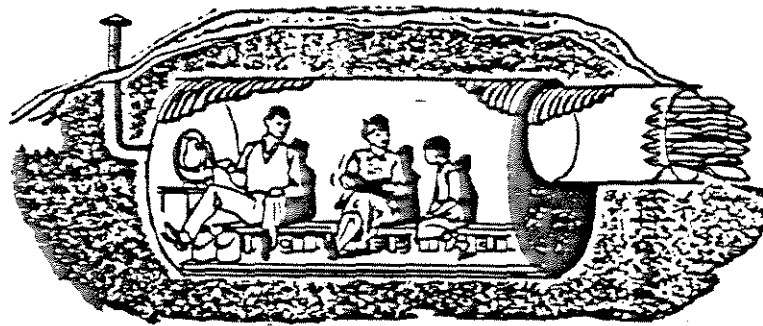


Matinee

By Charlie Haas

Second Draft
May 31, 1991



This prefab backyard shelter for four can be bought for under \$150. The price includes the corrugated steel-pipe unit (4-foot diameter), entry and air vent pipes.

"Tell us your phobias and we will tell you what you are afraid of."

- Robert Benchley

AN ATOMIC BOMB EXPLODES

in BLACK AND WHITE stock footage. A brilliant FLASH, and then the mushroom cloud, gravid with fallout, rising ominously. In a SERIES of shots, also B&W stock, we SEE the bomb's devastation:

The SHOCK WAVE blows HOUSES away as if they were matchstick models.

The rolling FIRESTORM sears a stand of trees from the ground.

The poisonous CLOUD spreads to fill the horizon...

CUT TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

We're still in black and white, on a studio sound stage. Lights and other MOVIE MAKING PARAPHERNALIA are prominent.

LAWRENCE WOOLSEY, discovered in a director's chair with his name on it, turns to face CAMERA. He's a cheerful man having fun by looking grave. Part theatrical impresario and part carnival hustler, he's sharply dressed for the time -- the early 1960s.

WOOLSEY

Yes, the atomic bomb is terrible.
But more terrible still are the
effects of...atomic mutation.
Hello, I'm Lawrence Woolsey. And
I'm here to warn you about
something that could happen --
something that does happen in my
newest picture...

CUT TO:

AN ANT HILL - B&W STOCK FOOTAGE

Industrious ANTS scramble over the dirt as Woolsey narrates.

WOOLSEY (V.O.)

Observe the ant -- a miniature
marvel of social cooperation and
prodigious strength. But if a
man and an ant were exposed to
radiation simultaneously...

Hokey animated "radiation waves" are SUPERED over the ant hill.

CUT TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - WOOLSEY AS BEFORE

WOOLSEY
...the result would be terrible
indeed... for the result would
be -- MANT!

On the word "MANT,"

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AN APARTMENT

Still in black and white. An ACTRESS SCREAMS and backs away, as the shadow of a huge, tingling ANT LEG falls across her body. The colossal title MANT flashes over the action.

A NEW ANGLE, in COLOR, REVEALS...

INT. STRAND THEATER

...that this TRAILER is being shown in a MOVIE THEATER. The house is only half-full, but two patrons are glued to the action on the screen: GENE INGRAM, 14, and his brother DENNIS, 7.

As the hairy legs of the unseen ant-creature push the woman to the wall, Dennis covers his eyes.

GENE
Dennis, you're gonna miss it!

Dennis uncovers his fright-widened eyes, but keeps his hand poised to cover them again at an instant's notice.

On the screen, Woolsey is back on camera.

WOOLSEY
I feel I should tell you: the
story of Mant is based on
scientific fact... on theories
that have appeared in national
magazines!

He vaguely brandishes a few magazines, too fast for us to glimpse their covers, and puts them aside.

INT. APARTMENT

The trailer returns to the apartment where the woman was menaced by the giant ant legs. Now, she lies on the floor, staring up in horror as the SHADOW of a grotesque antennaed HEAD falls across her tight-sweatered chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY (V.O.)

Yes, these terrible events could happen -- in your town... in your home...

In the audience, Dennis peeks out between two fingers, his free hand gripping Gene's arm. As Gene enjoys his little brother's distress, the trailer returns to

INT. SOUND STAGE - WOOLSEY AS BEFORE

WOOLSEY

... and they will happen in this theater.

As CAMERA moves in on the doomsaying Woolsey, an ANNOUNCER takes over the trailer narration:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Lawrence Woolsey -- the master of movie horror! In 1960, he hypnotized you...

The trailer CUTS to a fiendish-looking ACTOR staring down the CAMERA, gesturing hypnotically. Gene blanks his eyes and speaks in a monotone:

GENE

Yes, Master... I will.

DENNIS

Huh?

Gene, in an apparent hypnotic state, grabs Dennis's shoulders and pushes the kid down into his seat.

DENNIS (CONT.)

Gene, quit it!

Gene "snaps out of it."

GENE

Wh -- where am I? Oh...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

In 1961, he insured you against death by fright...

The trailer CUTS to an image of a paper certificate headed "INSURANCE POLICY." This DISSOLVES to a maniacally laughing, rubber-masked GHOUL stabbing something O.S. with a bloody knife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

See that guy? His brains come out.

Dennis flinches, terrified.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Now, in 1962, he exterminates you...

The trailer CUTS to a panicked ACTOR turning a corner in a dark corridor -- and we get a fast GLIMPSE of the man-ant MONSTER that suddenly confronts him. It's a perfect shock reveal, and this time Gene jumps along with Dennis.

GENE

Aaghh!

With Dennis watching him, Gene quickly resumes his calm expression, while, on screen, SCREAMING ACTORS run away from an overturned STREETCAR...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...with MANT!

ACTOR

Run! Run for your lives!

Behind the actors, a gargantuan ANT LEG stomps into FRAME, making Dennis cover his eyes again, as banner TITLES promise: MANT -- HALF MAN...HALF ANT...ALL TERROR!

The trailer is replaced on screen by a scratchy old LEADER that says COMING SATURDAY - MATINEE SHOW!

As the soft house LIGHTS come up, Dennis is rooted, his hand still over his eyes. Gene bends close to him, runs a few creeping-ant FINGERS over the back of the kid's neck, and simultaneously breathes a creepy insect RASP into his ear. Dennis YELPS, uncovers his eyes.

DENNIS

Gene! God!

GENE

Yeah, it's just me -- this time.

EXT. DUVAL STREET - SUNSET

The two boys emerge from the STRAND, a slightly faded Deco movie palace of '20s vintage, and walk up Duval Street, the honky-tonk main drag of Key West, Florida.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Even in October, the air is soupy, and the famous Keys SUNSET bathes the lightly-dressed LOCALS and TOURISTS on the street.

GENE

That was good today, Dennis. You only covered your eyes up twice.

DENNIS

But -- that couldn't really happen, could it? With the ant?

GENE

In fact, it has happened. Up in Tennessee, about a year ago...

(shakes his head)

This poor bastard got trapped in a uranium mine with a click beetle. He combined with it.

DENNIS

What?

GENE

Six feet tall. They killed him finally, but a lot of people were deaf by then. CLIIICK!

DENNIS

(shudders)

The poor bastard.

GENE

Don't curse, Dennis.

They go through a GATE marked U.S. NAVY - KEY WEST OPERATING BASE.

EXT. NAVY BASE (CONTINUOUS)

Gene and Dennis walk past drab, jammed-together military buildings that contrast with the bright tropical plantings.

GENE

Yeah... it could happen right here. The Navy's doing all kinds of experiments.

He spots a piece of heavy MACHINERY nearby, points at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE (CONT.)

That unit's atomic. One of these palmetto bugs or something gets in front of that -- forget it. Maybe the bug saw its mom and dad get crushed by a little kid... their guts and everything. So it goes looking for a little kid it can crush. Revenge. That's what insects like --

They've reached a compound of modest buildings: married personnel housing. Gene's talk has Dennis wide-eyed, but it's interrupted as ANDY, a kid Gene's age, comes up to them.

In contrast to Gene's attempt at regular-kid clothes -- chinos and a madras shirt-jac -- Andy is all military: brush haircut, Sea Scout shirt, and an AIR RIFLE in hand.

ANDY

Hey, Gene, I'm going down and shoot some tree frogs. Wanna come?

With mouth sound-effects, Andy mimes the BB gun going off, and a fat frog blowing up.

GENE

No thanks, Andy.

He leads Dennis to the door of their modest home.

GENE (CONT.)

(to Dennis)

Disgusting.

INT. GENE'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

The house is small, with an impersonal feeling to the furnishings -- it's a place where families live for brief periods of time before the Navy moves them on.

ANNE, the boys' mother, meets them at the door. At 35, she's pretty, but a little worn by the annual relocations of military life. As Gene breezes in through the screen door, Dennis dives into Anne's arms and hugs her hard.

GENE

Hi, Mom.

ANNE

Hi -- oh, Gene, what did you take him to?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

It was just a coming attraction.

DENNIS

It was a giant bug.

ANNE

That's not real, sweetie.

DENNIS

It's not?

GENE

No, no, of course not.

He says this as if humoring Anne, while winking at Dennis, who cringes.

ANNE

(to Gene)

Thanks a lot.

GENE

He can take it. Can't you, squirt?

DENNIS

You're a squirt.

Anne loosens Dennis's grip, and both boys follow her into

INT. KITCHEN

Also small. The open cupboard shelves are full of Jell-O, Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, and other convenience standbys. Anne gets a slice of bologna from the fridge, gives it to Dennis.

DENNIS

I want to see that movie.

ANNE

With the bug? You'll have bad dreams.

DENNIS

Uh uh. I promise.

ANNE

We'll see.

Dennis goes out, eating his bologna. Anne resumes throwing a casserole together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNE

You should have heard his heart going. You're scaring him half to death.

GENE

It's good for him, Mom. There's a lot of scary stuff out there.

ANNE

Uh huh.

INT. LIVING ROOM - WITH DENNIS

Dennis sits on the floor, watching Art Linkletter's People Are Funny on the console TV. Art has a WOMAN from the audience up on stage, and is showing her a BOX with a hole in the top.

LINKLETTER

... that's right, one hundred dollars just for putting your hand in this box. But, one little thing -- there are rats in there.

The woman, Art's audience, and Dennis all recoil.

LINKLETTER (CONT.)

Okay, now, wait a minute -- what if we said two hundred dollars?

INT. KITCHEN

Gene is slicing cheese for the casserole topping.

ANNE

You could have asked that Andy to come in, you know.

GENE

In our house?

ANNE

Well, he's your age...

GENE

So what? He's a jerk.

ANNE

But maybe he knows some kids you would like. If you want to make friends...

A sore point.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

Do we have to talk about that?

ANNE

All I said --

GENE

The guys down here don't want to be friends with me. It's like every place else -- I live on the base, I don't talk like they do, and they've all known each other since nursery school. They think I'm "weird." Anyway, we're just gonna move again.

ANNE

Dad says we might stay here a few years.

At the mention of Dad, Gene's temper softens, and he lowers his voice.

GENE

You hear anything today?

ANNE

Nope. I was here all afternoon. It must be some place they can't make calls from, or radio -- this whole deal was so sudden...

GENE

Maybe it's the Congo.

ANNE

Don't even say that. That's so far.

GENE

Yeah, but there's this great voodoo and stuff. He could get a mask with a native curse on it.

ANNE

Wonderful.

Gene finishes with the cheese, goes back into

INT. LIVING ROOM

On TV, the studio audience APPLAUDS Art Linkletter's victim as she snatches her hand out of the box and accepts a wad of cash from Art.

LINKLETTER

And now, let me show you what you
were so scared of --

He opens the box and pulls out a handful of "rats" -- ladies' hair extenders.

LINKLETTER (CONT.)

The official People Are Funny
rats. That's what you said felt
so terrible...

GENE

Rank-out.

Suddenly, the Linkletter show disappears, replaced by a "NEWS BULLETIN" card.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt this program to bring
you an emergency address by
President Kennedy, from the White
House.

A tense JOHN F. KENNEDY, seated at his desk, appears on the screen.

DENNIS

Wha'd they stop it for?

GENE

Sshh, wait a second --

KENNEDY (ON TV)

...the Soviet military build-up
on the island of Cuba. Within
the past week, unmistakable
evidence has established the fact
that a series of offensive missile
bases is now in preparation on
that imprisoned island. The
purposes of these bases can be
none other than to provide a
nuclear strike capability against
the Western Hemisphere...

GENE

(calls into kitchen)
Hey Mom?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anne comes in.

KENNEDY (ON TV)
...Each of these missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral...

DENNIS
They're gonna bomb us?

GENE
No. Sshhh --

Gene gestures Dennis quiet. There's a tapping at the screen door: TRUDY, a Navy wife about Anne's age, standing there. Anne waves her inside.

TRUDY
Oh, you have it on...

KENNEDY (ON TV)
...To halt this offensive build-up, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back...

TRUDY
(to Anne)
Is Bill... ?

ANNE
(nods)
Is Eric... ?

TRUDY
Uh huh.

Still watching Kennedy, Anne squeezes Trudy's arm and puts an arm over Dennis's shoulder, as Gene watches them.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - LATER

Gene and Dennis share a small bedroom with bunk beds. Gene pads into the dark room quietly, but Dennis is awake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENNIS
Gene?

GENE
Yeah.

DENNIS
Is Dad in Cuba?

Gene turns on the light, revealing a jumble of schoolbooks and clothes, Nock-hockey set, and the kids' drawings of monsters and rocket ships.

GENE
He's on a ship over near there.
There's a bunch of ships --
they're gonna stop the Russians
from taking any more weapons in
there.

DENNIS
How?

GENE
If the Russian ship comes, they
make them stop, and then they go
on there and search it.

DENNIS
Does Dad have to go on?

GENE
He might.

DENNIS
What if the Russians don't let
them?

GENE
I don't know.

DENNIS
I'm scared.

GENE
Everybody's scared now. Everybody
in the world. But you have to
try and not be, okay?

DENNIS
You wanted me to be scared of
Mant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GENE

That's not real. I know what I said, but it's not.

DENNIS

So you should be scared if it's not real?

GENE

You should try and go to sleep. Okay?

DENNIS

Could you put the radio on?

Gene turns on a transistor RADIO.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

...heading toward the quarantine point, some five hundred miles off Cuba in the Atlantic. Meanwhile, in Washington, ...

Gene changes the station, and the TOKENS' current HIT softly fills the room:

THE TOKENS (V.O.)

In the jungle,
The quiet jungle,
The lion sleeps tonight...

Gene turns off the light. He looks out the window at the dark sky for a moment, then gets into bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

The SCHOOLYARD of Horace O'Bryant Middle School is a sea of KIDS with yo-yo's, 77 Sunset Strip lunchboxes, Rat Fink tee-shirts, and ROCK-AND-ROLL-playing transistors.

ANGLE finds Andy, the gung-ho military kid from the base, trying to impress some skeptical TOWNIES: RAY, GREG, DUANE, and their leader STAN, a happy prince of eighth grade.

ANDY

(confidential)

Listen -- don't be surprised if they go put a surgical air strike on those missiles by 2400 hours. Blow 'em all up -- pow. Cuba's radioactive for nine lifetimes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN
Yeah? Where'd you hear that at?

ANDY
My dad's Navy. I live on base.

Greg checks out Andy's Sea Scout shirt, brush cut, and USN looseleaf.

GREG
No kidding?

SNICKERS from the other guys.

RAY
What's your dad do, man?

ANDY
Motor pool. Hey, they still hear stuff, though.

DUANE
Maybe we're attacking Cuba with jeeps.

GREG
Yeah, pontoons on 'em...

ANDY
Yeah, well, you see that guy?

ANGLE finds Gene nearby, sitting against a cyclone fence, reading a Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine. He realizes he's being looked at -- he looks up warily.

ANDY (CONT.)
His dad's on one of the blockade ships.

That's interesting.

STAN
Hey yeah?

He leads the guys over to Gene, who stands up, uncomfortable with the attention.

ANDY
Tell these guys about your dad.

GENE
Um -- they shipped out a couple days ago...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAY
Cool. Did he call you up from there?

GENE
(shakes head)
They're not allowed. 'Cause of security.

RAY
Tuff.

GREG
Face to face with Ivan, man.

ANDY
(checks watch)
Damn. I've got color guard. I'll see you guys.

Andy leaves, which nobody minds, but Gene is now on his own with Stan and company. He hangs at the edge of their circle, half-in and half-out, as Greg looks over at a pretty GIRL.

GREG
Man, look at Michelle. You think, if the bomb was gonna fall right now, she'd do it with me?

RAY
Ask her.

Greg snorts. Stan and Duane fool around at TETHERBALL as the conversation continues.

DUANE
You know, if Nixon was president, he would have already bombed the Russians. This whole thing'd be over with.

GREG
That's what we should do, is just blow their country up.

RAY
Uh uh. Germ warfare. If you bomb 'em, they never have time to think about what they did wrong. But if they're sick for a while, before they die --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STAN

Yeah, but germ warfare's illegal, though.

GREG

So what? They don't care. They do whatever they want.

Unnoticed by the guys, a girl named SANDRA is a few feet away, listening. She's under the influence of the early Joan Baez: leotard, ironed hair, and hammered-copper squiggle earrings.

SANDRA

That would solve a lot, wouldn't it?

DUANE

Oh, man.

RAY

Yeah, it sure would --

SANDRA

Everybody blow each other up just because we have different systems.

GREG

It's not just systems, man. They don't even have God. Instead of God, there's some big picture of a guy with a wrench.

SANDRA

You know, the Russians are people too. Their people don't want a war.

RAY

How do you know?

DUANE

She's best friends with 'em, man. That's where she goes for vacation.

Sandra gives up and goes away.

GREG

That girl is most unusual.

RAY

Hell yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

The warning BELL goes off, and the guys reluctantly head toward school -- Gene's still by himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Lunchtime in the crowded cafeteria, where KIDS eat under a Fighting Conch mascot on the wall. Gene, bag in hand, nears a table where Stan, Duane, Greg and Ray are eating.

STAN

Hey, Navy.

There's one empty seat, and Stan nods Gene into it -- just as Andy comes along, finds the table full, and unhappily moves on.

STAN (CONT.)

Good work.

Ray unwraps a sandwich, eyes it dubiously.

RAY

Man...

GREG

What?

RAY

This sandwich. My folks had a fondue party last night? So now I've got a sliced solid fondue sandwich, look at that.

STAN

Your folks are having parties during this?

RAY

It was already melted.

STAN

Man, that's good. My house, my dad's checking the fallout shelter every five minutes, my mom's going nuts... Every time Eastern Airlines flies over, she goes "This is it."

GREG

Trade you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY
Yeah? How come?

GREG
That has liquor in it.

RAY
Come on.

GREG
Yeah, it does. Swiss cheese and
liquor. That's how you make it.
My folks won't even let me eat
it.

RAY
All right. No trade.

GREG
Hey, come on.

RAY
Eat your tuna burger, man.

STAN
So, you guys going to that horror
show Saturday?

DUANE
Yeah, if they still have it.

GREG
If they still have Saturday.

RAY
Hey, that's deep.

GREG
It's called Mant. The guy that
made it was on TV. The P.T.A.'s
against him.

DUANE
(approving)
Tuff. What's his name... ?

A beat -- then Gene jumps in.

GENE
Lawrence Woolsey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED; (2)

STAN

Right, yeah. He made that other one, Island...

GENE

Island of the Flesh Eaters.

That's the one where they locked the theater so you couldn't get out if you were scared.

RAY

Yeah, I heard, in this one town, the projector guy got so scared he died.

GENE

No. That was a different movie, and it didn't happen. That was the one where they hypnotize you -- The Eyes of Doctor Diablo.

STAN

Hey, Navy here's an encyclopedia.

GENE

My name's Gene.

DUANE

Did you really get hypnotized?

GENE

I don't know. They guaranteed you wouldn't remember.

RAY

That guy's coming here to town for the show. That Woolsey.

GENE

He is?

STAN

That's the best kind of show to take a girl to. She gets scared, right, so she grabs onto your arm? Then you can kind of sneak your arm over in there...

He demonstrates, nuzzling Greg's imaginary breasts with his upper arm.

GREG

Cut it out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STAN

She doesn't even notice.

RAY

Your elbow doesn't count, man.

STAN

Sure it counts.

GREG

What, there's rules?

The BELL rings. As the guys head off, Stan sticks with Gene:

STAN

Hey Navy, wait up.

FOLLOW them into

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MOVING WITH GENE AND STAN

STAN

Man, you must go to the movies every night.

GENE

Well, we move every year -- sometimes more. You don't get to know too many people. But going to the movies, it's the same anywhere.

STAN

Move every year -- how many gym suits do you have?

GENE

Three Wildcats, two Trojans, two Spartans...

STAN

Wow. You got a date for that show Saturday?

Gene shakes his head.

STAN (CONT.)

You oughtta get one. See, this is kind of a special place you're in here.

GENE

Florida?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Key West. This is like the
make-out capital of the world.
It's like there's something in
the air. Even the grown-ups like
doing it. You get a date for
Saturday, you'll see what I mean.

GENE

I haven't really met --

STAN

It's easy, man. You just walk
up and ask 'em.

They turn a corridor corner, and Stan finds himself face to face
with SHERRY, a beautiful, scrubbed-looking girl in pink clothes
-- sweetness and light personified. Notwithstanding everything
he's just told Gene, Stan is instantly flustered.

STAN (CONT.)

Sherry. Hi.

SHERRY

Hello, Stan.

STAN

Uh, this is my friend Gene here,
from out at the base...

Sherry nods at Gene.

STAN (CONT.)

Um, Gene's father is on one of
those blockade ships. Off of
Cuba.

SHERRY

Oh my gosh, is he? You must be
so worried. But that's wonderful.
I think everyone is thinking about
our boys. I mean, your father's
not a boy, I don't mean...

GENE

Well, he's... forty...

SHERRY

I think people just naturally say
"our boys" -- oh, I think there
should be a prayer moment for all
of them, in study hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Beat.

STAN

So do I.

SHERRY

Yes. Well, I'll see you later,
Stan...

She's forgotten Gene's name already -- waves and goes. Stan stands still, watching her go, a little dazed.

GENE

You okay?

STAN

I'm fine...

He resumes walking with Gene.

STAN (CONT.)

You know, the last guy she went
with's in reform school?

GENE

Yeah?

STAN

This guy Harvey Starkweather.
Really bad kid. He's, like,
crazy. Stuck up a liquor store,
got in a high-speed chase...

GENE

Huh.

STAN

Hey, look, I'm sorry I brought
that in about your father, man.

GENE

That's okay. It's just a strange
way to be meeting people.

STAN

I know. That was low-class on
my part. I see that girl, I
just... Listen, we've got to
figure out about a date for you.
You want to come over after
school?

Gene attempts cool, as if people ask him this every day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

 GENE
Okay. Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. HEALTH CLASSROOM - DAY

The health-and-safety classroom is decorated with posters of traffic safety rules, boy and girl bodies without genitals, etc. A class of KIDS, including Gene, are listening to a HEALTH TEACHER (MR. ELROY), who's pointing to a poster of basic food groups.

 MR. ELROY
...so, in order to make sure
you're getting enough servings
from your red meat group, you
might have bacon at breakfast,
a hamburger or a pork sandwich
at lunch, and for supper --

The teacher is interrupted by a harsh SIREN over the school P.A. system. The kids are out of their seats immediately, as the teacher opens the door to the corridor.

 MR. ELROY (CONT.)
Okay. This might not be a drill,
people. Let's go, single file...

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR

KIDS pour into the corridor from the classrooms, and TEACHERS point them into position against the two walls and down the middle. Packed in tight, the kids kneel, with their heads against their knees and their hands behind their necks.

A few kids away from Gene is Andy, who tells the KID next to him:

 ANDY
This isn't real. There's a
different siren they use if it's
real.

 KID
How do you know?

 ANDY
From my dad.

 TEACHER 2
No talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But the nearby SOUND of a commotion makes Gene and others turn their heads.

SANDRA (O.S.)
No.

TEACHER 3 (O.S.)
Right now.

SANDRA (O.S.)
No, I'm not going to do that.

Sneaking a look, Gene SEES Sandra, the Joan Baez wanna-be, standing up, arguing with TEACHER 3 in the middle of a sea of kneeling kids.

TEACHER 3
We're not having this. This is
for your protection --

SANDRA
Yes, but it isn't any protection.
It doesn't do any good.

As more kids turn to look, Sandra's voice rises.

SANDRA (CONT.)
If you think it's gonna help to
put your hands on your neck when
the bomb falls, you're wrong.

ANDY
That girl's a Communist --

MR. ELROY
Heads down, people.

Teacher 3 starts pulling Sandra away, but she won't go.

SANDRA
If you get killed right when it
falls, you're lucky, because if
not, you get radiation sickness,
and first your hair falls out,
you bleed from your intestines,
and you throw up, but you're not
throwing up food, you're throwing
up your own organs --

GIRL
Eew!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANDRA
Yeah, ew is right.

TEACHER 3
Principal's office. Let's go.

SANDRA
But then I won't have the
protection of being on the floor
if --

TEACHER 3
I said, Let's go.

GENE'S POV

The furious teacher pulls the furious Sandra through the
spooked, kneeling kids.

SANDRA
And they don't tell you the truth,
they tell you put your hands
behind your neck, and they keep
building bombs --

TEACHER 3
Shut up.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A nice two-story wooden house in Old Town -- wide veranda and
balcony, and lush palms and tropicals out front.

INT. STAN'S HOUSE (DEN)

Stan and Gene are in the den, huddled by the "home entertainment
center," listening to a LENNY BRUCE LP at low volume.

STAN
Here, this part...

LENNY BRUCE (V.O.)
"To" is a preposition. "Come"
is a verb. To come, to come, to
come. It's like a big drum solo.
Did you come, did you come, did
you --

The SOUND O.S. of car tires on the gravel driveway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Damn, it's my mom.

He plucks the needle from the record, puts it back in its sleeve, and stuffs it in his gym bag. He picks up two other LPs, The First Family and an Allan Sherman, chooses the latter, slaps it quickly on the turntable as the FRONT DOOR OPENS O.S.

STAN'S MOM (O.S.)

Stan?

ALLAN SHERMAN (V.O.)

Hello muddah,
Hello faddah...

Stan opens the den door.

STAN

We're in here, Mom.

Stan's MOM -- 40ish, frazzled, thick Keys accent -- appears in the doorway.

STAN (CONT.)

Hi, Mom. This is Gene. He's from on base.

STAN'S MOM

Hello, Gene. What have you heard over there?

GENE

(shakes head)
They don't tell us much.

STAN'S MOM

Well, I can tell you what they're saying on the radio: the world is right on the brink. That's the terms they're putting it in.

She sinks into a chair.

STAN'S MOM (CONT.)

I almost couldn't get back here. They have these army trucks coming down Overseas Highway, they were holding people up...

STAN

Cool, let's go look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STAN'S MOM

Stan, you stay within seventeen minutes of home. If there's a flash, you don't look. You get down --

STAN

-- put our jackets up over our heads --

STAN'S MOM

-- and you get home as fast as you can. And Gene, you get to the base.

GENE

Yes, Ma'am.

STAN

Okay. Don't worry, Mom.

STAN'S MOM

(shakes head)

"Don't worry..."

CUT TO:

EXT. GULFSTREAM MARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

Gene and Stan are walking past the Deco-style grocery store when they hear NOISE of a commotion inside. A glance through the window shows a CROWD OF PEOPLE in anxious activity. A WOMAN wheels out a cart stuffed with eight bags of groceries.

STAN

Man, what's the deal?

INT. MARKET

The boys walk in on CHAOS: the market is mobbed with PEOPLE bent on hoarding staple goods and harassed CLERKS trying to keep things orderly. The shelves are nearly bare, and some of the shoppers in the long checkout lines are pushing two crammed shopping carts apiece.

GENE

It's a riot.

STAN

I know, it's tuff. Hey, look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He points down an aisle, where Mr. Elroy, the health teacher, is fighting over the last box of Shredded Wheat with MR. WILTZ, a local businessman. An exhausted CLERK tries to referee.

ELROY AND WIRTZ

(variously)

Give me that... I had my hand on it... you were halfway down the thing...

CLERK

Both of you stop it.

He manages to pull the crumpled box away from them.

WIRTZ

Is there more in back?

CLERK

There's no more Shredded Wheat in back, there's no more Shredded Wheat in the whole Keys, and one of you's gonna have to go through the atomic nightmare with no damn Shredded Wheat, what do you think about that?

MR. ELROY

Well, I was --

STAN

Hi, Mister Elroy.

Elroy turns, sees Stan and Gene --

MR. ELROY

Hello, boys --

-- and Wirtz seizes the moment and the cereal, as the clerk moves onto another crisis.

CUT TO:

EXT. S. ROOSEVELT BLVD./SMATHERS BEACH - AFTERNOON

Gene and Stan hurry along the shoulder of South Roosevelt, almost keeping pace with a convoy of Army VEHICLES heading for the beach. There are TRUCKS with blanked-out unit numbers carrying tarped-over equipment, BUSES with TROOPS inside, and VANS labelled "EXPLOSIVES."

As they reach sight of Smathers Beach --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Damn!

Though there are TROOPS posted to keep onlookers well back, the scene on the beach is clear enough from the boys' vantage point across the street: SOLDIERS setting up an invasion's worth of FIELD EQUIPMENT all along the beach, a few yards from the surf.

STAN

What's that one?

GENE

Mobile radar.

STAN

That one there?

GENE

Missile launcher.

STAN

Man. That little thing can reach Cuba?

GENE

That's the plan.

Stan points to a spot on the beach, near the launcher.

STAN

Right over there? That's where I got up on top of Denise Rodgers last summer.

A SOLDIER comes over to them.

SOLDIER

Fellas, we need you out of this area. Gonna pull some trucks up in here.

The guys nod, head back up the street.

EXT. STREET - FOLLOWING GENE AND STAN

STAN

You know Denise?

GENE

I think. With the braces?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Yeah. We were both just wearing
bathing suits...

They reach the Little League baseball field, and stop for a line
of Army JEEPS and TRUCKS being waved onto the playing field by a
SERGEANT.

STAN

I'm lying right on top of her,
and her bathing suit's real
low-cut, you can look down in
there? Man...

Gene nudges him -- the sergeant is listening to the
conversation.

GENE

(speaks up)
Boy, look at all those Jeeps!
Neat!

The sergeant, not buying it, waves them past.

STAN

But then this lady comes along,
slaps me on the butt, and yells
at us both. Denise starts
crying...

GENE

Sounds great.

STAN

Well, it was, for a while. So
then I had to walk her home. I
couldn't walk that great, either.
You know?

GENE

Uh huh.

STAN

Hey, maybe you should call Denise
up for Saturday.

GENE

I don't even know her.

STAN

Yeah, but -- don't you feel like
you do, now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GENE

Kind of.

They stop at a corner, and watch another long line of army trucks, loaded with weaponry, go past.

GENE (CONT.)

I don't know, though -- about taking girls out. I prob'ly won't be here next year.

STAN

(indicates trucks)

Man, you see all this stuff? We all might not be here next week. I'm just talking about Saturday.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RAILROAD TRAIN - DUSK

LAWRENCE WOOLSEY, star of the Mant trailer we saw earlier, sits looking out the window as the train pulls out. He looks as natty as he did in the trailer, but a little more life-size, and a little worn.

His girlfriend RUTH -- dark good looks and no illusions -- joins him, carrying a Miami newspaper.

WOOLSEY

You call the service?

RUTH

Uh huh. The film lab is threatening to sue us if we don't pay up by Thursday.

WOOLSEY

(shakes his head)

Boy, this business has changed. They used to settle these things with violence.

(looks out window)

If we had any money, I'd shoot something down here. Swamp creature or something. Half man, half grapefruit.

RUTH

Half a grapefruit sounds good.

Woolsey turns away from the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

Who else is hounding us?

Ruth flips through a sheaf of mail.

RUTH

People who rented us the White
Zombie costume...

WOOLSEY

White Zombie. The guy looked like
a Good Humor man. Let me see
those.

He takes the bills from her. scribbles some numbers on an
envelope.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

Got to pay some of these...
Spector says if we do okay here,
he'll book us in fifty theaters.
But that takes time. Let's see
-- Key West, the place holds five
hundred in the house, one hundred
in the balcony...

RUTH

The whole balcony?

WOOLSEY

It's old. They don't fill it up
all the way. Tropical climate,
the termites go to town.

He spots a flyer in the envelope, pulls it out.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

Look at this. Now this is
insulting. They put one of these
crummy collection agencies on us.

(reads)

"Our agents are every place. We
never sleep."

RUTH

What a coincidence. We never eat.

Woolsey sighs, stands.

WOOLSEY

Ham and cheese?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUTH

Sure.

As Woolsey heads for the club car,

CUT TO:

ADLAI STEVENSON (VIDEO IMAGE)

The United States' ambassador to the U.N. is engaged in angry televised debate:

STEVENSON

Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the U.S.S.R. has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Don't wait for the translation. Yes or no?

WIDER ANGLE reveals

INT. GENE'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING

Dennis is eating Beanie-Weenies from a TV tray and watching Stevenson debate the U.S.S.R.'s VALERIAN ZORIN.

ZORIN (ON TV)

I am not in an American courtroom, and therefore I do not wish to answer. In due course, sir, you will have your reply.

Gene comes in.

GENE

Hi...

ANNE (O.S.)

I'm in here.

FOLLOW Gene into

INT. KITCHEN

ANNE

Hi, where were you?

GENE

I went over to this guy's house...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She gives him a bowl of Beanie Weenies; he wolfs it as they talk.

ANNE

This guy...?

GENE

This guy Stan. He lives over in Old Town? People's houses over there, they look like they're in the jungle. His mom thinks the bomb's gonna fall any second.

ANNE

What did you do?

GENE

Just hung out. We saw the Army stuff, down at the beach. We played some records. It was pretty tuff.

ANNE

You mean it was hard?

GENE

No, tuff. It was fun. It's what the guys say here.

On Anne: she's pleasantly surprised, but plays it cool.

ANNE

Oh.

GENE

We're going to the matinee together Saturday. With some guys, you know...

He looks at her, volunteers:

GENE (CONT.)

I'm not a leper or anything.

ANNE

I know that.

GENE

Good Beanie Weenies. Thanks.

He puts his empty dish in the sink. Anne, thinking "You never know," watches him go into

INT. LIVING ROOM

where Dennis is still watching the U.N. debate.

STEVENSON (ON TV)
I am prepared to wait for my
answer until hell freezes over.

DENNIS
He said "hell."

GENE
It's okay. It's a crisis.

As Anne comes in, Stevenson is at an easel, pointing out missile sites in blown-up spy photos. Anne turns the TV off.

ANNE (CONT.)
He's been watching this all
afternoon. How about taking him
to a movie?

GENE
Naah, they've got one of those
Flying Rubber Professor pictures.

ANNE
You could watch something without
monsters for once.

DENNIS
No monsters?

GENE
Nope.

DENNIS
Hell.

ANNE
Where'd he get that from?

GENE
(indicates TV)
The U.N.

ANNE
Uh huh. Go.

She gestures them out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRAND THEATER - EVENING

On the Strand's marquee, plastic letters promise "Family Fun!
THE SHOOK-UP SHOPPING CART."

INT. THEATER

Gene and Dennis are among the AUDIENCE watching a Disney comedy of the That Darned Cat/The Love Bug variety.

On the screen, a HAYLEY MILLS-TYPE ACTRESS is leading a DEAN JONES-TYPE ACTOR down the main street of Backlotsville, U.S.A.

HAYLEY MILLS TYPE

We have no time to lose, Mister Adams. We have to find Uncle Cedric before he gets in any more trouble.

DEAN JONES TYPE

Well, what does Uncle Cedric look like?

HAYLEY MILLS TYPE

He's a shopping cart. You know, chromium finish, and his right front wheel is sort of wobbly --

DEAN JONES TYPE

Well, that shouldn't be hard to...
(shitty double take)
A shopping cart?

HAYLEY MILLS TYPE

Yes. Well, of course, he wasn't always a shopping cart, but he had a spell put on him, and it's my fault, really, because, you see, I always do my laundry when the library is closed. It all makes perfect sense. But we have to --

DEAN JONES TYPE

Miss Prescott, the F.B.I. has no time for --

Two CROOKS come out of an alley, one of them pointing a gun at Hayley and Dean.

CROOK 1

All right, stick 'em up. Both of yez.

But suddenly, a GROCERY CART comes rolling up behind the crooks, and knocks them off their feet. The gun goes flying, and the Dean Jones type catches it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crook 1 COLLIDES with a BAKER taking a cake out to a delivery van, and they both get cake all over them. Crook 2 knocks a can of PAINT off a SIGN-PAINTER'S scaffold, and gets the dripping can stuck on his head.

DEAN JONES TYPE

Okay -- hold it right there.

As he gets the drop on the crooks, the shopping cart ROLLS over to him and rocks a little on its wheels. Winsome pathetic-fallacy MUSIC plays on the sound track.

HAYLEY MILLS TYPE

See? He likes you.

GENE AND DENNIS AS BEFORE

DENNIS

Can we leave yet?

GENE

Uh huh.

They get up.

EXT. STRAND THEATER - NIGHT

Gene and Dennis walk out of the theater into a COMMOTION on the sidewalk outside. At the center of a couple dozen curious NATIVES AND TOURISTS are two 30ish MEN (HERB and BOB) with Jack Webb-type clothes, haircuts, and speech. They hold stacks of HANDBILLS that they've been passing out and pasting up. The headline reads KEY WEST SAYS "NO" TO SICK-O MOVIES!

HERB

... Ask the people who run this theater. Ask them why they're selling this town's kids down the river --

BOB

-- your own kids, going in there to get themselves warped --

A WOMAN in the crowd (RHONDA), dressed in the nubbly-sweater style of a 1962 free-thinker, challenges them:

RHONDA

Wait a minute. Have you seen the movie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERB

No I haven't, miss. I haven't been down and taken a tour of the sewer, either, but I know what's down there.

BOB

This guy Woolsey, his pictures are all the same -- a cheap, sick thrill for a bunch of --

Rhonda's neatly-bearded husband JACK speaks up.

JACK

What about letting people make their own decisions?

HERB

Sure. Let the kids see it, and wake up screaming every night, and forget all about church and school and --

JACK

Oh, for God's sake --

BOB

Sure, and let the fellas at the base come down here too.

BOB

Just when the country needs to be strong --

A VOICE out of the crowd:

WOOLSEY

Hold it! Hold on a minute.

Woolsey walks out of the crowd, with Ruth beside him. He's his public self now -- the larger-than-life character we saw in the Mant trailer.

GENE

(whispers to Dennis)
It's him!

WOOLSEY

I'm Lawrence Woolsey. Who are you fellows?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HERB

We're from the Citizens for Decent
Entertainment -- Mister Woolsey.

He hands Woolsey a leaflet.

WOOLSEY

Well, I've never heard of your
organization --

BOB

Well, you're gonna hear --

WOOLSEY

-- but I don't think you're being
fair to my movie --

HERB

They were fair to your movie in
Little Rock, pal, and look what
it got them.

BOB

Full-scale panic.

RHONDA

Let him finish!

WOOLSEY

Thanks. But I don't have some
big speech to make. I had the
impression Key West was a pretty
sophisticated place. Not like
coming to some hick town --

YOUNG MAN IN CROWD

Naw, man! Do your worst!

LAUGHTER from the crowd.

WOOLSEY

I tell you what I would like to
do, and that's to hand out some
free passes, so people can decide
for themselves if this movie is
really so terrible...

He holds up a little sheaf of tickets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

Now, it's true -- my movies show some things that nobody else does. Things that some people are scared to even imagine. Things that are shocking. But are they really so much more shocking than the world we live in every --

HERB

That's a real pretty speech, pal.

BOB

Does that help you sleep nights while you're turning kids into J.D.'s?

WOOLSEY

I sleep like a baby, my friend...

As the argument continues AD LIB, with Woolsey, Herb, Bob, Jack and Rhonda all going at it, Woolsey hands out tickets to several takers --

DENNIS

Aren't we gonna get free passes?

Gene has been distracted -- staring at Bob, as if trying to place him.

GENE

Oh -- yeah.

They go over and take a couple of passes from Woolsey... and Gene gets a quick handshake and the briefest of eye contact from the great man before Woolsey throws himself back into his street-corner debate.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ground-level floodlights throw SHADOWS of palms and gumbo-limboes on the house. From inside, SOUND of a phone ringing.

INT. STAN'S HOUSE (STAN'S ROOM)

Stan's room is a jumble of clothes, records, and POSTERS of stock racers, Roger Maris, etc. He's talking on the extension phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN
(calls to O.S.)
I've got it. It's for me.
(into phone)
Hello?

MAXINE (V.O.)
Stan, it's Maxine Sherrill -- I'm
a friend of Sherry's?

STAN
Yeah. Hi, Maxine.

MAXINE (V.O.)
I was talking to Sherry, and she
said, if you wanted to ask her
to do something together, she
thinks that would be fine.

STAN
Really? That's great.

MAXINE (V.O.)
You should talk to her tomorrow
morning, outside school.

STAN
Maxine, can I ask you something?
Why do girls always do this?

MAXINE (V.O.)
Always do what?

STAN
Well, like, how come you called
me instead of Sherry?

MAXINE (V.O.)
Oh, we just feel it's a good way
of doing things. Do you know Matt
Blyden?

STAN
Yeah, sure.

MAXINE (V.O.)
Well, Sherry's calling him tonight
to say she thinks I like him.

STAN
Oh. Well, hey, I hope that works
out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAXINE (V.O.)
Thank you, Stan.

Stan hangs up, bemused but happy.

STAN
Cool.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Out in the schoolyard, Stan walks with Sherry, who's dressed in pink again and exuding her usual sweetness and light.

SHERRY
Stan, there's one thing I have
to talk to you about.

STAN
Sure.

SHERRY
You probably know that, for a
while last year, I was seeing an
older boy. Harvey Starkweather?

STAN
I heard that.

SHERRY
Well, it was a mistake. I see
that now. I thought he was --
different. And he was different,
but that came from being
unbalanced inside. You see?

STAN
I think, yeah.

SHERRY
Although in some ways he's a very
good person. Sensitive. Did you
know that he writes poems?

STAN
Really?

SHERRY
(nods)
He sent me some from reform
school. Would you like to hear
one?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Yeah. Uh, some time.

SHERRY

Anyway, that's over with.
Although he did teach me a lot.

STAN

Like what?

SHERRY

About my body. My desires. About
being a woman. It was very good
for me.

She continues to look like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth
as she says this. Stan stares.

SHERRY (CONT.)

So we're set for tomorrow, then?

STAN

Uh, yeah. You know, there's a
horror movie at the Strand --

SHERRY

That sounds nice, Stan, but over
in Mallory Square, they're having
a special exhibit of coral.
Little animals and things that
people make out of it?

STAN

That sounds great.

SHERRY

See you there about one?

Stan nods, slightly dumbfounded. Sherry KISSES him warmly, then
hurries to join some GIRLFRIENDS as the BELL rings.

NEW ANGLE REVEALS

Across the street from the school yard, a tough-looking
19-year-old -- HARVEY STARKWEATHER -- has been watching the
conversation. He seethes.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - NEAR PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A CROWD of kids fills the hallway near the principal's office and exit, heading out of school for the day. Gene, in the crowd, finds himself face-to-face with Sandra, who's on her way into the principal's office. On impulse, he greets her:

GENE

Hi.

She looks at him for a minute, then registers:

SANDRA

Oh, you're one of those guys.
That hang out by the tetherball.

GENE

Oh. No, I just met them. My
name's Gene. I saw you in that
air raid drill yesterday...

SANDRA

Yeah, I think the whole world did.

GENE

What'd they do to you?

SANDRA

Detention. For a week.

GENE

Wow.

SANDRA

(shrugs)
They put Gandhi away for a year.

The name doesn't ring a bell with Gene.

GENE

I don't know that many people
here.

SANDRA

Uh huh. You live on the base?

Gene nods.

SANDRA (CONT.)

Well, they must be real excited
over there. This is their big
moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE
Yeah. My dad's on one of those ships.

SANDRA
Oh. I'm sorry.

GENE
He doesn't want to kill anybody.

SANDRA
No. I know.
(beat)
You're worried about him.

GENE
(shrugs)
Everybody's worried about the whole world blowing up.

SANDRA
But that's different.

GENE
Yeah.

SANDRA
I have to go in here.

Gene nods. Sandra goes into the principal's office.

CUT TO:

INT. GENE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Anne and Dennis are in the living room. Anne, who has answered the phone, calls O.S.:

ANNE
Gene?

Gene comes in, takes the receiver from her.

GENE
Hello?... Oh, hi, how you doing?... Uh huh...

Anne watches as Gene's face falls. He tries to cover his disappointment:

GENE (CONT.)
No, hey, that's okay... that's fine. Yeah... I'll see you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hangs up, sees Anne looking inquiringly at him.

GENE (CONT.)

It was just that guy Stan. He's
not going to the matinee Saturday.

ANNE

Oh, sweetie, I'm sorry.

GENE

I don't care.

ANNE

Well, I know you were looking --

GENE

I said I don't care. Look, stop
worrying about me making all these
great friends, okay?

ANNE

I didn't say I was worried.

GENE

The guy is just another jerk.
I don't need any --

DENNIS

Are we still going?

GENE

Dennis, shut up!

Anne is suddenly angry.

ANNE

Dennis didn't do anything to you.

GENE

Okay! Just leave me alone for
a minute!

He goes out, the screen door SLAPPING angrily behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN OLD TOWN - AFTERNOON

Stan walks down the street in a romantic reverie, snapping his
fingers and singing to himself the wordless Tijuana Brass hit
"The Lonely Bull"...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Da da da da da da-da
Da da da da, da da da...

...until he rounds a corner, and finds himself face to face with a looming, unhappy Harvey Starkweather.

HARVEY

Tell me your name.

Stan instinctively backs away, into a Cyclone fence.

HARVEY (CONT.)

I'm not mad. I just want to know your name.

STAN

Stan.

Harvey turns his most soulful James Dean gaze on Stan.

HARVEY

Stan... you have to give me some answers. If you don't, then I have to hurt you, and what does that solve? It doesn't solve anything. It's just -- more pain.

STAN

Answers?

HARVEY

About yourself and Sherry. Are you going out with her?

STAN

Well -- we were going to go look at some coral tomorrow.

HARVEY

Coral. She loves coral. Those little animals, giving up their bodies to make something pink for Sherry...You can't do it, Stan. You can't do anything with her.

STAN

Not even -- ?

Harvey moves closer, his look suddenly less James Dean and more Tony Perkins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STAN (CONT.)

Right.

HARVEY

And don't tell her we had this talk. The fact that things like this even have to happen...it's just -- it's crazy, you know?

STAN

Well -- maybe it doesn't have to happen.

HARVEY

No, Stan, it does. It's like I wrote in a poem once:
"Destiny is a crazy river
Where you see people's different boats,
That they have,
Going by,
On it.
But tomorrow --
Tomorrow is a knife.
Tomorrow is a big knife."
You get it?

STAN

Uh, sort of.

HARVEY

It's abstract, Stan.

He points a final warning finger at Stan, and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUVAL STREET - STRAND THEATER

As Gene walks up to the Strand Theater, a few curious PEOPLE are standing around, watching Lawrence Woolsey direct a STEP VAN into place at the curb.

The van bears the dead-bug logo of an exterminating company, and a bedsheet-sized BANNER reading: "STRAND THEATER - SORRY... MANT IS TOO BIG TO KILL! - KEY WEST EXTERMINATING CO." A bright red snipe across the bottom of the banner reads "COMING SATURDAY."

WOOLSEY

Back a little...

Gene goes over to Woolsey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE
Mr. Woolsey --

WOOLSEY
Hello, son. Good to see you.
You coming to the show Saturday?

GENE
Sure. You know, I was here the
other night, when you got here...

WOOLSEY
(distractedly)
Uh huh...

He signals the truck to stop. The DRIVER gets out, hands
Woolsey a clipboard to sign.

GENE
You know those two guys you were
arguing with, about your movie?

WOOLSEY
Oh, we see those people in some
towns. Sometimes it's the P.T.A.,
sometimes it's a church outfit.
You see, they mean well, but --

GENE
Yeah, well, one of those guys was
Bob Herlihy. He was in Shriek
of the Hamster Man. He played
Third Man at Lunch Counter.

Woolsey, caught out, hands the clipboard back to the driver and
draws Gene aside, speaking quietly.

WOOLSEY
Yes. Well, you see, Bob turned
against me. Okay, no, he didn't
turn against me, he's still
working for me. What's your name?

GENE
Gene Ingram.

WOOLSEY
You're very observant, Gene.
That's a good habit. Bob is an
interesting guy. He used to be
kind of -- well, dishonest. A
shakedown artist. Strong arm.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOOLSEY (Cont'd)

Someone sent him to collect some money from me, just when I needed an inexpensive actor. Isn't it fun to know these things about your favorite stars?

GENE

He's pretty good.

WOOLSEY

Oh, Bob and Herb are pro's. But it's hard to get these people stirred up around here. Could be this bomb business.

GENE

I don't have to tell anyone those guys work for you...

WOOLSEY

You want a free pass for Saturday?

GENE

I've already got one.

Woolsey starts into the theater; Gene follows.

WOOLSEY

(to passersby)

Hi! How you doin'? Saturday... right here...

(to Gene)

What do you want?

GENE

To help you out. You must have a lot to do.

They enter the theater.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - FOLLOWING GENE AND WOOLSEY

WOOLSEY

Okay, you're with the show -- for an hour.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM

As Gene and Woolsey enter the theater proper, Woolsey is accosted by MR. DARTMOUTH, the Strand's jittery manager. A transistor RADIO in Dartmouth's pocket plays nonstop STATIC.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED;

DARTMOUTH

There you are. What is all this?

He indicates a MESS on the floor: loose electrical wiring, small motors, and tools. Near this litter, several theater seats have been opened up.

WOOLSEY

It's a secret.

(to Gene)

Can you keep a secret?

GENE

I already am.

WOOLSEY

Right. Well, these are a little surprise for the audience... goes in the seat cushion. Feel that.

He holds out a wired-up gadget. Gene touches it -- it BUZZES his hand.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

Giving it to the people where they need it most.

GENE

Cool.

Dartmouth tries the buzzer too, and recoils.

DARTMOUTH

Mister Woolsey, this is a national crisis going on. You start vibrating the whole theater, and putting things in the seats, and scaring people --

Woolsey indicates the static coming from Dartmouth's pocket.

WOOLSEY

What is that?

DARTMOUTH

Conelrad. The Civil Defense channel. They're tied straight into the Distant Early Warning. If there's an attack, it'll be on here a full ninety seconds before we have local sirens. You see what I'm saying?

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARTMOUTH (Cont'd)

The country's on red alert.
People are already scared.

WOOLSEY

Exactly. It's the perfect time
to bring out a new horror picture.
(puts arm around
Dartmouth)

Think about it, my friend:
Millions of people, looking over
their shoulder, waiting for God's
other shoe to drop. Never knowing
if each kiss, each sunset, each
malted milk ball, might be the
last...

DARTMOUTH

Please!

WOOLSEY

We're halfway home. These yokels
are on pins and needles --

DARTMOUTH

Mister Woolsey, people in Key West
are not yokels.

WOOLSEY

Well, they shouldn't have any
problem with it, then. I'm glad
you spoke up.

Dartmouth, exasperated, heads for the lobby O.S.

GENE

What a jerk.

WOOLSEY

Oh, I kind of like him. Is there
a hardware store around here?

GENE

Yeah. Can I walk you?

WOOLSEY

Knock yourself out.

CUT TO:

INT. HARDWARE STORE - AFTERNOON

Woolsey finishes buying a few electrical items from a CLERK, and heads down an aisle toward the door with Gene.

GENE

That guy didn't even know who you are.

WOOLSEY

(shrugs)

Who am I? A grown man that makes rubber monster movies and owes everybody money. If the nice people don't show up on Saturday, I'm dead.

GENE

Are you kidding? Sure they'll show up --

WOOLSEY

I should have gone into hardware. Stuff you can touch. Sturdy. Look at this...

He runs a hand over a belt sander, and follows Gene out the door.

EXT. DUVAL STREET - AFTERNOON

FOLLOWING Gene and Woolsey back to the theater.

WOOLSEY

I didn't think anyone would recognize Herlihy. What do you, spend your life sitting at monster movies?

GENE

I go a lot. My dad's in the Navy. Almost every year, we move.

Woolsey nods.

GENE (CONT.)

You go to one town, if you don't wear Madras, you're a geek. You go to the next town, if you wear Madras, you get beat up -- everybody there wears Pendletons.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE (Cont'd)

Nobody in a monster movie ever wears any of that stuff, unless they're about to get it right in the neck. Monster movies are great.

They arrive at the theater, go back in.

INT. THEATER - LOBBY

WOOLSEY

Uh huh. I'll tell you, though -- it's getting harder to scare people with this stuff. Too much competition. They've got bombs that kill half a million people, nobody's had a good night's sleep in years --

INT. THEATER - AUDITORIUM

GENE

There was this lady, in the newspaper? She was scared to even leave her house. She stayed in there for eight years.

Woolsey goes to work, wiring seat buzzers.

WOOLSEY

Well, she's right, you know. Pliers.

Gene kneels, passes the pliers over.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

If you think about it -- you go out the door, all hell could break loose. Like you said, you have the wrong shirt on, you could get beat up. A piano could fall on you.

GENE

Well, yeah, but you have to go out of your house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

Oh, sure. So you have to decide what to be scared of, and then you still have to do scary things every day. That's why people go to monster movies.

Gene doesn't get it.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

For the practice.

GENE

Oh. Yeah.

From the corner of his eye, Woolsey SEES Gene reach to pick up a bare WIRE trailing on the floor. Woolsey reaches out --

WOOLSEY

Hey!

-- and knocks Gene's hand away at the last second.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

That thing's live.

They stare at each other for a moment, both rattled. Gene stands up.

GENE

Um, sorry. I better go. I'll see you Saturday.

WOOLSEY

Uh huh. God willing.

He goes back to work, as Gene leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERRY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

The room is a symphony in pink, highlighted by miniature CORAL ANIMALS with rhinestone eyes. Sherry answers her RINGING Princess phone:

SHERRY

Hello?

STAN (V.O.)

Sherry? It's Stan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERRY

(warms)

Hello, Stan.

STAN (V.O.)

Um, I'm not gonna be able to go with you tomorrow.

SHERRY

Oh no. How come?

STAN (V.O.)

Well, Coach Phillips called, and they need guys to come and put sand bags up in front of the all-purpose room, so if there's a missile attack...

SHERRY

Oh, Stan -- the all-purpose room?

STAN (V.O.)

Yeah. You know, it faces south. They think it's gonna take all day, unfortunately. I'm sorry.

SHERRY

Well, but that's important, though. I understand. Maybe we can do something next weekend.

STAN (V.O.)

Uh, yeah. I'll see you at school.

He hangs up. Sherry does too, a little troubled -- and then her brother DWIGHT, eight years old, bursts into her room.

DWIGHT

Hey, Sherry.

SHERRY

Dwight, you brat, you go back out and knock first.

DWIGHT

Uh-uh.

From behind his back, Dwight pulls out a sheaf of rumpled looseleaf paper.

DWIGHT (CONT.)

You weren't supposed to write to that guy in jail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sherry, horrified, grabs for the letters, but Dwight holds them back.

SHERRY
Give me those!

DWIGHT
Nope. Boy, these are dirty. His poems don't rhyme, though.

SHERRY
They're not supposed to.

DWIGHT
I'm gonna show Mom.

SHERRY
You are not. What do you want?

DWIGHT
You take me to the horror movies tomorrow. It's got a guy that turns into an ant. Some people throw up at it.

SHERRY
Sounds wonderful.

Dwight, letters in hand, fakes toward the door.

SHERRY (CONT.)
Okay!

DWIGHT
Neat.

He hands her all the letters but one.

DWIGHT (CONT.)
This one's real hot. I better hold on to it.

Sherry grabs for it, but he runs away. She stuffs the other letters under her pillow and flops back on the bed, hating her life.

SHERRY
God!

CUT TO:

EXT. DUVAL STREET - HOTEL - DAY

Establishing a downtown hotel, with ANGLE favoring the popular ground-floor BAR.

INT. BAR -

Key West's long cocktail hour has begun, and the place is filling nicely. At the bar, Harvey Starkweather waits to order. His manner owes a lot to Marlon Brando in The Wild One and James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause: he's just a punk, but he wants to be a sensitive punk, with a deep inner life.

As the BARTENDER serves another CUSTOMER, Harvey discreetly scans the bottles behind the bar -- picking out the name on a label in the lowest, farthest-back row.

BARTENDER

Help you?

HARVEY

Yeah, do you have any, ah, Metaxa?

BARTENDER

Yes. Do you have I.D., son?

HARVEY

Ah, yeah...

He hands a driver's license to the bartender, who looks skeptically at the picture on it. Harvey, looking embarrassed, speaks sotto voce:

HARVEY (CONT.)

I'm wearing a hairpiece.

The bartender decides what the hell, and gives the license back. As the bartender turns to ferret out the Metaxa, Harvey's fingers flutter over the open drawer of the cash register and spirit a wad of MONEY to his pocket.

BARTENDER

Seventy-five.

Harvey hands over a bar-damp dollar bill, holds his hand up to refuse the change.

HARVEY

That's for you.

BARTENDER

Thanks.

Harvey walks away, sips his drink, winces --

HARVEY (CONT.)

Whew...

-- and settles at a small table next to one held by Herb and Bob, the decency agitators who baited Woolsey at the theater.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARVEY (CONT.)

How you doin'.

BOB

Oh, we're doing fine, my friend.
Except for this big truckload of
socio-pathology that's about to
be dumped out here on Duval
Street...

HERB

We're just dandy.

HARVEY

Socio...?

HERB

This so-called monster movie
that's coming here Saturday.

HARVEY

Oh. I didn't know about that.

BOB

Maybe it's time you take a look
at what's happening in your own
town, friend. Wake up and smell
the coffee.

HERB

Smell the wreckage of young minds.

BOB

Gag on it. What's your name,
friend?

HARVEY

Harvey.

HERB

Harve, do you know they let little
children in to see these things?
And what's the message they put
out?

BOB

That atomic power is nothing but
trouble, and it's all right for
mutations to rip the clothes off
of young women.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HERB

That's what they teach the youngsters. That's a long way from George Washington and the cherry tree, isn't it, Harve?

HARVEY

Ah, yeah --

Bob takes out a handbill, holds it out to Harvey.

BOB (CONT.)

This is our organization, Harve.
The Citizens for Decent
Entertainment.

As Harvey reaches for the handbill, his free hand brushes momentarily through Bob's SPORTCOAT, hanging on the back of his chair.

HARVEY

Gee. Can I keep this?

HERB

Keep it and read it, Harve.

HARVEY

Hey. Okay...

He gets up, heads out of the bar the back way.

INT. CORRIDOR BEHIND BAR

Harvey passes the bathrooms, heading for the exit...

...and suddenly finds himself getting a bruising BODY CHECK from Herb, as Bob stands by. The blow knocks all the air out of Harvey, and he pants as he tries to stand up.

BOB

Harve, I know you won't mind if
I take this back from you.

He plucks his wallet from Harvey's jacket pocket.

HERB

You must get caught pretty often,
Harve. Ever do any time?

HARVEY

Yeah. Opa-Locka Boys'
Reformatory. I just got out.
Seven months.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

Not long enough. You didn't learn much.

HARVEY

It was supposed to be a year, but... see, I write poetry. I sent some of my poems to this guy in New York, and he got me out early.

BOB

Poems.

HARVEY

You want to hear one?

HERB

I don't think so, Harve.

HARVEY

Hey -- are you guys really from the, uh --

HERB

You know, it's a funny world, Harve. Almost nobody is what they seem to be.

BOB

And the ones that are, you have to really watch. Can we give you some advice?

Harvey shrugs.

BOB (CONT.)

Get yourself a square job, Harve. You're not very good at this.

He aims a sudden POKE at Harvey, who flinches. Herb and Bob nod their approval, and return to the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAND THEATER - AUDITORIUM - EVENING

The house lights are up, and a dozen or so PEOPLE are sitting in the front row of seats. These people have their backs to us -- we FAVOR Lawrence Woolsey, who stands in front of the stage, addressing them with a clipboard in hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

...and as MANT stumbles to his death on that screen, still dimly glowing with radioactivity, the Rumble-Rama is turned off for the last time, and the theater returns to normal...or does it?

REVEAL a couple of the people listening to him -- they're teenage girl THEATER EMPLOYEES, who can't quite decide how seriously to take this guy.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

No one who attends this show will be quite the same...and neither will any of you. Tomorrow, you will not just be popcorn ladies or ushers or ticket takers...

As Woolsey continues talking, PAN across the theater employees, who are torn between thinking this guy is a wacko and being spellbound by him.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

I know that some of you have never even worked in a movie theater before... but you will be helping to scare your neighbors... your friends... maybe even your parents... within an inch of their lives. I envy you.

CAMERA stops as it reaches the last employee in the row, slouched in his seat: Harvey Starkweather.

CUT TO:

INT. GENE AND DENNIS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gene, in the bunk bed, is awakened by the SOUND of the front door closing O.S. He sits up, listens:

ANNE (O.S.)

Bill! Oh my God --

GENE'S DAD (O.S.)

Sshh! You'll wake the kids up.
Let me put this down --

ANNE (O.S.)

Are you kidding, I'll go wake them up right now --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 GENE'S DAD (O.S.)
No, wait a minute...

FOLLOW Gene as he gets up, heads for the living room.

 GENE'S DAD (O.S.) (CONT.)
I would have called you to say
it was over, but they said they
had to keep a lid on the whole
thing...

But as Gene arrives in

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark and empty.

 GENE
Dad... ?

He opens the front door --

EXT. GENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Gene steps onto the front stoop, his neighborhood goes day-bright with WHITE LIGHT -- an A-BOMB BLAST like that in the Mant trailer. The SHOCK WAVE rolls in, BLOWING BUILDINGS AWAY, heading toward Gene --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GENE AND DENNIS'S ROOM

Gene wakes up -- for real this time -- in a sweat. And he again HEARS something O.S.... not voices, but the WHIR of a small movie projector. He gets up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anne is sitting on the couch, watching an 8-millimeter HOME MOVIE that plays on the bare white wall. The jerky IMAGE is of a 6-YEAR-OLD GENE and his DAD playing Whiffle-ball catch on some other Navy base.

Gene stands in the doorway, watching Anne watch -- she doesn't know he's there. The flickering LIGHT of the projector catches a tear on Anne's face. After a moment, Gene turns and goes O.S. to his room. From the dark living room,

CUT TO:

EXT. STRAND THEATER - DAY

The brightness of mid-day in front of the theater. The exterminator's van is still parked at the curb. A LINE is forming at the box office.

INT. THEATER BASEMENT

A narrow old HALLWAY, under the movie theater. Mr. Dartmouth, the nervous theater manager, is down here, listening to his transistor RADIO as he watches a heavy-looking DOOR close on an automatic mechanism.

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...the U-2 pilot shot down by the
Communists over Cuba has been
identified as Major Rudolf
Anderson, Jr....

The mechanism TICKS as the door slowly closes.

DARTMOUTH
Come on, come on...

The door finally shuts, and Dartmouth turns the bank-vault-style HANDLE to lock it.

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...reporters described President
Kennedy as looking grim and
determined when he left the White
House this morning...

FOLLOW Dartmouth down the corridor...

INT. STRAND LOBBY

...and find him opening a door at the top of some stairs and emerging into the LOBBY of the Strand. He goes to the theater's glass front doors, looks out, and SEES --

EXT. THEATER - DARTMOUTH'S POV

-- the LINE of customers, now stretching around the corner.

INT. LOBBY - DARTMOUTH AS BEFORE

He heads for his office, shaking his head.

DARTMOUTH
I take it back. They are yokels.

EXT. THEATER

Huge, truncated ANT LEGS have been attached to the front wall of the theater, as if colossal mutant ants were trying to break through the stucco and onto the street. The legs WAVE back and forth in the breeze.

The marquee offers "MANT! HALF MAN - HALF ANT - ALL TERROR! LIVE NURSE IN ATTENDANCE!" Big SIGNS advertise "MANT! In ATOM-O-VISION and RUMBLE-RAMA!"

FAVOR Gene and Dennis in the long LINE, mostly kids and teenagers, that snakes its way toward the box office. As Gene SEES something O.S., his expression darkens. REVEAL what he sees: Stan, heading their way.

STAN

Hi. Listen, I thought I wasn't gonna --

GENE

Don't worry about it.

STAN

Worry about what?

GENE

You don't have to sit with me. That wouldn't be cool, right?

STAN

What are you talkin' about?

GENE

You can sit with your friends.

With a nod, he indicates Greg and Duane approaching the theater.

STAN

Hey man, listen a minute --

But Gene and Dennis have reached the box office, where Gene hands over money and tells the CASHIER:

GENE

Two, please.

CASHIER

See the nurse before the show.

As Gene and Dennis go inside, STAY with Stan, as Greg and Duane hail him.

GREG

Stan, how's it going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN

Man, I just had the weirdest --

SHERRY (O.S.)

So!

The guys turn to find Sherry advancing on them, with little Dwight in tow.

STAN

Sherry?

SHERRY

This is where you're spending your day. Not sandbagging the all-purpose room...not with me...

DWIGHT

(seeing Mant stuff)
Neat!

SHERRY

...but down here at the monster show.

STAN

No, see, I --

SHERRY

Very mature!

DWIGHT

(indicates Stan)
Who's that?

SHERRY

That's nobody.

DWIGHT

I'm telling anyway.

STAN

Hey, Sherry, wait --

But Sherry is stomping toward the back of the line, pulling Dwight with her.

DUANE

All-purpose room?

STAN

(sighs)
Oh, man...

INT. THEATER LOBBY

CUSTOMERS, after buying tickets, file past a fake NURSE'S STATION, where Lawrence Woolsey's girlfriend Ruth is sitting, wearing a nurse's uniform too low-cut to be found in nature. She pushes two forms, with pencils, at Gene and Dennis.

RUTH
Sign here, please.

DENNIS
What is it?

RUTH
It's a release form. It says it's not our fault if the movie scares you to death.

GENE
Wow.

RUTH
It's not a joke. We've had ten-year-olds having heart attacks. They're recovering, but we can't be exposed legally. If you won't sign...

Dennis believes her -- she's not a bad actress.

GENE
But we're not scared, are we, Dennis?

DENNIS
(yes)
No...

A KID with a bleeding elbow scrape comes up to Ruth's station.

BLEEDING KID
Nurse! I cut my elbow.

RUTH
That looks terrible.
(to other customers)
Next!

DENNIS
Lookit!

He points to a four-foot-high dirt ANT HILL that's been built on the carpeted floor. A lifelike human FOREARM, streaked with blood, reaches desperately out of the dirt, trapped in the grip of a fake ant leg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Gene's eyes travel up the display, he's surprised to meet those of --

 GENE
Sandra?

-- standing on the other side of the ant hill.

 SANDRA
Hi.

 GENE
Hi. I didn't know you liked
monster movies.

 SANDRA
I'm here with my parents --

And just catching up with Sandra are Jack and Rhonda -- the couple Gene saw arguing Woolsey's cause outside the theater. Rhonda, getting a look at the ant hill, recoils.

 RHONDA
God, that's disgusting.

 SANDRA
I know, Mom.

 JACK
The point isn't whether we like
it. The point is, if we let them
start telling us what movies we
can see, or what music we can
listen to, or --

 SANDRA
I know, Dad.

Rhonda puts a hand on Jack's arm, and indicates Gene and Dennis. Jack puts his palms outward in a "hands-off" gesture.

 JACK
We'll see you afterwards.

He and Rhonda go into the auditorium.

 GENE
You mean those two are real?

 SANDRA
Yeah, they're real. They're my
parents. They're great, you know,
but...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Gene nods. Sandra looks around -- at the nurse, at the anthill -- and lowers her voice as she asks Gene:

SANDRA (CONT.)
Um -- what actually happens in
this?

GENE
(shrugs)
It's just a movie.

SANDRA
Right. I just -- heard they have
some other things...

GENE
Well, there's some stuff to make
it scarier. But a lot of people
don't even get sick --

DENNIS
You guys, we gotta get seats.

Sandra follows them toward the auditorium doors.

SANDRA
Could I kind of -- sit with you?

GENE
Okay.

ANDY (O.S.)
Hey, Gene!

The young Sea Scout pushes through the lobby crowd to join them.

ANDY (CONT.)
You going in?

GENE
Uh, yeah --

He opens the door for Sandra -- Andy sees her, registers that she and Gene are together, and backs off, looking disgusted.

ANDY
See you later.

He goes away.

GENE
(to Sandra)
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SANDRA
What for?

Gene, Dennis and Sandra go inside.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (BACKSTAGE)

Behind the movie screen and curtains, the Strand's past as a movie/vaudeville house is revealed: old dressing rooms, flats, lighting rigs, etc. SOUNDS O.S.: noisy KIDS in the auditorium, and the SOUNDTRACK of a color cartoon.

Lawrence Woolsey, unshaven and unslept, is talking Harvey Starkweather through a typed instruction sheet and showing him a couple of black CONTROL BOXES with dials marked 1 through 10.

WOOLSEY
...Now, when the guy in the movie says, "You don't understand, my wife is in there -- my God, look out --" that's cue number five. You turn number one up to four, and number two up to three.

HARVEY
Uh huh.

WOOLSEY
Then, for cue number six, one goes to five, and two goes to seven. But you never turn one above six.

HARVEY
Uh... right.

Harvey turns away from the black boxes and indicates Woolsey's other creation -- a towering, clunky APPARATUS that includes small MOTORS, PROJECTORS, SPEAKERS, and box-kite-like STRUCTURES faced with scrim material.

HARVEY (CONT.)
What about this stuff?

WOOLSEY
Don't touch that stuff. Don't even breathe on it.

HARVEY
Okay.

Woolsey stands back from the machinery, looks at Harvey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

You know, you're not a bad-looking kid. Have you ever done any acting?

HARVEY

Uh-uh. How do you do it?

WOOLSEY

Uh, never mind. Better get your suit on --

He's interrupted as Dartmouth arrives backstage, his shirt-pocket radio again crackling with static.

DARTMOUTH

That's some audience you brought in here. They're tearing the place to --

WOOLSEY

Just the man I wanted to see...

As Woolsey and Dartmouth head up the PASSAGEWAY toward the lobby...

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

I'd like to get paid in cash as soon as this show is in. In fact, I'd like to get paid in cash on every show.

DARTMOUTH

Mr. Woolsey, we've never shorted anyone.

WOOLSEY

Really? You should learn how...

REVEAL that Harvey is following them at a distance, listening.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

The mood of the packed theater is CHAOS: paper airplanes in flight, thrown candy, yelling and stamping that nearly drowns out the soundtrack of the COLOR CARTOON on the SCREEN.

As Gene, Dennis and Sandra make their way to four seats near the front, Sandra ducks the sticky crossfire of a CANDY FIGHT. Gene points to the noisiest section...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE
Down here looks good.

... and Sandra looks at him, wondering what she's gotten herself into.

INT. LOBBY

As Woolsey and Dartmouth come from backstage, Ruth is closing up her nurse's station. Dartmouth goes off into the box office booth.

WOOLSEY
How are we doing?

RUTH
We're too dazzled by show business
to speak, Larry.

WOOLSEY
That's the stuff.

His eyes light up, as the cashier waves a stocky, cigar-chomping middle-aged MAN into the lobby.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)
Mister Spector!

Woolsey pumps Spector's hand. In b.g., Dartmouth emerges from the box office booth and goes to the STAIRS that lead to the balcony.

SPECTOR
Woolsey. How's it going?

WOOLSEY
Sensational. Ruth, this is Mister
Spector, from Megalopolitan
Theaters.

Spector turns to Ruth, focusing on the low-cut zone of her nurse's uniform.

SPECTOR
Pleasure.

RUTH
I'm up here.

Across the lobby, Dartmouth hooks up a CHAIN across the bottom of the stairway, with a "BALCONY FULL" sign hanging from it. A couple of KIDS, approaching the stairs, are miffed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KID

Hey!

DARTMOUTH

Sorry. That's all the balcony
can safely hold. There are seats
down front.

He comes over to Woolsey and the others and hands Woolsey a
thick ENVELOPE, which Woolsey slips into his coat pocket.

DARTMOUTH (CONT.)

Hello, Mister Spector.

SPECTOR

Hi, Harold. What's the numbers?

DARTMOUTH

It's Howard. We're sold out.

WOOLSEY

Fantastic!

(to Ruth)

What did I tell you?

RUTH

You told me I wouldn't have to
wear this uniform anymore.

Woolsey sneaks a peek through the auditorium doors...

WOOLSEY'S POV - THE AUDITORIUM

...as TITLES reading WOOLSEY INTERNATIONAL PICTURES PRESENTS
-MANT flash onto the screen, to a CHEER from the audience.

INT. LOBBY AS BEFORE

Woolsey rejoins the others.

WOOLSEY

We should go in --

SPECTOR

The question is what happens the
rest of the week. That's what
I'll be watching with great
interest. It's not just a matter
of putting yourself in there.
It's a matter of staying in there
for a nice long ride.

(to Ruth)

Am I right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruth gives Spector the world's thinnest smile. Spector notices the STATIC coming from Dartmouth's transistor radio.

SPECTOR (CONT.)
What is that?

Woolsey lifts the radio out of Dartmouth's pocket, shows it to Spector.

WOOLSEY
War news.

SPECTOR
(to Dartmouth)
Oh. You got a bet on it?

Woolsey releases the radio and herds the group toward the auditorium doors.

WOOLSEY
When you see what I've got cooked
up... and wait till you see the
feelers on this thing.

He holds the door open.

DARTMOUTH
I'm sure it's wonderful.

He heads for his office as Woolsey, Ruth, and Spector go into the auditorium.

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

The audience has settled down, and is glued to an early scene in Mant.

ON THE SCREEN

In his DENTAL OFFICE, the white-smocked DR. GRABOW talks to BILL, a despairing young man who covers his face with his hands as his wife CAROLE tries to comfort him. (Carole looks familiar: she's Ruth, with different hair.)

GRABOW
You're lucky to be alive, Bill.

BILL
I wish I was dead.

CAROLE
How could such a thing happen,
Doctor Grabow?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRABOW

It's really quite simple, Carole.

He indicates his X-RAY MACHINE.

GRABOW (CONT.)

When Bill was having his teeth X-rayed, an ant must have bitten him at the exact moment the radiation was released. I'd been meaning to have the office fumigated, but I just haven't had the time.

CAROLE

But how could it cause this?

GRABOW

There's a lot we don't know about radiation yet, Carole. But as nearly as I can figure...

He pulls down a chart showing a very basic grade-school drawing of a human head with a brain badly drawn within its skull. He uses a pointer (badly) to clarify his description.

GRABOW (CONT.)

The ant's saliva must have gotten into Bill's bloodstream and gone directly to his brain... just as the Roentgens of radiation were released.

CAROLE

And that's how he became a --

GRABOW

MANT!

Bill removes his hands from his face as the orchestra goes into orgasm. He has a very large, very disgusting, ANT'S HEAD.

IN THE THEATER

SCREAMS from the audience as MANT's face is revealed. Dennis is one of the loudest screamers --

-- and Gene looks down, surprised, at Sandra's HAND clamped to his arm.

STAN (O.S.)

(hisses)

Hey! Gene!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sandra jumps, startled -- then sees Stan in the aisle, and nudges the rapt Gene, who looks over. Stan beckons him out of his seat.

GENE

Excuse me.

Looking dubious, he slips his arm out from under Sandra's hand and goes to follow Stan up the aisle.

INT. LOBBY

Gene and Stan talk, with kids acting up at the candy counter and water fountain in b.g.

STAN

Look, I wasn't trying to get out of anything. I got a date with Sherry. We were gonna go look at coral animals.

GENE

Yeah? So what happened?

STAN

Harvey Starkweather. He basically said he'd kill me. Now she's here with her brother and she wants to kill me. Plus you want to kill me. I'm supposed to be popular.

GENE

I didn't want to kill you. I'm just used to...

STAN

Look, it's okay. Can I sit with you guys, at least? Greg and Duane are having a burp contest.

GENE

Sure.

They start inside, but Stan stops Gene to ask:

STAN

Hey, isn't that that ban the bomb girl you're with?

GENE

We're just sitting together.

Stan punches Gene's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAN
You hound.

INT. THEATER

As Stan and Gene join Sandra and Dennis...

ON THE SCREEN - DENTAL OFFICE AS BEFORE

GRABOW
I'm sorry, Bill. I really am.

BILL
Sorry? Sorry? Do you realize
the hell I go through with every
Sunday picnic?

He moves on Dr. Grabow, ready to attack.

CAROLE
Doctor, look out!

The dentist grabs a can of RAID, sprays a blast of it into
MANT's face. The monster reels back, dazed.

BILL
Thanks, Doc. I needed that.

IN THE BALCONY

The loudest, rowdiest section of the theater -- KIDS here are
screaming, baying, and stomping as MANT appears.

As a CUTAWAY to the SCREEN shows MANT moving forward, looming
huge in Woolsey's CAMERA --

FAVOR Sherry and her little brother Dwight in the balcony --
he's recoiling in terror, while she's merely disgusted.

DWIGHT
Agghhhh!

Sherry looks restlessly around, and sees a NECKING TEENAGE
COUPLE, sprawled over several seats and competing with the movie
for the balcony crowd's attention. The boy's hand assaults the
hem of the girl's sweatshirt, and her hand's resistance
weakens...

Sherry sighs in self-pitying envy, and sits back reluctantly
to watch the movie.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A BIG, HEAVY DOOR

that swings open to reveal MANT glowering down through fierce, gigantic ant eyes.

WIDER ANGLE REVEALS

that the door is the backstage fire door of the Strand Theater, opening onto an alley.

MANT -- that is, Harvey in costume -- flicks a cigarette butt out into the alley and lets the door swing closed. The creepy, rubber-headed costume adds four inches to his height. He goes over to Woolsey's electrical dials, picks up his cue sheet...

INT. THEATER

As Gene and his friends watch...

ON THE SCREEN - MANT'S LIVING ROOM.

MANT paces furiously through his LIVING ROOM, as Carole frets. MANT has GROWN several inches in height. Every time he passes the rabbit-ear antenna of his TV set, the picture fritzes, his own antennae barely missing certain entanglement.

BILL

Crumbs! How long can I exist on crumbs!

CAROLE

Bill, please -- the doctor said not to get excited, and --

MANT goes over to the mantle, grabs an ANT FARM, and smashes it to the floor.

BILL

Go, my brothers and sisters!
You're free! Free!

CAROLE

No, Bill --

BILL

(laughs maniacally)
Behold the great emancipator!
And now...to go downtown --

CAROLE

No, Bill, you mustn't --

She runs to the door, trying to block his way, fumbling to turn the lock. But MANT moves in on her...as Woolsey's CAMERA favors the TWITCHING FEELER at the end of MANT's arm --

INT. BACKSTAGE

Harvey, in his MANT suit, stands at Lawrence Woolsey's electrical controls, reading his instruction sheet as Mant's soundtrack leaks backstage.

BILL (V.O.)

Get away from that door, Carole!

ON THE SCREEN - MANT'S LIVING ROOM AS BEFORE

BILL

Don't make me use this!

Carole, her back to Bill at the door, looks over her shoulder and sees MANT's tingling FEELER zeroing in on her tightly skirted REAR END --

INT. BACKSTAGE

Harvey pushes a button under a hand-lettered sign reading "SEAT BUZZERS" --

INT. THEATER - AUDITORIUM

On the screen, MANT's feeler GOOSES Carole, who SCREAMS --

-- but the audience screams much louder, as the BUZZERS are activated. Customers jump out of their seats, and look down in amazement at the traitorous cushions.

ANGLE - AT THE BACK OF THE HOUSE

At the back of the theater, Lawrence Woolsey makes a triumphant gesture of an ass-goosing fist, as Spector chortles appreciatively.

WOOLSEY

Gotcha!

ANGLE ON OUR KIDS

Gene and Stan are grooving on their vibrating seats, while Dennis rides his like a white-knuckle roller-coaster. Sandra, who has stood up, feels her cushion with her hand. The buzzing stops. She sits down, shaking her head.

ON THE SCREEN - INT. PRISON

MANT is bigger now, and more ant than man. He's imprisoned in a JAIL CELL. Carole and Dr. Grabow gaze in at him.

CAROLE

He needs to be in a hospital, not a prison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRABOW

Where would you have me send him
-- a funny farm, or an ant farm?

CAROLE

How could you be so cruel?

Dr. Grabow puts his arms around her.

GRABOW

And how could you not love me --
now that I'm the only real man
in your life?

As Carole struggles against Grabow's advances, MANT emits a
furious SHRIEK.

GRABOW (CONT.)

Just kidding, Bill.

MANT breaks down its cell door, tosses it aside, and SWATS Dr.
Grabow to the floor.

CAROLE

Bill! Wait!

But MANT is getting away.

CUT TO:

INT. DARTMOUTH'S OFFICE

Behind his closed door, the theater manager is a jittery wreck.
He's glued to his little TV set, his foot tapping, his hand
stuffing popcorn in his mouth, his eyes never leaving the
NEWSCASTER on the screen.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

...after the boarding and search
of the Soviet cargo vessel Marucla
by the U.S. Navy, an anxious world
is holding its breath today...

INT. THEATER - ON THE SCREEN

MANT is now much larger than he was the last time we saw him
-- almost double-size. In a triumph of cheap special effects,
he climbs up the side of a downtown OFFICE BUILDING. At the
second story, he reaches out and grabs the overhead WIRES of
an electric streetcar system, just as a STREETCAR nears the
building --

INT. BACKSTAGE

The MANT-clad Harvey gets ready, reads his crib sheet...

MOVIE ACTOR 2 (V.O.)
Wh -- what the devil is -- Good
God!

...and turns some knobs.

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

ON SCREEN, the streetcar wires SPARK, the streetcar DERAILS, and helpless PASSENGERS are tossed out onto the street by the insanely laughing MANT, while --

-- in the theater, WIRES strung from the front to rear of the room crackle with SPARKS of their own. The whole building seems to VIBRATE in sympathy with the careening streetcar, making customers cling to their armrests.

INT. THEATER - IN THE BALCONY

The teenage neckers, oblivious to the effects, the movie, and the younger kids staring at them, are more passionate than before, the guy's hand now roaming freely under the girl's sweatshirt.

An USHER comes along, and trains his FLASHLIGHT on the couple.

USHER
Hey, you two. Let's cool down
over here.

The teenagers ignore him -- but two younger KIDS reach over and move the usher's flashlight down the teenagers' bodies for a better look.

ON THE SCREEN - EXT. A DOWNTOWN

As MANT crawls up a building, an ARMY UNIT with BAZOOKAS takes up positions amid the streetcar rubble. Carole stands beside a grim GENERAL.

GENERAL
What the hell do you call that
thing?

CAROLE
(sobbing)
Bill.

The general speaks through a megaphone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENERAL

Bill, this is General Chester.
Surrender now. Come down off the
building. We have sugar for you!

No dice.

GENERAL (CONT.)

Men -- load your DDT missiles.

IN THE AUDIENCE

One ANGLE finds Andy yakking at the KID beside him...

ANDY

A general wouldn't really say
that...

KID

Shut up!

...while another ANGLE finds Gene and Sandra: his hand is now
on top of her hand that's clamped to his arm.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE

Listening to the Mant dialogue O.S., Harvey tries to make sense
out of Woolsey's instruction sheet and the knobs in front of
him. Is this cue number three, or four? Do the dials get
turned up to six and five, or vice versa...?

GENERAL (V.O.)

Ready...aim...fire!

Harvey decides the hell with it -- he JACKS both controls all
the way up to eight. Overhead, in an old FUSE BOX, a fuse
labelled "Office" starts to FIZZ OUT.

INT. THEATER - AUDITORIUM

ON THE SCREEN, the DDT missiles bombard MANT's writhing body...

ALONG THE WALLS, flash-powder CHARGES explode near the
ceiling...

IN THE AUDIENCE, a violent RUMBLING shakes the seats and the
floor...

INT. DARTMOUTH'S OFFICE

As Dartmouth feels the rumble, his TV set goes to SNOW. He sits
forward, his heart in his throat, and whaps the TV set, to no
effect. He picks up his phone -- the line is DEAD.

INT. LOBBY

Dartmouth, panicking, bolts into the lobby. A couple of KIDS see him go through a door that leads to a stairwell.

KID

Tuff!

They undo the chain at the foot of the balcony steps. They go upstairs, and a few other KIDS follow...

...as a new ANGLE finds Gene coming out of the men's room, just as Sherry's little brother Dwight goes in. Gene finds the long-suffering Sherry waiting a few feet away.

GENE

Sherry?

SHERRY

Hello, um...

GENE

Gene.

SHERRY

Gene, yes. Are you and your friend Stan enjoying the show?

GENE

Could I talk to you for a minute?

SHERRY

What about?

GENE

About Stan. This wasn't his fault, today. He really wanted to go see the coral with you.

SHERRY

I find that hard to believe.

GENE

Well, it wasn't the coral, so much, but -- see, Stan likes you. He really likes you.

SHERRY

He certainly has a strange way of showing it. He told me he was sandbagging the all-purpose room today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

He was probably afraid you'd think it was childish, to, uh --

SHERRY

To come here? I do.

GENE

Well, he was going to go with you today, but then he remembered -- he said he'd go to this movie with me and my little brother. See, Stan kind of calms Dennis down when he gets scared. He's -- like an uncle to him.

SHERRY

To your brother?

GENE

Yeah, and he knew Dennis was really looking forward to it, and he said, "I can't do it. I can't let the little guy down."

SHERRY

Well, that's sweet of him. Thinking about little --

Dwight has come out of the bathroom -- he pulls impatiently on Sherry's arm.

DWIGHT

We're missing it!

SHERRY

Go away, Dwight.

Dwight goes back into the auditorium.

GENE

That's the kind of guy Stan is. He just thought, with our dad being -- out there -- he didn't want Dennis being alone -- in here.

SHERRY

Oh, and with you living out at the base... being less advantaged. That is moving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GENE

I know. But, see, he really cares about you. He's not like these guys that just -- use girls. He's interested in girls as...as people.

SHERRY

That's just how I'm interested in boys.

GENE

There you go.

SHERRY

Gene -- show me where you're sitting.

She opens the auditorium door, and Gene follows her in.

INT. THEATER

The theater is still SHAKING, with the Rumble-Rama turned up to ten.

ON THE SCREEN

The General shouts to his men, as MANT continues his rampage.

GENERAL

That didn't even stun it -- bring in the atomic missiles.

CAROLE

Atomic? But that's how this started...

GENERAL

Carole, the power of the atom can be used to create -- or to destroy. It's up to mankind...

MANT has climbed down off the office building. He stumbles to the doors of a MOVIE THEATER, the Bijou.

GENERAL (CONT.)

(to men)

Quickly! It's heading for that movie theater!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLE

"It"? Don't you understand? He's not a monster -- he's a shoe salesman.

GENERAL

Would you let -- that -- fit you in a pump?

IN THE AUDIENCE

ANGLE on our kids -- Gene returns to his seat, with Sherry in tow.

GENE

Dennis -- shove over one.

As Dennis makes room, Stan is stunned to see Sherry sit down next to him.

STAN

Sherry?

SHERRY

Stan -- Gene explained everything to me. I'm sorry, I didn't realize why you --

DENNIS

Sshh!

Sherry complies by planting a hot KISS on Stan. He responds, and they're locked in a deep clinch, while --

ON THE SCREEN - INT. MOVIE THEATER

The action of Mant now takes place inside the Bijou Theater. The AUDIENCE seen on the screen is watching a TWIST PARTY scene in a teen movie.

Woolsey's CAMERA tracks in, so that the IMAGE on the Bijou's screen fills the Strand's screen as well...

An EFFECT at the left side of Woolsey's frame simulates the screen RIPPING, pseudo-revealing a blank wall behind it, and...

MANT -- that is, Harvey in costume -- careens onto the stage of the Strand. On the screen behind him, ACTORS portraying frightened Bijou audience members point and SCREAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACTORS
(variously)
Eeeee!... What is it?... Look
out!... Help!... Run for your
lives!

Here in the Strand, MANT looks around, and...

HARVEY'S POV

Through the compound hexagonal lenses of the ant costume's eyes, he SEES a kaleidoscopic image: multiple Stans and Sherrys, locked in a steamy kiss.

INT. STRAND AUDITORIUM AS BEFORE

Furious, MANT leaps from the stage, and heads into the audience. At the back of the house, Woolsey watches happily.

WOOLSEY
He looks mad, doesn't he? The
kid's all right...

At our kids' seats, Dennis sees MANT heading this way, and nervously grasps Stan's elbow. Stan finally breaks off the kiss with Sherry, sees what's happening --

STAN
It's okay, Dennis. It's just some
guy in a --

-- and is interrupted, as MANT grabs him, yanks him from his seat, and starts BEATING HIM UP, for real, in the aisle.

STAN (CONT.)
Hey!

He tries to fight back, but MANT is stronger, weirder, and, in the costume, hugely taller. Gene tries to separate them, but MANT pushes him aside. KIDS jump from their seats and surround the fracas.

At the back of the house --

WOOLSEY
Jesus, he's beating the hell out
of that kid!
(to MANT)
Hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Woolsey takes off down the aisle, Gene again dives into the fray, and this time manages to tear Stan's shirt free of MANT's feeler.

Stan stumbles away down the aisle, and MANT gives chase. Woolsey runs down the aisle after them.

WOOLSEY

You're just supposed to scare
them, you idiot hick psychopath!
Where are you going?

At the back of the house, Spector watches, pleased...

SPECTOR

You see, what he's putting back
-- the showmanship. This, to my
mind, is what's been missing.

...as MANT wheels around and DECKS Woolsey with a roundhouse punch.

RUTH

You're right. This isn't bad.

MANT resumes chasing Stan, who ducks through a big DOOR beside the stage. Gene, Sandra, Sherry, and the dazed Woolsey catch up with MANT and struggle with him just long enough to give Stan a head start. But MANT breaks free and goes O.S. through the door. The others follow, while, up above...

INT. THEATER - BALCONY

More KIDS have crammed into the balcony -- they're standing in the aisles, massing against the front railing. An USHER tries to get their attention.

USHER

Hey, you guys -- out of the
aisles! Come on --

But no one pays any attention -- the movie and the VIBRATING Rumble-Rama are too loud.

ON THE SCREEN

MANT -- even bigger than before -- breaks through the back wall of the Bijou Theater, into an alley. As he runs down the alley, Woolsey's CAMERA favors MANT's huge feet, whose steps make the ground SHAKE.

IN THE BALCONY

The kids CLAP and STOMP in unison with the footfalls. Together with the Rumble-Rama, their audience participation makes the old, overloaded balcony TREMBLE.

CUT TO:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER

Dartmouth has gone through the vault-type door, which stands ajar -- he is in a basement room outfitted as a deluxe FALLOUT SHELTER. There are bunk beds, a shower, big stacks of number-10 food cans, and a bicycle GENERATOR. Heavy, foil-faced INSULATION gleams on the walls.

The theater manager is near the door, where a CONTROL PANEL includes meters and switches marked "RATEMETER," "DOSIMETER," and "DOOR LOCK."

Dartmouth checks a double-barreled SHOTGUN -- then, still cradling the gun in one hand, he pushes the "DOOR LOCK" button. The big door starts swinging slowly shut on its TICKING timer mechanism...

...as Stan comes running in.

STAN

Hi, Mister Dartmouth.

DARTMOUTH

What are you doing down here?

STAN

Can I borrow this?

He grabs the shotgun.

DARTMOUTH

No! What do you --

Stan heads out of the shelter, but Dartmouth grabs his shoulder.

STAN

MANT is after me. He's trying to kill me. Thanks.

Stan pulls away, and Dartmouth follows him out the door of the shelter.

DARTMOUTH

You stupid kid! That's part of the show! This is real! Come back here --

But Stan runs out into the corridor --

INT. CORRIDOR

-- and Dartmouth follows --

DARTMOUTH

Give me that gun! The door's
closing --

-- just as MANT appears in the corridor, pursued by Gene and Sandra. The costumed Harvey gets one look at the shotgun and does a fast 180, back toward the theater --

DARTMOUTH

None of this matters! The
Russians have attacked! The bombs
are falling!

GENE

What?

But Gene and Sandra are almost bowled over by the retreating MANT, and they duck into the fallout shelter to get out of his way. The door is now so nearly closed that Gene has to squeeze through.

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER/CORRIDOR

SANDRA

Where are we -- ?
(It dawns)
Oh my God, it's a --

DARTMOUTH

No!

As Dartmouth tries to pry his way into the fallout shelter, Sandra tries to pry her way out.

GENE

What are you doing?

SANDRA

I don't believe in this.

GENE

But he said the Russians --

DARTMOUTH

Let me in --

SANDRA

Let me out --

It doesn't matter: Sandra and Dartmouth get one last glimpse of each other's panicked EYES before the door closes.

INT. CORRIDOR

Woolsey and Sherry arrive to find Stan holding the shotgun and Dartmouth pounding on the shelter door.

WOOLSEY

What the hell's going on here?

DARTMOUTH

The Russians have attacked!

WOOLSEY

You saw that on TV?

DARTMOUTH

No, the TV went blank. They must have hit the broadcast towers first. Then everything started shaking from the blast waves...

WOOLSEY

That's not the Russians. It's Rumble-rama.

(to Stan)

Give me the gun, kid. You could shoot somebody with that.

DARTMOUTH

What?

Stan hands the gun over.

WOOLSEY

That stupid kid I hired turned everything up too high. You don't hear any air-raid sirens, do you?

DARTMOUTH

No, but --

(indicates shelter)

There are two kids in there. My fallout shelter.

WOOLSEY

Well, let 'em out.

DARTMOUTH

It's on a time lock. It can't be opened for at least two months.

STAN

Oh man.

DARTMOUTH

It's not my fault --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

Is there food?

DARTMOUTH

Yes, but -- I didn't get to set the air intake blower.

WOOLSEY

The which?

DARTMOUTH

Air intake blower. It brings the air in. It's got a fallout filter, but if you don't set it...

SHERRY

You mean there's no air in there?

DARTMOUTH

There won't be soon.

WOOLSEY

Dandy.

(examines door)

We'll have to pop this thing off here...

(to Stan)

Go get us a couple crowbars and hammers, would you?

STAN

Sure.

He heads back toward the theater. Dartmouth shakes his head.

DARTMOUTH

They guaranteed it couldn't be opened.

WOOLSEY

Who?

DARTMOUTH

The people I bought it from.

WOOLSEY

Boy, am I in the wrong business.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER LOBBY

Dennis, upset, talks on the lobby PAY PHONE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENNIS
I can't find him anywhere. They
went out this door, and I was
scared, and... okay. Okay.

He hangs up and heads for the front exit.

CUT TO:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER

Gene and Sandra check out their strange surroundings. The heavy door is locked tight. Half the room is taken up by canned food and bottled water, and there's a tiny BATHROOM glimpsed through a half-open door. There are a hot plate, a narrow bed, a little table and chair, and a bookcase full of Reader's Digest Condensed Books and board games.

GENE
Why did you want to go out there?
You would've died.

SANDRA
So what? Everyone else is. First
the blast, then the fire, and the
radiation...

GENE
Did you used to have had dreams
about it?

SANDRA
Uh-huh.
(looks around)
This was one of them.
(beat)
Not you, just the place.

GENE
Right.

He finds a thin MANUAL on the bookcase, reads from it:

GENE (CONT.)
"The door of your Lifeline Fallout
Shelter will automatically open
when atomic radiation outside has
fallen to a safe level." That
could be two years. If Miami's
ground zero...

SANDRA
Two years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

(reads)

"A selection of popular novels
and board games has been
provided..."

He puts the manual back.

SANDRA

That's how they talked people into
it. "It'll be okay. We'll have
board games..."

She sits down on the little bed. From the theater, they feel,
and almost hear, a faint RUMBLING.

GENE (CONT.)

Listen.

It fades.

GENE (CONT.)

That was the bomb. That was
Miami.

SANDRA

God... I was nasty to Jack and
Rhonda, and now I'm never going
to see them again.

GENE

Who?

SANDRA

My parents. That's who I'm going
to miss. I don't have a lot of
friends. I mean, even before
this.

GENE

Yeah, I don't have a lot of
friends either.

SANDRA

Well -- they got theirs, huh?

GENE

How come you call your parents,
um...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANDRA

Jack and Rhonda. They believe that they're just people too, and calling them "Mom" and "Dad" sets up a false --

She breaks down -- starts crying.

SANDRA (CONT.)

Oh God...

Gene goes over and sits beside her on the bed.

GENE

I know. We have to -- just...

SANDRA

Gene...

GENE

Yeah?

She looks up at him -- holds his arms.

SANDRA

What if we're the only ones? What if nobody else made it into -- one of these things in time?

GENE

Then...

SANDRA

We'd be the only people. It's like we're --

GENE

Like we're what?

SANDRA

Like Adam and Eve. I mean...if there are still going to be people afterwards.

GENE

Babies.

SANDRA

Well -- yeah. Maybe they'll be the ones that can live here without blowing it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GENE
(nervous)
That's right. That'd be good.
I mean, it'd be good if they --

SANDRA
Are you scared?

GENE
Of what?

SANDRA
All of it.

GENE
Yeah.

SANDRA
Me too.

They hold each other, heads on each other's shoulders.

SANDRA (CONT.)
Gene?

GENE
Uh huh?

SANDRA
Are you sure you don't think I'm
some weirdo?

GENE
Yeah. I'm sure. I thought that
was good, at the air raid drill.

He pauses, thinking.

SANDRA
What?

GENE
I was just thinking -- there's
some stuff I wish I'd have done
differently.

SANDRA
Like what?

GENE
Just... stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SANDRA

Look -- in two years, we're going to tell each other everything.

GENE

Okay. You go first.

They look at each other -- Sandra smiles, though still crying. Gene wipes a tear from her cheek, and they KISS -- tentatively at first, but then deeper, trying to lose themselves.

They pull back -- Gene touches the top button of Sandra's blouse and looks questioningly at her. She nods, and we

CUT TO:

EXT. STRAND THEATER - AFTERNOON

Outside the theater, Dennis sees his mom arrive, and throws himself at her.

DENNIS

Mom!

ANNE

It's okay, sweetie --

DENNIS

But, but Gene and MANT went out a door, with --

He SPOTS Stan, returning to the theater with an armload of TOOLS. Dennis points at him.

DENNIS (CONT.)

-- with him.

Oops, thinks Stan. He goes over to Anne and Dennis.

STAN

Uh, hi. Are you Gene's mom?

As Stan speaks sotto voce to Anne, ANGLE behind them finds Jack and Rhonda coming out of the theater, looking enervated.

RHONDA

How can this be a free speech issue?

JACK

I don't know. Ants...

ANGLE returns to Dennis, Anne and Stan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNE

Dennis, you go back inside, okay,
honey?

DENNIS

But --

ANNE

The ant can't hurt you, sweetie.
Don't be scared. I'll be right
out here afterwards. Please?

DENNIS

Okay.

He goes back inside.

ANNE

(to Stan)

Where is he?

STAN

See, Gene and this girl Sandra
got stuck in a --

RHONDA

(overhears)

Sandra?

Jack and Rhonda see Stan and his armload of tools, and come over
this way.

STAN

Hi.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - LOBBY

Dennis SEES some kids heading up the stairs, past the
disconnected warning chain to the balcony. He joins them.

CUT TO:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER

Gene and Sandra are still perched on the bed. It's starting
to get short of air in here, and they're a little sweaty, but
their minds are elsewhere: Sandra's blouse is unbuttoned, and
Gene tentatively touches the hollow between her breasts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

You can tell me to stop if you want to.

Sandra shakes her head, smiling sadly.

GENE (CONT.)

What?

SANDRA

This isn't a date or something.

GENE

I know.

SANDRA

Like going upstairs at a party with someone or...

Her voice is shaky again. Gene takes his hand away.

GENE

I'm sorry.

SANDRA

It's okay.

She puts his hand back where it was, moves it over herself, and meets him in a KISS...

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE FALLOUT SHELTER

Woolsey, Stan and Dartmouth attack the unyielding door hinges with crowbars and claw hammers as Anne, Sherry, Jack and Rhonda watch.

ANNE

But how did they get in there?

STAN

It's complex, Ma'am...

JACK

(to Dartmouth)

This is your fallout shelter?

DARTMOUTH

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

How could you fall for this crap?
Wall yourself up --

Dartmouth stops struggling with his crowbar, confronts Jack.

DARTMOUTH

My life is worth saving.

RHONDA

How about my daughter's life?

Jack reaches for Dartmouth's crowbar.

JACK

Here, give me this, I'll do it
for a while --

Dartmouth pulls the crowbar away, half-brandishes it -- a
standoff.

WOOLSEY

Hey! Let's take it easy here.
Let him take a turn.

Dartmouth and Jack back off their angry stances. Dartmouth
gives Jack his crowbar, and Jack joins Woolsey and Stan in
attacking the door again.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

(working)
People can always disagree.
That's what makes race riots --

The hinge he's been struggling with finally pulls free.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

Hah!

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

ON THE SCREEN, the anguished MANT is going through the
traditional brushing-cars-and-buses-aside-as-if-they-were-toys
routine.

In the still-vibrating theater, the overloaded BALCONY is
TREMBLING, but the KIDS in it are digging the show, oblivious
to the danger...

...while, down below, flakes of PLASTER fall on the KIDS in the
floor seats -- who yell up at the balcony:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KID IN FLOOR SEAT
Hey, quit it, you guys!

CUT TO:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER

Gene and Sandra, in their clinch.

SANDRA
Gene, wait --

They pull back again.

SANDRA (CONT.)
Are you hot? I mean real hot --
like you can't breathe.

GENE
Um -- I can't tell --

And the last two teenagers alive are suddenly interrupted by a godawful wrenching NOISE, as the fallout shelter door FALLS off its hinges. Stunned, they turn to SEE Anne, Woolsey, Dartmouth, and Sandra's parents staring in at them.

Sandra jumps up, runs to embrace her mother --

SANDRA
Rhonda! Oh my God...we thought
the --

RHONDA
Sandra, your blouse.

SANDRA
What? Oh. I'm sorry.

RHONDA
Would you button it?

Sandra can't believe this is so important. She buttons.

SANDRA
I am.

Gene makes brief eye contact with Jack, finds it not much fun, and makes his way to Anne.

ANNE
(to Gene)
Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOOLSEY

I think he was doing fine.

ANNE

Thank you.

GENE

We thought everyone else was dead.

ANNE

You live like everyone else is dead.

A beat -- Anne's anger catches Gene up short.

GENE

No, Mom, I'm --

ANNE

Excuse me.

She goes over to Rhonda, and the party heads toward the theater in small groups -- Woolsey walking with Gene...

WOOLSEY

Well, it's rough, kid. But, on the plus side, the world is still here...

...and Anne with Rhonda...

ANNE

... believe me, we've never had anything like --

RHONDA

I mean, a drive-in movie, yes...

...Stan with Sherry...

SHERRY

Stan, does your house have one of those shelters?

STAN

Yeah. Down in the basement.

Sherry smiles dreamily and takes Stan's hand, while Jack talks with Sandra...

JACK

Is the boy military?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANDRA
Oh, God.

JACK
I'm just asking...

...and Dartmouth looks sadly at the mangled shelter door, then brings up the rear as we

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - AUDITORIUM

ON SCREEN, a small MOB of people with flaming TORCHES look frantically around a dead-end ALLEY.

MOB MEMBER 1
Where'd it go?

MOB MEMBER 2
It lost us!

But a third mob member turns, SCREAMS, and POINTS straight at Woolsey's CAMERA -- that is, into the Strand Theater audience.

MOB MEMBER 3
There! There it is!

For a moment, the people on the screen seem to be pointing and screaming at nothing more than the Strand's crowd of rowdy kids -- but then Harvey, a beat late, comes running into the auditorium in his MANT suit and GROWLS at the audience.

MOB MEMBER 2
(on screen)
Stop him! Someone stop him!

At the back of the house, Ruth, in her nurse's outfit, picks up her cue -- she runs down the center aisle toward MANT, and SCREAMS...

...as Harvey, following the Woolsey plan, grabs her and LIFTS her into his hairy black arms.

MOB MEMBER 1
(on screen)
It's got that woman!

MOB MEMBER 3
She's a nurse!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruth keeps screaming -- but pauses as she realizes that Harvey is taking her toward the stage. Indicating the direction of the lobby, she hisses at him sotto voce:

RUTH

No, no, you dumb bastard, that
way...

But then Ruth FEELS something -- and looks to SEE Harvey's palmed SWITCHBLADE pricking at her neck. She SCREAMS, with real feeling now, as the ant-man carries her toward the stage.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (BACKSTAGE)

Woolsey, Dartmouth, Jack, Rhonda, Stan, Sherry, Anne, Gene and Sandra come through a door into the backstage area, and Anne SCREAMS as she SEES --

-- MANT arrive backstage, with his switchblade at Ruth's throat.

GENE

(to Anne)

He's not real.

JACK

What about the knife?

HARVEY

The knife's real.

(to Woolsey)

Give me the money. Fast.

Woolsey digs out the envelope of box-office cash and hands it over, but MANT doesn't release Ruth yet. Instead, he nods Sherry toward him.

HARVEY (CONT.)

Come on, Sherry...

SHERRY

(it dawns)

Oh no --

Harvey pulls off the rubber MANT head with one hand, presses the knife harder against Ruth's throat with the other. Sherry, terrified, goes over to him. He lets go of Ruth but grabs Sherry in her place.

HARVEY

You're coming with me, Sherry.
We're going far away from here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERRY

No, Harvey. Please --

But Harvey is already backing out the fire door -- the movie monster making off with the beautiful girl as the crowd stands hopeless.

As the door slips closed, Stan rushes toward it. Woolsey tries to hold him back --

WOOLSEY

Hold it, kid. We'll call the cops...

-- but Stan gets free of him, and runs out the door...

EXT. ALLEY - SUNSET

...just in time to see a CORVAIR peel out down the alley behind the theater, with Harvey at the wheel and Sherry trapped beside him. Stan runs after the car.

INT. BACKSTAGE AS BEFORE

Dartmouth is already on the phone --

DARTMOUTH

Get me the police...

-- as Woolsey hurries to turn his gadget control dials off. With the Rumble-rama gone, the theater finally stops vibrating, allowing Mant dialogue to be heard back here.

DR. GRABOW (V.O.)

You see, Carole, unless man learns to live in peace with his universe...

GENE

Mister Woolsey -- it's still shaking.

Woolsey hears it too -- a RUMBLING from out in the house. As Gene follows, Woolsey rushes to the edge of the screen --

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM/STAGE)

-- and out onto the stage. Their SHADOWS on the screen draw BOOS from the audience.

WOOLSEY AND GENE'S POV

While the audience tries to watch Mant, the old balcony, weakened by overloading and Rumble-Rama, creaks up and down like an overcrowded stadium tier. PLASTER floats down on the seats below...

WOOLSEY AND GENE AS BEFORE

GENE

Do we turn off the movie?

WOOLSEY

(shakes head)

Then they stamp. Come on.

He rushes Gene to the edge of the stage -- light APPLAUSE from the audience as the shadows leave.

INT. BACKSTAGE AS BEFORE

Woolsey addresses his troops, first Gene and Sandra --

WOOLSEY

Go open all the doors to this place -- fire exits, everything. Fast.

-- then the grownups:

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

When people start leaving, you get in the aisles -- make sure nobody gets trampled.

ANNE

Trampled?

WOOLSEY

Go.

As the mystified group scatters to carry out Woolsey's orders,

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THEATER/INT. HARVEY'S CAR

Harvey, with one hand rapped around Sherry's wrist, drives fast down the alley, turns a corner into another alley, heading for the street.

SHERRY

Harvey, we can still go back...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARVEY

We can never go back, baby.

But he STOPS SHORT as he SEES a POLICE CAR blocking the mouth of the alley -- crowd control for the around-the-block LINE OF PEOPLE waiting for the next show of Mant.

HARVEY

Damn.

The Corvair SQUEALS in protest as Harvey WHEELS AROUND, slopping onto the sidewalk, FISHTAILING around the corner, and almost hitting the desperately RUNNING Stan, who barely JUMPS to safety as Sherry SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

One ANGLE finds Gene opening a fire exit down front and jamming it back against the alley pavement to hold it open...

...while another ANGLE finds Rhonda wedging a flattened popcorn cup under a door from the auditorium to the lobby for the same purpose, while...

ON SCREEN, ATOMIC BLASTS bombard MANT's body. Dr. Grabow, the General, and the tearful Carole turn their eyes from the final battle.

GENERAL

Stay down low! And don't look!
Those are atomic weapons!

CAROLE

Oh, Bill...

But suddenly, the drama of MANT's destruction is WIPED FROM VIEW, as a thunderous explosive NOISE is heard O.S., and --

STRAND AUDIENCE'S POV

THE SCREEN COLLAPSES, curling down onto itself and falling in a heap on the stage, revealing --

A HUGE CHUNK of the theater's back wall BLOWING OUT, and a BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHT visible through the flying RUBBLE.

It's like the stock shots of atomic blasts in the Mant trailer, but much more vivid: through the blown-out back wall, we SEE the hot light ROLLING IN toward the theater, flattening the outside world...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...and, with a low, sickening CRACKLE, the curtains and the fallen screen catch FIRE --

VOICE IN THE HOUSE (O.S.)
Jesus! This is it!

IN THE AUDIENCE

PATRONS start fleeing the theater, through the fire doors and up the aisles toward the lobby, while --

ON STAGE

A FLAMING SCENE FLAT comes CRASHING down onto the apron. Fiery PIECES of it bounce out onto the floor. Chunks of the CEILING over the stage catch fire and fall.

IN THE BALCONY

KIDS run out of the teetering balcony, through the doors to the upstairs lobby. We SPOT DWIGHT among those leaving.

ON STAGE

Amid the smoke and spreading FIRE, the figure of a MAN ON FIRE reels blindly onto the apron of the stage. We think we recognize the tall form, and the agonized VOICE confirms it:

WOOLSEY
Help me! Help me --

A couple of AUDIENCE MEMBERS hesitate near the stage, but Woolsey stumbles back behind the flames, and those who hesitated are swept into the escaping crowd.

IN THE SEATS

As kids flee around him, Andy the Sea Scout watches the stage in terror... and SWOONS into a dead FAINT.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY/INT. HARVEY'S CAR

Speeding toward another outlet to the street, Harvey again sees a line of PEOPLE -- but no cop car this time, just a sawhorse BARRICADE.

Harvey blasts the HORN, brakes just enough to give people time to SCATTER. The shimmying Corvair SPLINTERS the sawhorse and SKIDS from the alley into the street, narrowly missing MOVIEGOERS who dive for cover.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - IN AN AISLE

Ruth is traffic-copping people out of the theater --

RUTH
Out that door, that's right, here
we go --

-- when a VOICE interrupts her.

KID
Nurse! This guy fainted.

She looks down to see two KIDS carrying the out-cold Andy down the aisle.

RUTH
You're right.

She turns away from them, goes back to work:

RUTH (CONT.)
This way, everybody, let's go...

CUT TO:

EXT. DUVAL STREET - IN FRONT OF THEATER

The first few panicked PATRONS run out of the theater, almost knocking over some Saturday SHOPPERS on the sidewalk.

SHOPPER 1
Hey! Watch it!

SHOPPER 2
What the hell is -- ?

As KIDS waiting in line watch in amazement, the people from the theater stop in their tracks, looking around. Duval Street is the same lazy main drag it ever was. No mushroom cloud...no fire... just the beautiful Keys SUNSET.

Mr. Elroy, the health teacher who was fighting over Shredded Wheat at the grocery store, is among those who've fled the theater. He looks around and LAUGHS with relief, like someone waking from a nightmare...

MR. ELROY
Look! Look!

He HUGS the shopper he almost knocked over --

SHOPPER
Hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. ELROY

It's all here! It's all right!

KID IN LINE

Man, I'm seeing this twice.

-- as more PEOPLE come out of the theater, and Harvey's Corvair comes SCREAMING around the corner --

-- and is SWAMPED by the crush of theater evacuees.

MOVIEGOER

Hey, you moron!

Stopped in the middle of the street, Harvey finds himself the object of an angry CROWD's attention. As he flinches back from the onslaught at his window, Sherry ELBOWS Harvey smartly in the gut, and breaks his grip on her.

Sherry scrambles to the passenger door and shoves it open against the crowd, just as the breathless Stan pushes his way to the car...

SHERRY

Stan!

STAN

Sherry!

... and a COP makes it to Harvey's door.

COP

Out!

Stan and Sherry embrace.

SHERRY

Oh, thank God you got here! I was so scared! You were wonderful!

STAN

I was?

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER (AUDITORIUM)

Most people have left. The fire continues raging onstage while, in an aisle, Anne looks frantically around and calls --

ANNE

Dennis?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She spots Gene and Sandra nearby.

ANNE (CONT.)
I can't find him!

GENE
He was down here --
(calls)
Dennis!

DENNIS (O.S.)
Help!

They turn toward the source of the voice -- the balcony above, which CREAKS as its forward edge takes another nauseous DIP toward the waiting floor.

Gene runs up the aisle, under the ominously swaying balcony, with Anne and Sandra following.

INT. UPSTAIRS LOBBY/BALCONY

Gene, Anne and Sandra dodge the last few KIDS fleeing down the stairs, sprint across the upper lobby to the balcony doors, and find --

-- a THREE-FOOT GAP has opened between the balcony doorway and the back edge of the balcony itself. On the other side of the gap is Dennis, the last person on the balcony, frozen in fear, unable to jump to safety.

GENE
Dennis!

DENNIS
It's -- gonna --

The balcony TEETERS, its support beams groaning as they prepare to snap. The gap widens as Gene reaches for Dennis.

GENE
Hold out your hand!

DENNIS
I can't.

GENE
Dennis -- you know how you watched
Mant, and you weren't scared?

DENNIS
Um --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE

Well, don't be scared now. Give
me your hand...

Dennis reaches, but the gap is too wide. Gene grabs a door jamb
and STRETCHES out so far that it seems he'll fall in...

... but Anne holds Gene's wrist against the jamb, and Sandra
anchors Gene's feet to the floor...

... and he finally reaches Dennis's fingers, as the floor FALLS
AWAY beneath the kid's feet, and...

SEEN FROM THE STAGE

THE BALCONY GOES, hitting the seats below with an ear-splitting
CRASH. SEATS, floorboards and popcorn boxes BOUNCE six feet
into the air --

-- while, on the landing up above, Dennis dangles into space
at the end of Gene's arm.

INT. UPPER LOBBY

As Anne and Sandra anchor Gene, he strains forward, grabs more
of the terrified Dennis's arm, and pulls him up onto the lobby
floor. Gene, Anne, and the crying Dennis EMBRACE.

GENE

I'm sorry...

ANNE

It's okay --

Dennis points down at the stage.

DENNIS

He's -- he's on fire --

GENE

No he's not.

THEIR POV

ON STAGE, the burning figure of Lawrence Woolsey is again
reeling out in front of the flames -- exactly as it did before.

WOOLSEY

Help me -- hel --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The voice is cut off suddenly. The figure of Woolsey FREEZES in place -- and then a big chunk of the middle of it DISAPPEARS, as a RECTANGLE of fiery light suddenly turns into the darkness of the backstage area.

And now, all around the image of Woolsey, more of the fire disappears, replaced by rectangles of darkness -- as if someone were somehow removing rectangular slabs of the conflagration...

The back wall of the Strand seems to REASSEMBLE...

LIGHTS start coming up on stage, and Anne and the kids SEE:

THE REAL WOOLSEY, not a smudge on him, turning off pieces of his Rube Goldberg-like construction of scrims, mirrors, speakers and projectors.

The screen really is heaped on the floor, but the blast, the fire, and the burning Woolsey were illusions: a "scenography" like the 1960s designs of Josef Svoboda.

As Anne and the kids watch, mesmerized, Woolsey steps to the edge of the stage and yells up to them:

WOOLSEY

How was it?

CUT TO:

EXT. STRAND THEATER - DAY

Outside the theater, Woolsey and Ruth find a relieved, milling CROWD, and a confused FIREMAN at the theater's front doors.

FIREMAN

(indicates inside)

There's no fire in there.

WOOLSEY

No, I turned it off.

As Woolsey and Ruth wade into the crowd, CAMERA picks up Gene, Anne, Sandra and Dennis, emerging from the theater. Gene spots Woolsey and starts after him, but --

RHONDA (O.S.)

Sandra!

Gene's family and Sandra go over to join Sandra's parents.

SANDRA

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
We were worried about you.

SANDRA
Now you were worried about me?

JACK
Sandra --

RHONDA
(to Anne)
We're going to have a talk with
Sandra, and you might --

SANDRA
Gene just saved his brother's
life.

JACK
Oh. Well --

ANNE
Sandra helped.

Beat.

RHONDA
(to Anne)
You know, at their age, you don't
want to get too alarmed about --

WOOLSEY (O.S.)
Great show, everybody!

Woolsey, Ruth, Stan, Sherry and Dwight join the group. Spector
spots them, comes over too...

SPECTOR
Hey, Woolsey --

...but is distracted by angry CROWD NOISE nearby -- Dartmouth
is breaking the bad news to the people in line for the next
show.

DARTMOUTH
-- there won't be any more shows
this week, but we will give each
of you a pass to a future --

He's drowned out by the CROWD, as they surge around him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARTMOUTH (CONT.)

Please, please -- Ma'am, that hurts --

A COP moves in to help keep order. Spector, watching the crowd, talks to Woolsey:

SPECTOR

These people have turned into a mob. Congratulations. Do you own that process?

WOOLSEY

Yep. I've been working on it for a while. Small projectors... mirrors... carnival stuff, really, but the big studios have nothing like it. Why? They're dinosaurs. No vision.

(to Gene)

They were scared, weren't they?

GENE

Terrified.

WOOLSEY

Might even want to tone it down a little...

SPECTOR

Sure. Normally, you can let them leave the theater at their own pace. Easier on the carpets. Also, I have some concerns on this bomb thing.

RUTH

Little question of taste?

SPECTOR

No, no -- but, your younger patrons, you could have some seat wetness. This is where I see a drawback.

WOOLSEY

Right. Hey, you know what wouldn't be bad? Ghosts. They come through the screen... fly over the heads of the audience. Ghosts that drip blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As USHERS hand out passes to the disgruntled mob, Dartmouth tears himself free and heads over this way, looking angry.

SPECTOR
Drip it on the audience.

WOOLSEY
That was my thought.

SPECTOR
Blood-o-Scope. Bleed-o --

DARTMOUTH
He wrecked the theater!

WOOLSEY
No, I didn't -- he did.

He points to Harvey, still in costume from the neck down, being led to a cruiser by COPS. He tries to catch Sherry's eye, but fails -- she's wrapped up in Stan.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)
Reckless endangerment, on top of everything else. Rumble-Rama is a powerful force, Mister Dartmouth. It can enthrall... or it can obliterate.
(to Spector)
Now, I like this bleeding ghost thing. Drip-o-Vision...

DENNIS
Can we go home now?

ANNE
Sure.

Gene shakes hands with Woolsey.

GENE
That was great, Mister Woolsey. You know -- it's kind of hard to believe you're a grownup.

RUTH
No kidding.

WOOLSEY
Why? You think grown-ups know what they're doing? Grown-ups are making it up as they go along, just like you are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SANDRA

Worse.

WOOLSEY

This whole so-called "grown-up" business is a hustle. Remember that, and you'll be fine.

STAN

That's beautiful, Mister Woolsey.

WOOLSEY

No trouble. Nurse?

Resigned to her fate, Ruth follows Woolsey, and they disappear into the crowd. Stan heads off with Sherry and Dwight, and Spector pulls the still-protesting Dartmouth away...

DARTMOUTH

But -- he --

SPECTOR

Now, now. Insurance'll cover it.
Gore-o-Scope. Lifeblood-
o-Rama...

...and Gene looks at Sandra and her parents.

GENE

I'll call you.

JACK

Um --

SANDRA

I'll call you too.

Gene and Sandra smile goodbye to each other, as the two families head off down Duval in opposite directions.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GENE'S HOUSE - MORNING

The Sunday quiet is broken by VOICES -- a buzz of people spreading news around the base.

INT. GENE'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM)

Anne, excited, watches a NEWSCASTER on TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSCASTER

...Khrushchev's communique said the Soviets would begin dismantling their Cuban missile bases immediately...

ANNE

(calls O.S.)

Gene! Dennis!

NEWSCASTER

President Kennedy, in his response, called the Soviet leader's move "an important contribution to peace"...

Gene and Dennis come in from O.S.

GENE

What -- ?

ANNE

It's over.

She puts an arm around each of the boys.

NEWSCASTER

Pentagon spokesmen said that the American naval quarantine of Cuba would be ended, and the ships are expected to sail for their home ports within the week...

ANNE

Oh, God. You know, they say you get used to it after a while -- being scared like this. But I wouldn't want to get used to it...

GENE

No. Some things, you want to stay scared.

DENNIS

Like Mant?

GENE

Yeah, that too... squirt.

DENNIS

You're a squirt.

Gene punches Dennis's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GENE

Okay if I go out for a while?

ANNE

Sure, sweetie.

She smiles, watching him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH HOTEL - DAY

A seaside hotel, across Roosevelt Blvd. from Smathers Beach. As suffering BELLHOPS load Woolsey's enormous equipment TRUNKS onto a TAXI, Woolsey and Ruth say goodbye to Gene and Sandra.

WOOLSEY

It's amazing -- you won't believe the ink we're getting. Look at this --

He points to a small, buried story in the Miami Herald.

WOOLSEY (CONT.)

"Horror Stunt Saves Patrons' Lives."

GENE

Where? Oh, down there.

WOOLSEY

Well, we're up against this Cuba thing. But Spector's putting us into sixty theaters. We're going to the opening. Cleveland.

SANDRA

Congratulations.

RUTH

Exactly.

Woolsey and Ruth get into the cab.

WOOLSEY

Gonna scare the hell out of people. They'll be lined up for blocks.

SANDRA

You'd think, after all this, people would just be glad to be alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH
Sure they will. I give it two weeks.

WOOLSEY
See ya.

The taxi rolls off, leaving Gene and Sandra alone on the sidewalk.

GENE
I am.

SANDRA
Am what?

GENE
Glad I'm alive.
(indicates beach)
You want to walk over here?

SANDRA
It's all full of Army stuff.

GENE
No, they're pulling out now.
Look...

And as they cross the street to the beach, they SEE a line of Army vehicles starting the trip north. Gene points out a couple of them as they pass:

GENE (CONT.)
Mobile radar unit...missile launcher...

SANDRA
Stuff for killing people.

GENE
Naah. Some of it's for finding them first.

They reach the beach, kick their shoes off, and step onto the sand.

SANDRA
When does your dad get back?

GENE
About a week. How are your --
Jack and Rhonda?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANDRA

They're okay. They said you could come over later.

GENE

Really?

SANDRA

Yeah. Rhonda finally said, "Nobody could play board games the whole two years."

GENE

Cool.

He leans in to KISS her. To his surprise, she keeps the kiss demure -- nothing like the one in the shelter.

SANDRA (CONT.)

I just don't want to rush anything.

GENE

No, right --

SANDRA

I mean... we have time.

Gene looks at the departing Army trucks...

GENE

Hey yeah.

...and as Gene and Sandra walk down to the water, their conversation is drowned out by the ROAR of jet engines...

...as we PAN UP to two FIGHTER JETS overhead, streaking in from over the ocean, and

FADE OUT.