

BLUE BOOK

Episode 101

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ACT ONE

THE MOON

Shimmers in a black pool of water. We HEAR urgent voices, the sounds of people moving through thick woods before SHOES splash the water away REVEALING siblings WILL (10), and LILY (11), with their bloodhound DALLAS trampling through --

EXT. WEST VIRGINIA WOODS - NIGHT

Their husky mother KATHLEEN is trying to catch up.

WILL

It went down just beyond those trees! C'mon...

Kathleen stops, wipes her brow, looking ahead.

KATHLEEN

Can't see nothing out here.

(then, turning)

Kids, I need to put supper on and you got chores to do. That's enough of this nonsense--

Lily stops her.

LILY

Ma, Will's not makin' this one up. It fell down right out of the sky.

LATER -- Our trio climbs a steep ridge as:

KATHLEEN

I swear, if either you grasshoppers are pullin' my leg again...

As the trio reaches THE HILLTOP:

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

...God Almighty.

BELOW THEM

Trees smolder and smoke swirls as fire burns everywhere in a scene from a post-apocalyptic nightmare.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Cover your mouths!

Dallas darts down into the smoke.

WILL  
Dallas, no!

Will moves to stop him, but trips on a root. Kathleen tries to grab him, but Will tumbles down into:

THE RAVINE

Red smoke swirls all around, hard to tell where we are. Will picks himself up, dazed, bloody, trying to get his bearings.

KATHLEEN (O.S.)  
Stay there, baby. We're coming!

It's like another world down here. Eerie. Every little sound feels alien. Then Will sees movement to his left.

WILL  
...Dallas?

Suddenly, Dallas races out of the smoke and darts past him, whimpering. Will spins, confused -- where'd he go now? Then his eyes go wide as what can only be described as a CREATURE rises up out of the fire in front of him. As WILL staggers back and falls, helpless as he SCREAMS, we PRE-LAP:

VOICE  
The encounters are increasing...

INT. MEETING ROOM OF THE MJ-12 - NIGHT

A windowless, concrete bunker with a conference table at the center. Ten MEN, mostly faceless in the dim light, have their faces buried in the same open file. Two more men, clearly presiding over the meeting, stand at the head of the table. They are GENERAL HOYT VANDENBERG, 60s, handsome with slick white hair and GENERAL NATHAN TWINING, 40s, a military man so old school he probably graduated twice.

VANDENBERG  
We're at a tipping point now. The public is demanding answers--

TWINING  
Blue Book's still our best option.

One of the men at the table looks up. This is JAMES FORRESTAL, 50s, chiseled from the same granite as Twining.

FORRESTAL  
You said that about the last operation.

TWINING

We didn't have the proper support--

FORRESTAL

But you expect us to put you back  
in charge.

Twining eyes Forrestal -- no love lost here.

VANDENBERG

The President made it clear. No one  
in this room has rank over anyone  
else. And we will have the funding  
for the right personnel this time,  
don't make that the issue.

(off the room)

We're running out of time,  
gentlemen. Those in favor?

Twining and Vandenberg raise their hands as do nine of the  
others at the table. But Forrestal holds out just long enough  
to make a point. Finally raises his hand as we PRE-LAP:

VOICE

Welcome aboard, sir...

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

CAPTAIN ED RUPPELT, late 20s, military uniform and handsome  
like Paul Newman in his prime, steps through the boarding  
door to where a pretty blonde FLIGHT ATTENDANT (MANDY) greets  
him with a smile.

MANDY

Would you like me to check your  
hat?

RUPPELT

Why, is there something wrong with  
it?

MANDY

Oh, no I just meant...

Mandy suddenly gets the joke, smiles.

RUPPELT

I know, that one must get old, huh?

But Ruppelt's still charming enough to sell it.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

Maybe you could help me with something else though.

(off Mandy)

I'm on a leg back from Thailand so my clock is completely off. But it's nothing a gin martini can't fix once we're in the air. Would that be too much trouble?

Know that moment when two people meet and there's an instant chemical connection...? Double it.

MANDY

Not at all, sir.

RUPPELT

Thank you. And please, call me Ed.

(off her nametag)

Mandy.

MANDY

Well, Ed...you just let me know if there's anything else I can help you with.

INT. AIRPLANE BATHROOM - LATER

Half-dressed but fucking like the world was ending, Mandy rides Ruppelt on the couch in the bathroom at the back of the plane (yes, they made the lavatories that big back then).

INT. AIRPLANE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruppelt exits the bathroom, discreetly closes the door and moves to re-take his seat next to an ELDERLY WOMAN.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Little bumpy while you were gone.

He nods, "certainly was," as he sips the last of the martini on his tray table. Then notices how spooked she is.

RUPPELT

It's nothing to worry about. Promise. I've flown in much worse.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh, you're a pilot?

(off his nod)

So what brings you to Ohio?  
Business or pleasure?

Mandy glides past in the aisle now, all poise as she throws him back a smile.

RUPPELT

A little of both right now.

As "Come on-a my house" by Rosemary Clooney bleeds into the SOUNDTRACK, we CUT TO:

EXT. OBSERVATORY/OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES as a 1951 Chevrolet Styleline sedan bounces down a rutted road.

INSIDE THE CHEVY

DR. ALLEN HYNEK (40s), plastic-rimmed glasses, sits at the wheel, anxious as he glances at the passenger seat. There's an OFFICIAL-LOOKING ENVELOPE there with his name on it.

Suddenly the Chevy hits a big rut, veers right. Hynek jerks at the wheel, gets the big sedan back to center.

HYNEK

Easy, girl...

Then he SEES it: The Ohio State University OBSERVATORY tucked away in the black mountains.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

WALTER (60s), Black, the uniformed Night Watchman, sits on a folding chair in a brightly lighted corridor, scans a RACING FORM. He hears hurried footsteps, looks up as

WALTER

Evening, doctor...

On a mission, Hynek barely nods as he marches past holding the letter and a satchel full of papers.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Wasn't a good day, thanks for asking.

Hynek stops, turns back -- then realizes.

HYNEK

Walter. I forgot. How much?

WALTER

Usual fifty you laid. Plus my fee.

Hynek re-approaches, emptying his wallet. Embarrassed now.

HYNEK

I, um... all I have is forty.

Walter accepts the bills. He's not a hard ass. And these two are more like friends. So he smiles.

WALTER

Guess I know where you work... Less you want the trifecta tonight?

(off Hynek)

Alright, well, you'll have better luck next time.

He sits back down and Hynek has his out now. But he can't go. This is bugging him.

HYNEK

It's because someone switched the feed.

(off Walter)

To a cheaper brand, lacking lysine. It's an amino acid I'd accounted for in my calculations. The weather, weight, jockey -- those were constants. You change the feed, you upset the equation and my horse never has a chance.

WALTER

It's horse racing. They all have a chance.

HYNEK

Not when you know how to do the math.

He turns and marches off.

INT. TELESCOPE DOME - NIGHT

A MASSIVE TELESCOPE stretches toward the heavens. Hynek enters. Alone now, he stops, takes a breath. This is the safest place he knows. Which is why he waited for this moment to open the letter. He takes a breath, RIPS it OPEN, starts to read its contents...

Then every single bit of enthusiasm, not to mention hope, drains from his features.

ON THE LETTER

From the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics. Words JUMP OUT. *Sorry to inform you...No relevant need at this time...insufficient evidence to support your thesis...*

Hynek is devastated. Then angry. Then defeated. But he tamps down all that emotion, hides it deeply inside. Carefully returns the letter to the envelope, puts it in his satchel. Then he pulls out the mound of paperwork inside -- his research. Looks to the telescope like a disciple in need of a sermon.

INT. TELESCOPE DOME - MOMENTS LATER

Hynek leans into the telescopic EYE PIECE, jots down numbers, then moves to a HUGE MAP, a BED-SIZED GRID of stars, each with a number beneath. But as Hynek scans the map, something starts to happen. The NUMBERS BEGIN TO FLOAT OFF THE PAGE, rearranging themselves before his eyes. This is a visual representation of his mind at work. But only a first step.

Full of the new knowledge he just saw, Hynek returns to the telescope, peers in and we see what he sees:

THE UNIVERSE

The vast expanse...Planets...Galaxies. But then we REVERSE, looking back at Hynek THROUGH THE EYE PIECE, seeing the same galaxies reflected *in his eyes*. CAMERA PUSHES IN so it feels like we're **ENTERING HIS MIND**. Something we'll call:

HYNEK VISION

Cosmic events FLICKER as two STARS swirl, collecting dust, then rotate each other. In this way, Hynek is able to deconstruct the past and put it back together inside his head. Eidetic recall that is a kind of super power. Though at the moment, it feels more like a healing balm.

Finally, Hynek pulls back from the eye piece, renewed. The problems in this world can feel small when you consider what's really out there. And Hynek does. Every waking minute. But it's time to go home. As he turns and heads out, killing the light in the room... CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. WRIGHT PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

Establishing.

INT. AIR FORCE BARRACKS - DAY

Ruppelt enters, looks around the space. It's small, a little dingy, not much on the walls. He drops his duffel bag.

TWINING (O.S.)  
In here, Captain...

Ruppelt moves into:

INT. BLUE BOOK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Twining sits on the edge of the desk, smoking as he scans a folder. Ruppelt enters, salutes.

TWINING  
(without looking up)  
Have a seat.

Ruppelt obliges as Twining stays in his file.

TWINING (CONT'D)  
...Five battle stars, two theater  
combat ribbons, three Air Medals  
and a Distinguished Flying Cross.  
(looks up now)  
Some kinda hot shit, aren't you?

Ruppelt's not sure how to respond.

TWINING (CONT'D)  
It's okay. It's what we wanted.  
Otherwise you wouldn't be here.

He drops the file on the desk, squares up to Ruppelt.

TWINING (CONT'D)  
So. Why are you here?

RUPPELT  
...sir?

TWINING  
Vandenberg told me he debriefed you  
'fore you got on the plane. I wanna  
hear how the old man did.  
(off Ruppelt)  
Gimme the skinny on your new job,  
son.

RUPPELT

Of course. Project Blue Book. To replace the now defunct Project Sign and Grudge. The Air Force's official investigation into flying saucers.

TWINING

I'm sorry, flying *what*?

RUPPELT

...Isn't that what the papers are calling them?

TWINING

The papers... Some reporter gets wind of a Hillbilly seein' a flock of birds, writes a headline and the whole country goes into a panic. What they don't realize is the Russians see that, think we're a bunch of backwards fools. Try to sneak in the back door, spread the worst lie of all. *Communism*.

(off Ruppelt)

The *press* is our number one enemy right now, Captain. Which is why I need you to understand *exactly* what it is we're doing here.

RUPPELT

...Investigating reports of--

TWINING

We're going to show the public the truth. These saucers? Don't. Exist.

Twining studies Ruppelt. *Does he get it?*

RUPPELT

Yes, sir, I understand. You can count on me.

TWINING

Nonetheless...

He hands a DOSSIER to Ruppelt.

TWINING (CONT'D)

If the public's gonna get the message this time, I need someone else with a little more credibility in the field.

RUPPELT

A *partner*?

TWINING

Think of him as the *brains* of the operation.

INT. HYNEK HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Hynek faces his image in a bedroom mirror. He is dressed for academia. Tweedy, even. Hynek inspects his image in the mirror as if to erase every trace of the gut-punch he got last night. Then, over his image, a VOICE-OVER:

JOEL (V.O.)

In the mighty battle, Ming's army proves to be too strong!

INT. HYNEK HOME - KITCHEN

Joel Hynek (12) sits at the kitchen table, ignores the bowl of Kellogg's Sugar Pops in front of him as he reads a Flash Gordon comic book aloud:

JOEL

But Flash has one more trick up his sleeve. Pow! Smash!!

MIMI HYNEK (30s), Hynek's pretty but sheltered wife, stands at the sink, looking out a kitchen window to where WORKERS build what looks to be a small TOOL SHED next door.

HYNEK (V.O.)

Good morning.

Hynek enters, sees Joel poring over the comic book.

HYNEK

Sport, what'd we say about comics at the table?

Joel stows the comic in his lap as Hynek steps to Mimi, kisses her good morning, follows her gaze. Then, quietly:

MIMI

Are we safe?

HYNEK

What kind of question is that?

MIMI

(re: the neighbors)

The Coopers are putting in a bomb shelter.

HYNEK

The Coopers worry too much.

MIMI

You know the school has the kids doing duck and cover drills now. The Russians--

HYNEK

The Russians have two percent of the weapons stockpile we do. Better they duck and cover in *Moscow*.

Hynek kisses Mimi a second time, steps to Joel. Mimi watches him. That second kiss felt like condescension --

AT THE TABLE

Hynek takes the comic book from Joel's lap, sits down across from him. Joel fears confiscation. But Hynek surprises:

HYNEK (CONT'D)

Flash Gordon, eh? Is he the one who runs fast?

JOEL

That's "the" Flash, Dad. Flash Gordon is a space hero. He travels from planet to planet saving people.

HYNEK

But that kind of space travel isn't feasible yet.

Joel reacts. *Seriously?! Hynek returns the comic to his son.*

HYNEK (CONT'D)

We spoke about your needing to focus on school. More science, less science fiction. Did you finish your homework?

MIMI

Yes, he did. Every assignment.

Mom to the rescue. She sets a plate of scrambled eggs and toast in front of Hynek.

JOEL  
May I be excused?

Hynek nods and Joel bounds from the room. Hynek takes a forkful of eggs. Mimi lingers, then:

MIMI  
Allen, I wanted to talk to you about something. I found this advertisement...

She pulls a small CLIPPING from her apron, unfolds it.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
They're hiring typists for the pool at the Dispatch. It's part time, but I could start right away, maybe take some of the pressure off--

HYNEK  
There is no pressure, Mimi.

MIMI  
But you said if they turned down your grant application...

That's the bad news in the envelope, the gut punch. But Mimi doesn't know that. So Hynek sets down his fork. And lies.

HYNEK  
I told you. I don't know anything about the grant yet.

A beat. Hynek takes one more forkful, checks his watch and stands, gives her a third kiss. This one says goodbye.

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
Didn't realize how late it was. Mid-terms today.

Hynek steps to the door. Joel yells from a bedroom:

JOEL (O.S.)  
Mom? Where're my high tops?

Hynek turns back to Mimi, grins. And his grin is the kind that puts people at ease.

HYNEK  
Mimi. We're great, all right? Don't you worry about a thing.

And he's gone. Now Mimi's got high tops to find...

INT. CLASSROOM/OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY - DAY

A lecture hall full of STUDENTS. Pencils, blue books. The usual mix of desperation, boredom, and determination. But something's not quite right with this picture. Students whisper and wonder. Some keep working as if gifted with an unexpected reprieve. CAMERA FINDS one among them --

LISA PARK (18) is a nerd before they called them nerds. She finished her exam twenty minutes ago, looks at the clock on a wall. It's ten past. Lisa steels herself, stands as:

LISA  
*Okay pencils down.*

Groans all around. But some students keep at it.

LISA (CONT'D)  
You better stop. I'm sure Dr.  
Hynek will be back any *second*--

INT. HYNEK'S OFFICE - DAY

No, he won't. Hynek sits in his cluttered office lost in thought, reading the rejection letter one more time. Then a THROAT CLEARING. Hynek looks up, sees DR. IAN BING (45) in the doorway. Bing is a self-entitled, if brilliant, asshole.

BING  
I only just heard. Barb said she  
put the letter on your desk...

Hynek stows the letter like Joel hiding his comic book.

BING (CONT'D)  
It's crushing, I'd assume.  
(off Hynek's silence)  
But look, be a good lad, keep  
trying. What's the harm in that? My  
last grant, the fourth, I think,  
took nearly --

'Lad'. That does it. Hynek shoots to his feet. And finally releases all the emotion pent up inside him.

HYNEK  
Get the hell out of my office you  
supercilious son of a bitch!

BING  
*Whom* do you think you're talking  
to? I came here to offer my  
condolences--

HYNEK  
Fuck your condolences.

LISA (O.S.)  
Dr. Hynek?

RUPPELT (O.S.)  
Whoa, egghead fight.

Hynek sees two faces in the doorway. One familiar, one not. Lisa reacts with shock as Dr. Bing storms out of the office. Ruppelt looks to Lisa, amused.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
He's not always like this, is he?

HYNEK  
Lisa, what are you-- ?

LISA  
Dr. Hynek, I--

RUPPELT  
Nice dress, by the way. The color really brings out your eyes.

HYNEK  
Who are you?

RUPPELT  
Captain Edward Ruppelt, United States Air Force.

LISA  
...Dr. Hynek, the examination period ended fifteen minutes ago, but when you didn't come back--

HYNEK  
I'll be right there. Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Lisa returns to the hallway as Hynek reaches back to his desk to grab his glasses and go. But when he turns back, Ruppelt is in his path.

RUPPELT  
Hold on there, doc--

Hynek slips around him, expecting Ruppelt to follow.

HYNEK  
Excuse me, but I have a room full of students that are--

RUPPELT

And I guess I didn't make myself clear. You've been ordered to report to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base for a confidential debriefing on a top-secret national security issue. So school day's done. You're coming with me.

Hynek is a man thoroughly in need of good news. But this feels like something completely different. Off Hynek, we...**END ACT ONE.**

ACT TWO

A B&W PHOTO

The iconic ROSWELL IMAGE from newspapers. MAJOR JESSE MARCEL kneels by some shredded metallic debris posing for reporters.

RUPPELT (O.S.)  
 July of '47. Roswell, New Mexico.  
 You familiar with it?

INT. BLUE BOOK HEADQUARTERS/WRIGHT PATTERSON - DAY

Hynek sits at a table, opposite Ruppelt who lights a cigarette, blows a perfect smoke ring (of course).

HYNEK  
 (taking a closer look)  
 Yes, sure. From the papers. A  
 crashed Army weather balloon.

RUPPELT  
 Remember the *first* reports?

HYNEK  
 Invasion of the Spacemen. My son  
 wouldn't stop talking about it...

Hynek's looking around the room, still trying to figure out what this place is.

RUPPELT  
 When that story hit, it jammed  
 phone lines nationwide. Broke a few  
 switchboards in the process. *War of  
 The Worlds* all over again.

HYNEK  
 Which is all very 'fascinating',  
 Captain. But you said this  
 concerned my research--

Ruppelt picks another FILE, reading.

RUPPELT  
 Indianapolis '48, man sees strange  
 lights, calls the cops. Papers  
 catch on, whole town goes nuts.  
 Turns out to be *migrating geese...*  
 (another file, more  
 quickly)  
 (MORE)

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 Oregon '49, fisherman swears he  
 sees a metallic disk hovering in a  
 park. Turns out to be a *water*  
*tower.*

(another file, even more  
 quickly)  
 Two weeks ago in Manhattan? College  
 kid sees this "unearthly anomaly."

Ruppelt hands Hynek a blurry black-and-white photo of a  
 hovering WHITE ORB.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 Do you know what that is, Doc?

HYNEK  
 (studies for a beat)  
 It's a crude photograph of the  
 moon.

RUPPELT  
 Bingo. Took four Coast Guard  
 vessels combing the Hudson for two  
 days to make that same astute  
 determination.  
 (off Hynek)  
 And *that* is why you're here.

Hynek looks up from the photo -- huh?

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 The Air Force is launching a  
 program to investigate unknown  
 aerial phenomena. Project Blue  
 Book. And we need a man with your  
 unique talents front and center to  
 make sure it all runs smoothly.

Hynek is stumped, unsure how to respond.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 Think of it as your patriotic duty.

HYNEK  
 Of course, but I--

RUPPELT  
 Did I mention that your duty comes  
 with a pretty sweet paycheck?

*Paycheck.* The word lands in Hynek's expression.

EXT. KITCHEN/HYNEK HOME - NIGHT

Mimi steps from oven to kitchen table, ferries a One-Eye Eskimo TV dinner to Hynek as he lights his pipe.

MIMI  
Flying *saucers*?

HYNEK  
You know the public has gone crazy  
for all that stuff.

CAMERA REVEALS Joel in the hallway, eavesdropping. He's dressed for bed in bright red pajamas.

MIMI  
But why would the Air Force come to  
you?

HYNEK  
I give them credibility.  
(then)  
I have a PhD in Astrophysics, Mim.  
I'm respected in my field --

And sometimes he feels like he needs to remind her. Or maybe he's reminding himself.

MIMI  
But this *isn't* your field, Allen.  
If anything, you're over-qualified.  
I could tell them it's all bologna.

HYNEK  
They made me a great offer...

Hynek glances at the hall.

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
Would you like to join us, Joel?

Busted. A beat. Then Joel emerges, eyes wide, and:

JOEL  
Dad. Are you *really* gonna fight  
Spacemen for the Air Force?

HYNEK  
First of all, there's no such  
thing. I'll be doing *research*. And  
you should be in bed, Sport. Go on.

Joel reluctantly obeys. A beat. Mimi looks back to Hynek.

MIMI

But what about the grant? For your telescope. When that comes through...

'When.' Hynek nearly confesses.

HYNEK

The Advisory committee has no vision. They don't understand what I'm trying to do.

(backtracks)

I'm just saying we shouldn't rely on some grant.

(back to subject)

This is the Air Force, Mim. It's my patriotic duty.

Mimi studies her husband -- that doesn't sound like him at all. We hear a PAPER FLIPPING and CUT TO:

INT. RUPPELT'S OFFICE/BLUE BOOK HQ - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a sketch of a CRESCENT-SHAPED CRAFT from the granddaddy of all UFO cases. The 1947 KENNETH ARNOLD CASE (REAL). CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal...

Ruppelt sits at his desk, a single lamp casting a cone of light in the dark. Ruppelt studies the sketch, trying to make sense of it. Then he sets it aside and takes another folder from the PILE. This one looks more like a FLYING DISC. A third folder contains the 1947 VILLA SANTINA CASE (real). There are sketches of two HUMANOID CREATURES inside. Ruppelt takes a closer look. The CREATURES stare right back at him. Ruppelt feels an eerie shiver. That does it. He reaches into a drawer, retrieves a BOTTLE of SCOTCH, and pours himself a SPLASH. Ruppelt lifts the glass to his mouth and then --

BRIIIIIING. The rotary dial phone sounds like a fire alarm. Ruppelt spills scotch on his shirtfront. He utters a curse, grabs the offending telephone receiver --

RUPPELT

WHAT?!

TWINING (O.S.)

How'd it go today?

It's Twining. Ruppelt shifts gears without missing a beat:

RUPPELT

Good. Great. Hynek's...all right.  
But maybe we should look at some  
other candidates just in case--

TWINING

We don't have time for that. I need  
you both in West Virginia. First  
thing. Case file is on your desk.

There's a SINGLE FILE separate from the pile. But how did Twining know that? Ruppelt opens it. There's a picture of the Flatwoods Monster with some accompanying text and witness reports. But Ruppelt is still thinking about Allen Hynek.

RUPPELT

If I may sir, I'm just not sure  
Hynek's the best pick for the job.  
Guy's pretty stiff--

TWINING (V.O.)

Then iron him out. That's what  
you're there for.

(then)

There's a 10am train tomorrow out  
of Columbus. Make sure you're *both*  
on it.

CLICK. Ruppelt sighs in frustration. As he hangs up, glances at the Flatwoods folder, PRE-LAP a TRAIN WHISTLE and CUT TO:

EXT. OHIO - DAY

A TRAIN rumbles through rolling hills under a blue sky.

INT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

Hynek is settled in across from Ruppelt, making notes in an astronomy book as Ruppelt scans the faces on the train. He spots a GORGEOUS YOUNG WOMAN down the aisle, gives her a smile. Hynek catches this and Ruppelt, in turn, catches him.

RUPPELT

I just love the railway, don't you?

Hynek goes back to his reading. Ruppelt considers him for a beat, digs in his pocket and pulls out some:

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

Gum?

Hynek looks up, Ruppelt's offering him a stick.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

It's sugar-free. They just started doing that. Swear you can't taste the difference.

HYNEK

No, thank you.

Hynek goes back to his book. A beat. Ruppelt reads the cover.

RUPPELT

Astro-Particle Dynamics and Its Stellar Foundations... must be a real page turner, huh?

HYNEK

It is, actually.

RUPPELT

So...how long you been doing the teaching thing?

HYNEK

*Thing?* 11 years. Not counting the 4 while I earned my doctorate.

RUPPELT

I hated school. No offense.

HYNEK

Why would I be offended?

RUPPELT

You just look like that kind of guy, I guess.

A beat between them before Ruppelt reaches over, grabs a briefcase and places it between them, opens it.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

Alright enough chit-chat. Whaddya say we do some homework, professor?

As he starts to pull out all sorts of files/books, we CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS - DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Mimi moves down the block, slows when she sees a MOM MANNEQUIN in a storefront window gripping a new vacuum.

"Moms Love the Hoover Upright!" It's a scene meant to convey domestic bliss. But for Mimi, it's more like coming upon a car accident. She looks away, moves into:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Mimi enters the BEAUTY AISLE, taking in the polish, blush and perfume before pausing at lipsticks. Her eye catches a glossy red one, "Raspberry Passion." She grabs it then spots another shade, "Ruby Red". As she debates her choice, a STYLISH WOMAN with a blonde bob and an eye-catching dress strolls up to ponder the same selection. Mimi looks her over, clearly envying her style right now.

MIMI

Could I ask your opinion?  
 (off the Woman)  
 Which shade do you think works  
 best?

She holds up her two choices as Stylish Woman considers.

STYLISH WOMAN

Depends on who it's working for.  
 But, honestly? With your  
 complexion? Neither.

Ouch. Stylish Woman comes closer to clarify.

STYLISH WOMAN (CONT'D)

It's just with delicate features  
 like yours, reds can be  
 overwhelming. Something a bit  
 softer suits you...

She reaches past Mimi into the pink shades, finds "Tea Rose", a tasteful peachy hue. She uncaps it, turns Mimi toward her.

STYLISH WOMAN (CONT'D)

Stay still...

Mimi's taken slightly off guard as Stylish Woman carefully, delicately, coats her lips, turns her to face the MIRROR.

STYLISH WOMAN (CONT'D)

What do you think?

MIMI

...I love it.

STYLISH WOMAN

Now your boyfriend's gonna owe me.

MIMI

You mean my husband.

STYLISH WOMAN

Oh, I should've known. I'm a newlywed myself.

(then, holds out her hand)  
Susie.

MIMI

(shaking her hand)  
Mimi.

SUSIE

Mimi. What do you know about men's ties?

INT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

Documents (including newspapers, files and photos) are spread between the two as Hynek inspects an actual BLUE BOOKLET, the signature of the BLUE BOOK program.

HYNEK

Blue Book. Blue booklets. Guess the Air Force isn't prone to metaphor.

RUPPELT

You were never in the service. Subtlety's never been Uncle Sam's strong suit.

(off a file he's reading)  
So, we have three witnesses. All with the same account...

HYNEK

May I see that?

Ruppelt hands him a copy of a West Virginia newspaper where we read the headline: **POTENTIAL SAUCER CRASH CAUSES STRANGE FIRE**. Real 'Flatwoods Monster' case IMAGES flicker: Witnesses, sketches of a fiery light, burnt woods, etc.

HYNEK (CONT'D)

Looks like there's another woman who saw something similar a few weeks earlier...

RUPPELT

Not credible. Mother and her two kids are what we're after.

HYNEK

(reading)

"We came upon a fiery hell after seeing a strange red object crash down."

RUPPELT

Kid's 10 years old, probably saw a firefly or something.

HYNEK

Until we see the actual site, we rule out nothing.

That sounded like an order. Ruppelt studies Hynek for a beat.

RUPPELT

You don't believe even an inch of this could be for real do you?

HYNEK

Are you asking me if it's possible that extraterrestrial life *exists*?

RUPPELT

Sure. Isn't that what you're looking for when you peek through your telescope?

HYNEK

When I "peek," I'm looking for an understanding of how the universe works. From the planets in our own solar system to the evolution of stars and nebulae. The macro-system of the galaxies holds the key to our existence.

There's a thrill in his voice. Hynek truly loves his work. Ruppelt remains unimpressed.

RUPPELT

That a 'yes?' I don't know what you just said.

HYNEK

Given the finite speed of light, the vast distance between the stars, any alleged visitation is a scientific impossibility.

RUPPELT

Good to know. Otherwise we'd have a big problem.

Ruppelt goes back to work. Now Hynek studies him.

HYNEK

I'd like to amend the term 'Unknown Aerial Phenomena' in our reports.

(off Ruppelt)

'Unknown' doesn't instill confidence. It implies more mystery than necessary. Why don't we call them... *unidentified*.

RUPPELT

'Unidentified?'. Ah, maybe...

Off Hynek, we PRE-LAP:

MIMI (V.O.)

What color are your husband's eyes?

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

In Men's Wear now, Mimi and Susie pore over a sea of ties.

SUSIE

Hazel. No, brown. I always confuse the two.

Mimi holds up a couple ties to compare, puts one back.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

You're so good at this.

MIMI

It's what we wives do.

(then)

I just can't remember the last time I shopped with a girlfriend...

She's instantly self-conscious. Was that wishing ahead? Susie sees it, gets back on track to avoid the awkwardness.

SUSIE

So how long have you been married?

MIMI

Twelve years.

SUSIE

No... but you're so young.

(off Mimi)

And what does your husband do?

MIMI  
He teaches. Astrophysics.

SUSIE  
Should I pretend to know what that  
is?

MIMI  
Worked for me for the past ten  
years.

They chuckle. Then notice a POSTER nearby (REAL): It's a NEAR-NAKED WOMAN cradling a man's dress shoe: it reads "Keep Her Where She Belongs." Susie clocks Mimi's appalled reaction.

SUSIE  
Mimi... I'm new in town. Where are  
all the fun spots here in Columbus?  
And if you say the roller-rink,  
I'm'a squeal.

MIMI  
I'm not the best person to ask.  
Allen and I used to Rumba down at  
the Rec Center. But he works so  
much now. Just took another job,  
too.

SUSIE  
Really? Doing what?

MIMI  
...I can't really talk about it.

EXT. KATHLEEN MAY'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

A GROUP of restless LOCALS gathers near a long dirt driveway. A Hudson Hornet turns down the drive. Locals quickly turn their attention to the car, form a line in the road.

INSIDE THE CAR

Ruppelt slows the car as Hynek looks out to the crowd.

HYNEK  
What's going on?

RUPPELT  
Beats me...

Ruppelt rolls down the window, addresses the crowd.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
Scuse us, folks. Comin' through...

But the locals surround the car instead, forcing Ruppelt to a sudden halt. One of the locals steps to the driver's side. His name is DONNIE (35). Donnie is a steel bar forged from grievance. Naturally, he's the leader.

DONNIE  
Who are you?

RUPPELT  
Government business, Chief. Step aside.

DONNIE  
Kathleen call you?  
(off Ruppelt)  
This is a local problem. You best turn around now.

Ruppelt would very much like to punch Donnie in the face. But he smiles a charmed smile instead.

RUPPELT  
I'm sorry. My fault. I didn't make myself clear. We're here to *help*. So if you could just step aside...

DONNIE  
(to the others)  
Looks like they don't *wanna* go. Why don't we give 'em a little *help* --

And with that, the locals put hands to the car and ROCK IT back and forth. As if to tip the auto on its side.

INSIDE THE CAR

Hynek looks to Ruppelt, panic rising.

HYNEK  
*What are they doing?*

RUPPELT  
They're pissin' me off is what they're *doing* --

Ruppelt tries to KICK the door open, but the mob PRESSES HARD against it. The car feels like it's about to TIP OVER. But then, a sudden reprieve: the SOUND of a SIREN.

A POLICE CRUISER rolls to a halt. A beat. And the LOCAL SHERIFF (50s) eases from the cruiser into view. He faces up to the mob and scolds:

LOCAL SHERIFF  
All of you, back away from there!  
Goddammit, Donnie!

Sheriff pulls Donnie aside to have a word. Crowd steps back from the auto, staring daggers at Hynek and Ruppelt inside. But then the mob parts and the Sheriff approaches Ruppelt's window.

LOCAL SHERIFF (CONT'D)  
How long you boys gonna be here?

HYNEK  
(interrupts)  
We haven't assessed anything yet,  
Officer. I'm afraid we can't answer  
that.

Ruppelt shoots a look at Hynek--

LOCAL SHERIFF  
Well folks here are really spooked  
with all this alien talk. Think  
it's end of days, tryin' to blame  
Kathleen, so... just hurry up.

He motions for them to pull forward.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Hornet comes to a stop. Hynek and Ruppelt exit.

RUPPELT  
Next time, Doc? Let *me* do the  
talking. Remember, your job is to--

But Hynek stops in his tracks. Ruppelt stops too.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
*What?*

Hynek motions to the farmhouse. ALL THE WINDOWS have been crudely boarded up with 2X4s. Like it was hastily braced for the siege of zombies in Night of the Living Dead.

The two simply exchange a look before moving off to the front porch. Ruppelt knocks but no one answers. Then Hynek SEES a woman's TERRIFIED FACE peeking out between the boards of the living room window.

HYNEK

Good afternoon, Ma'am. My name is--

He pulls back when he sees Kathleen's holding a shotgun.

RUPPELT

(cutting in)

Kathleen? It's Captain Ruppelt? We spoke on the telephone--

KATHLEEN

Who's this one?

RUPPELT

That's Doctor Hynek. We work together. Could you please open the door?

Kathleen vanishes from sight. A beat. Then the front door OPENS a crack so Kathleen can take a closer look. At Hynek.

KATHLEEN

If you're a real doctor -- meet me out back. *Hurry.*

EXT. KATHLEEN'S BARN YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Kathleen leads Ruppelt and Hynek to a BARN, heaves the big door OPEN and the trio enters:

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

STACKS OF HAY block out all the windows, it's dark inside. Even DARKER when Kathleen closes the door. Hynek's just trying to get his bearings when a small CHICK runs over his foot. Hynek jumps back, bumps into some saddles.

KATHLEEN

Mind where you walk, they're everywhere.

She motions for Ruppelt and Hynek to follow her past sheep, a horse, and some goats. Shapes that loom in the black.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Got to keep it dark. The light burns their eyes now.

Kathleen comes to a ladder leading to a LOFT, calls up:

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Lily, Will, it's all right. You can  
come down. There's a city doctor  
here.

A beat. Will and Lily descend. But these are not the same  
kids we saw earlier. They're paler, trembling like dogs at  
the vet. But it's only when they land and face Hynek that the  
real shock sets in: Painful, RED BLISTERING SORES fester  
around their eyes, making them *look like aliens* -- if not  
near death.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Please, doctor, tell me what's  
happening to my babies...

Off Hynek and Ruppelt, they weren't prepared for this,  
we...**END ACT TWO.**

ACT THREEINT. DEN/KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Hynek uses a Q-tip to swab ointment over Will and Lily's burns as Ruppelt and Kathleen speak in the background.

HYNEK

Y'know I got a boy about your age.  
Loves to read comics. You read  
comics?

(off Will)

What's your favorite?

Will doesn't answer. So Lily speaks for him.

LILY

*It's Journey into Unknown Worlds.*

WILL

(then, leans in, quiet)

I'm not supposed to read it though.  
My mom says it's 'cause sometimes I  
get scared.

HYNEK

It's because you have a good  
imagination I bet.

(then)

That picture you drew. Of the  
creature? You think that could've  
been part of your imagination?

Will shakes his head.

HYNEK (CONT'D)

You sure?

LILY

It spooked Dallas, too. And he's  
not afraid of nothing...

Off Hynek, we MOVE TO --

RUPPELT

Taking notes while Kathleen speaks, her hands shaking.

KATHLEEN

Whole forest smelt like death.  
Burned my nose, my eyes. And you  
couldn't see anything through the  
smoke. Least at first.

Ruppelt scribbles this down as Hynek walks up, taps him, "can I see that?" Ruppelt hands him the pad as:

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)  
Then when we saw that... *thing?*  
Lord, I thought it was the end.

Hynek hands the pad back and Ruppelt sees he's scribbled: "Corrosive tree fungus?". Ruppelt looks to Hynek, "really?"

HYNEK  
Miss May. Could you take us to  
where this all happened?

EXT. RAVINE - LATER

The trio approaches from the top of the hill where Kathleen and the kids first encountered the fire. Kathleen stops.

KATHLEEN  
This is it. But I ain't goin' back  
down there.

Ruppelt and Hynek stare at the VALLEY below... The charred trees... The scorched earth. Remnants of Armageddon.

As Hynek stares deeper INTO THE RAVINE, we ZOOM IN on his eyes (just like at the observatory) as we realize, just like then, he's moving HIS MIND BACK IN TIME to --

**HYNEK VISION - THE BURNING WOODS (FLASHBACK)**

*Kathleen and Lily are searching, SCREAMING FOR WILL as swaying FIRE-TREES HISS and SNAP. They finally find Will and lift a branch off him to help him up.*

KATHLEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*When we found Will, that's when we  
saw the spacecraft...*

*The smoke clears and for the first time we glimpse a truly horrifying, melting RED FORM.*

KATHLEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*It was glowing red, with this lava  
pouring out. Looked like a raging  
red diamond is all I could think.*

*CAMERA PUSHES so close to its pulsing diamond-like shape, it's like we can feel its heat before we SMASH BACK TO*

HYNEK

Coming out of his vision as Kathleen finishes her story.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

As god as my witness, it was not of  
this world.

(then)

Ya'll must think I'm crazy.

RUPPELT

(a lie)

No, not at all.

HYNEK

We're just here to find the truth.

Hynek (who had been carrying a bag), zips it open to double  
check his inventory before he slings it over his shoulder.

HYNEK (CONT'D)

Captain?

As Hynek heads down into the ravine and Ruppelt follows, we  
PRE-LAP:

MIMI (V.O.)

I don't know. It's a little tight.

INT. CHANGING AREA/DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Susie sits in the WAITING AREA by the dressing room door.

SUSIE

Well come out and show me first.

Door opens and Mimi emerges in a form-fitting, busty teal  
sheath. Susie stands in genuine awe.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Honey. You look amazing.

MIMI

I couldn't get the...

She turns to show Susie her backside; zipper's still undone.  
Susie walks up behind her, gently guides it up.

SUSIE

Turn to me.

Mimi does and Susie stays close -- very close. Mimi never  
breaks her gaze.

SUSIE (CONT'D)  
I envy your husband right now.

MIMI  
You really think he'll like it?  
(then)  
It's really expensive.

SUSIE  
Didn't you say he just started a  
new job?  
(off Mimi)  
Then you deserve this. And when he  
sees you in it, he'll take you out  
dancing every night.  
(then, hopeful smile)  
Then maybe you and I can do this  
again sometime...

As Mimi smiles back, that'd be real nice, we CUT BACK TO:

INT. THE RAVINE - LATER

Hynek and Ruppelt move slowly through the charred woods,  
scanning, taking notes when Hynek stops suddenly.

HYNEK  
You smell that? Sulfur.

Ruppelt sniffs, not sure he smells anything. Then Hynek looks  
at the ground, bends down and pushes into it.

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
Surface soil's loose. This entire  
area was jolted somehow...

RUPPELT  
*Jolted?*

HYNEK  
Like an earthquake. Which would be  
uncommon. Given there're no active  
fault lines in this area.

Ruppelt looks around, just trying to catch up.

RUPPELT  
I thought you just studied the sky.

HYNEK  
When I was seven, I contracted a  
severe case of meningitis. Didn't  
leave my bed for almost a year.  
(MORE)

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
I read the entire Encyclopedia  
Britannica. Twice.

Ruppelt studies his new partner. *Who is this guy?* Hynek rises and approaches a tree, feeling its bark.

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
See how deep these singe marks go?  
Like a river of lava ran down...  
(looks up the tree)  
From up there.

MOMENTS LATER: Ruppelt helps hoist Hynek INTO THE TREE.

RUPPELT  
What'd the Britannica teach you  
climbin' trees?

Hynek ignores the wisecrack, climbs higher, examining.

HYNEK  
(calls down)  
Just as I thought. These branches  
broke from impact, not fire or...

Suddenly, Hynek trails off when he catches sight of

A MAN IN A FEDORA

About a hundred yards away on a hilltop. His long black coat camouflaging him with the trees. *It's pretty damn eerie...*  
SNAP! Hynek's branch snaps TUMBLING HYNEK HARD to THE DIRT.

RUPPELT  
You okay, doc?

Ruppelt helps him up. Hynek squints between trees, but that mysterious figure is GONE now. *If he was ever there...*

HYNEK  
You hear that?

RUPPELT  
...I don't hear anything.

HYNEK  
Exactly. I haven't seen or heard a  
single insect in this entire forest  
since we've been here.

RUPPELT  
Considering it all just burned to  
the ground...

Hynek drops his bag, and starts to dig in for something.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 Hey, Doc. This was a forest fire.  
 Someone probably dropped a  
 cigarette, place went up and those  
 kids saw a branch fall or  
 something. Have you never seen a  
 forest fire?

Hynek drops his bag, digs in for something. Pulls out a small METAL BOX with a meter read-out, flips its "on" switch.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
 Wait. That isn't--?

HYNEK  
 Radiation detector, yes. Borrowed  
 it from the University.

RUPPELT  
 Why would you need a...

Hynek moves off, Ruppelt has to catch up.

HYNEK  
 Point two-seven. Extremely  
 elevated.

RUPPELT  
 Whoa, *what?*

Hynek lowers the meter to the ground and the DIAL SPIKES. He keeps pushing forward, watching the needle climb as it guides him to a LARGE DEAD TREE. Now, Hynek sees something.

HYNEK  
 Captain, give me a hand...

They start to move away fallen branches and other debris before they discover a huge CAVE-LIKE OVAL HOLE at the tree's base: The machine goes berserk now: *BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP!*

RUPPELT  
 What the hell is that?

Ruppelt's not sure what to think. Hynek is. He replies, quietly triumphant:

HYNEK  
*That, as Kathleen called it, is the  
 red diamond.*

INT. LIVING ROOM/KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - DUSK

Ruppelt adds another log to a ROARING FIRE. Under a blanket, Lily and Will stare into it from a safe distance as Hynek speaks with Kathleen.

HYNEK

The red streak across a sky, the fire in the woods that started at the treetops, the pungent mist, all of it points to something extraterrestrial.

KATHLEEN

Lord, I *knew* it--

Ruppelt steals Hynek's punch-line:

RUPPELT

It was a meteor crash.

Hynek shoots a look at Ruppelt, then back to Kathleen.

HYNEK

What made everyone sick were the 'arsenic fumes', quite common with a crash of this nature. The skin burns could have come from the level of radiation off the meteor, if it was uranium. Or thorium. Even if you didn't touch it, the area is toxic enough to have that effect. The good news is it's temporary.  
(re: the kids)  
You're all going to be okay.

Will and Lily seem uneasy. Kathleen steals a glance at them.

KATHLEEN

What about what my children saw? A meteor can't explain that--

HYNEK

I didn't say that it did. And I'm not discrediting their account. I'm just taking this step-by-step--

RUPPELT

Doc, can we...?

He motions Hynek to follow him out to:

THE HALLWAY

Hynek follows Ruppelt, who turns to face him now.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)  
The case is closed.

HYNEK  
No, it's not.

RUPPELT  
You found a *meteor*. What more are we looking for here?

HYNEK  
Something that explains the creature.

Ruppelt flinches -- *seriously*?

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
You read the case file. There was one other witness. We should talk to her. Maybe the meteor was only a coincidence.

RUPPELT  
You can't be serious.

Off Hynek, we CUT TO:

EXT. SPRING FALLS RETIREMENT HOME - GROUNDS - DUSK

VROOM! Their Hudson Hornet enters the grounds. On a distant hill, a dilapidated BUILDING looms.

INT. SPRING FALLS RETIREMENT HOME - DUSK

An ORDERLY in a white uniform leads Hynek and Ruppelt through this dimly-lit, aging facility. Like the patients here, everything around them appears near death.

ORDERLY  
We told Evelyn you were comin', but I'm not sure what you'll get. She still thinks Lincoln's President sometimes.

He arrives at a door, nods inside.

INT. EVELYN MYERS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hynek and Ruppelt enter, see a rail-thin ELDERLY WOMAN with matted white hair in a chair staring into space.

HYNEK  
 ...Miss Myers?

She doesn't respond so Ruppelt steps forward, yells:

RUPPELT  
 Evelyn!

That gets her attention. Ruppelt glances to Hynek. *You sure you wanna do this?*

HYNEK  
 (to Evelyn)  
 Miss Myers, my name's Doctor Hynek.  
 We're from Washington. Is it okay  
 if we ask you some questions?

She simply studies him.

HYNEK (CONT'D)  
 ...We understand you saw a, an  
*entity* of some sort a few weeks  
 ago. During a break outside. That  
 you reported to the authorities.

EVELYN  
 They all *laughed*.

RUPPELT  
 Really? Imagine that--

Hynek pulls out Will's drawing.

HYNEK  
 Was this what you saw?

Evelyn stands up now so she can come closer. Real close. Like see-into-your-soul close.

EVELYN  
 Yes...that was it. And when I  
 looked into its eyes, it showed me  
 the end of all things...

Ruppelt looks to Hynek -- can we go now? This is pointless. Hynek realizes he's right.

HYNEK  
 Okay, Miss Myers. Thank you for  
 your time...

He and Ruppelt turn to go. Then:

EVELYN

The others that came to see me,  
they believed.

Ruppelt and Hynek turn back -- what?

EVELYN (CONT'D)

They knew I was telling the truth.

HYNEK

What others?

EVELYN

The men in hats. And they were  
scared. You should be too.

*Men in hats.* Hynek's not sure what to think. But it strikes a chord deep inside. Evelyn sees his reaction and starts to LAUGH and LAUGH and we SMASH TO:

EXT. SPRING FALLS RETIREMENT HOME - DUSK

Ruppelt and Hynek exit, head for the car.

RUPPELT

We learned a valuable lesson here,  
Doc.

HYNEK

(lost in thought)  
What's that?

RUPPELT

Never grow old.

Ruppelt lights a smoke, pulls out the car keys. The thoughts Hynek was thinking now coalesce:

HYNEK

We need to go back to the farm.  
We're not done here.

RUPPELT

What we need to do is to pick up  
our shit, get on the road and be  
home by morning.

Ruppelt opens the driver's side door. Hynek stands at the passenger side, forcing Ruppelt to talk over the roof.

HYNEK

This is not what I signed up for.

RUPPELT

I'm sorry -- what you signed up for?

HYNEK

You told me my expertise was needed to calm the public. A voice of reason to combat fear and superstition with the truth. And I'm doing that job the best I know how -- but all the while, *you're* acting like finding the truth is some kind of inconvenience!

RUPPELT

Your *job!*? Your job is to do what I *tell* you to do?!

HYNEK

I'm not here to answer to you, I'm here to add legitimacy!

Hynek and Ruppelt face up to each other, both angry if for wholly different reasons. Ruppelt tries to defuse it:

RUPPELT

Boy, I bet your students must *love* you.

HYNEK

The smart ones do.

RUPPELT

*Get in the damn car.*

Hynek glares at Ruppelt across the roof. He will not move. No matter, Ruppelt just slips inside. Engine roars to life and it's crystal clear he'll leave Hynek right here if given the opportunity. Which is why Hynek, despite his reservations, gets inside.

EXT. KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Headlights turn down the long driveway and come upon a house under siege. The mob that was present when they first arrived has now surrounded the house, torches in hand, shouting at the front door like villagers looking for Frankenstein.

The Hornet pulls to a halt, Ruppelt and Hynek jump out.

RUPPELT

What the hell?... HEY!

LOCAL #2

You brought the Devil to our door,  
Kathleen!

LOCAL #3

We know you're hiding the truth in  
there! Come on out!

RUPPELT

Get away from their house!

HYNEK

There are young children in there!

Mob turns their focus (and anger) to Hynek and Ruppelt now.  
Hynek shows them two palms.

HYNEK (CONT'D)

Please...everyone needs to calm  
down.

Then Donnie steps to the front. No less brutish than before.

DONNIE

Well, lookee here. It's them  
Washington boys tryin' to tell us  
how to protect our families.

RUPPELT

Easy there, Clodhopper --

DONNIE

We know what you folks covered up  
in Roswell.

The Mob roars agreement, steps closer.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

And you ain't gonna bury your  
secrets in our town. Cause we gonna  
bury you first...

CLACK, CLACK, CLACK -- a few of the men cock shotguns as  
others ball up fists. As the group steps forward, Hynek and  
Ruppelt in their crosshairs, we ... **END ACT THREE.**

ACT FOUREXT. KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Where we left them. But Hynek and Ruppelt hold their ground as the angry mob pushes toward them, Donnie out in front.

RUPPELT

Whoa, hang on, *don't shoot* --

The mob hesitates, but do not lower their guns.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

(to Donnie)

Just so I'm clear. *You're* the man in charge, am I right?

DONNIE

Goddamn right, I'm the --

WHACK! Ruppelt FRONT-KICKS Donnie's left knee cap out of its socket before he grabs his gun and jabs the gun stock into Donnie's face. Donnie hits the ground with a thud. Ruppelt takes a single step toward the mob.

RUPPELT

New plan. From now on, *I* am the man in charge. Any questions?

Donnie writhes and bleats on the ground. The mob's not sure what to do. Ruppelt makes it easier for them:

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

Everyone drop your guns and stand down. Now!

A tense beat. Reluctantly, one by one, they oblige. Hynek looks at Ruppelt with surprise, newfound respect. Ruppelt keeps his eyes on the mob, disarmed but still dangerous.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

Go check on the family.

INT. KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Hynek springs through the door, finds Kathleen holding her terrified kids.

KATHLEEN

We lived our whole lives here. What is wrong with these people...

Will cries as he hugs his sister. As Hynek looks around at this shattered family, we PRE-LAP:

*NEWS ANNOUNCER (PRE-LAP V.O.)  
Could this be the end of the world?*

INT. HYNEK HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A wide-eyed Joel sits in the dark, watching TV as a NEWSREEL runs a report on an atomic raid test.

ON SCREEN. Men in WHITE SUITS swarm as PEOPLE scramble in fear.

*NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
In the most comprehensive test of  
its kind ever held in America, the  
imaginary blast lays waste to  
Utica, one of New York state's most  
industrial cities...*

BOOM -- Joel jumps, as Mimi bursts in the front door with a department store bag. Mimi sees the look on her son's face.

MIMI  
Joel...? What's wrong?

JOEL  
How far away is Utica?

MIMI  
Utica, why...?

Mimi looks to the TV screen. Tales of nuclear war.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
Oh, baby, don't watch this.  
(she turns off the TV)  
I'm sorry I'm late. I got hung up  
at the store. Did your father call?

Joel shakes his head. Mimi pecks the top of his head.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
Okay. I'll fix us some dinner.

INT. HYNEK HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mimi puts her bags on the kitchen table. Pulls out a slip of paper. CLOSE UP: *Susie's name and phone number*. As Mimi smiles, clearly smitten with her new friend, we CUT TO:

INT. KATHLEEN MAY'S FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hynek studies the case file with a renewed sense of urgency as Ruppelt, visible through the front window, talks with the Sheriff on the porch.

KATHLEEN (O.S.)  
Finally got them to sleep.

Hynek looks up as Kathleen enters. She's exhausted.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)  
I don't know what we're gonna do.  
This is our home and it don't feel  
safe here any more.

HYNEK  
Well, we're not leaving you.

KATHLEEN  
Maybe you should. Things only got  
worse after you showed up.

Ruppelt enters.

RUPPELT  
Sheriff's gonna post someone  
outside. You won't have to worry  
about anyone running up here again--

KATHLEEN  
You don't understand! People think  
we *made* this mess. That kinda story  
don't ever go away.

HYNEK  
But it's not true.

KATHLEEN  
It don't have to be true for a  
story to stick. Just has to be  
repeated.  
(then)  
Y'all should move on. Please. Ain't  
nothing more you can do here.

And with that, she turns and goes. Hynek is clearly troubled.  
So's Ruppelt. But it's a dead end. Right?

RUPPELT  
We can write up the report. Maybe  
that'll help.  
(then)  
I'm gonna pack up the car.

He turns and exits. But Hynek's gears are still turning. Then he catches something peeking out from under a couch cushion. Slowly, he reaches over, slides it out. It's the *Journey into Unknown Worlds* comic book. Hynek opens it, flips through and panels of the comic scroll by. Then Hynek stops, something's clicking in for him now --

He looks over at the drawing on the newspaper headline once more and IMAGES FLASH HIS MIND -- **HYNEK VISION** --

*TREES, GLOWING YELLOW EYES, RAZOR CLAWS, metal tubes embedded into scaled skin. A mouth SNAPS CLOSED.*

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruppelt has the trunk open on the car, putting bags inside when he sees Hynek hurry from the house and head into the barn. A beat later he re-emerges, marches to Ruppelt.

HYNEK

Do we have flashlights?

Ruppelt nods, reaches in the trunk, hands him one.

RUPPELT

Whatta you want a flashlight for?

HYNEK

An experiment.

RUPPELT

Wait...what *kind* of experiment?

Hynek just bolts off into the dark. Ruppelt grabs a flashlight, and follows.

EXT. WEST VIRGINIA WOODS - NIGHT

Flashlight beams cut through the black before Hynek and Ruppelt appear, trudging towards the 'crash site'.

RUPPELT

You wanna tell me what we're doing out here?

HYNEK

Summoning the monster.

RUPPELT

Oh, sure. That makes sense. How exactly do we *summon*--?

Off that, Hynek reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out a BABY CHICK. Hynek places the chick on the ground. He stands, faces the dark. Then, without warning, he makes odd SHRIEKING SOUNDS. Loud, louder. Ruppelt thinks Hynek's lost his mind.

RUPPELT (CONT'D)

*What the hell are you doing?*

Hynek calls again. CA-CAW! Waits. Then again. CA-CAW! Then, and suddenly, an answering SHRIEEEEK! A beat of surprise. Hynek caws once again. Then another answering SHRIEK! But it's MUCH CLOSER now. Ruppelt's eyes dart to the sky when WOOSH! SOMETHING HUGE descends from above! Ruppelt ducks as--

A GIGANTIC OWL

SWOOPS DOWN and snatches the chick, then flaps to a nearby branch where it begins to disembowel it. Hynek shines his flashlight on predator and prey.

HYNEK

Take a good look, Captain Ruppelt.  
I give you the Flatwoods Monster.

Now it's Ruppelt's turn. He looks at Hynek with surprise, newfound respect. CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

Locals, policemen, and news reporters gather in the town square. The Sheriff stands with Kathleen, Lily, and Will on a platform, wraps up his address. Ruppelt is just off stage.

LOCAL SHERIFF

...So it was entirely reasonable for Kathleen and her children to say something extraordinary happened that night. Because it did. A meteor that size? It's like being struck by lightning...

There's some grumbling from the crowd. Someone shouts:

LOCAL

What about the monster!?

More voices second the notion.

SHERIFF

Easy...we have 'the monster' right here.

(turns, waves)

Boys?

TWO COPS carry up a large object, covered by a bright yellow tarp. They place it on stage. A beat of tension before they YANK the tarp away revealing an ENRAGED SHRIEKING OWL in a cage. As a murmur creeps through the crowd, clearly they're not all convinced, CAMERA MOVES to discover --

HYNEK. Across the street on a payphone, mid-call.

HYNEK

No, it all went great, hon. How're things at home? How's Joel?

INT. KITCHEN/HYNEK'S HOME - SAME TIME

Mimi cooks bacon, Joel's head is in a comic.

MIMI

He's good, we're good. Are you going to make it home for dinner?

HYNEK (V.O.)

I don't know. Probably not. We still have to make one more stop.

MIMI

...okay, well, I understand.

EXT. THE TOWN SQUARE - SAME TIME

Ruppelt poses for pictures with Kathleen and the Owl. As FLASHBULBS POP, Kathleen uncomfortable, we shift perspective

ACROSS THE STREET

To where a BLACK BENTLEY sits. Inside is a FIGURE IN A FEDORA WHOSE FACE WE DON'T SEE, his black gloved hands resting on the steering wheel. This is clearly the same figure from the woods: UNSEEN. He watches the spectacle closely, then turns to focus on Hynek who's still on his call. As he pulls his hat lower and opens the door to get out, we notice Lily's ORIGINAL SKETCH on the seat next to him before we are --

ON A SIDE STREET

Lily and Will approach their mom's truck, happy to be away from the commotion behind them.

LILY

Will...Do you think it really was just an owl?

Lily opens the truck's door, digs around inside.

WILL

Nope.

LILY

(turns back, shows Will)  
Nickel. Gonna buy a soda pop.

Will watches her go, then spots his slinky on the front seat. He grabs it and quickly moves to a set of stairs, heads to the top so he can make it walk on down.

CLOSE ON THE SLINKY now as it drops down each step...drop... drop...drop... before landing on a SHINY BLACK SHOE. A gloved hand picks it up -- that UNSEEN MAN. Will looks up, uneasy. Mr. Unseen hands Will back his slinky and, as he bends down, WHISPERS SOMETHING to him, never showing us his face.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen is still being hounded by REPORTERS. Hynek returns as Ruppelt eases into the fray to get them all some space.

RUPPELT

Alright, that's a wrap, fellas. She needs to get home. We all do, thank you...

The reporters start to disperse as Hynek turns to Kathleen.

HYNEK

I'm sure this'll all blow over soon enough.

KATHLEEN

No. No, it won't. This is how me and my family'll be remembered from now on. It's just human nature...

(moving off)

I have to find my babies, scuse me...

And at that, Kathleen turns and walks off.

RUPPELT

You're welcome, I guess.

(back to Hynek)

I'm outta smokes, gonna grab some. Meet you at the car?

But Hynek's focus is still on KATHLEEN. He nods. And with that the two head off in opposite directions.

DOWN THE BLOCK

Hynek finds Will sitting on the curb, staring at his slinky, slowly rocking it in his hands.

HYNEK

Son, I think your mother's looking  
for you... Will? WILL.

Will hasn't even acknowledged him. That's odd. Hynek touches Will's shoulder, and now the boy holds out a BLACK ENVELOPE.

WILL

He told me to give this to you.  
Said not to tell *anyone*. Cuz he's  
watchin' you now. Real close.

*What?* Hynek takes the envelope. Opens it. Inside is a single POLAROID: *A grainy image of AN EERIE LONG HALLWAY leading to a COLD ORNATE IRON DOOR at the end, with a LONE LIGHT, which leaves a long FLOOR SHADOW of a FIGURE IN A FEDORA. Creepy.*

HYNEK

What is this? Who gave this to you?

WILL

I don't know, I never saw his face.  
But he said to tell you...  
(leaning, in a whisper)  
The truth is like the sun. Closer  
you look, the more it blinds...

Hynek is speechless. But before he can even figure out what to do, Will darts off and joins his mom who scoops him into THE TRUCK. And as they speed off, Hynek is left completely dumbfounded, alone with that Polaroid, we... **END ACT FOUR.**

ACT FIVEEXT. THE PENTAGON - DAY

Establishing.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/THE PENTAGON - DAY

Looking but not really listening, Hynek focuses on Ruppelt as he DEBRIEFS someone OFF SCREEN. Their MUTED EXCHANGE hinders us from hearing any words until:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Is that right, Doctor Hynek?

Hynek comes to, and we see it's Vandenberg across from them.

VANDENBERG

Asteroids bombard our atmosphere  
all the time, but mostly burn up?

HYNEK

Meteors, sir. Technically 'meteor-  
ites', if they strike the Earth.

Vandenberg nods, never knew that. Pats the Blue Book report.

VANDENBERG

Well, it's excellent work, Doctor.  
And you're doing your country a  
huge service. We appreciate it.

A door opens and Vandenberg looks up.

VANDENBERG (CONT'D)

Nathan. There was no need to--

TWINING

No, no. I wanted to meet our new  
Scientific Advisor in the flesh...

Hynek stands as Twining approaches, offers his hand.

TWINING (CONT'D)

Dr. Hynek. General Nathan Twining.

HYNEK

It's an honor, sir.

Twining releases his hand. Just studies Hynek for a beat.

TWINING

Helluva job down there in Virginia.  
We didn't start you off easy, did  
we. Always the simplest folk with  
the most untapped imaginations.

Hynek forces a smile. Twining turns to Vandenberg.

TWINING (CONT'D)

Is he up to speed on Discretion?  
Security? Protocol?

Vandenberg nods. Twining turns back to Hynek.

TWINING (CONT'D)

Then you're all set. Take the  
rental to get home. The three of us  
still got a little pow-wow to do  
here, so... we'll be in touch.

Ruppelt rises, shakes Hynek's hand warmly, smiles.

RUPPELT

Nice work, Doc... And hey, cut  
those college kids some slack, huh?

Hynek just nods. Exits. The three of them watch him go.  
Twining *holding his stare* an extra beat longer.

EXT. HYNEK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The Hudson Hornet's lights BURN towards us, as Hynek's rental  
car pulls up to the driveway. It's late.

INT. RENTAL CAR - SAME TIME

Hynek stares at his front door, relieved to be home. He  
should just run inside, but his mind is still turning on  
something else. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the  
POLAROID. Studies it for a long beat. What does it mean? Who  
would give it to him. For a man who's always used to finding  
the answer, this has got him stumped. He finally puts it  
away, grabs a LARGE BOX on the passenger seat.

INT. LIVING ROOM/HYNEK HOME - NIGHT

The famous Indian-head TEST PATTERN is on the TV. Hynek  
enters... then hears VOICES in

THE KITCHEN

Hynek comes to the doorway, sees Mimi and Joel playing Scrabble. He holds for a beat, just watching them. Mimi finally sees him, rises quickly.

MIMI

Allen...

JOEL

Mom said I could stay up 'til you got home!

Mimi pulls him close and they hug. She whispers:

MIMI

I was getting worried.

HYNEK

Sorry. I should've stopped to call.

JOEL

Did you catch any spacemen, Dad?  
(then, sees it)  
What's in the box?

Mimi turns. Sees the box too. Hynek nods for Joel to follow him outside, grins a loving grin.

HYNEK

Let's go see...

EXT. FRONT LAWN/HYNEK RESIDENCE - MOMENTS LATER

The open box on the ground, Hynek finishes putting together and adjusting a shiny NEW TELESCOPE as Joel and Mimi look on.

HYNEK

So it occurred to me on my drive home, tonight is the opposition of Mars. That's not a martian uprising Joel, it's the point in Mars' orbit when it passes closest to Earth.

Joel comes closer to the telescope, clearly intrigued.

HYNEK (CONT'D)

And when I was your age, it was Mars that first got me interested in astronomy... and in science...

Joel approaches the telescope, looks in.

JOEL

Whoa, Dad. Far out!

The slang makes Hynek smile. Mimi steps beside Hynek, puts her arm around him. As they watch their son discovering, for the first time, part of what makes Dad tick. We HEAR a CLICK.

*This family moment FREEZES like a photo. CLICK! We REVEAL:*

INT. PINK CADILLAC - UP THE STREET

Susie SNAPS a few more shots before lowering a CAMERA with a telephoto lens; She'd been spying on them. *What the hell?!* Susie finally drives off, no headlights.

EXT. VACANT PARKING LOT/DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS - NIGHT

Susie's Cadillac pulls to a stop by a pay phone. Susie gets out, moves to the phone and dials a number. After a beat:

SUSIE MILLER  
Mikhail... Ya svyazalsya.

TRANSLATED: 'I've made contact.' And off Susie, we SLAM TO:

EXT. TARMAC/AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

FOOTFALLS. Vandenberg and Twining walk with purpose.

VANDENBERG  
I think the Captain will perform his part, don't you?

TWINING  
He'll suffice. It's the doctor I'm worried about...

INT. BATHROOM/HYNEK HOME - SAME TIME

Hynek blots cold water on his face. It soothes him. Drying off, he gazes long at his reflection in the mirror.

TWINING (V.O.)  
There was something off about him. Are you sure he didn't say anything else in the debrief?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS OFFICE/HYNEK HOME - MOMENTS LATER

In the dark, Hynek moves to a bookshelf, retrieving a KEY from behind a stack. He then unlocks a DESK DRAWER, opens it.

VANDENBERG (V.O.)  
No. He didn't. Why?

Hynek takes out the Polaroid Will gave him, studies it for a long beat. Its very existence eats at him. *What is it? Who's it from? Why?*

He hides it in his desk, locks the drawer, hides the key...

TWINING (V.O.)  
He was afraid. I'm not sure about what. But, the man is hiding something.

We hold on Hynek, alone in the dark, before we CUT BACK TO:

EXT. AIR FORCE BASE - TARMAC HANGAR - NIGHT

Twining and Vandenberg stop, outside a MASSIVE HANGAR. It's surrounded by barbed-wire fences and HEAVILY ARMED SOLDIERS. Vandenberg replies:

VANDENBERG  
Isn't everyone?

Twining motions to one of the Guards -- *open it up*. Turns back to Vandenberg.

TWINING  
Just keep eyes on him. Keep eyes on everyone. No stone left unturned.

Vandenberg nods agreement. Then, quiet and sure:

VANDENBERG  
You do realize the consequences of our actions impact every man, woman and child on the planet now...

Light spills across their faces. The MASSIVE DOORS OPENING. Twining absorbs the import of that statement.

TWINING  
Well, rest assured, General. Their fate is in good hands...

They enter. As in the distance, we slowly make out something OVAL AND ABSOLUTELY GIGANTIC under a huge, white tarp at the far end. The blinding light ahead washes these TWO SHADOWS out into nothingness. As at last we -- SNAP TO BLACK.