceland.

O'BANNON

Confirmed, Trout. Over.

WAINSCOTT

Bring a containment bottle for the specimen and portable hi powered lights. Repeat, portable hi powered lights. Over.

O'BANNON

Roger, Trout. Over and out.

All DISCONNECT. The Mercs throw on jackets, battle vests - grab weapons.

LONDON - EXT. ROOF BIODYNE BUILDING - DAY

The Mercs run out of the roof stairwell, loaded for bear. Two have the big CONTAINMENT BOTTLE on a dolly. Others carry the hi-powered lights. All are armed.

The RUSTED GUARDRAILS, WEATHER-BEATEN PAINT and DEBRIS on the roof show us that the HELIPAD HERE has been long neglected... but now O'BANNON throws aside a CAMOUFLAGE TARP and reveals a GUNSHIP CHOPPER in CHERRY CONDITION.

As the others load it, O'Bannon gets inside.

INT. COCKPIT

O'Bannon grins as he runs his hands over the controls. It's been a long time. He TURNS OVER THE MOTOR.

Behind him the cargo doors CLOSE. The female mercenary gives him a thumbs up. He nods, feathers the controls.

BIODYNE - HIGH ANGLE

As the 'chopper LIFTS OFF, the BACKWASH blowing a decade's worth of pollution and dirt from the helipad, REVEALING the BIODYNE LOGO.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISOBAR TRAIN - ON RAILS (MINIATURE)

It crosses from over the sea to the Icelandic coastline.

INT. OBSERVATION CAR - DAY

The COLLISION KLAXON SOUNDS. We HEAR the COUNTDOWN Sari demonstrated so long ago.

PA SYSTEM

Three minutes four seconds. Three minutes three seconds...

The passengers put on their seat belts and assume crash positions.

INT. CLUB CAR

The passengers here do the same thing.

LESLIE

starts to secure the bottles, realizes it's hopeless. Grabbing several choice bottles Leslie heads for a seat.

OTHER CARS - QUICK CUTS

As everybody prepares for the crash, we see a range of emotion: Fear: Resignation: Bravery: Panic.

INT. WAINSCOTT'S SUITE - DAY

Total calm here. Waincott stubs out a cigar... gets into his seat. The others across from him do the same - adding a check of the BULLETS in their clips to the normal crash procedure.

CAMERA TILTS into the hole in the floor. WE SEE TUBES dripping HYDRAULIC FLUID and the sole uncut one.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION CAR - UPPER LEVEL

Sari begins the second sequence of the crash procedure... REACTS to a READ OUT: "EMERGENCY POD HYDRAULIC FAILURE CARS 1 - 4A and 4C - 6."

BACK TO SCENE

SARI
My God - the Pods!

PRINE
(also seeing it)
Everything except 4B -
(realizing)
Wainscott -
(realizing)
The son of a bitch - I'll kill him-

SARI
There's no time! We go off the rails
in 90 seconds, it'll take that long
to go back there - !

Prine realizes she's right - looks down at the people strapping themselves in: Men: Women: Children.

PRINE
My plan. My brilliant fucking plan!
They finally let Russ Prine out of
his little cubbyhole and the first
thing he did was kill 200 people.
Jesus!

SARI
Stop it! You were right, it was
brilliant. It is brilliant. There's
a manual override for the hydraulics!

She runs down the stairs. Hopeful, he follows.

INT. REDUNDANT CONTROL PANEL

where she supervised the decoupling earlier. She opens it, touches the CODE KEYS of an emergency panel, revealing the MANUAL POD LEVER. The COUNTDOWN continues, O.S.

PA SYSTEM
Seventy five... seventy four...
seventy three...

SARI
Get in your seat, Prine.

PRINE
Okay. Let's go.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

SARI

Maybe you don't know the train specs
as well as you think.

(looking at him)

Like I said... it's a manual override.
Someone has to stay and work it.

Pause. The COUNTDOWN CONTINUES.

PRINE

I've had enough of your pulling rank,
Sari. I'm an Executive Vice President.
Haul ass.

SARI

You're a pencil pushing decoy and
you're not calling the shots. Get
in a pod.

REGGIE'S VOICE

Listen to her, Prine.

CAMERA ADJUSTS to show Reggie, Young's gun in his hand.

REGGIE(cont'd)

(to Sari)

And you listen to him.

PRINE

Reggie, this isn't your responsibility.
You don't know what's going to happen
here -

REGGIE

You think I'm stupid, because I didn't
finish high school? Coming up from
the streets I seen enough fists stop
in enough faces to understand that
Isaac Newton shit. Action, reaction.
Yeah, I know what happens when we hit.
Now get in a pod.

PRINE

(stepping closer)

That's a popular gun, Reg. But you
know what? I think that before he
died, Officer Young used all the
bullets.

REGGIE

Don't call my bluff, Prine.

Prine hears what we hear in his voice: He's begging, not
threatening. And that's what makes Prine hesitate.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - (2)

REGGIE

(sotto)

Christ, Prine, what's left for me?
You think I wanna go back and watch
my company go down the tubes because
I'm in charge again? This way, I go
out at the top. You said you found
my body, right?

PRINE

Right.

REGGIE

Then I want one favor.
(handing over a note)
Tell them you found this in my pocket.

PRINE

"Last will and testament?"

REGGIE

Yeah. Don't tell nobody I back dated
it.

DEBBIE

(coming over)

Reggie, come on, we gotta get in a
pod - Reg?

(seeing the gun)

Reggie, what are you doing?

REGGIE

What I never did before, baby.
(showing the paper)
I'm taking care of you. It's all here.
How you're my heir... how...
(losing it)
You're my wife.

DEBBIE

Reg, no - please - we were gonna go
first class all the way -

REGGIE

That's what I'm doing. Take her,
Prine.

Prine pulls the girl away. Hedda helps.

HEDDA

Come on, Honey -

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN

rushing along above the black and rocky Icelandic terrain -

CUT TO:

INT. ISOBAR HQ - CONTROL ROOM

The staff here watches the blip while a COUNTDOWN plays -

HQ COUNTDOWN
Fifteen seconds to Incline crest...
fourteen seconds... fifteen...

SUPERVISOR
(into phone)
--air rescue, you are cleared for
immediate take off. Repeat, immediate
take off.

CUT TO:

INT. ISOBAR TRAIN - LONG DOLLY SHOTS

The EMERGENCY COUNTDOWN playing in empty cars while the KLAXON
SOUNDS -

EMERGENCY COUNTDOWN
Eleven...ten... nine... eight...

THE CREATURE

REACTING to the NOISE, the FLICKERING EMERGENCY LIGHTS -POUNDING
at the forward bulkhead, which BUCKLES -

WAINSCOTT'S COMPARTMENT

Waincott takes a last reluctant puff on a cigar, stubs it out as
his Pod automatically closes -

INT. FIRST CLASS

Everybody in the pods, Prine beside Sari, Tony alone and strapped
in sideways, Lisa with Gibran, Hedda strapping in a hysterical
Debbie.

Prine throws Reg a two finger salute.

COUNTDOWN
Two... one.

Reggie THROWS the SWITCH. The emergency pods CLOSE.

DEBBIE
(as she's hidden from view)
Reggie - !

CUT TO:

INT. BILGE - MAGLEV LIFTERS

The crazy Mr. Coffee timing device GOES. There's a FLASH of electricity as the POLARITY is violently SHIFTED. Screen WHITES OUT as the equipment SEIZES. Then - SILENCE as the Maglevs SHORT OUT.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

It SAILS FROM THE TRACK, every car in line, its initial ARC as smooth as those jet take offs of twenty years ago.

No SOUND except the RUSHING WIND.

INT. FIRST CLASS

Reggie, hanging on to the lever, takes one last shot of liquor in the silence -

EXT. TRAIN

The neat curve of the train goes askew. It starts to TWIST and ROLL and FALL.

Then it HITS, FLIPPING, plowing up the earth, CRASHING, CRUMBLING, EXPLODING.

INT. SEVERAL SURVIVAL PODS - ON OUR CHARACTERS

enduring BONE JARRING VIBRATION and ROTATION -

REGGIE

is SWEPT from our sight as the car DISINTEGRATES.

INT. ISOBAR CONTROL - QUEBEC - DAY

The BLIP BLINKING WILDLY while "SUBSONIC DERAILMENT -SUBSONIC DERAILMENT" lights up -

CUT TO:

EXT. ISOBAR WRECK

The front SMASHED and STILL, the middle still FLIPPING OVER as the last car FOLDS across the earlier ones.

It STOPS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISOBAR RESCUE BASE - NOVA SCOTIA

OXYGEN MASKED GROUND CREWS wave two RESCUE CHOPPERS into the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISOBAR WRECK - HIGH ANGLE

CAMERA PANS the debris. We see luggage, broken dishes, the ruin of all the luxury. And then we hear the SOUNDS of hissing gears and SEE the pods OPENING. People begin to STUMBLE OUT.

INT. FIRST CLASS

Prine and Sari crawl out, shaken. Immediately COUGH in the thin air. They strap on the oxygen boosters from the pod.

Seeing some small FIRES, Prine finds an extinguisher, uses it.

THE SLEEPER CAR WRECKAGE

The three men put on their masks... REACT to the SOUND of VOICES.

WAINSCOTT
Some one else survived?

ESSICKER
(checking his gun)
Hold that thought.

He signals Lardner and they move cautiously through the wreckage. Waincott takes the transmitter from the pod, ACTIVATES it.

PRINE AND SARI

They come out into the harsh daylight - and that's when BULLETS ping around them. They DIVE for cover. Prine SHOUTS back into the wreckage.

PRINE
Stay down!

ESSICKER AND LARDNER

ESSICKER
(shouting over his shoulder)
Waincott! You got a shitload of witnesses up here!

He waves Lardner forward so they can flank what's left of First Class.

PRINE AND SARI

PRINE
Find me a sea rescue pack.

SARI
We're on dry land.

PRINE
Don't get technical.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Sari turns, moves on her haunches through the wreckage.

CAMERA ADJUSTS to show Lardner, lurking behind a chunk of fuselage. He STEPS OUT, AIMS - she GASPS - and then

GIBRAN

Leaps into view, SLASHES the gun out of Lardner's hand and then UPPERCUTS him with the other end of the staff.

As Sari GRINS, Gibran BOWS - and then a BULLET tears through his shoulder. As he FALLS we see ESSICKER in the B.G., his gun SMOKING. Essicker moves to a new position.

LISA

emerging from her pod, she SCREAMS.

LISA

Gibran!

She runs forward before Hedda can stop her, cradles the Bedoe in her arms.

WAINSCOTT

HEARING the GUNPLAY, he speaks into the transmitter.

WAINSCOTT

Fly rod, this is Trout. Arm your weapons.

INT. MERC 'CHOPPER - EN ROUTE

WAINSCOTT

(filtered, over radio)
Repeat, arm your weapons. You may have some clean up work.

O'Conner ACTIVATES the weapons systems. Behind him, WEAPONS are COCKED.

CUT TO:

PRINE

DIVES and ROLLS between pieces of wreckage as BULLETS hit around him. Now he can see Sari. She holds up the sea rescue kit. He nods. She TOSSES IT.

Too short. To reach it he has to expose himself. He takes a deep breath... thinks. Takes a slug of Maalox. RUNS. BULLETS hit all around him - he grabs the kit - and then two bullets HIT HIM. He falls, ROLLING.

WAINSCOTT - BY THE TRAIN FUSELAGE

He GASPS and COUGHS. Realizes his oxygen kit is defective.

He sees another one a few yards away. Moves towards it. Then the SHADOW falls on him. He looks up.

The Boromez is right there. Wounded. Agonized. Furious.

Wainscott looks around. Nowhere to go. He looks back at the creature with a perverse smile.

WAINSCOTT

Come to papa.

And - with a rending of MEAT and a tearing of FLESH - it does, the creature's BODY hiding everything but Wainscott's HANDS as they SHRIVEL TO BONE.

PRINE

bleeding, he REACTS to a PAIR of FEET: Essicker. He AIMS his gun down at Prine.

ESSICKER

Looks like it's your turn to play Jeopardy.

Prine pulls his hand out of the rescue kit. He's holding a FLARE PISTOL. He FIRES it at POINT BLANK RANGE.

REVERSE ANGLE

The HOLE in Essicker is a FOOT ACROSS. Essicker looks down to see DAYLIGHT for a second before his EYES ROLL and he DROPS.

PRINE

Sorry. That wasn't phrased as a question.

Suddenly BULLETS again, from above. Prine TURNS, sees the Merc Chopper APPROACHING.

INT. CHOPPER

They see the scene below, bank. O'Bannon puts his finger on his rocket launchers... FIRES.

BELOW

A DIRECT HIT on what's left of the sleeper car. Prine goes FLYING.

THE CREATURE

moves too slowly - HALF THE CAR falls across its back -

PRINE

Shot all to shit. Something SLITHERS around his ANKLE. But it's only a ROPE. Sari pulls him to cover as the 'chopper PASSES. A pathetic SQUEAL from somewhere. Both of them look over at

THE CREATURE

PINNED under some wreckage. Its forward TENDRILS are folded back from its "face" and the noises it is making are not unlike the ones it made long ago when it was trapped and helpless.

Like now.

BACK TO SCENE

SARI

It's dying.

PRINE

No... something else.

HIS POV

Its body is SPLITTING along a CREASE. COLORS fluctuate there.

BACK TO SCENE

PRINE

Christ. The final mutation.

The creature FLOPS and FLUTTERS. It puts all of its tendrils and limbs against the rocky slope... there's an EFFORT and then the front half of the creature breaks free from the rear.

SUDDENLY the ROAR of an ENGINE. The Merc Chopper DIVES on them again. Prine and Sari take cover as BULLETS HIT all around. Prine looks out. SEES

AN INTACT MAGLEV UNIT

throw clear by the crash. An intermittent BLUE SPARK shows us it's still ENERGIZED.

BACK TO SCENE

Getting an idea, Prine runs towards it.

THE MERC CHOPPER

Swings around for another pass. They see Prine. COCK weapons.

PRINE

As they DIVE towards him, GUNS BLAZING, Prine CRANKS the overload wheel on the maglev unit. It SIZZLES and GLOWS.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

Prine's WATCH flies off his wrist and sticks to it - so do his CUFF LINKS.

He grins, stands his ground. The line of BULLETS from the chopper DANCES CLOSER.

PRINE

Come on you bastards. You want to fuck with mother nature? Fuck with me first.

THE CHOPPER

Almost directly overhead. And then the CONTROLS SPARK BLUE. They're in the MAGLEV FIELD.

THE MAIN ROTOR

The cotter pin UNSCREWS. The ROTOR FLIES AWAY.

BACK TO SCENE

The chopper pitches INTO THE MOUNTAIN ABOVE PRINE. EXPLODES. Prine DIVES for cover as DEBRIS and FIRE rain down. After a moment, he gets up.

And sees he's beside the DYING CREATURE. It turns its "head", "looks" towards -

A FIELD - BELOW

BACK TO SCENE

PRINE

The earth. That's it, isn't it? You have to get off the rocks, back to the earth?

No reply, of course... but the weakened thing makes a feeble attempt to move forward.

Prine hesitates... moves towards it as Sari appears.

SARI

Prine, don't touch it -!

PRINE

(weak)

We have to let the genie out of the bottle, Sari. If it spores in the open, there's no secret anymore.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

PRINE (Cont'd)
(to the thing)
I don't know if you can hear, or think,
or understand. But I believe you can
feel, because whatever you've done
was done because you were afraid...
because you wanted to stay alive.
Believe me, I know the feeling.

He slowly extends his HAND.

SARI
Prine, no -!

Too late. The tendrils WRAP around Prine's ARM.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Prine sucks in his breath. But - it doesn't hurt him!

Gasping in his oxygen mask, wounded himself, Prine DRAGS the creature onto the earth with his last ounce of strength. COUGHING, he discards his empty oxygen booster. Sinks to his knees. REACTS to

THE CREATURE

It regards him with an expression - if we can call it that -that could almost be gratitude.

Then it sinks its tendrils into the EARTH. SHIVERS. Begins to SPLIT OPEN down that seam.

PRINE

Dizzy, amazed - he watches as

THE BOROMEZ

gives him one last look. Then it TURNS INSIDE OUT, a NETWORK OF WRITHING ROOTS extending from within the body, - roots which now BURROW into the GROUND with FRENTIC energy.

Suddenly it's gone, like a whale diving into the sea.

PRINE

Startled, he whirls - looks around - Sari moves forward - and then the ground PITCHES violently -

PRINE
Stay back!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

He tries to make it to the rocks but then THE EARTH EXPLODES under his feet and a giant THING is rising beneath him -

SARI

Knocked down by the growing form, she watches in shock as

PRINE

is carried SKYWARD in a shuddering fist-like GROWTH whose color and texture tells us it is the Boromez in its final form. As he SCREAMS for breath, his chest near breaking in the tight grip, the limbs suddenly RELAX and OPEN. He almost FALLS, catches himself. Reacts to -

THE ALIEN TREE - WIDER

which indeed is what he is inside. Just as he absorbs that, PODS on the limbs OPEN, revealing beautiful FLOWERS which now EMIT a WINDFALL of FAIRY DUST: They're SEED PUFFS, like dandelion spores, but in SPARKLING COLORS never dreamed of.

PRINE

DUCKS, then LAUGHS WHEEZINGLY as the seeds float past him, harmless - CAMERA FOLLOWS them into the sky.

As Prine drops down from the tree, Sari comes up behind him, as he comes down the tree, amazement on her face.

SARI

(catching one)
Seeds...?

PRINE

(taking it from her)
Hope.

He BLOWS it away. It joins the others. He grins, puts his arm around her, under the only tree we have seen.

HIGH ANGLE - THE TRAIN WRECKAGE

As the survivors slowly pick their way through it, the twinkling SPORES drift across the scene.

CUT TO:

INT. VICTORIA STATION - LONDON

ELECTRIC POWERED RESCUE VEHICLES pull up, discharging the survivors of the Isobar wreck into a MOB of people who expected to meet the train and the MEDIA attracted by the news.

HEDDA

As Tony is carried past on a gurney, Hedda vamps for her friends and the press.

HEDDA

-and of course you know my
Granddaughter... and this is her
fiancee... The Lord Mayor of Burbank.

Gibran, one arm in a sling, BOWS regally, impressing the Brits.

DEBBIE

Getting out of the vehicle, showing a lot of pretty leg, looking
forlorn but head held high.

REPORTERS (AD-LIB)

That's her, the one with Rossiter-They
said he left her everything-Give us
some leg, sweetheart -

She tries to get through the crowd. Then a HAND in evening
clothes grabs her arm, leads the way.

NEW ANGLE

It is the PETROL HEIR from the HOLOGRAM. Somehow in the flesh
he ain't that bad.

PETROL HEIR

Sorry about that. Fleet Street thinks
it's open season on everyone. Saw
you on the news holo. My condolences.

DEBBIE

Thanks.
(noticing his clothes)
Goin' to a party?

PETROL HEIR

Yes. Royal Charity Ball. Heard of
it?

DEBBIE

Heard of it? Me and Reggie paid for
half of it.

PETROL HEIR

That's right, you did. You know, I
don't want to sound crass, but with
the publicity and all, if you put in
an appearance it might really boost
the take. All for a good cause. Of
course, I understand if you'd rather
not-

CONTINUED

CONTINUED -

DEBBIE

No, no. Reggie paid plenty for this
soiree. And I'm gonna do him proud.

He gallantly takes her arm.

PRINE AND SARI

Ignored, hidden behind a Holo Kiosk. They KISS.

PRINE

(after a moment)

Sari...

SARI

Ummmm?

PRINE

If we're going to be, well, you know..?
An item? Maybe you could take off
your heels?

SARI

They are off. I lost them in the
wreck.

He looks at her. So she's tall. She's also his.

He shrugs. GRINS. They move off, arm in arm. But as they pass
a trash bin he tosses something in it.

ANGLE ON TRASH BIN

As the lid swings back and forth, we SEE what it is:

His bottle of Maalox.

THE END