

REIGN OF FIRE

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CHILDREN'S VOICES sing the haunting strains of a *Dies Irae* -- that part of the Requiem Mass which prophecies Judgment Day.

FADE IN. CREDITS OVER:

A SERIES OF STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

portraying a pageant of MEDIEVAL KINGS and ARMORED KNIGHTS. Heroes of the past commemorated forever in glass mosaic.

END ON a rendering of the most mythic warrior: ST. GEORGE. Lance lifted, warhorse rearing, he's shown charging into battle against his fabled foe: A GIGANTIC WINGED DRAGON.

HOLD ON this image as an ominous RUMBLING suddenly builds. The window begins to SHAKE. PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A BULLDOZER, loudly lumbering down a street below.

We now see the windows are the facade of WESTMINSTER ABBEY. We are in

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - LATE AFTERNOON

SUPERIMPOSE: *WESTMINSTER, LONDON. THE PRESENT.*

A city caught between the 12th century and the 20th; where the medieval spires of the Tower of London compete for space with office buildings of glass and steel.

THE BULLDOZER rumbles through the city's afternoon traffic toward a nearby CONSTRUCTION SITE. A high barrier surrounds the site, from which hangs A BANNER: *JUBILEE LINE EXTENSION PROJECT: TAKING LONDON INTO A NEW MILLENNIUM.*

The dozer stops by the banner, lowers its bucket to the ground. Revealed inside is a young passenger

QUINN ABERCROMBY

age 12, a "forward moving chap" just stalled on the border of puberty. ~~He~~ hops out of the bucket with a nod to the DRIVER.

QUINN
Cheers, Jake.

Bookbag in one hand, some bags of fast-food in the other, Quinn enters a door in the barrier marked SITE ENTRANCE.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - LATE AFTERNOON

Quinn walks through the site. Around him, WORKERS labor over a lattice of girders. Huge CRANES lift material down a FIFTY FOOT WIDE HOLE which leads to subway construction below.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE SITE - LATE AFTERNOON

Site forewoman KAREN ABERCROMBY stands by a table, going over a schematic. She's a working class matron in her 40s, full of life, sturdy as the buildings she's helped construct. Her assistant, STUART, nudges her.

STUART
There's your man.

Karen looks up, sees Quinn approaching.

KAREN
What're you doin' without a hat?

QUINN
(Brandishing the food bags)
Bringin' you supper.

Karen takes off her own hard hat, tosses it to Quinn.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Aw, mum...

KAREN
Oh, "Mum" yourself. You know you can't be here without protection.

STUART
Don't believe it, Quinn. If she'd had protection, you wouldn't be here at all.

KAREN
Watch it, mate...

A WORKMAN calls from nearby.

WORKMAN
Karen! Jess needs you downstairs.

KAREN
Can't it wait? We're just havin' our tea.

WORKMAN
He says it's urgent.

Karen sighs, puts down the food.

QUINN
Can I come down?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAREN

No, love, they're still layin' in supports.

(Kisses him on forehead.)

'Nother time.

Karen and Stuart head to the construction hole and enter a cage-like ELEVATOR. With a metallic THUNK, the cage descends.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Dark, recently dug walls of soft earth and clotted clay. The entire tunnel resonates with GRINDING SOUNDS coming from

A TUNNEL BORING MACHINE ("TBM"): a steel cylinder the size of several pick-up trucks. Its cutting edge is a series of hydraulic rams that dig into the earth before it.

At the moment, the TBM is stuck into the earth at the tunnel's end. It bucks and grinds, like an animal trying to free itself from a trap.

Karen and Stuart approach the TBM's operator cab. Inside, JESS, a portly, choleric Irishman, fiddles with the controls.

KAREN

All right, Jess?

JESS

Damn stuck is what I am.

(Jimmies controls)

You geniuses tol' me it was clay down here. I'm hittin' bloody bedrock.

Karen and Stuart look at each other, confused.

KAREN

Bollocks.

(Climbs into the cab.)

There's no bedrock for miles.

JESS

Well, maybe if Your Ladyship'd learn to read the charts.

Karen disregards him; she works the hydraulic controls. The TBM WHIRRS, begins to unjam itself from the wall.

Stuart inspects the debris nearby. It's then he notices

A TRICKLE OF WATER running from the cut the TBM has made into the wall. It's as if the machine has hit a water main.

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4.

STUART
Oy, Karen! Hold...

CRASH! A GUSH OF WATER BLASTS FROM THE CUT IN THE WALL! It SLAMS into Stuart, knocking him backward.

KAREN
Stuart!

Karen grabs his arm, pulls him up to the cab just as THE GUSH BECOMES A TORRENT, PUSHING THE TBM BACKWARD, like a cork forced from a bottle.

KAREN, STUART AND JESS cling to the TBM cab for dear life.

Then, as quick as it came, the flood subsides. Soon, the only sound is the HISS of water STEAMING in the tunnel.

Karen rises unsteadily. She stares at what lies before them.

A LARGE HOLE, punctured in the wall by the TBM.

EXT. TOP OF CONSTRUCTION SITE - DUSK

Unaware of the events below, Quinn sits reading a schoolbook. A distant CLANG splits the air. He looks up.

The sound resonates from the spire of BIG BEN. It's 6:00 PM. The famed clocktower is tolling in the coming night.

INT. HOLE IN THE TUNNEL

Holding her flashlight, Karen steps into the hole, followed by Stuart and Jess. They can see their breath MIST with cold.

JESS
Jesus! Water's bloody freezing.

KAREN
Below freezing, mate. It's salt.

STUART
What the hell's salt water doing...?

All come to a mute halt on the other side.

KAREN
Good Christ.

REVEAL they are in

INT. A HUGE DRIPPING WET CAVERN

100 feet high, but the dark makes it seem bigger. SHADOWS of ODDLY SHAPED TRANSLUCENT STALACTITES AND STALAGMITES haunt the space. Eeriest of all, however, are the PINPRICKS OF PHOSPHORESCENT LIGHT that dot the ceiling and walls. Their dim, green glow make them look like subterranean stars.

The three glance around nervously, their breath misting eerily before them.

JESS

Welcome to Wonderland, Alice.

Stuart touches the glowing stuff on the wall.

STUART

Phosphorescent algae. What do you reckon?

KAREN

Undersea cave maybe.

JESS

You daft? Ocean's miles from here.

KAREN

Yes, your Lordship. And this country was under it.

JESS

What, ten thousand years ago?!

STUART

This must've gotten sealed off somehow.

Karen and Stuart walk forward into the cavern.

Jess, not so bold, takes a few steps back.

SQUISH. His foot falls on something soft and wet. He looks down at what he's stepped upon:

A MASSIVE CABLE, stretching the length of the floor.

Jess touches the thing with his boot. It's then he sees

The Cable is covered with what seem to be HAIRS.

KAREN AND STUART

head into the cave. Karen trips on something. Stuart catches her. Karen turns her light to see on what she tripped on.

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6.

A BIZARRE FISH, prehistoric, almost alien looking, lies motionless on the ground. Stuart bends down to look at it.

STUART (cont'd)
Jesus. Looks bloody primeval...

Suddenly the fish THRASHES OUT, its spiny body nearly striking Stuart in the face.

STUART (cont'd)
Fuckin' hell! How can it be alive?

THUD. A FAINT SOUND like a fist hitting an empty drum echoes through the cavern.

STUART (CONT'D)
Jess, what are you on about?

No answer. Karen flashes her light around. No sign of him.

KAREN
Jess?

Nothing. Karen and Stuart rise, calling Jess' name.

Karen heads toward one end of the chamber. She comes to

A CIRCULAR BOULDER set in the wall. 5-feet, shiny black. It looks like an obsidian marble sunk halfway into the rock.

STUART searches his end.

ANOTHER THUD echoes through the cave, this one louder.

He shines his light ahead...and freezes. For sprawled on the ground before him is

JESS. Eyes frozen open, blood trickling from his mouth. The "cable" he stepped on has WRAPPED ITSELF around his chest, CRUSHING it like a tin-can.

STUART
Karen!

Karen turns. The beam of her flashlight hits the surface of the circular black boulder.

THE COLOR OF THE BOULDER CHANGES: DEEP BLUE appears vertically on either end, widening so that all that's left of the black is an angry SLIT in the middle.

It's not a boulder at all.

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CONTINUE:

IT'S A GIGANTIC DILATED EYE

Karen finds herself staring into an 4-FOOT EYE. Unnervingly catlike; sky-blue iris; night-black pupil.

She barely has time to react before

SNAP! THE "CABLE" FLICKS OUT, SLAMMING Stuart against the wall with a sickening CRACK!

KAREN

Stuart!!

She runs to him. But by that time, all hell's broken loose.

The dull echoing thuds grow louder, quicker...

MOVEMENT all around. The strange translucent stalactites shift one way...parts of the walls shift another...THE ENTIRE CAVERN SEEMS TO BE ALIVE WITH A TRANSLUCENT FLESH.

The thuds are now DEAFENING AND RHYTHMICAL. The sound of a massive HEARTBEAT.

KAREN

throws Stuart over her back in a fireman's carry

SNAP!! The "Cable" STRIKES the ground nearby. Karen dodges with Stuart, makes for the cavern's exit.

The "Cable" does not go after them. Rather, it WRAPS itself around TWO BOULDERS by the wall and drags them into an OPENING in the cavern wall.

An opening which we now see is a GIGANTIC MOUTH. And the cable is its massive TONGUE.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Karen runs with Stuart over her shoulder. She comes to a tunnel junction where SEVERAL WORKERS are busy.

WORKER #1

Karen, what's...?

KAREN

Everyone topside! NOW!

In a burst of adrenaline, she books for the elevator. The others follow.

INT. CAVERN

The boulders start RATTLING within the mouth of the unseen creature...like clicking flints trying to make a spark.

POV - UNSEEN CREATURE

begins to move out of its cavern into the tunnel.

EXT. QUIET STREET NEAR CONSTRUCTION SITE - SUNSET

A fiery sunset is reflected in the WINDOWS of nearby shops. Suddenly, an ALARM STARTS TO SOUND.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SUNSET

BY QUINN

The ground underneath the boy begins to TREMBLE. Quinn tries to rise, but is literally knocked off his feet as

THE EARTH AROUND THE SITE STARTS TO SHUDDER!

INT. CONSTRUCTION ELEVATOR

CLANG! Karen SLAMS the elevator door shut. She, Stuart and the other workers are packed in like sardines. She presses the controls. The elevator SLOWLY begins to climb.

The tunnel's SHAKING. In the distance, a terrible RATTLING.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DUSK

Workmen run for cover as girders fall around them. An ear-piercing SCREECH OF METAL as a HUGE CRANES TOPPLES OVER.

QUINN

Mum...?

Quinn looks toward the construction hole just as

THE ELEVATOR CAGE

rises from the hole. Quinn can see his mother and the others caught in the cage. They're almost to safety when...

THE RATTLING BELOW BECOMES DEAFENING.

KAREN

Quinn, STAY BACK! STAY...

CRAAAAACK! AN ARC OF BLUE PHOSPHOROUS LIGHTNING BURSTS FORTH FROM THE HOLE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Karen and the others SCREAM as the elevator cage is CONSUMED BY FIRE SO HOT IT INCINERATES THEM.

The flaming elevator TOPPLES back into the hole.

QUINN

MUM!!!

Quinn runs to the collapsing elevator...then stops short. For something else is coming out to greet him.

A MAMMOTH WING

painfully unfurls from the hole. Its flesh is withered, translucent from centuries without light. The sun shines through it, revealing a webwork of skeletal structure.

QUINN

can only watch, paralyzed, as

A SECOND WING

joins the first, torturously stretching, hoisting its main body from the hole.

As light hits the creature's skin, its color CHANGES. Like a ghost taking form, the flesh becomes a dark, rich BLACK.

AN ENORMOUS SHADOW

takes shape on the ground: a leviathan's silhouette of two batlike wings and a gigantic, serpentine body.

THE CREATURE'S HUGE EYE

stares mercilessly. For an instant, Quinn's REFLECTED in the thing's cornea. Captured, like an insect in a glass.

QUINN

stares back in terror as the CREATURE'S SHADOW covers him. It blots out the remainder of light, taking us into

DARKNESS:

Silence. Then, a hollow SOUND of wind rushing through stone.

FADE IN:

A SLITTED, INHUMAN EYE

fills frame, its gold-flecked iris staring evilly at us.

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CONTINUED:

PULL BACK SLOWLY TO REVEAL

It's only a mangy TABBY CAT, standing in the middle of

INT. A STONE ROOM

Small as a prison cell, made entirely of ancient rock. Dawnlight filters in from a slit in the wall.

The Cat MEOWS, trying to get the attention of

A MAN, asleep in a small cot. Dressed in fatigues, his face turned from us, he does not seem about to get up.

The Cat jumps up on a knickknack filled SHELF above the man's head. It MEOWS again. The Man groans into his pillow.

MAN

Bugger off, Murphy.

Undeterred, the Cat starts tapping a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH with its paw. It pushes the object over the edge of the shelf; the picture falls, landing a half-inch from the Man's head. We see it's a FAMILY PHOTO: Young Quinn standing with Karen.

The Man rolls over; we see his face.

QUINN ABERCROMBY, now in his late 20s. A gentle, handsome face, one that's lived at great cost.

Quinn picks up the photo, shakes it at the cat.

QUINN

One a these days, you're not gonna miss.

Quinn puts the photo on the shelf, then gently grabs the cat.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Then where you gonna be, eh?

He carries the cat through the room. PLANTS hang from the wall; A GOLDFISH TANK in one corner; a CAGE with MICE in another. An old SHEEP DOG huddles by the door.

Quinn walks to what passes for a "pantry": a small sterno burner with an assortment of ancient food tins.

QUINN (CONT'D)

They'll try you. Convict you. Hang you.

He empties a packet of DRIED MILK into a bowl, fills it with water from a canteen, stirs.

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QUINN (CONT'D) *

Probably won't even give you a last meal.

He sets the bowl on the floor. Murphy hungrily laps the milk.

The Sheep Dog by the door BARKS.

QUINN (CONT'D) *

Don't worry, I'm not playin' favourites.

Quinn grabs a partially burned BOOK from a rickety shelf. Then, dog in tow, he heads out the door.

INT. STONE HALLWAY

Quinn walks through a narrow hallway of ancient rock.

A BOY AND GIRL (JARED, 11, and BETH, 9), faces stained with soot, race around the corner and nearly knock into him.

QUINN

Oy oy oy, Jared. Keep it under fifty.

JARED

Sorry, Chief.

The children continue on with their chase-game. Yawning, Quinn walks on past the door to

A SMALL CHAPEL

CHOIR MUSIC within, intoning a Catholic "Kyrie". We see the source of the music is A SHORTWAVE RADIO near the lectern. The music ends, and an ANNOUNCER'S VOICE comes over the radio, speaking in ITALIAN.

VOICE OVER SHORTWAVE

This is Vatican station, transmitting
from temporary sanctuary in Sicilia...

Quinn crosses himself as he walks by the chapel. He heads down a STONE STAIRCASE, which in turn opens out to

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - MORNING

Three acres enclosed by 30 FOOT HIGH STONE WALLS. It's a cross between a medieval village and a modern refugee camp.

PEOPLE dressed in threadbare clothes go about morning business. Some cook on grills fueled by SOLAR BATTERIES; some get water from wells pumped by WINDMILLS. Others tend LIVE-STOCK roaming freely through the area. Everyone has the lean, hungry look of wartime refugees.

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Quinn walks by, nodding hellos. The residents' replies are all respectful: "mornin', Chief...up early, Chief..."

He heads to the back of the yard where sits

DAVE CREEDY -- 30s, red-haired, the runt of a short litter. His accent is Cumbrian: a dialect that sounds like a Scottish brogue run through a blender.

He is cooking something over a coal fire as Quinn approaches.

QUINN

There's your man.

CREEDY

Give us a kiss.

QUINN

Shave.

Creedy hands him a cup of tea. Quinn looks down, sees what his friend is cooking: a frighteningly runny CHEESE SANDWICH.

QUINN (CONT'D) *

What's this then?

CREEDY

(Proudly)

Fookin' cheese toastie.

QUINN

"Fookin' cheese," eh?

(Inspects it.)

From a cow or your toes?

CREEDY

Try it an' see.

(OFF Quinn's look)

Oh, don't be "Mr. Picky-Poo". I's good this time, I put chives in it.

Quinn regards the oozing mess, politely shakes his head.

CREEDY (CONT'D) *

Since when'd you develop such a profoun'ly delicate palatte?

QUINN

Since you found that damn cook book.

Quinn rises, walks over to a set of STAIRS leading up to

EXT. TOP OF WALL - MORNING

In what is obviously a morning ritual, Quinn paces the WALKWAY that runs the top of the wall.

He leans against the battlement, pulls out the book he took from his shelf. It's a technical manual titled: **OXYGEN UNIT REPAIR**. He starts to read.

PULL BACK SLOWLY TO REVEAL he is standing on the walls of
A MEDIEVAL NORMAN CASTLE

Its ancient towers outfitted with solar panels, barbed wire and rusting guns. Its formidable rock walls scarred with huge black SCORCH MARKS. Wounds from a war with fire.

PANNING AWAY from the castle, we see the country it inhabits
A BURNT, DESOLATE LANDSCAPE.

Nothing standing much less living. The ground is SLICK BLACK SLAG - as if it were burned, melted, then licked clean.

It stretches to an ever-grey sky which itself seems scorched.

SUPERIMPOSE: **WARWICKSHIRE, ENGLAND. 2024 A.D.**

SERIES OF DISSOLVES:

over the barren domain. All seems lifeless until we come to a CHARRED TREE, standing like a sentinel on a hill overlooking

EXT. SEVERAL FARMING FIELDS - SOUTH OF CASTLE - DAY

Acres of color -- amber barley, green stalks of corn and alfalfa -- all reclaimed from the sea of black.

People from the castle are busy HARVESTING. Some use decayed bits of technology -- tractors, mowers, bailers. Others use jury-rigged equipment pulled by animals.

Around the fields are several old WATER TENDERS -- firetrucks with huge water tanks and hoses. MEN IN FIREFIGHTING GEAR sit atop them, armed with old rifles, guns, even crossbows.

They scan the cloud-covered sky, watching for signs of life.

INT. CASTLE - CHAPEL - LATER

A group of twenty STUDENTS aged four to twelve sit raptly watching Quinn, who is acting out a story for them.

(CONTINUED)

QUINN

(In a deep basso.)

"Join me" the Black Knight says, "and we can end this destructive conflict together."

(In a younger voice.)

"I'll never join you!" The White Knight cries. "You killed my father!" But the Knight in Black only stares at him, stares through the buggy eyes of his black mask. And then he speaks the words that burn into our hero's heart forever.

(In deep basso.)

"No, Luke. I am your father..."

The kids GASP at the revelation.

JARED

You make that one up, Mr. Quinn?

QUINN

I did.

The Kids MUMBLE, impressed. Quinn winks at FAITH, 17, a sweet-faced, ersatz school teacher who's barely through being a student. She blushes at Quinn's wink, turns to the kids.

FAITH

Right then, loves. Time for maths.

The Kids all protest.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Come on, now. Thank the Fire Chief for comin' to storytell.

KIDS

Not yet! One more! Please! Please!

Faith can't get a word in. She looks at Quinn, who smiles.

QUINN

All right. Just one...

KIDS

"The one about the shark"! "The Indiana man"! "The Lion Thingy"!

BETH, a shy girl of eight, speaks from the back.

BETH

Tell us about The Ashley.

Everyone goes quiet at the mention of that name. Long pause.

(CONTINUED)

QUINN

You've heard that one plenty, Beth.

BETH

Not the way you tell it.

The children stare at him. Quinn glances at Faith, who nods.

Quinn gestures the kids in; they gather around him in a tight circle, as if it were a campfire tale.

QUINN

Listen then. You've heard how they found The Ashley in London town. Asleep in her cave, she was, in water colder 'n' ice. So long in darkness, her skin was clear as glass.

JARED

How long she been there?

QUINN

Thousands of years, Jared. Since the last ice age, even.

BETH

Was it magic she lived so long?

QUINN

No, Beth. Some reptiles, they hibernate in the cold. Scientists reckon she slept without eatin'. Without breathin. Waitin for warmth to wake her. And it did...

With his hands he casts SHADOW OF A WINGED SHAPE on the wall.

QUINN (CONT'D)

She rose into the sky that night, her skin turnin' the color of evening. Then like a ghost in the wind she disappeared.

The hands' shadow vanishes.

EXT. CASTLE PARAPET - DAY

A lone WATCHMAN stands atop the castle tower.

QUINN (VO)

Oh, men looked for her, surely. Searched with machines from ocean to air.

He scans the sky with an old coin-operated TOURIST BINOCULARS. He puts coin slug after coin slug into it to keep it going.

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CONTINUED:

QUINN (VO)
(CONT'D)

But The Ashley was smart. She'd flown far
into the Arab deserts...

EXT. PLAIN - NEAR CASTLE

A SENTRY squats in a stone hutch, watching the sky with a
telescope.

QUINN (VO)
...and buried herself deep in the sands
where nobody'd find her.

Unseen by the man, something MOVES in the sky behind him.

TWO AIRBORNE SHAPES

huge yet nearly invisible. They BLEND IN with the smoky sky, like
chameleons turned the color of clouds.

INT. CLASS ROOM

QUINN
A year later, that whole desert starts
shiftn' an' shakin', as if the sands
'emselves were alive. And then...

Quinn's HAND SHADOWS imitate the ground exploding.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Up they came! Thousands of thousands of
them. The Ashley's brood. Takin' to the
air like locusts.

EXT. SKY HIGH ABOVE FARMING FIELDS - DAY

POV OF THE AIRBORNE CREATURE -- looking down through the
cloud cover at the living fields below.

QUINN (VO)
They fell first on the cities...

REVERSE ANGLE - BY CHARRED TREE

QUINN (VO)
(CONT'D)
...and then on the land.

A WIND picks up. The charred tree trembles...then
DISINTEGRATES INTO SWIRLING ASHES.

INT. CLASSROOM

The Kids look on expectantly.

BETH

And then?

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - DAY

As the wind picks up, the animals in the Courtyard react. Horses skitter. Dogs begin to HOWL and BARK.

INT. CLASSROOM

Quinn suddenly stiffens, sensing something.

EXT. CASTLE PARAPET - DAY

The Watchman suddenly spies something.

WATCHMAN

Oh, Christ!

He immediately turns the crank of an AIR RAID SIREN. Its ear-piercing WHINE cuts through the air.

EXT. FARM FIELDS - BY WATER TENDER - DAY

Several Firemen atop a Tender look up just as

CRACK!! An ARC OF PHOSPHOROUS LIGHTNING STRIKES THE TENDER! The vehicle EXPLODES in a cloud of superheated steam.

INT. CHAPEL

Quinn gathers the students.

QUINN

Jared, get 'em to the cellars! Faith, you're with me...

EXT. FARM FIELDS - DAY

The siren BLARES as Firemen on a second Tender desperately try to extinguish the flames shooting up from the first...

Two other Firemen mount a decrepit WWII ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN...

Terrified Farm Workers run SCREAMING for cover as...

CRACK!! Another Phosphorous Arc strikes in the middle of the corn field. The effect is like NAPALM -- A SWATH OF FIRE SCYTHING through the vegetation, consuming all in its path.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

The yard's in the grip of ordered panic. Like a city used to war, PEOPLE run for pre-arranged protection of the castle towers as above the Watchman shouts

WATCHMAN
STRIKE ON THE NORTH FIELD!! STRIKE ON
THE NORTH FIELD!!

Quinn and Faith race to the yard's end to a

INT. BARN STRUCTURE

A rag-tag FIREHOUSE stocked with equipment that ranges from modern day oxygen tanks to old hand-operated waterpumps.

Quinn rushes to a TWO-WAY RADIO, flicks it on. CRIES and SOUNDS of a desperate battle are heard.

QUINN
Justen? Talk to me!

JUSTEN (OS, OVER RADIO)
We're in the middle of the gobshite, Chief!

EXT. FIELD - DAY

JUSTEN, 35, buff, firefighter, screams into a combat phone.

JUSTEN
I got three Tenders down and two worms in
the air...

His voice is drowned out by the BLAM BLAM BLAM of the Anti-Aircraft gun as it BLASTS its shells into the sky above.

The shells EXPLODE, pocking the cloudy air with black bursts.

But the SHAES easily avoid the blasts. Barely visible, they slide into the clouds like snakes slithering under stones.

INT. BARN/FIREHOUSE

QUINN
Listen to me: dig in an' hold your
position. I'm comin' with back up.
(No response.)
Justen?

Only a STATICHISS from the radio.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quinn looks up. Dave Creedy, Faith and TWENTY MEN AND WOMEN have joined him. They stare at Quinn in tense silence.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Suit up.

MONTAGE

Clipped, staccato CLOSE-UPS of Quinn and Co. suiting up. They're like knights getting ready for battle:

A thick ALUMINIZED FIRECOAT is thrown over Quinn's shoulders...An asbestos GAUNTLET/GLOVE is thrust over his hand...A PULASKI (double bladed hoe and axe) slides into a SHEATH on his back...A FIREMAN'S HELM fits over his head. Finally, a plexiglass VISOR snaps down over his face.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE - BY MAIN GATES - DAY

The metal gates are thrown open...and Quinn CHARGES OUT, RIDING ATOP A HORSE, leading

A RAGTAG FIRE BATTALLION on a range of vehicles: horse-drawn FIRECARTS; LIGHT PUMPERS (mini-firetrucks the size of cars); a MACK AERIAL (a truck with a long extension ladder); and an ALVIS SALAMANDER (armored 6-wheel ATV used for runway fires).

EXT. TOP OF HILL - DAY

Quinn pulls up short, looks down at the fields below.

THE AREA IS AN INFERNO! Walls of THICK BLACK SMOKE rise into the air, backlit by orange flames.

Above, a WWII MOSQUITO FIGHTER PLANE roars by, dumping RED FLAME RETARDANT FOAM over the fire. It does almost no good.

Quinn speaks into a MIC set into his helmet.

QUINN

Eddie, gimme the word...

INT. MOSQUITO FIGHTER PLANE - COCKPIT

EDDIE STAX -- 30s, cockney, so huge he barely fits into the cockpit -- stares out the window.

EDDIE

We got us a firebox, Quinn.

EDDIE'S POV -- FIELDS BELOW. All four sides of the field area are BURNING, creating a literal box. Within, PEOPLE are

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

running, choking, looking for an escape. Blinded by the black smoke, they can't see a way out; they're like rats in a trap.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I count 30, maybe 40 people inside.

QUINN (OS)

Any sign a the worms?

Eddie sees a DISTANT SHAPE passing into the clouds above.

EDDIE

They're circlin'.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - DAY

QUINN

Keep 'em off our backs. We're gonna try a rescue.

EDDIE (OS)

You mental?! That wind shifts, you got a firestorm. No one's gonna make it...

QUINN

Just do it!

Quinn turns to his "troops", now pulling up to the hill.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Listen up! All companies, we're gonna take this bastard on the west side. I want a 20 meter firebreak in ten minutes.

(Dismounts from his horse)

Danny, fit a 10-K searchlight to the Mack. My signal, you turn it on.

Quinn jumps atop the Salamander which Creedy drives.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Bad news, Dave. You're with me.

CREEDY

What're we doin'?

QUINN

Walkin' in God's garden...

ABOVE ANGLE

The battallion charges down, splitting left toward the west "wall" of the fire box. The Salamander breaks right, straight to the east "wall" where the fire burns fiercest.

INT. MOSQUITO COCKPIT

Andy, the plane's 20-year old tailgunner, nervously locks and loads his gun as Eddie removes a MICROPHONE from his panel. He flicks a switch marked PA SYSTEM.

EDDIE
OY!! WANKERS!!

EXT. OUTSIDE MOSQUITO - DAY

His voice BLARES over a LOUDSPEAKER on the plane's belly.

EDDIE (OVER PA)
YEAH, YOU! YOU SLITHEY-TOVED BASTARDS!

POV - AIRBORNE CREATURES

Taking notice of the Mosquito. We hear Eddie's voice as THE CREATURES HEAR IT: a series of HARSH, GRATING NOISES.

INT. MOSQUITO

Andy OPENS FIRE as the SHAPES start to head for the plane.

EXT. SKY - OUTSIDE MOSQUITO - DAY

The plane banks, leading the shapes away from the fields.

EXT. FIELD - WEST SIDE OF FIRE - DAY

The fire companies are attacking the firewall: spraying water, using the pulaskis to create a firebreak.

EXT. FIELD - EAST SIDE OF FIRE - DAY

The Salamander speeds toward a WALL OF FLAME. Quinn stands atop the vehicle, manning an artillery sized FIRE HOSE GUN. Creedy sticks his head out the window.

CREEDY
DON'T YOU FALL OFF!

QUINN
DON'T YOU SLOW DOWN!

Creedy mumbles a prayer, then FLOORS the accelerator. The firewall GROWS till it fills his entire line of sight.

TOP OF SALAMANDER -- Quinn sprays the fire, creating a breach
CRASH! THE SALAMANDER BURSTS THROUGH THE FIRE WALL TO

EXT. A CROP FIELD - DAY

The inside of the "firebox" is a maelstrom of BLACK-SMOKE peppered with RED HOT CINDERS. One can't see 5 feet ahead.

CREEDY

It's gonna be hell findin' anybody!

QUINN

Drive slow. They'll find us...

Quinn points the nozzle out and begins SPRAYING water in a wide, slow arc into the smoke-choked fields.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE FIELD - DAY

A MAN and several CHILDREN struggle in the darkness, unable to see, barely able to breath. There seems to be no way out.

Suddenly, a SPRAY OF WATER pierces through the thick hot smoke, sprinkling their faces like a cool benediction.

EXT. TOP OF SALAMANDER

Quinn keeps spraying as he calls into the black void.

QUINN

ANYONE THERE! KEEP LOW! FOLLOW THE WATER!

His eyes are tearing from the smoke as he scans the darkness. For a long moment, there is nothing.

But then, through the clouds, they come. PEOPLE, coughing, choking, drawn from the inferno by the life-giving water.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Hold on to the truck!

They cling to the truck, which leads them through the dark.

EXT. SKY - BY MOSQUITO - DAY

FLASH! A PHOSPHOROUS ARC cuts through the clouds like horizontal lightning. The Mosquito barely avoids it.

EDDIE'S VOICE (OVER PA)

IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?! YOU SOD-SUCKIN' EXCUSE FOR A REPTILE...?

INT. MOSQUITO COCKPIT

Andy looks out the window, shouts to him. Eddie sees that his right engine is on fire. He switches frequencies on the mic.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

Quinn...I got a flame out on number two.
We gotta call it a day...

EXT. SKY BY MOSQUITO - DAY

The Mosquito banks away, toward the safety of the castle.

EXT. FIELDS - BY SALAMANDER - DAY

A STRING OF PEOPLE now hold on to the Salamander for dear life. But it's a case of the blind leading the blind.

CREEDY

I can't see a bloody thing...

QUINN

Settle down.

(To Radio)

Faith! How's my fireline?

EXT. WEST SIDE OF FIELDS - DAY

The firemen have created a 20 meter BREAK in the fire wall. It literally looks like a door out of hell.

Faith speaks into her radio.

FAITH

Right and ready, Chief.

QUINN (OVER RADIO)

That 10K rigged?

Faith looks up to brigade lieutenant DANNY GOODWIN, age 30, who stands atop a THIRTY FOOT LADDER that extends from the Mack. A SEARCHLIGHT has been set upon it.

DANNY

Ready, Chief.

QUINN (OS OVER RADIO)

Light 'em up.

Danny throws a switch. The searchlight FLICKERS ON

EXT. FIELDS - BY SALAMANDER - DAY

The LIGHT PIERCES THROUGH THE SMOKE LIKE A KNIFE. A beacon to guide the Salamander out.

Creedy LAUGHS. He drives toward the light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But then Quinn hears a BOY shouting behind him.

BOY
Mr. Quinn! My sister...she let go...

Quinn calls to Creedy.

QUINN
Keep it movin', Dave!

Quinn jumps off the back, heads toward the fields.

EXT. SKY - DAY

POV OF AIRBORNE CREATURES -- flying back toward the fields.

EXT. BY FIREBREAK - DAY

The Firemen rush to help the survivors into every vehicle. A gentle WHOOSH of a breeze is heard. Faith feels it first.

FAITH
(Nervously, to walkie-talkie)
Quinn...

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Quinn picks up a barely conscious GIRL lying on the ground.

FAITH (OS, OVER RADIO)
Winds changin'. The fire's gonna flare...

His radio SPUTTERS. Quinn taps it. No good. IT'S DEAD.

EXT. FIELD - BY FIREBREAK - DAY

FAITH
Quinn? Can you hear me?

No response. Unsure of whether Quinn knows of the danger, she runs into the fields in search of her chief.

EXT. FIELD - BY QUINN - DAY

From his belt, Quinn pulls a FIRE SHELTER -- a floorless aluminum pup tent. He spreads it over himself and the girl. He secures the edges with his boot tips and gloved hands.

QUINN
Glynnis...we're gonna close our eyes an' stay flat. When I count three, you hold your breath. Can you do that for me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Girl nods, terrified. The roar of wind gets louder.

QUINN (CONT'D)

One...

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD - DAY

Faith feels the wind. She pulls out her emergency shelter.

QUINN (OS)

Two...

Faith tries to assemble it, but lacks Quinn's experienced calm. Her hands shake, costing her precious seconds.

INT. QUINN'S FIRE-SHELTER

QUINN

Three.

Quinn and the Girl breath deep.

EXT. FIELDS - VARIOUS - DAY

WHOOSH! A GUST OF WIND sends fire FLARING OVER THE FIELDS. It washes like a tsunami over Quinn's emergency shelter...

EXT. FIELD - BY FAITH - DAY

...and STRIKES FAITH FULL ON as she tries to get into her own shelter. So quick, she never knew what hit her.

INT. QUINN'S FIRE SHELTER

The Girl clutches Quinn as the fire FLARES over the shelter, shaking and roaring as if it were a living thing.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

The Salamander drives in. Danny's at the wheel, Creedy mans the water gun, spraying the fiery ground before him. He sees Quinn's shelter, sprays the area around it.

CREEDY

Quinn!

Quinn emerges from the shelter, the young girl in his arms.

CREEDY (CONT'D)

Move it! We got worms comin'!

(CONTINUED)

QUINN
(Handing girl to Danny)
Where's Faith?

Danny shakes his head. Quinn stares a second, unbelieving. He turns, starts to go look for the girl. Creedy stops him.

CREEDY
FORGET IT, QUINN! SHE'S DUSTED!

Quinn struggles; but Creedy is much stronger than he looks. He pulls Quinn back to the Salamander.

EXT. HILL OVER FIELDS - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

SHADOWS OF TWO WINGED FORMS pass over the land, flying north toward the burning fields.

DANNY (O.S., OVER RADIO)
Chief, they're comin' down. You want a counterattack?

INT. SALAMANDER

Quinn looks at the blackened, exhausted faces of his Firemen.

CREEDY
They'll just go airborne again. Hit us from the sky.

Quinn stares out the window, his eyes weary, almost lifeless.

QUINN
Pull back.

EXT. HILL OVER FIELDS - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

The battallion of fire vehicles beats a hasty retreat south.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

The fire subsides. Once green fields are now nothing but ash.

Through smoke, we see SILHOUETTES OF TWO HUGE WINGED SHAPES landing on the field. We don't get a full view of them; just CLOSE SHOTS of PARTS OF THEIR BODIES seen through the smoke:

A CLAW/LEG -- the stunted limb of a beast not built for walking.

WINGS -- veined, leathery, batlike. Folding silently against

CONTINUED:

A GIANT TORSO -- 30-feet of slick, reptilian scales. The scales are the color of clouds. But as they near the charred earth, they CHANGE HUE, turning the COLOR of the dark ground.

Finally -- and perhaps worst of all -- A HUGE MOUTH enters frame. Lips curled in the perpetual smile of a predator. Its teeth are like rows of sword-length RAZOR SHARP NEEDLES.

A CABLE-LIKE TONGUE unwinds from its maw. It sweeps over the charred ground and begins to rake in piles of ash.

The mouth FEEDS ON THE ASH. Its needle-teeth MESH together, creating a kind of filter which strains bits not completely burned: pieces of metal, wood and human bone.

As the mouth works its meal, something falls from its lips. The remains of Faith's scorched FIRE SHELTER.

A RATTLING SOUND is heard, followed by a short BURST of PHOSPHOROUS FLAME. The fire consumes the shining tent, reducing the last remnant of the girl to ashes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT

Lit by solar-powered floodlights, it looks like an island caught between dual voids of black sky and black earth.

EDDIE (OS)

Look, if my conscience could change the math, it would...

INT. MEETING HALL

A council of Firemen -- Creedy, Danny, Eddie among them -- argue around a long rusted table. Quinn sits at the head, examining a CHALKBOARD filled with numeric calculations.

EDDIE

But it's plain subtraction, all right?
With those fields gone, we're not gonna
have enough food for winter.

DANNY

It's only August. We can still lay in a
new crop...

EDDIE

With those worms out there?

CREEDY

They'll leave once they've fed.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

That could be months.

CREEDY

You the bloody Almanac now?

EDDIE

No, Creedy, I just got bloody eyes...

QUINN

(Calmly)

All right, cut it down.

The group shuts up. They stare at Quinn, who scratches recalculations on the board with a piece of chalk.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Now we still got the hydroponics. I can convert the main hall into a greenhouse. If we cut to half-rations...trade for seed with Edinburgh...

(Looks up at them.)

It won't be a feast, lads, but it'll get folks through to March.

EDDIE

That's it, then? The grand solution?

Quinn looks at him. Eddie shakes his head bitterly.

CREEDY

You got a problem with it?

EDDIE

Nooo. I think it's rosey-fuckin'-doo.

(To the others.)

We burrow like rats. Starve through another winter...

DANNY

Eddie...

EDDIE

...meanwhile, Ashley squats in London, hatching her eggs. Come spring, her kids can just burn us out again...

QUINN

All right.

EDDIE

It's not all right, Chief! HOW LONG WE GOTTA PUT UP WITH THIS?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quinn sees the same question reflected in each of his firemen's eyes. When Eddie speaks again, it's a challenge.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'm for goin' to London.

Quinn shakes his head. Eddie turns to the others.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Look, there's buildings still standin' there. Food. Medicine. If we knock out Ashley's nest, it's all ours...

CREEDY

We can't even handle the two worms here. You wanna pick a fight with their ma?!

EDDIE

I'd rather go out fightin' than starvin'.

QUINN

An' take the whole castle with you?

(Shakes his head.)

We stick to the strategy.

EDDIE

(Icily)

Same strategy that got Faith killed?

The room goes dead quiet; Eddie's clearly crossed a line.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I say we put it to a vote.

(To Quinn)

Or you too much of a big girl's blouse?

Quinn remains composed. He rises, chalkboard in hand.

QUINN

All right. I can see there's a bit of division on the subject.

(Starts walking around table)

But let's not start callin' names, yeah?

Least we owe each other is the courtesy of debating this like Englishmen...

Quinn wheels round and BREAKS THE CHALKBOARD ON EDDIE'S HEAD.

The firemen are taken aback. Quinn stands over Eddie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN (CONT'D)

Your first job's to this community. Not your damn pride. You wanna play buckaroo, join another brigade.

Quinn tosses the broken chalkboard down to him, then leaves.

INT. QUINN'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Quinn feeds his fish with GRUBS from a jar of earth.

A KNOCK on the door. Creedy enters, carrying a plate filled with a scary looking potato. Quinn regards it dubiously.

QUINN

What's this then?

CREEDY

Fookin' spud.

(Sets it down)

I simmered it in gravy; gave it a nice bouquet. Earthy. Kin' a mooshroomy...

QUINN

Almost fungus-y.

CREEDY

Just eat it.

Quinn smiles, takes the plate.

Creedy sits on the bed; he's visibly on edge.

QUINN

You been havin' conversations.

Creedy tries to put it delicately.

CREEDY

There's some thinkin'...maybe Eddie's right.

Quinn shakes his head.

CREEDY (CONT'D)

Quinn, he's got a big mouth, but he's also got a point. We can't last here forever. Sooner or later, we gotta make a stand...

QUINN

We are makin' a stand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quinn goes to the window, gestures out.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Look at it. Twenty years ago, you couldn't see the sky, there was so many of 'em. Ten years, you couldn't lay in a crop. Now we can. What's that tell you?

Creedy rubs his eyes. They've been through this before.

QUINN (CONT'D)

We can outlast 'em, Dave. Every year, there's less to burn, less ash for 'em to eat. They'll starve eventually. We just gotta hang on till...

CREEDY

Till when? You don't know.

QUINN

I know Ashley. We go stirrin' her up, we'll be diggin' graves for every man, woman an' child around.

(Shakes his head.)

I'm not partial to doin' that duty again.

Creedy glances at a faded 20th-century POSTCARD on the wall: a PHOTO OF A CASTLE with inscription: **PEMBREY CASTLE**.

CREEDY

That was eight years ago, mate. You can't keep blamin' yourself...

Quinn suddenly stops, seeing something through the window:

BRIGHT LIGHTS playing in the distance, slowly approaching.

SHOUTS are heard in the hall outside. Danny runs in.

DANNY

Whicles comin'!

(Nervously, to Quinn.)

It looks like a raiding party.

Quinn and ~~Creedy~~ exchange glances, then head for the door.

EXT. CASTLE BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Alive with ~~ammotion~~ motion. Quinn's Firemen run along the battlements, taking positions with guns, crossbows, etc.

Armed with a rold rifle, Quinn climbs up to the battlements. He stares ~~ou~~ over the walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHITE LIGHTS dart wildly in the darkness over the ridge, accompanied by the distant ROAR OF VERY BIG ENGINES.

EXT. NEARBY RIDGE - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOTS of WHEELS and TREADS of some seriously HEAVY VEHICLES. Chewing up and spitting out chunks of blackened ground as they grind toward the castle.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS

Quinn paces the battlements, commanding like a general.

QUINN

Danny, take B company to the south wall.
Eddie! Get that goddam howitzer up here!

The ENGINE ROAR gets louder; the white lights closer.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - NIGHT

The Watchman squints into his Tourist Binoculars.

HIS POV

a LICENSE PLATE attached to a yet unseen vehicle. It reads:
NEW HAMPSHIRE. "LIVE FREE OR DIE".

PULL BACK TO REVEAL it is attached to

AN ABRAMS TANK. 46 tons. God's wrath in metal.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

As they pull a Howitzer into position on the wall, Quinn and Creedy get a glimpse of what's coming.

CREEDY

Say goodnight to the folks, Gracie...

EXT. RIDGE - NIGHT

EIGHT HEAVILY ARMORED VEHICLES follow the Abrams: BRADLEY ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS bristling with guns; AML MINI-TANKS outfitted with HARPOON LAUNCHERS; and finally, a scud-like MOWAG MISSILE CARRIER.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Firemen look at each other nervously. They're utterly outgunned. Quinn tries to keep them from panicking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

Easy, lads. We still got height on 'em.

THE VEHICLES' ROAR becomes deafening. In the blinding glare of their headlights, they look like a herd of metal monsters.

Quinn takes a position at the wall.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Fire by file on my signal!

THE VEHICLES keep coming. A WHIRRRR from the APCs. ARTILLERY GUNS SPROUT from wells at their top, aiming at

CREEDY, who nervously mans the Howitzer. It's like facing down a bazooka with a water pistol.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Steady!!

THE ABRAMS TANK turns its massive turret gun toward

THE FIREMEN, holding position, keeping one eye on

QUINN, who raises his arm, waiting till the enemy's in range.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Steady!!

His arm is about to come down when suddenly

THE VEHICLES STOP. That quickly. All noise fades into echoes.

QUINN doesn't move. A long, eerie silence follows, broken by

THE ABRAMS TANK. A metallic CHK-CHK-CHK is heard from its top-hatch. The hatch opens up with a heavy CLUNK!

A scarred LEFT HAND appears, holding a PDW SUBMACHINE GUN.

An equally scarred RIGHT HAND appears, holding a CIGAR.

The two arms work together to pull up their massive owner

DENTON VAN ZAN

30s, handsome, an American Achilles. The classical features of a Roman general; the 1000-yard stare of a Vietnam vet.

He surveys the landscape impassively, lights the cigar with a Zippo, takes a drag, then passes judgment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN
What...a...dump.

EXT. BATTLEMENTS/GROUND BEFORE CASTLE - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Quinn hears the man's accent, looks over at Creedy.

QUINN
Americans?

VAN ZAN (OS)
You by the Howitzer!

Creedy turns, sees Van Zan is talking to him.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
Yeah, you, Sparky. Who's in charge?

CREEDY
What he call me?

QUINN
Shhh...

CREEDY
I AIN' NO FOOKIN' "SPARKY"!!

QUINN
Shut your gob!

Quinn pulls Creedy back. Beat. He yells back at Van Zan.

QUINN (CONT'D) *
What's your business?

Van Zan smiles.

VAN ZAN
Real estate.

QUINN
Yeah, well, the market's a bit depressed
right now. I advise lookin' elsewhere.

VAN ZAN
Relax, bro. We're here to make friends.

Van Zan lays down his gun, jumps to the ground, raises his empty hands in a sign of "truce".

Long beat. Quinn considers, then calls out to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

Keep your vehicles back. I'll meet you at the gate.

Van Zan begins walking toward the castle.

Quinn gives Creedy his rifle.

QUINN (CONT'D)

He tries anything, you know what to do.

It's plain from Creedy's face he hasn't any idea.

EXT. COURTYARD - BY GATE - NIGHT

Quinn nods to a Firemen. The man opens the gate, revealing Van Zan, standing casually on the other side. The two men look at each other a moment, sizing one another up.

VAN ZAN

I'm told in Medieval days, two Kings'd meet, they'd exchange the kiss of peace.

(Extends his hand.)

I'll settle for a handshake.

QUINN

Back then, they shook hands to see if there were weapons up their sleeves.

Quinn takes Van Zan's hand. Not as much a greeting as a method of immobilization. For a moment, neither man lets go.

QUINN (CONT'D)

What's your game, mate? You tradin' or attackin'?

VAN ZAN

That depends on you, "Mr. Buddy".

QUINN

I ain't your "buddy".

VAN ZAN

And I ain't your "mate". But that doesn't mean we can't come to an agreement.

(Gestures back to his vehicles.)

My boys are kinda tired. Long trip, bad food. We were hopin' for accommodations.

QUINN

What's it worth to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Van Zan removes a PACK from his shoulder, hands it to Quinn. It's filled with army issue C-RATIONS.

VAN ZAN
100 pounds of C-rations. Plus freeze-dried ice-cream for the kids.

Quinn considers a moment, then tosses the bag back at him.

QUINN
I think you can do better.

Van Zan remains pleasant, but shows a flash of teeth as he tosses the bag back at him.

VAN ZAN
You know...you're really not in a position to negotiate.

Van Zan nods in the direction of his mini armada.

Quinn takes it in stride, throws the bag back at him.

QUINN
I reckon I'm doin' all right.

Quinn nods up to his armed men lining the battlements.

Van Zan smiles, knowing they're even. He holds out the bag, this time a little more congenially.

VAN ZAN
Okay, friend. 150 pounds.

QUINN
200. And that's just for one night.

VAN ZAN
Done.

Quinn goes to take the bag. Van Zan grabs his hand.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D)
But you don't get any ice cream.

Quinn allows himself a smile. He takes the bag.

EXT. OVER CASTLE - AERIAL VIEW - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

Van Zan's armada enters through the gates into

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Residents line up to gawk at the new arrivals. Quinn and his Firemen watch, their weapons at the ready.

DANNY

"Denton Van Zan"?

QUINN

That's what he calls himself.

CREEDY

Sounds like a blood disease. They ship all that shite over?

QUINN

Transport plane. Crash-landed off the coast.

EDDIE

What the hell are they doing here?

Quinn is silent. He just stares at

THE COURTYARD

Van Zan sits atop the moving tank, waving to the people with all of the confidence of Patton entering Palermo.

VAN ZAN

Evenin'...nice to be here...thanks for watching...

SEVERAL KIDS touch his tank in fascination.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *

'Scuse me.

The kids look up. Van Zan stares down at them coldly.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *

Do I play with your tank?

Beat. The kids all shake their heads.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *

Then don't mess with mine. Scram.

And they do.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Creedy watches Van Zan's MEN unpack their vehicles. They're scarred, hardened folk who've spent much time in the field.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He notices a shrimpy 16-year old KID unloading his gear from a truck. The boy has NO LEGS. Just tied off stumps at his hips. None of his comrades make any attempt to help him.

Moved by the sight, Creedy walks over to him.

CREEDY
Need a hand there, lad?

The Kid draws a huge SHOTGUN from a sheath on his back.

KID
Suck my dick.

Creedy goes crimson.

A deep LAUGH is heard behind him. Creedy turns to see GIDEON -- black, 30s, seven-feet of post-apocalyptic rasta man.

GIDEON
He fine by himself, mon. Da Pope don't like charity.

Creedy looks back at the kid, who shall now be known as

CREEDY
"The Pope"?

Before Creedy can say more, the SOUND OF ROTORS is heard.

EXT. CENTER OF COURTYARD - NIGHT

A WASH OF WIND AND LIGHT comes over the crowd.

VAN ZAN
Ladies and gentlemen, you all might want to move back a bit...

The crowd rushes to get out of the way of

A Blackhawk "" HELICOPTER, descending from the heavens. It nestles down into the middle of the Courtyard.

QUINN
Aw, spiffy...

But his attitude changes when the pilot appears at the door

COLLEEN BEANE -- 20s, small build, enigmatic eyes. Her perpetual dress is a unisex flight-suit and combat boots.

VAN ZAN
What took you, Beane?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLLEEN

(Laughs)

What took me? Your coordinates, my man.

They almost took me to France.

(Puts her arm on his shoulder)

Not that I couldn't use the vacation...

The two walk off. Quinn finds himself staring at her. Not because it's a female pilot; rather, because it's one of those times when he can't help himself.

EXT. COURTYARD - LATER - NIGHT

Creedy walks with Van Zan, who carries The Pope back-to-back via a harness. Pope hangs from the man like a weird knapsack.

CREEDY

I take it you watch his back.

THE POPE

No, Sparky. He watches mine.

PAN OVER TO Colleen and Quinn, walking behind them. Colleen looks around the area, inspecting the castle walls.

COLLEEN

I've never seen a base like this. It pretty secure?

QUINN

We moved into here after the other buildings were destroyed. The Normans built their castles to last.

COLLEEN

Normans?

QUINN

Norman dynasty. Y'know, Richard the Lionheart.

COLLEEN

He your Fire Chief?

QUINN

Ah...no. He was a king back in the...

COLLEEN

I was kidding.

Quinn looks at her, surprised. He chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

QUINN

That's good. You got me. You didn't look like someone who'd do that.

COLLEEN

Looks can be deceiving.

QUINN

Names are a bit more straightforward.

(Offers his hand.)

Quinn.

COLLEEN

Colleen.

They take each other's hand.

INT. STABLE

Bunking down in the straw, The Pope unlatches his guitar case. Colleen checks out one of the horses, patting its neck.

Quinn watches her from the door as Creedy talks with Van Zan.

CREEDY

...clean up afterwards. An' no funny stuff with the livestock.

VAN ZAN

We'll try to contain ourselves.

Creedy goes to the door. Quinn turns to Colleen.

QUINN

Sleep well.

Van Zan claps a friendly/warning hand on Quinn's shoulder.

VAN ZAN

We'll sleep light.

Quinn smiles thinly.

QUINN

By a stunning coincidence, so will we...

EXT. BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT - VARIOUS

Weapons armed, Quinn and the firemen stand post on the battlements, tensely watching for any treachery from the Yanks.

INT. STABLE

Van Zan looks through the slats. He smiles at The Pope.

VAN ZAN

Think they know what they're in for?

The Pope smiles back. He pulls a ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADE LAUNCHER (RPG) from his case. It gleams balefully in the lantern light.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HORIZON OUTSIDE CASTLE - DAWN

The sun rises in the smoke filled sky.

EXT. BATTLEMENT - BY QUINN - MORNING

Quinn slumped asleep by the battlement, rifle in his hand. Creedy nudges him.

CREEDY

The, ah, Lord of the Americas desires your presence in the Courtyard.

QUINN

Hah?

Quinn looks down. At the end of the courtyard, Van Zan sits, surrounded by Quinn's firemen. They've put down there weapons and listen intently to him, like kids at a camp fire.

QUINN (cont'd)

Bloody shaggin' hell...

CREEDY

You might wanna talk to him, Quinn.

QUINN

What? Why?

CREEDY

He says he's a dragonslayer.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Jared and Beth play with Van Zan's discarded cigar butts.

JARED

No no no, it's like this...

(Takes a drag, imitates Van Zan.)

"What a dump!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN (OS)

Jared, get that outa your mouth!

Quinn grabs the cigar as he walks hurriedly by with Creedy.

CREEDY

...he says they killed ten of 'em in
Chicago. Ten!

Gideon the rasta man passes by.

GIDEON

Top a da mohnin'.

CREEDY

Jah-love...

(To Quinn)

They practically cleaned out Los Angeles.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN COURTYARD - MORNING

Van Zan sits on his tank, holding court to the firemen. The
Pope sits below him, an obnoxious court jester.

VAN ZAN

...the worst? Hell, I'd have to say...

THE POPE

Grand Canyon.

VAN ZAN

Oh, yeah. That was a turdsucker...

QUINN (OS)

Oy! Beowulf!

Quinn approaches him. Beat. The two eye each other.

QUINN (CONT'D)

I'm told you're a scrapper. *

Beat. Van Zan removes a pair of MIRROR LENSE SUNGLASSES from
his pocket, puts them on as if he was a celebrity.

VAN ZAN

My associates and I have been known to
"scrap" things from time to time...

INT. MEETING HALL - LATER

Quinn and the inner circle of firemen sit at the council
table. Facing them are Van Zan and The Pope, both wearing
sunglasses and looking very much the cool customers.

(CONTINUED)

QUINN
A hundred and *fifty*?!

THE POPE
One fifty three to be exact.

CREEDY
Keep a score-card, do ya?

THE POPE
(Deadpan)
We have a newsletter.

QUINN
Wait a sec, Rambo: last I knew, it took
eight fighter jets just to kill one...

VAN ZAN
Sure. In the old days.
(Rises, begins to pace.)
First we used fighters. Then nerve gas.
Then nukes. Hell, we lost more people to
collateral damage than we ever did to the
snakes. It's no miracle they overran us.

He's come to the head of the table. He stares at Quinn.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
But they can be killed, folks. Cleanly.
Easily. No stress, no mess. Just takes a
little bit a "this" ...
(Taps his head.)
And a little bit a "this".
(Holds out his "fuck you" finger.)

Silence. The firemen look to their leader for a response.
Quinn stands up, stares at Van Zan a long moment.

QUINN
How much a "this" ...
(Holds up his own "fuck you" finger)
...to get rid a the two we got here?

Van Zan looks at Quinn's finger challengingly.

VAN ZAN
How much you got?

Beat. Quinn nods at his council. One by one, each of his men
raises their middle finger. A forest of fuck yous sprouts up.

Van Zan smiles. He likes that. He likes it a lot.

INT. FIREHOUSE

VAN ZAN (OS)

First off, you have to know your enemy.

REVEAL Van Zan addressing an assembly of ALL OF QUINN'S FIREMEN. He talks with the energy of a powerbroker.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D)

Worms, snakes, dragons. You deal with 'em every day; but what do you know about 'em?

He picks out one tow-headed young ROOKIE FIREMAN

VAN ZAN (CONT'D)

You: Jughead.

The Rookie nervously stands, as if he was in class.

ROOKIE

Well, they...they're a kind a dinosaur...

VAN ZAN

Pre-dinosaur, Einstein. Cambrian species. Crawled out of a much scarier swamp than you ever did.

(To the others.)

Anyone tell me why they eat ash?

All are silent. Finally it's Quinn who speaks up.

QUINN

They can only digest pure carbon.

Van Zan raises his eyebrow, mock-impressed.

VAN ZAN

So how come we never found any fossils?

QUINN

They burnt each other for food. You're not tellin' me anything new, mate.

Van Zan smiles a challenging smile.

VAN ZAN

I'm tellin' you the big picture...

INT. CHAPEL

THUNK! A GIANT DRAGON-HIDE SCROLL is unrolled down the aisle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN (O.S.)
They're like locusts.

On it has been painted A SERIES OF PICTURES, like the Bayeux tapestry, showing the life cycle of dragons.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
Every 50,000 years, they come up, breed
and burn, eat and starve.

Van Zan walks down the aisle, talking to the castle RESIDENTS who are crammed into the hall trying to get a look.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
They didn't just kill the dinosaurs,
folks. They're responsible for every
major die-off on this planet. Ash they
threw in the air caused nuclear winters
that started the freakin' ice-ages.

PAN OVER the standing room crowd. Quinn watches at back.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
Oh, a few of 'em survived between cycles.
Probably gave rise to the legends.

QUINN
So you don't put stock in the myths then?

VAN ZAN
What, that they're the "scourge of God"?
(Laughs.)
No. We make the myths.

He looks at a stained glass depiction of the CREATION OF MAN.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D) *
As for the "scourge of God" -- you're
talking to him.

INT. QUINN'S ROOM

Just Van Zan and Quinn now, sharing a bottle of Glenfiddich.

QUINN
So now you wanna "scourge" for us?

VAN ZAN
Mr. Buddy, I can have you sowin' crops by
Monday and eatin' pretty all winter.

QUINN
Just what do you get out of it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Van Zan looks out the window.

VAN ZAN

I've seen a 1000 communities like yours,
Quinn. Scared. Starving. Fighting a war
of attrition till the snakes go away.

(Turns to him.)

Well, they won't. Not till we've
pulverized, excised and atomized them off
our God-given planet.

Van Zan walks to the table, an odd light in his eyes.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D)

See, what people don't realize is...this
ain't no disco.

(Smiles.)

It's a motherFUCKIN' HOLY WAR!!

BAM! He BANGS the table so hard it nearly cracks.

QUINN

So that's it, eh? You want recruits.

VAN ZAN

You got a problem with that?

QUINN

What I got is 300 people lookin' for
protection. You want to help 'em, fine.
But I'll not have 'em be fodder for a
personal fuckin' Jihad...

VAN ZAN

Come off it, Chief. We all got scores to
settle with 'em.

QUINN

I've learned to live with it.

VAN ZAN

No offense, but I think you've learned to
take it up your Limey butt.

Beat. Van Zan's crossed that line. Quinn rises, comes face-to-
face with him, deadly polite.

QUINN

It's a "British butt". An' I'm not in
the habit of takin' anything there.
Includin' your General Patton attitude.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

If it wasn't for Patton, you people'd be speaking German.

QUINN

If it wasn't for my people, you wouldn't be speakin' English.

Tense moment...which is broken by Van Zan's easy grin.

VAN ZAN

Least we can understand each other.

(Offers his hand)

Do this one job together. If you like the collaboration...we'll talk about others.

Quinn stares into Van Zan's eyes. Is he making a deal with a savior? Or a devil? A moment of decision.

Quinn spits into his own palm. Van Zan smiles, does likewise.

Their hands come together with a SLAP!

SMASH CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Van Zan's militia gears up.

VAN ZAN (VO)

(CONT'D)

Four easy steps to this, people. Get it right or get a priest.

INT. COURTYARD - DAY

Van Zan addresses Quinn's Firemen.

VAN ZAN

One: knock 'em outta the air...

EXT. COURTYARD - BY BLACKHAWK - DAY

Colleen attaches MISSILES to the copter's fuselage.

VAN ZAN (VO)

They may be hotshit up there...

Nearby, Gideon and TWO MEN assemble bizarre-looking BODY HARNESSES.

(CONTINUED)

VAN ZAN (VO)
(CONT'D)

...but they're jackshit down here.

EXT. COURTYARD - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

VAN ZAN

Two: stop their flame...

He picks up some stones, shakes them. It sounds like the same RATTLE the dragons make.

VAN ZAN (CONT'D)

They rattle rocks in their throats to spark their phosphorous.

EXT. COURTYARD - BY TANKS

MAN-SIZE HARPOONS are fit in LAUNCHERS on the AML MINITANKS.

VAN ZAN (VO)

If you hold the bastards down, then hit 'em in the gut...

HUGE SHELLS are loaded into the Abrams Tank.

EXT. COURTYARD - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

Van Zan tosses pebbles onto the dirt floor like dice.

VAN ZAN

They'll spit 'em up every time.
Which brings us to "three".

(Taps bottom of his throat.)

Gland that secretes their napalm is here.

INT. STABLE

The Pope slides a rocket bolt into the weapon.

VAN ZAN (VO)

Put a good-size grenade down there...

The bolt locks into place with a sinister CLICK.

EXT. COURTYARD - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

VAN ZAN

...and you're all ready for step "four".

CREEDY

What might that be?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Van Zan smiles evilly. As if to say: "you'll see".

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE - DAY

Van Zan's militia moves out, flanked by Quinn's firemen.
 FLAGS fly from each vehicle: the original U.S. flag of 1775 --
 A PICTURE OF A SNAKE with the logo: **DON'T TREAD ON ME.**

END MONTAGE. DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

Vehicles are strategically placed on what looks like a barren
 moonscape. BURN SHADOWS of a once lush forest are etched on
 the stone. The only sound is the fluttering of flags.

FIND Quinn, talking to his men.

QUINN

...we stay outa the perimeter till the
 order comes. Last thing I need is one a
 you tossers gettin' dusted.

CREEDY

Where you gonna be?

COLLEEN (O.S.)

Denton wants him in the chopper.

Quinn turns to see Colleen approaching.

QUINN

I don't take orders from your boss, lass.

COLLEEN

That's okay. You can take 'em from me.

FIREMEN

Oooooooh..

Quinn blushes despite himself. Colleen smiles.

COLLEEN

You want to see how this works, right?

Beat. Quinn looks up toward Van Zan, who stands on a hill
 nearby. The American speaks into a headset.

VAN ZAN

All units, this is Good Shepherd. Let's
 get ready for the revival...

EXT. AROUND THE PERIMETER - DAY

Van Zan's men throw DARK COLORED NETTING over their vehicles, camouflaging themselves in the black blasted landscape..

INT. BLACKHAWK

Gideon and TWO MEN secure their "harnesses" in the hold.

Quinn belts up in the copilot seat, Colleen next to him. He casts a glance at her. She notices.

COLLEEN

What?

QUINN

I was just thinkin'. I've only seen you in that jumpsuit. I was wonderin' if you'd like some other clothes.

COLLEEN

Your straps're on wrong.

She moves to help him.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

You ever been up in one of these? *

QUINN

Ah. No. I've just flown planes.

COLLEEN

Well, this is a lot different.

(Fastens his buckle.)

Whatever you do, don't touch anything.

QUINN

You're makin' that a tad difficult.

He smiles. She blushes despite herself, clips his belt.

EXT. BY SOUND VEHICLE - DAY

Van Zan goes to the driver's seat. There sits GOOSH -- stringy hair, hippy-like demeanor, zapped out eyes. Imagine Dennis Hopper from APOCALYPSE NOW as a disc jockey.

GOOSH

What's the theme?

VAN ZAN

Hard-core.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOOSH

Awesome.

Goosh nods. He presses a couple of buttons on his console.

Several INDUSTRIAL SIZED AMPLIFIERS lift up from the top of the carrier.

Van Zan picks up a mic from the vehicle. His voice blares.

VAN ZAN

Ladies and gentleman, are we ready to rock?!

Van Zan's soldiers give a ROUSING CHEER.

VAN ZAN SOLDIERS

Yeah!

VAN ZAN

ARE WE READY TO ROCK?!

VAN ZAN'S SOLDIERS

YEAH!!

The Englishmen look at each other nervously.

EXT. BY SOUND VEHICLE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A WHEEL on a CD PLAYER turns, CLICKS into place.

A HARD-CORE INDUSTRIAL SONG blasts from the speakers.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Quinn looks at Colleen, who flips circuit breakers overhead.

COLLEEN

Sound lures 'em in, screws with their hearing. They don't like music.

GIDEON

And it takes our mind off dis crazy shit.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

Van Zan is doing a passionate "air guitar" duet with The Pope, who uses his RPG as a guitar.

EXT. BY QUINN'S FIREMEN - DAY

Creedy's face falls; the sanity quotient ain't lookin' high.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREEDY
We are so fookin' fooked.

EXT. SKY ABOVE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The Blackhawk leaps into the air like a dog off its chain.
The music rises with it. A clarion call to battle...

SERIES OF DISSOLVES:

Through a cloud-choked sky, moving far, far away. The music
becomes faint...fainter...until it's a whisper in the wind.

But then, just as it's about to become inaudible

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - POV OF UNSEEN AIRBORNE CREATURE

Coming from the opposite direction. We hear the music as THE
CREATURE HEARS IT: as sharp, disjointed SCREECHES.

The thing banks through a cloud toward the sounds.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

A BLIP appears on a RADAR SCREEN. The RADAR OPERATOR speaks.

RADAR OPERATOR
Good Shepherd, this is Oracle. We have a
visitor to the revival...

EXT. FIELD - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

The man's voice is heard over the headset.

RADAR OPERATOR
5 klicks, forty degrees North Northeast.

VAN ZAN
Seraph, you copy that?

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen responds into her radio.

COLLEEN
Seraph copies. We're at two thousand
feet and ready to dance.

VAN ZAN (OS)
Dress the angels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colleen makes a handsign to Gideon and his friends. They begin to put on their metal "harnesses".

EXT. SKY - BY AIRBORNE CAMOUFLAGED CREATURE - DAY

Its nearly invisible SHAPE slips easily through the heavens.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The blip on screen has moved closer to the center.

RADAR OPERATOR

Visitor is three clicks and closing...

INT. BLACKHAWK

Gideon and his cohorts insert themselves into the harnesses: BRACES over their legs; METAL RODS along their chests; RIFLES attached to their stomachs; PACKS on their back.

COLLEEN

Angels are ready.

EXT. PLAIN - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

Van Zan scans the sky with his binoculars.

VAN ZAN

Send 'em out.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Quinn watches, perplexed, as Gideon goes to the CARGO PASSENGER DOOR on the right. Gideon flashes a smile.

GIDEON

You wanna dance wid da Devil, you gotta walk wid da Lord...

He opens the cargo door. Then, with the grace of a cliff diver, he LEAPS OUT.

EXT. SKY OUTSIDE BLACKHAWK - DAY

Gideon falls, his two pals right behind him. Bodies rigid, they hurtle toward the ground like knives.

Gideon mouths a countdown, then grabs the two METAL RODS that run along his chest. What follows is instantaneous:

He flips out his hands and the metal rods...

His legs do a SCISSOR KICK; the leg braces lock with a SNAP!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His backpack OPENS...A BLOOM of fabric appears...

EXT. PLAIN - BY QUINN'S FIREMEN - DAY

The Firemen watch, slack jawed.

EDDIE

You got to be joking.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen smiles wryly at Quinn's surprise.

COLLEEN

Good Shepherd, the angels are flying.

EXT. SKY - DAY

THE HARNESSSES HAVE OPENED INTO BIZARRE-LOOKING HANGLIDERS!
The invention could be out of a Da Vinci drawing; the image
out of a religious painting. For the three men GLIDING easily
through the air look literally like angels.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The blip has gotten closer to the center of the screen.

RADAR OPERATOR

Visitor is two kilometers and closing.

INT. SKY

A FLICK of a tail is seen; a GLANCE of a leathery wing.

EXT. PLAIN - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

VAN ZAN

Aerial units, lock and load.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen flips the safety of her Armament Fire Control Switch.

EXT. SKY - ON GIDEON - DAY

Gideon removes what looks like a staff from his stomach. We
see it is an incredibly LONG RIFLE. A CANNISTER WITH SPIKES
(a "Sonic Grenade") is fit snugly into the barrel.

THE TWO OTHER HANGLIDERS (ARCHANGELS #1 & #2) follow suit.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The blip on screen is closer...closer...

RADAR OPERATOR
One kilometer...

INT. BLACKHAWK

Quinn sees something's emerging from the clouds ahead.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The blip enters the radar's inner circle.

RADAR OPERATOR
All units...visitor has arrived.

EXT. SKY - DAY

And like a child's nightmare, it emerges from the clouds

A DRAGON

Its huge body is dwarfed by the span of its massive wings. VESTIGIAL LEGS line its scaly torso, their claws opening and closing reflexively. If Giger were to mate with the Brothers Grimm, this is the abomination they'd spawn.

EXT. PLAIN - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

COLLEEN (O.S., OVER RADIO)
We got us an Adolescent. Worker Class.
Fifteen meters and ready for a fight.

Van Zan's face is impassive as a mountain.

VAN ZAN
Let's give it some religion.

INT. BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Colleen presses the ARMAMENT FIRE switch.

EXT. OUTSIDE BLACKHAWK

The MISSILES burst forth, tearing through the air toward...

EXT. THE DRAGON

which arcs and avoids the first missile. The second
DETONATES beneath its tail. No damage; just annoyance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The creature rears back like an airborne cobra. A RATTLING is heard from its throat...

And a BLAST OF PHOSPHOROUS LIGHTNING BURSTS FROM ITS MOUTH!

THE BLACKHAWK

swerves, barely missing getting fried. It arcs, speeding away from the monster.

INT. INSIDE BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Quinn looks out his side window to see

EXT. THE DRAGON - DAY

Giving chase, the way a wolf would run down a rabbit.

DRAGON'S POV

The Blackhawk banks and swerves in evasive action; the creature can't get a clean hit with its phosphorous. But at the rate its closing, in a few seconds, it won't matter.

INT. INSIDE BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Quinn stares at Colleen, handling the many controls like a virtuoso organist. She's pretty calm, given the situation.

QUINN

Anything I can do?

COLLEEN

Nah.

Quinn looks out the window.

COLLEEN

Trust me. We're being watched over.

EXT. THE DRAGON - DAY

is now within spitting distance of the Blackhawk. Its maw opens, its throat starts RATTLING...

WHAM! A spiked SONIC GRENADE CANNISTER SLAMS into the beast's neck. It CLAMPS to the skin and emits a deafening WHINE.

The Dragon reels back to see

A HANGLIDING "ANGEL"

sweeping by with amazing grace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCHANGEL #1
 (Into his helmet mic)
 Seraph, this is Archangel One...

INT. INSIDE BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

ARCHANGEL #1 (OS)
 ...we got it from here.

Quinn looks out the window.

EXT. SKY - BY DRAGON - DAY

THE HANGLIDING "ANGELS" ARE BATTLING THE DRAGON MID-AIR!
 It's an awesome sight. Their long rifles look like ANGEL STAFFS. Against the behemoth, Gideon and his men seem as sparrows trying to bring down an eagle.

The Dragon twists, trying to get a fix on the annoying gnats.

It sees Archangel #1, lets out a phosphorous stream.

Archangel #1 easily banks away...

...and Archangel #2 closes in. He raises his rifle, FIRES...

His sonic grenade SLAMS into the Dragon's face like a burr. The Dragon begins to thrash in pain.

ARCHANGEL #2
 (Into helmet mic)
 Gideon, it's all yours.

HIGH ABOVE THEM

Gideon glides almost listlessly. His glider sweeps up...and then PLUNGES DOWN -- like a hawk going in for the attack.

THE DRAGON

neither hears nor sees him.

GIDEON

holds out his rifle, takes aim.

GIDEON
 All right, snake...
 (Finger tightens on trigger)
 ...here's mud in your ear.

He FIRES!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sonic grenade SLAMS into the exposed stretched TYMPANUM of the Dragon's ear. It GOES OFF IN A HIGH-PITCHED WHINE.

DRAGON'S POV

We hear it as the beast hears it: AN UNENDURABLE BLAST OF SOUND.

The Dragon shakes its head to disengage the grenade. But the metal is deeply embedded in its ear, and its legs are too short to get to it. There's no way to dislodge it in the air.

So the beast does the only thing it can; it descends.

EXT. BY QUINN'S FIREMEN - DAY

watch in awe as the monster falls.

CREEDY

I call that a bloody miracle.

DANNY

(Nods at Van Zan)

I think he calls it "step one"...

EXT. BY VAN ZAN - DAY

Van Zan yells into his headset.

VAN ZAN

Jonah units, fall in!

THE AML MINI-TANKS speed over the ground, their harpoon launchers lowering as they approach

EXT. THE CENTER OF PLAIN - DAY

The Dragon COMES DOWN to earth, thrashing violently.

It drags its head over the ground, scraping the sonic grenade from its ear. But it's no sooner done that when...

VAN ZAN (OS)

FIRE!

The First Mini-tank FIRES ITS HARPOON! The projectile knives through the air, connected to the tank by a WIRE ON A WINCH.

SHHK! It PIERCES the Dragon under its RIGHT WING.

The Second Mini-tank FIRES its harpoon, which strikes into the Dragon on the opposite side, under the LEFT WING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Dragon is now pinioned on both sides -- like Gulliver tied down by the Lilliputians. It struggles, trying to free itself. And that's just when

THE ABRAMS TANK rolls into view.

The Dragon BLASTS it with fire. A flaming "fuck you".

INT. INSIDE ABRAMS

RAMSEY, the tank gunner, takes aim.

RAMSEY
Fuck you, too.

EXT. OUTSIDE ABRAMS - DAY

The Abrams BLASTS a TWO FOOT SHELL right back at the monster.

It STRIKES the Dragon right by its belly. The monster twists in a spasm...and two huge BOULDERS come up from its mouth.

EXT. BY QUINN'S FIREMEN - DAY

Danny Goodwin looks over at Creedy. He holds up two fingers: "step two".

VAN ZAN (OS)
Missionaries, move in!

EXT. PLAIN - VARIOUS - DAY

There is movement, as if the ground has become alive. It's Van Zan's FOOT SOLDIERS, camouflaged against the scorched earth. They run forward into battle, guns a-blazing!

CREEDY

sees this is the moment. He turns to the Firemen.

CREEDY
OVER THE TOP, LADS!!!

Rifles in hand, Creedy and his men leap from their positions with an exuberant WAR CRY!

Like a scene from a WWII battle, Englishmen join with Americans in a final, savage charge toward

THE DRAGON

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

now unable to use its wings or fire. It can only LASH OUT with its cable-like tongue, trying to retrieve the boulders that will allow it to reignite its flame.

SOLDIER

(To the Fireman)

KEEP IT AWAY FROM THE ROCKS!!

A HAIL OF GUNFIRE. The Firemen let loose with everything they've got, keeping the dragon away from the boulders.

The Dragon's tongue whips out, SKEWERING A FIREMAN RIGHT THROUGH THE TORSO.

Its head STRIKES FORWARD LIKE A SNAKE, GRABBING A FOOTSOLDIER AND TEARING HIM TO PIECES IN ITS SWORD-LENGTH TEETH.

But another Soldier unleashes a barrage of EXPLOSIVE-TIPPED BULLETS AT THE DRAGON'S FACE, SEVERING ITS TONGUE.

The creature is now utterly defenseless. It's payback time.

VAN ZAN (OS)

All units...stand by for communion.

The footsoldiers begin to pull back; the firemen follow them.

Van Zan walks over, bearing The Pope on his back, backpack style. He walks with the measured steps of an executioner.

DANNY

(To Creedy)

"Step three"?

Van Zan stops a ways from the Dragon. He glares at it like a general meeting a vanquished, unrepentant foe. The Dragon HISSES and SPITS. It's difficult to know who hates who more.

VAN ZAN

(To The Pope)

Bless him.

In a weird Janus moment, Van Zan turns his back on the Dragon, thus turning The Pope toward it. The Pope raises his RPG, rests it on his and Van Zan's shoulders.

THE POPE

In the name of the father..

(He takes aim.)

And the son...

(Puts finger on trigger)

And the holy ghost...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Dragon opens its mouth to HISS in defiance.

THE POPE

Buh-bye.

The Pope FIRES! The grenade rocket bursts from the RPG...

...into the creature's mouth...

...and the Dragon EXPLODES IN BLAST OF PHOSPHOROUS!

ON CREEDY

who now understands the meaning of step number...

CREEDY

FOUR!!

He grabs the firemen nearest him, dives for cover as THE BATTLEGROUND IS FLOODED WITH BURNING DEBRIS.

Chaos for a moment. Then, slowly, the debris settles.

CREEDY AND THE FIREMEN

look up. There's barely enough dragon left to bait a hook.

Van Zan lights his cigar from a burning piece of debris, then strikes a somber pose of victory over the incinerated corpse.

A CLICK-FLASH from a camera is heard-seen. FIND a Soldier taking Van Zan's pictures with an old polaroid.

SOLDIER

Okay. Now a profile...

Van Zan shifts his pose. CLICK-FLASH.

As for the Firemen, there's only a stunned silence. Finally Eddie Stax breaks it. He begins to clap his hands.

The others join in. The applause grows into rousing CHEERS.

INT. BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Quinn can't believe his eyes. He LAUGHS.

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

Then, as if out of nowhere, ANOTHER BLIP appears on screen.

INT. BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Quinn looks through the chin bubble...and reacts. He grabs the COLLECTIVE CONTROL STICK by Colleen's left, pulls it.

COLLEEN

HEY...!!

The Blackhawk SHOOTs UP VERTICALLY, just in time to avoid

EXT. OUTSIDE BLACKHAWK - DAY

A SECOND DRAGON, lashing at the copter's rails with its tail.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

The Radar Operator is heard over Van Zan's headset.

RADAR OPERATOR (OS)

Shepherd, we got another! Slipped right under the goddam radar...

Van Zan immediately moves back into action.

VAN ZAN

All units, BACK TO ONE!!

EXT. SKY - THE BLACKHAWK - DAY

banks away, the Second Dragon behind them. It's one-and-a-half times the size of the last one; sleeker, deadlier.

COLLEEN (O.S., OVER RADIO)

Be advised. This one's a Full Adult Soldier. Very smart, very pissed.

BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Colleen calls over the radio.

COLLEEN

Archangel, what's your position?

SKY - FURTHER DOWN

Gideon and his "angels" are only a hundred feet above ground.

GIDEON

No good, Coll! We're too far down!

BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Colleen swears, then speaks into the radio.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLLEEN
Releasing countermeasures...

She presses a SWITCH on her Cyclic Control.

OUTSIDE BLACKHAWK

a CARGO DOOR on the bottom opens up, releasing THIRTY SONIC GRENADES, each with A SMALL PARACHUTE. They fly into the air like flowers scattered to the wind.

THE SECOND DRAGON

passes through the parachutes. The whine of the sonic grenades deflect its focus off the helicopter, the way a submarine's countermeasure would deflect a torpedo

But this ruse only works for a moment. After burning several of the decoys, its back on the trail of the Blackhawk.

VAN ZAN

observes from the ground. Worried.

VAN ZAN
It's not going for it, Colleen.

BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Colleen's brow is knit in concentration.

VAN ZAN (OS, OVER RADIO)
Continue evasives and get the hell out...

COLLEEN
It's kinda late to turn the other cheek.

Quinn looks out the window toward the dragon...then toward the back of the helicopter toward a WINCH AND CABLE.

QUINN
How strong is that cable?

Colleen looks at him.

GROUND - BY VAN ZAN

looking through binoculars.

VAN ZAN
What the...?

The BLACKHAWK is turning IN THE DIRECTION OF THE DRAGON.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Quinn is tying the cable around his waist.

COLLEEN

This is crazy...

QUINN

So's everything else I've seen.

(Smiles at her.)

By the by, if it doesn't work...this was
a grand first date.

And with that, Quinn SLIDES OUT OF THE CHOPPER ON THE CABLE.

COLLEEN

Date?

EXT. BLACKHAWK - DAY

Quinn dangles twenty feet down the cable. His weight on the cable causes it to remain vertical like plumb line.

The Blackhawk begins to accelerate toward

THE SECOND DRAGON

which keeps coming. It's like a game of aerial chicken.

EXT. PLAIN - BY VAN ZAN - DAY

screams into his headset.

VAN ZAN

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE DOING?!

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen doesn't answer, just keeps her focus on

EXT. THE DRAGON - DAY

which begins its fire-rattle.

EXT. BY QUINN - DAY

Hanging on as the behemoth moves toward them.

QUINN

(Into his headset)

Remember, go for the joint...

EXT. THE DRAGON - DAY

blasts out a PHOSPHOROUS ARC!

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen throws the Cyclic to the left with all her might.

EXT. BLACKHAWK - DAY

THE BLACKHAWK TURNS SIDEWAYS, so that it's rotors are now 45 degrees. It misses the phosphorous bolt...

Quinn swings to the right...

AND THE CABLE TEARS INTO THE DRAGON'S WING RIGHT AT THE JOINT

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen barely manages to hold onto the controls as

EXT. BY QUINN - DAY

Quinn holds on for dear life while the cable CUTS THROUGH the dragon's bone and into the membrane of the wing.

QUINN

Oh, this was a bloody bad idea...

Quinn is PULLED THROUGH THE MEMBRANE OF THE WING!

EXT. THE SECOND DRAGON

CRIES OUT IN RAGE! It begins to plummet, its torn wing streaming like a tattered banner.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - VAN ZAN

sees the second dragon falling. He nods, impressed.

VAN ZAN

That's original.

He runs with The Pope for its landing site.

INT. BLACKHAWK COCKPIT

Colleen stabilizes the Blackhawk. Still flying, still alive.

COLLEEN

Quinn!! Are you okay?

EXT. BY QUINN

Hanging on, his entire body covered with dragon blood.

QUINN
Spiffy, luv. I'm...

LIGHTS AND ELECTRICITY in the chopper suddenly die.

EXT. THE SECOND DRAGON

hurtles helplessly downward begins its own form of defense.

It executes a bizarre aerial manoeuver. It STRAIGHTENS its body out vertically like an arrow, then begins to SPIN, wrapping its head and body protectively its good wing.

The result is a finely honed spear, plummeting to earth.

VAN ZAN

knows exactly what it's doing.

VAN ZAN
You little...

THE SECOND DRAGON

STRIKES into the earth head first! The creature BURROWS INTO THE GROUND LIKE A WORM, disappearing in seconds.

VAN ZAN
Oh yeah? You wanna burrow on me?!
(To headset)
Get a sonic on that son-of-a-bitch!

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The Radar Operator turns to a SECOND SCREEN.

RADAR OPERATOR
Switching to ultra-sound.

The screen comes on. It begins a SUBTERRANEAN SCAN.

INT. BLACKBANK COCKPIT

Colleen flips the circuits but it is no good. Power's gone.

COLLEEN
(Into headset)
I've lost power. We're gonna have to autorotate!

EXT. BLACKHAWK - DAY

Quinn looks down.

QUINN

(Into headset)

Would that be anything like falling?

The copter moves to a flat pitch, allowing some lift to the rotors. Still, it's VERY much like falling.

QUINN

Right...

He starts climbing as the copter descends hellishly fast.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

Everybody's dead quiet. Van Zan whispers to The Pope.

VAN ZAN

Get ready. It could surface anywhere.

The Pope nods, starts to reload the RPG. Van Zan looks up.

He sees the Blackhawk descending from the heavens.

VAN ZAN (cont'd)

(To headset)

Colleen, you're coming down in the middle of my battlefield!

EXT. BLACKHAWK - BY QUINN - DAY

struggling to climb back up before the copter crash-lands.

QUINN

(To headset)

TELL IT TO GRAVITY!

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The Radar Operator watches the ultra-sound. A BLIP appears.

RADAR OPERATOR

Shepherd, we got a fix...

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

Van Zan is caught between listening to the headset and watching the Blackhawk's crash-landing.

(CONTINUED)

RADAR OPERATOR (OS)
39 degrees West...

THE GROUND SUDDENLY EXPLODES BEHIND HIM!

He and The Pope are thrown forward in A SPRAY OF BLACK EARTH.

Van Zan hits the ground on his front face first stunning him.

CLOSE ON - THE POPE

on his back, attached to Van Zan's back by his harness. His RPG is just a few feet away. He reaches for it, but is restrained by the harness.

Just then hears a RATTLING right behind him. He turns to see

THE SECOND DRAGON'S HEAD RIGHT ABOVE HIM

THE POPE
Oh, cr...

SMASH! The Dragon SINKS ITS RAZOR SHARP TEETH into his torso.

The Pope SCREAMS as the creature lifts both him and Van Zan -- still attached to the boy by the harness -- into the air.

Van Zan comes to as the creature shakes its head violently. The Dragon's teeth have fortunately not penetrated him.

He pulls a BUCKLE on the harness, releasing him. He is thrown to the side...tucks and rolls as he hits the ground.

EXT. PLAIN - BY BLACKHAWK

CRASH! The Blackhawk SLAMS into the earth nearby. Its landing skis CRUMPLE with the impact.

Quinn is thrown off, landing right next to the RPG. Working on pure fighter's instinct, he grabs it, whirls around...

...and finds himself in a wild Mexican standoff.

He's got the RPG aimed at the dragon, who still has The Pope in its maw. The boy's alive. Blood trickles from his lips.

Van Zan rises from the ground, sees the situation.

VAN ZAN
Shoot it!

Quinn puts his finger on the trigger...and hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The dragon starts backing toward its burrow.

VAN ZAN

What are you waiting for? SHOOT!!

QUINN

It's got your man!!

Van Zan's eye flits from the Dragon to The Pope. The boy looks at him, coughing blood but still defiant.

He nods at Van Zan. And we go into

SLOW MOTION

Van Zan suddenly makes a run at the dragon. From his chest, he pulls a GRENADE.

Quinn yells, tries to stop him.

Van Zan gets near the beast, DIVES aside, tosses the grenade to

THE POPE

who catches it in his free hand, rips the pin with his teeth.

THE POPE

Bite me.

The Pope SLAMS GRENADE AGAINST HIMSELF IN THE DRAGON'S MOUTH.

We don't see the explosion that engulfs both the Dragon and the boy; only Quinn's horrified reaction.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Banners high and triumphant, Van Zan's militia and the firemen make their way from the killing fields, the dragon carcasses still smouldering behind them.

INT. ALVIS SALAMANDER

Quinn drives in tense silence. Creedy sits shotgun.

CREEDY

There's nothin' you coulda done.

(No response.)

The lad was dead meat, you know that.

(No response)

For Chrissakes, Quinn, it was merciful...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

Tryin' to save him woulda been merciful.

Creedy is silent.

QUINN

Doesn't it bother you, what he did?

CREEDY

Honestly? Those worms bothered me more.
And he killed 'em...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Goosh's truck pumps ROCK 'N' ROLL TUNES into a courtyard filled with people. A party's in progress.

INT. MEETING HALL

Danny pulls pints from old beer kegs, serves them to the firemen and Van Zan's militia. Creedy grabs some glasses, carries them to Van Zan, who sits at the "table of honor".

Gideon stands atop the council table, reciting the day's exploits like a medieval bard. Eddie accompanies him on a bodhrun (irish drum).

GIDEON

...and you who saw this today: remember it. Tell it to your children. Tell dem about de man who shook hands wid Destiny.

(Points at Van Zan.)

De St. George of Cincinnati.

(Cheers from the crowd)

De Beowulf of da Bronx!

(Louder cheers.)

DE VAN ZAN MAN!!!

The crowd erupts with the HUGEST CHEERS yet. Van Zan smiles broadly, not feigning the faintest attempt at modesty.

Colleen takes a seat next to Quinn, who is unusually quiet. She nudges him.

COLLEEN

You okay?

Quinn half-smiles, looks back warily at Van Zan.

Cries of SPEECH! SPEECH! from the crowd. Van Zan rises modestly, puts up his arms for quiet. The crowd hushes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

I've been to many places. Liberated many towns. But I want you to know, it is a special honor to be here tonight...

From one of his soldiers, he takes a folded CLOTH.

VAN ZAN

...and it is a personal privilege to claim your island...as the 51st state of the United States of America!

He unfolds the cloth: it's a U.S. FLAG.

The Englishmen react to the joke with good-natured...

ENGLISHMEN

Boo! Bollocks! Yer arse!

The Americans strike up a chorus of...

VAN ZAN'S MEN

"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing..."

Not to be outdone, Quinn and his men start a chorus of

QUINN/ENGLISHMEN

"God save our sovr'gn Queen, God save our gracious Queen, God save our queen..."

Both songs have the same tune.

VAN ZAN'S MEN

"Land of the pilgrims' pride
Land where our fathers died..."
"From e-e-every mountainside..."

And soon, whether the lyrics match or not, all are singing the same song.

ALL

"Let freedom ring!"

The moment is unexpectantly moving for all present. As the song ends, the group erupts in CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

EDDIE

Tell you what. Creedy'll give you Cumbria if you stay through winter.

(CONTINUED)

CREEDY
Fookin' A. We got three worms in
Workington need dustin'.

DANNY
Those four in Leeds...

CREEDY
Two in Canterbury...

VAN ZAN
London.

The mention of that name throws them all off a beat.

CREEDY
What?

VAN ZAN
Main stop on the tour, ladies. Why you
think we're here?

An uncomfortable silence has fallen among the English.

DANNY
You...don't wanna go to London, mate.

CREEDY
That's Ashley's town.

VAN ZAN
Well, next week it'll be mine.

Everyone is silent. You can hear a pin drop.

VAN ZAN
Jesus wept, doesn't it bother you people?
The bitch that started this whole mess
sleeps 200 miles away.

DANNY
Sure, but...you gotta understand...

CREEDY
Ashley's different.

VAN ZAN
How?

CREEDY
Well, we can tell you what we've heard.

(CONTINUED)

VAN ZAN

"Heard"? You tellin' me none of you have even seen this thing?

Nobody answers. But slowly, they all turn to Quinn.

Van Zan moves his chair over to him.

VAN ZAN

Go ahead, Chief. Enlighten us. What's it like, this... "Ashley"?

Quinn smiles grimly.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The Mosquito skims over the hilly landscape.

INT. MOSQUITO COCKPIT

Quinn flies. Van Zan sits in the gunner's seat, staring at A FADED POSTCARD seen earlier on Quinn's wall: the PHOTO OF A CASTLE with inscription: **PEMBREY CASTLE**.

QUINN

Man who trained me was Fire Chief here. Pretty much how it looked back then.

VAN ZAN

So?

Quinn just gestures to the window. Van Zan looks out as the plane rises above a ridge.

Veteran though he is, even Van Zan isn't prepared for the sight that now spills across the horizon...

THE RUINS OF PEMBREY CASTLE

It's not just been destroyed; it's been erased. As if God had torn it apart stone by stone, then melted it to the ground.

EXT. CASTLE RUINS - DAY

A dance floor of death. Weapons lie melted on rock next to HIROSHIMA SILHOUETTES of people incinerated where they fought. Charred clothes, cracked utensils, melted toys lie strewn over the site like surreal decorations.

QUINN (OS)

Fall a '16 they were strong, bold, proud. When their Fire Chief called for a raid on London, everyone cheered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIND Quinn and Van Zan walking through the wreckage.

QUINN (cont'd)

He knew the risks, a course. Twelve castles'd already gone up against Ashley. Men went to London. Never come back. But Ashley always did...

Quinn kneels, picks at something on the ground.

QUINN

She'd follow their trails home. Then burn every man, woman an' child to the ground.

We see what Quinn has been picking at: CHILDREN'S CRAYONS, melted over the ground. The color is almost pretty against the scorched background.

QUINN

But my old Chief, he was gonna be different. He comes to my castle, tells me how he's gonna do the old girl. Asks for my help.

VAN ZAN

You give it to him?

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE RUINS - DAY

CLOSE ON a large CROSS, crudely fashioned with old rusted metal pipes. It's been set in the ground as a gravemarker.

QUINN (OS)

Dug these, didn't I?

REVEAL IT IS ONE IN A VAST FIELD OF GRAVEMARKERS. Hundreds of similar crosses stretching to the horizon. Wind blows through the pipe-crucifixes, making hollow, almost musical sounds. Like ghosts, whispering to each other.

QUINN

If I'd had sense, I'da beaten the shite out of him 'fore he left my gate...

VAN ZAN

So what's your point?

QUINN

Ashley's not just some "snake", Van Zan. She's a flyin' Apocalypse. You can't go stirrin' her up.

Van Zan stares at him, his eyes frighteningly glacial.

(CONTINUED)

VAN ZAN

You have no idea what I can do.

He walks past Quinn into the

EXT. GRAVE FIELD - DAY

Quinn catches up with him.

QUINN

Look, I'm the only one alive who's seen the bitch! Trust me. She's older, smarter an' meaner than anything you...

VAN ZAN

(Turning on him)

What she is is their weakness.

QUINN

What?

VAN ZAN (cont'd)

All the intel says she's killed every other dragon female. She's the only egg-layer their species has left. We take her out, no more babies. No more babies, no more dragons. No more war.

QUINN

Bollocks. You've not even seen her eggs.

VAN ZAN

Have you?

(No response.)

No. Cause you didn't have the guts to stand with your pal.

Beat. Quinn comes close to him, deadly calm.

QUINN

You callin' me coward, mate?

VAN ZAN

You're not a coward. You're weak. Tell me, Chief: how many men would you sacrifice to kill a dragon? A hundred?

(No response.)

Fifty?

QUINN

I'm not gonna...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

One?

(Shakes his head)

You don't stand and fight. You rescue and run.

QUINN

And you'd rather kill one a them than
save one a yours.

VAN ZAN

Yes I would! They're the master fuckin'
race, Fireman. They've wiped out every
dominant species on this planet and we're
next. The only way we're going to live is
if we're bloody and ruthless as them!

QUINN

I'd rather die before I became like them.

VAN ZAN

That's why you'll lose.

Beat. Van Zan turns, walks into the field. Wind picks up,
blows through the pipe-gravemarkers. Hollow sounds rise from
them, like a hushed chorus of the dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CASTLE - EVENING

COLLEEN (O.S.)

...he won't listen to me, Quinn.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - BY BLACKHAWK

Colleen makes repairs on the Blackhawk. Quinn helps her.

QUINN

Well talk to your crew, then. Tell 'em
it's suicide...

COLLEEN

The gears don't turn that way.

QUINN

Well then how do they bloody turn?

Colleen looks at the ramparts a long moment. She sighs.

COLLEEN

Ever heard of the Samurai?

(CONTINUED)

QUINN
Japanese scrappers. Why?

COLLEEN
When a person became a Samurai, he was considered dead. That's what...

QUINN
...what gave him the courage to fight. So?

COLLEEN
We've all lost and died, Quinn. Pope snuffed it when he lost his legs. Van Zan when he lost his brother...

QUINN
Yeah, and I lost me mum. You don't see me walkin' round like a ghoulie.

COLLEEN
Well, maybe you need to lose more.

QUINN
Why? What did you lose?

COLLEEN
Enough.

QUINN
Enough you want to die?

COLLEEN
Enough I can't have what I want.

QUINN
Do you want to stay with him?

She is silent.

QUINN
I'm just askin'. Cause if you don't... there's room here.

Beat. He comes closer to her. She shakes her head.

COLLEEN
I've seen hundreds of these places, Quinn. It's no way to live...

QUINN
It is if you're building something.

Colleen looks at him. They're quite close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLLEEN
It's not that simple.

QUINN
Course it is. You just tell him goodbye.
Pack your gear...

COLLEEN
Change out of my flight suit?

QUINN
Change out of your flight suit, an'...

She starts to unzip her flightsuit.

QUINN
Well, I didn't quite mean now...

Quinn stops. She's unzipped the suit so that just the top of her chest is exposed. It is a mass of SCAR TISSUE.

Colleen's face has remained impassive.

COLLEEN
Snakes flamed my house when I was 8. My
nightdress caught fire. Van Zan managed
to put it out before it got to my face.
(Smiles dryly.)
Thank God for small favors, huh?

Silence. Colleen zips up the suit, turns to go.

QUINN
Colleen?
(Comes over to her.)
You're alive enough for me.

She doesn't believe that for a second. Quinn turns her head
to look at him.

COLLEEN
I'm not...

QUINN
You are.
(Takes her hand.)
You're alive.

Their fingers begin to intertwine...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CASTLE - MORNING

The sky is overcast, the first hints of an incoming storm.

INT. FIREHOUSE

The firemen are assembled. Quinn looks at them in disbelief.

QUINN

Well...either I'm goin' deaf, or you're goin' mental. Which is it?

Uncomfortable beat as Quinn stares into their faces.

CREEDY

It's only a couple days...

QUINN

A "couple days"? You just gonna pop down to London? See the sights, kill The Ashley, come back for tea?

EDDIE

We're askin' for your help, Quinn. Not your permission.

Quinn can't believe his ears.

DANNY

It's like he said, Chief. In London, there's buildings standin'. There's medicine an' food...

QUINN

In London there's Ashley, and that's it! Christ Jesus, people, don't you remember what it did to Pembry?!

CREEDY

We know it's risky. But we got a chance now. With Van Zan's help...

QUINN

He hasn't seen the bloody thing. I have.

EDDIE

Once. An' that 20 years ago.

Quinn shoots Eddie a withering look.

EDDIE

I mean...you were a kid. Everything seems bigger then. Your room, your house...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

She's bigger than my house, Eddie.

EDDIE

I'm just sayin'...

QUINN

She's bigger than BIG-FUCKIN'-BEN!

Quinn OVERTURNS a table filled with equipment; it falls to the floor with a CRASH! Everyone stares at him, wide-eyed.

QUINN

We got a fire drill 3:00 on Ban's Field.
Anyone doesn't show up can consider
himself off my brigade. Permanently.

Quinn leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAN'S FIELD - LATER THAT DAY

Quinn sits on the ground by his horse. He stares down at his pocket watch. It reads 3:00.

SERIES OF TIME LAPSES:

Quinn watching and waiting. The watch now reads 4:15. None of his firemen have shown up.

He hears something, looks up to see

Colleen, walking toward him over the blackened hill.

She comes near him. An uncomfortable silence.

COLLEEN

Denton called a drill same time as yours.

Quinn glances around at the obvious lack of people.

QUINN

Why aren't you with him?

She sits opposite him but does not meet his eyes.

COLLEEN

I needed to ask you something.

QUINN

Well, I don't know. As you can see, I'm
a rather busy individual...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLLEEN

You...you really think we can't win?

Beat. Quinn shakes his head.

QUINN

If he goes up against Ashley, he'll be killing every man, woman and child in my community.

He's said this with such even-handed conviction that it's chilling. Colleen is silent, now nervous.

COLLEEN

All right. I'll talk to him...

QUINN

I'm afraid it's beyond that, luv.

He goes over to his horse.

COLLEEN

What're you doing?

QUINN

(Mounts his horse)

What I shoulda done before.

COLLEEN

Quinn, c'mon...

(Grabs the horses rein)

You're smarter than this. It doesn't have to be about taking sides!

He gives her a sad smile, then SPURS his horse forward.

EXT. COURTYARD

Van Zan's soldiers drill with Quinn's firemen. Van Zan himself sits atop his tank, shouting orders into a MEGAPHONE.

VAN ZAN

...back to one. Right wing, left wheel...

The firemen move to reposition themselves. Suddenly, Creedy stops. As does Eddie and Danny Goodwin and soon all the rest. Van Zan turns to see they are staring at

Quinn, taking a stand near the tank. He holds his pulaski in his hands like some sort of medieval weapon. Silence.

VAN ZAN

I don't got time for your alpha-dog shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a huge swing, Quinn SLAMS the pulaski head first into the ground. It's like throwing down a gauntlet.

QUINN

Make some.

The confused firemen look at their chief, then Van Zan.

VAN ZAN

You got a beef with me, come up and settle it like an adult.

QUINN

Why don't you come down and settle it like a man?

Van Zan just rolls his eyes.

QUINN

Or do you just do crippled kids?

At that, Van Zan's face goes terribly and utterly dark. In dead silence, he descends from the Abrams, walks to Quinn. Slow, imminent. A casual avalanche of rage.

Quinn holds his ground up to the moment Van Zan's upon him.

SLAM! It's not clear who throws the first blow, and it doesn't really matter. Within moments, the two are letting into each other with all the fury they can muster.

Creedy tries to intervene, but Gideon holds him back.

GIDEON

He picked it...

The fight quickly degenerates into a brutal *mano e mano* street brawl. Neither English or Americans dare interfere.

Easily the better fighter, Van Zan slams Quinn with a series of blows that sends him to the ground.

But Quinn won't quit. He rises, charges the man, knocks him back. Van Zan pulls a reversal, hurls Quinn into the tank.

Quinn slumps painfully, but catches himself before falling. He shakily regains his footing, faces off with Van Zan again.

VAN ZAN

Aren't we just "Mr. Come-and-Get-It"?

Quinn charges and the two come together in a deathlock. An immovable object meeting an irresistible force, Van Zan

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

punches him repeatedly, trying to dislodge him. But Quinn won't let go, even as his insides are hammered into jello.

Colleen comes running through the gates, sees the brawl.

COLLEEN
STOP IT!! DENTON, STOP IT!!

Her actions open a floodgate. Men from both sides intervene to separate them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. QUINN'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Quinn wakes painfully in his cot. Face bruised ribs bandaged. He looks up to see Creedy sitting beside him. The Cumbrian leans over, puts a cup to Quinn's lips.

QUINN
(Barely a whisper)
What's this?

CREEDY
Water.

Quinn pushes it away. They stare at each other. Creedy's face is a mix of emotion.

CREEDY
Quinn Abercromby, resident earth mother.
Saves everyone, makes everything okay.
Well, it's not okay, Quinn. Look at you!

Quinn just looks at him.

CREEDY
Don't look at me like tha'. You think I wanted this?

QUINN
Don't know...what you want...

CREEDY
What I want? You wanna know what I fookin' want?
(Beat)
I want a proper oven!

The admission's comical except for the catch in his voice.

CREEDY
That's right. And matchin' steak knives.
And green groceries. I wanna feed people
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREEDY (cont'd)
 till they're sick in the face.
 (Sits)
 I want children. I wanna know they'll
 outlive me.
 (Looks at Quinn, eyes wet.)
 I don't want to be afraid anymore.

Silence. Quinn takes Creedy's hand.

QUINN
 You want...too much...

Quinn closes his eyes, slips back into unconsciousness.

Creedy turns round, sees Van Zan standing in the doorway.
 He's pretty beat up, but still burning with belief.

VAN ZAN
 Doesn't mean you can't get it.

OFF Creedy's conflicted face we

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - NEXT MORNING

To a CHEERING CROWD, a combined convoy of firemen and militia
 heads out the gate. Firetrucks have been outfitted for war.

The Blackhawk takes off from the center of courtyard. We see
 Colleen in the pilot's seat.

A SHEET is pulled off a Mowag MISSILE CARRIER. Revealed is a
 huge MISSILE. Across its side: **TO ASHLEY, WITH LOVE.**

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE CASTLE - DAY

The convoy drives over shattered asphalt toward its destiny.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD - NEAR LONDON - DAY

Melted 20th century vehicles line the road.

A torn street sign, hanging from an underpass like the Sword
 of Damocles. It reads: **LONDON. 100 MILES**

The convoy has stopped. All stare in awe at something o.s.

CREEDY
 (A whisper, to Gideon)
 You ever seen anythin' like tha'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gideon shakes his head. For the first time he seems unsure.

A MOUNTAIN OF ASH RISES BEFORE THEM. A hundred feet, pointing up to the air like an accusing finger.

Danny Goodwin nervously inspects its base. It's filled with BURNT HUMAN BONES AND SKULLS.

He looks back at Van Zan, who rides atop the Abrams.

DANNY

It's...all human.

All eyes turn to Van Zan. The man remains impassive.

He taps the top of the Abrams, signalling it to move on. The tank and convoy lurch forward, not so enthusiastically.

TILT UP to reveal MANY SUCH MOUNTAINS rising in the distance. They look like giant pylons on a highway to Hell.

INT. QUINN'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Quinn's just awoken. He painfully pulls himself off the bed.

Jared and Beth enter with trays of food. They stop short.

BETH

Mr. Quinn, you can't get up. You're broken!

QUINN

Where is everybody?

EXT. COOMBE HILL - 35 MILES WEST OF LONDON - SUNSET

The combined fireman/militia forces are spread over the hill. Van Zan turns to Goosh, sitting in the sound truck.

VAN ZAN

Start it up.

Goosh looks down nervously at the sight miles below them.

THE CITY OF LONDON

a blasted skyline of a city cauterized by flame. A sight so unnerving it gives everybody pause.

Goosh's hand goes to press the audio button, then stops. He's not exactly wild about opening this Pandora's box.

Van Zan pushes him aside, presses the button himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A CD comes into play. From the speakers bursts forth an ARIA from Handel's MESSIAH.

ARIA
And he shall purify...

The voice swells skyward, toward a darkening horizon.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Quinn, hastily clothed, makes his way to the Mosquito.

JARED
...but you said it was wrong to go.

QUINN
It is. But if he won't listen to sense, maybe he'll talk strategy. He can't beat Ashley like he did the others.

JARED
And you can?

Quinn doesn't answer. He climbs into the Mosquito.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE - NIGHT

Quinn pilots the Mosquito from a bunker outside the castle walls. Lights blazing, the plane rises into the night.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

Creedy sits nervously in position. He looks over at Danny and the other Firemen. Everyone's on edge.

A RUMBLE OF THUNDER is heard from a far away bank of clouds.

DANNY
(Making the best of it)
Maybe we'll get rained out.

The Blackhawk zooms over them.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Gideon and the other Archangels sit fidgeting anxiously with their harnesses. Colleen speaks into the headset.

COLLEEN
Good Shepherd, we're getting low on fuel.
Suggest we call it a day.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - BY VAN ZAN - NIGHT

Van Zan impatiently scans the sky with his binoculars.

VAN ZAN

Negative.

COLLEEN

Denton, it's been three hours. We're
pissing in the wind...

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - NIGHT

LIGHTENING FLASHES put a host of skeletal structures into a spectral bas relief: the wreckages of the HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT; the torn spires of WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

A FINAL FLASH reveals the gothic gargantua of BIG BEN.

But something's odd about the famed clocktower. The shape is just slightly off-kilter. A moment later, we see why...

ITS SURFACE STARTS TO MOVE!

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

The Blackhawk comes to a landing. Van Zan moves towards it angrily as Colleen gets out.

VAN ZAN

Goddammit, I told you to stay in the
air...

Suddenly, the music STOPS. Van Zan turns toward

THE SOUND VAN

where a hand comes away from the button. It's Quinn.

QUINN

It's too late for that.

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - BIG BEN - NIGHT

HUGE WINGS begin to unfurl from Big Ben's sides. A GIGANTIC TORSO unwinds from its center tower.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

Quinn turns to the collection of firemen and soldiers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

Listen to me! We got to get off the open ground and pull back to the marsh...

VAN ZAN

We're not pulling back anywhere.

QUINN

You bleeding moron! She knew you were here hours ago. She was waiting...

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - NIGHT

A GIGANTIC SHADOW falls over one of the many ash mountains.

An artificial WIND starts to pick. The ash begins scatter.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

VAN ZAN

...I am not gonna stand here and debate lizard intelligence with...

RADAR OPERATOR (O.S.)

Sir!

INT. RADAR VEHICLE

The Radar Operator stares at his screen.

RADAR OPERATOR

We...got something...

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

Before Van Zan can react...

QUINN

Good Christ.

We see what he's looking at.

A MAELSTROM CLOUD OF ASH, SWEEPING OVER LONDON.

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - NIGHT

Row after row of the ash mountains are COMING APART in the artificial wind. Its like a TIDAL WAVE OF GRAY, sweeping from the south of the city toward the north. Specifically toward

EXT. COOMBE HILL - VARIOUS NIGHT

The cloud engulfs them like a demon's hurricane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The effect is at once blinding and disorienting. Smoke chokes the air. HOT CINDERS light up the night.

INT. SOUND TRUCK

Burning cinders fly through the open windows, falling on Goosh. His long hair and beard CATCH FIRE.

Goosh panics, trying to put it out. In the process, his hand accidentally slams against the control board. A CD CLICKS on...

EXT. OUTSIDE SOUND TRUCK - NIGHT

...and from the speakers bursts the most famous movement of Handel's MESSIAH: the "Hallelujah Chorus".

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

Hallelujah!

EXT. COOMBE HILL - VARIOUS - NIGHT

The chaos of the cinder cloud is now compounded by the music.

Van Zan yells into his headset, but his voice is drowned.

Quinn turns to his men.

QUINN

VISORS ON!

The firemen grab for their helmets and protective visors.

Goosh falls from the sound truck SCREAMING bloody murder. His hair and beard are afire, like a bizarre halo.

Quinn runs to him. He pulls off his own jacket, starts smothering the flames.

INT. INSIDE RADAR VEHICLE

The Radar Operator hears a BEEP from

THE RADAR SCREEN

A GIANT BLIP has appeared right in the center of the screen.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - VARIOUS NIGHT

The black ash/cinder cloud begins to disperse and PART, as if to signal the entrance of some divine being.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colleen looks up into the sky. Her jaw drops.

Quinn stares up from Goosh's body.

All the Firemen and Militia are frozen where they stand.

Even Van Zan is silenced as his greatest adversary rises from behind the ridge of the hill.

A leviathan's head more terrifying than any biblical monster.

A serpentine body longer than a freight train.

And a 200-foot wing span that blots out the very sky.

THE ASHLEY

No mere animal; she is a force of nature. Like a fallen angel emanating arrogance and power, she rises to her full height and greatness before the pathetic human beings.

Now, accompanied by one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written, the creature begins a *sinfonia* of destruction.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

The kingdom of this world...

VAN ZAN

yells orders into his headset.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

...is become...

THE FIREMEN AND MILITIA

scatter to take up positions.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

The kingdom of Our Lord!

THE ASHLEY'S FACE

Ears FLATTEN like a cat in attack mode. She opens her maw.
MULTIPLE STREAMS OF PHOSPHOROUS TRIFURCATE FROM HER MOUTH!

QUINN

covers Goosh with his body as the blast STRIKES the ground by the sound ~~trck~~. The truck is BLASTED ten feet into the air...the FLIPS DOWN right on top of them.

CREEDY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

manages to throw himself over a dirt embankment. But

DANNY GOODWIN

and most of the firemen are not so lucky. Man and machine are INCINERATED as totally as if it were an atomic blast.

THE AML MINITANKS

FIRE their harpoons at the passing behemoth.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

And He shall reign forever and ever!

The harpoons STRIKE home under the wings of

THE ASHLEY

who doesn't even slow down.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

And He shall reign forever and ever!

The Ashley DRAGS THE VEHICLES OFF THE EDGE OF THE HILL.

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen takes off with Eddie, Andy, Gideon and the "angels" readying themselves in their harnesses.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

King of Kings!

EXT. BLACKHAWK - NIGHT

The helicopter rises into the sky.

Gracefully, almost casually, The Ashley's wing lightly touches the whirring rotor blades.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

And Lord of Lords!

THWANG! The rotors COME APART!

INT. BLACKHAWK

Colleen and her crew tumble within as

EXT. BLACKHAWK - NIGHT

The rotorless copter tumbles out of the sky and CRASHES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
And he shall reign forever and ever...

VAN ZAN

wounded, climbs atop the hill just in time to see

THE ASHLEY

letting loose a blast of flame on the Abrams Tank.

INT. ABRAMS TANK

Ramsey tries to open the escape hatch. He SCREAMS as his hands burn on the searing hot metal

The flame is so hot, the tank literally MELTS THE METAL AROUND HIM.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - VAN ZAN

The man sees only one chance to stop the massacre:

The MOWAG MISSILE CARRIER, parked yards away, still unharmed.

Van Zan makes a run for it.

THE ASHLEY

sees the scurrying bug.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
Forever and ever! Forever and ever!

Van Zan reaches the Mowag.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
Hallelujah!

The Ashley rears up to full height.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
Hallelujah!

Van Zan turns the missile launcher in the dragon's direction.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
Hallelujah!

The two face off as the chorus SWELLS in its final strains

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.
HA-LLE...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Ashley makes the FIRE-RATTLE loud in its throat.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

...LU...

Van Zan yells a WAR CRY as he presses the launch trigger.

CHOIR VOICES OVER P.A.

...JAH!

THE ASHLEY'S MOUTH OPENS TO FLAME JUST AS THE MISSILE FIRES FROM THE MOWAG LAUNCHER...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUND TRUCK - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

Quinn opens his eyes. The truck flipped over on him on the OPEN DOOR, so he finds himself wedged in the cab space.

He looks down at Goosh. Only the upper part of the man's body made to the open space. The other half is crushed.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - BY THE SOUND VAN - NIGHT

Quinn painfully extricates himself out of the truck.

The place is a disaster area. Fires and smouldering wreckage everywhere. Smoke drifting. No sign of life.

He hears a GROANING from nearby. He runs over to see Creedy, lying wounded in a ditch.

Quinn helps him to his feet.

CREEDY

Oh, I'm gonna marry you.

QUINN

We'll talk about it.

COLLEEN (OS)

Quinn!

Colleen emerges from nearby, supporting Gideon, who's limping badly. Quinn goes to the woman, embraces her.

QUINN

Where's your crew?

Colleen solemnly nods back at

THE WRECKAGE OF THE BLACKHAWK

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

on its side. The twisted bodies of Eddie, Andy and the other angels are splayed with it.

Then, through the smoky night, a SOUND. A sharp, hacking noise, like a cleaver being wielded through meat.

Quinn and the others walk towards its origin

EXT. COOMBE HILL - EDGE OF HILL - NIGHT

They stop, stunned, as the smoke before clears to reveal

THE ASHLEY'S CORPSE

lying along the length of the hill, its smoking skin stretching to the valley below. Part of its skull is smashed; its left eye a shattered, glutinous mess.

And atop the great dragon's head stands

VAN ZAN

covered in oil-black blood, hacking away at one of her horns with a machete-sized piece of metal.

Quinn stares at him. He's like a vision from prehistory: a blood-soaked savage, viciously cutting a trophy from his vanquished enemy.

Van Zan notices their stares, stares ferociously back.

With a sickening tearing sound, he RIPS the horn free from Ashley's skull.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - BY SALAMANDER - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

Van Zan finishes securing The Ashley's severed horn to the top of the vehicle. He looks down at

THE BACK OF THE SALAMANDER

where Quinn and the others finish loading charred bodies of English and Americans. The back is nearly filled to the top with the corpses of their friends.

Despite their victory, nobody's cheering. Just numb.

QUINN

(Quietly)

We'll come back for the others tomorrow.

CREEDY

What about her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He nods at Ashley's corpse, ghostlike through the smoke.

VAN ZAN
We'll bring chainsaws.

Quinn ignores the comment, just stares at the bodies.

COLLEEN
I'm sorry, Quinn.

Quinn nods at the corpses.

QUINN
I hope they're not.

He shuts the door.

EXT. COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

Colleen and Gideon take off in the Mosquito, parked nearby. Quinn and Creedy drive off in the Salamander. Van Zan stands atop its crow's nest like a conquering general coming home.

INT. MOSQUITO

The sky's pitch black. The only light comes from the dying fires which dot the battle field below. Gideon sits in the tailgunner's seat, holding the polaroid camera seen earlier.

GIDEON
Do one pass for me, wouldja?

COLLEEN
Why?

GIDEON
We ain't gonna be able to chronicle dis
one wid words.

EXT. SKY OVER COOMBE HILL - NIGHT

The Mosquito swoops over the area. CLICK-FLASH. The cockpit LIGHTS UP with the flash of Gideon's camera as he takes pictures of the battlefield. CLICK-FLASH. CLICK-FLASH...

Almost in answer, LIGHTENING flashes back.

INT. MOSQUITO

Gideon's lap is covered with polaroids. He stares down for one final shot...and freezes.

GIDEON'S POV - THE BATTLEFIELD

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the area where The Ashley had lain IS EMPTY. The great dragon's body has DISAPPEARED.

GIDEON
Sweet Jesus...

FLASH! Lightening LIGHTS UP THE SKY, like God taking his photo. Just for a second, it illuminates

THE ASHLEY'S TAIL

500 yards in front of them, swooping up into the clouds.

INT. SALAMANDER

Colleen's voice crackles over the radio.

COLLEEN (O.S.)
Quinn! We got a problem...

INT. MOSQUITO

GIDEON
(Utterly pale)
I think she wants her horn back.

EXT. SKY NEAR MOSQUITO

The Ashley arcs over the Mosquito, falling into a flight path RIGHT BEHIND THEM.

INT/EXT. SALAMANDER

Creedy looks out the window in despair.

CREEDY
PLUM DUFF, MAN! FOOKIN' PLUM DUFF!

Both Van Zan and Quinn are struck speechless.

INT. MOSQUITO

Gideon mans the tailgun, begins to FIRE.

EXT. SKY OVER LONDON - NIGHT

The Mosquito flies toward the city, the great dragon in hot pursuit.

INT. MOSQUITO COCKPIT

GIDEON
She's gaining!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colleen pulls up on the controls.

EXT. THE MOSQUITO - NIGHT

banks up into a layer of low lying clouds.

The Ashley looses a PHOSPHOROUS BOLT!

INT. MOSQUITO

The Mosquito JOLTS! Colleen looks out the window.

THE ENTIRE LEFT WING IS ON FIRE!

The plane starts to descend at an alarming rate.

GIDEON

Get your chute on!

Gideon opens the canopy.

COLLEEN

Gideon, wait...!

Too late. He releases his belts.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOSQUITO - NIGHT

SHOOM! Gideon is catapulted into the cloudy air.

He pulls his chute cord...the chute BLOSSOMS open...

INT. MOSQUITO - NIGHT

Colleen struggles to maintain control of the burning plane.

EXT. SKY - BY GIDEON - NIGHT

Gideon looks around. Caught at night in the cloudbank, he is floating completely blind...and utterly defenseless.

For a long moment, just the RUSH OF THE WIND.

And then, something else...a WHOOSH of what might be wings.

He opens his eyes. He still can't see anything.

WHOOSH.

Was that a shape through the clouds?

Gideon nervously pulls his last weapon...a .45 revolver.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A faint FIRE RATTLE is heard. Impossible to tell from where.

GIDEON

Come on. Come on come on come on...

The fire-rattle gets LOUDER.

What could be a shape passes nearby. Gideon FIRES!

The rattle STOPS.

Gideon floats down through the cloudbreak into the clear air.

He can see again. For a moment, he seems relieved. But then, he looks down...

...and sees THE ASHLEY'S MOUTH COMING RIGHT UP AT HIM!

Gideon SCREAMS!

And a PHOSPHOROUS BLAST TURNS HIS CHUTE INTO A BLOOM OF FIRE!

EXT. MOSQUITO - NIGHT

The plane is heading in a death dive toward the city.

INT. MOSQUITO

With all her strength, Colleen pulls up.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - NIGHT

The plane manages to level just as it hits the now waterless Thames River...

...and SMASHES into an ash mountain.

INT. SALAMANDER

Creedy sees Ashley's shadow arcing in their direction.

CREEDY

She's comin' this way!

Quinn swears. Through the windshield, he spies one of the Ash Mountains rearing up not too far away.

He makes a split decision, yells out to Van Zan.

QUINN

HOLD ON!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

I figured the ash might hide our scent.

CREEDY

Figured that, did ya?!

Creedy looks at him. Realization crosses both their faces.

QUINN

Our scent...

EXT. NEAR ASH MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The Salamander BURSTS out of the mountain.

EXT. ROAD BACK TO WARWICKSHIRE - NIGHT - VARIOUS

Quinn drives the Salamander top speed over the blasted road.

LIGHTENING and THUNDER bursts in the distance.

EXT. ROAD NEAR CASTLE - NIGHT - LATER

Quinn pulls the Salamander to a sharp stop. We see his face through windshield. An etching of despair.

QUINN

No.

Van Zan's expression is pure shock. Creedy can't even look.

QUINN

No...

Quinn opens the door, runs out into the rain toward

THE BURNING RUINS OF HIS CASTLE

Quinn's mouth opens in silence as tears begin to run down his face, mixing with the rain.

When he finds his voice, it is a SCREAM OF ANGUISH.

EXT. RUINS OF THE CASTLE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Quinn, Creedy and Van Zan comb the wreckage, looking for survivors. But there seems little chance. It has the look of a wholeheartedly malicious massacre.

VAN ZAN

Over here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Van Zan pulls piles of rock from a METAL TRAP DOOR. He yanks it open, revealing

INT. A CELLAR

In the darkness, he can make out the terrified FACES of a number of CHILDREN. He reaches down to them.

VAN ZAN

Come on!

Beth moves to him...then recognizes his face and stops.

VAN ZAN

It's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you.

Beth moves away. None of the children will get near him.

QUINN

Beth!

BETH

Mr. Quinn!

Quinn jumps in the cellar. Beth and the kids crowd around him

QUINN

Oh, God...you're alive...

BETH

Jared hid us.

QUINN

Where is he?

The children are all silent. Quinn holds the kids closer. Their tension gives way to tears.

BETH

We could hear him screaming Mr. Quinn...

KID #2

The Ashley wouldn't stop...

Van Zan watches as the kids cling to Quinn like a life preserver. The enormity of the suffering he has caused hits him like a wrecking ball...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CENTRAL LONDON - NIGHT

Wind whips through the ghost town.

EXT. LONDON - ASH MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The Mosquito's half buried in the mountain. Colleen, covered in ash, pulls herself out and looks around. She's in

THE BOTTOM OF THE THAMES RIVER

The river's bone dry. All water has been BURNED AWAY. Silt and sand have been FUSED INTO GLASS which glitters dully, a post-apocalyptic version of the Yellow Brick Road.

Suddenly, a PIERCING CRY splits the night.

THE ASHLEY

speeds through the dark skies toward the city center.

COLLEEN

Quickly takes cover within the ash.

The great dragon flies right over her, heading towards

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

The one seen at the beginning. The tattered PLASTIC BANNER still flaps: **JUBILEE LINE EXTENSION PROJECT: TAKING LONDON INTO A NEW MILLENNIUM.**

In a move of supernal grace, Ashley's body ARCS up in the air, then DIVES LIKE AN ARROW INTO THE CONSTRUCTION HOLE. Fast as cobra, so perfect she never even touches the sides.

BACK TO COLLEEN

Slowly, she emerges from her hiding place.

EXT. BANK OF THAMES - VICTORIA TOWER GARDENS - NIGHT

Under the shadows of the Houses of Parliament, the ash covered Colleen climbs up into what was once a park.

EXT. WESTMINSTER TUBE STATION - NIGHT

Colleen passes by the subway station. She halts, seeing something. She walks into

INT. WESTMINSTER TUBE STATION

Colleen stares down the long escalator into the station.

THE WHOLE AREA IS FILLED WITH EIGHT FOOT SPHERES. Orange, translucent, like gigantic salmon eggs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colleen approaches one, touches its surface. Oddly rubbery. She pulls a knife from her belt, slices into the surface. Viscous orange liquid OOZES out, revealing what lies within.

A GARGOYLE-LIKE FETUS

Man-sized, horribly wrinkled. AN EMBRYONIC DRAGON.

Clearly premature, not fully formed. Stunted wings, mouth pathetically opening and closing like a drowning fish.

Colleen sheathes her knife.

FLIP! The Embryonic Dragon is suddenly ON ITS FEET. Though only a partially formed preemie, it's lethal from birth.

The thing coils back, hissing in attack mode.

Colleen draws her side-arm, FIRES, HITTING THE DRAGON DEAD ON. It doesn't even phase the little bastard.

The creature spreads its stunted wings, ready to spring.

Colleen fires a final time. The bullet misses the dragon...

...and sparks nearby, right on the orange fluid.

WHOOSH! The Embryonic Dragon and the area around it EXPLODE IN A BLAST OF FLAME.

Colleen stands, frozen. What the hell is this?

An idea forms. She turns to another egg nearby.

From her pocket, she pulls out an old ZIPPO LIGHTER. She flicks on the flame, tosses it at the orange sphere.

BOOM! The flame IGNITES the sphere, blasting it like a bomb.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE RUINS - BY A WRECKED STOREROOM

Quinn digs out paltry food supplies from the rubble, hands them up to Creedy.

QUINN

That's the lot.

CREEDY

Christ, that won't last us a week...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN (O.S.)

Quinn!

Van Zan emerges from the cellar.

VAN ZAN

Radio's breathing.

CREEDY

Grand. We'll order out for Chinese.

VAN ZAN (cont'd)

(Nods back at the cellar)

Trust me. You're gonna wanna hear this.

INT. REMAINS OF A HARDWARE SHOP - LONDON

Colleen hunched in a corner, talking into a SHORTWAVE.

COLLEEN

They gestate in some kind of phosphorous.

INT. CASTLE CELLAR

Van Zan, Quinn and Creedy gathered by their shortwave.

QUINN

How many eggs?

COLLEEN

Thousands. Maybe more. If the one I saw was the norm, they're nearly ready to hatch.

Van Zan looks up at Quinn.

VAN ZAN

It'll make twenty years ago look like a mayfly spawn.

QUINN

That's it then. We have to go back.

CREEDY

Yea daft? Ashley's there.

QUINN

Yea, and she's heavily wounded. It may be our one chance.

CREEDY

What happened to "outlastin' her"?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

What about it?

CREEDY

I think it's a pretty good idea!

QUINN

It's a *shite* idea! No one's gonna make it through another spawning.

CREEDY

I'll take me chances. I'm done with this "save the world" crap...

VAN ZAN

What about saving them?

He nods at the children huddled in the back of the room.

QUINN

(Bitterly)

Joined UNICEF, have you?

VAN ZAN

Let's just say I'm willing to listen.

CREEDY

What are we gonna do? Go back there, guns blazing? Lemme do a little impression: BANG! BOOM! SHIT! SHE'S ALIVE!!

Silence. Quinn looks at a candle burning near the radio.

QUINN

We make a fire.

(Turns to the others.)

A fire so hot she can't survive.

CREEDY

We don't have those kinds of explosives.

Van Zan raises an eyebrow, catching on.

VAN ZAN

No. But she does.

Quinn stares at the candle, a new light in his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT - NIGHT

Van Zan finishes loading equipment into a derelict FISHING BOAT. Quinn turns to Creedy by the Salamander, now filled with the surviving children.

QUINN

Don't stop till you get 'em to Edinburgh.
I'll contact you there if we make it.

Beat. Creedy looks at him, knowing it's most likely the last time they'll see each other. Quinn turns, gets on the boat.

CREEDY

Don't you fall off.

Quinn grimly smiles back.

QUINN

Don't you slow down.

He casts off the line.

EXT. COAST - NIGHT

The Salamander drives off as the boat moves out the sea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FISHING BOAT - OFF ENGLISH COASTLINE - NIGHT

The small boat navigates through the rough water.

INT. BOAT CABIN

Van Zan works setting detonating devices from a series of their remaining explosives. Quinn pilots the boat.

Van Zan pulls out a flask from his pocket, takes swig. He offers it to Quinn. Quinn doesn't even look at him.

VAN ZAN

We're not gonna get far in this if we
don't talk.

Quinn is silent.

VAN ZAN

Quinn, look...

QUINN

If you say you're sorry, I'll throw you
off the boat now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

I was gonna say, "I know how you feel".

QUINN

Don't flatter yourself. We got nothin' in common, you and me.

VAN ZAN

Pretty sure about that, are ya?

QUINN

Pretty fuckin' sure.

Beat. Van Zan pulls out a cigarette, lights it.

VAN ZAN

Ever make it to Chicago, Quinn?

Quinn stares at him, not following the connection.

VAN ZAN

Shitty winters. Good pizza.

(Beat.)

Night the snakes hit us, city went up like a Roman candle. Burned my folks in the first strike. Only way clear was the lake. It was Dunkirk, man. Every asshole with a boat was out there. Including me.

(Beat.)

My kid brother and I, we were halfway across when the snakes flamed us. I remember thinkin', "got to get him into the water. Water's cold." And it was... until they started torchin' it. Figure it reached 150 degrees in minute. People were screamin'. Boilin'. Guess it was the snakes idea of a lobster bake.

Quinn is held, despite himself.

QUINN

What the hell did you do?

VAN ZAN

Dove. Held my brother in my arms and kicked for depth. Thought if we could stay under till the fire passed us...

(Beat.)

I was 15. Pretty good free diver. Kyle -- he was 9. No lung capacity. He gave me this scar when he started to struggle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUINN

You...kept him down?

VAN ZAN

He'd've boiled alive up there. All I could do was...hold him. Kept telling myself: 'this isn't a person I'm killing. It's a fish. It's an animal. It's not...'

His voice catches. Silence. He smiles grimly at Quinn.

VAN ZAN (cont'd)

So you see, Mr. Buddy, we do have one thing in common.

(Crushes out the cigarette.)

Neither of us wants to be me.

Quinn looks at him. Van Zan offers him the flask once again. After a long moment, Quinn takes it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THAMES ESTUARY - NIGHT - VARIOUS

The boat makes its way up the lower Thames...past the ash mountains...into the dark heart of London...

...and finally docks at THE THAMES RIVER BARRIER - a damlike structure that separates the lower and upper Thames. The river westward is dry glass. Ashley's domain.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - TOP OF HOLE - NIGHT

The construction hole looks like an abyss. The only way down is the twisted ELEVATOR RUNNING TRACK seen at the beginning.

Quinn goes over the subway map with Colleen and Van Zan as each of them finish covering themselves in ash.

QUINN

Set charges here and here. That should seal off Ashley's escape.

COLLEEN

If she's there.

QUINN

It's her home base. She'll be there.

(Looking down at the map)

The blasts should start a chain reaction with her eggs. This works, it'll turn the whole tube system into one big oven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

Along with the rest of the city.

QUINN

Colleen's fixed the plane...

COLLEEN

With gum and string, Quinn. I wouldn't count on it for an escape.

VAN ZAN

And I wouldn't count on your little ash camouflage workin' too long.

Quinn takes out the trigger device, hands it to Van Zan.

QUINN

Fifteen minutes, you set it off.

VAN ZAN

Why me?

QUINN

We may need to blow the tunnels with one of us in 'em. I know you won't hesitate.

Before Van Zan can respond, Quinn swings himself onto the running rails and descends into the abyss.

INT. SIDE OF CONSTRUCTION HOLE

The three climb down the rusty metal, mindful of the explosive-filled packs on their backs. Framed by the vast wall, they look like ants descending into a tarantula's den.

INT. BOTTOM OF CONSTRUCTION HOLE

Quinn drops with a CRUNCH...and finds himself staring at the CHARRED REMAINS OF THE ELEVATOR in which his mother died.

Quinn stares uneasily at the sight, then looks beyond.

The tunnel before him is filled with ASHLEY'S EGGS. It stretches like an obscene birth canal.

INT. TUBE TUNNELS - VARIOUS

Quinn, Van Zan and Colleen head into the egg-infested tubes.

They split up silently. Colleen moving west...Quinn heading south...Van Zan heading East.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan moves down a fully operational section of tube.

He passes by a SUBWAY TRAIN literally SQUASHED FLAT against the side of the tunnel.

VAN ZAN
Public transportation.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (COLLEEN)

Colleen follows her tunnel into the open platform of

INT. VICTORIA STATION - PLATFORM (COLLEEN)

She climbs onto the platform, past a sign: **MIND THE GAP.**

INT. UNCOMPLETED SECTION TUBE TUNNEL (QUINN)

Quinn works his way into the tunnel seen under construction at the beginning. Loamy earth ribbed with rusted iron.

INT. VICTORIA STATION - ESCALATOR PLAZA (COLLEEN)

Colleen removes the pack from her back, begins to set charges at the base of an ESCALATOR.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan molds his charges by the flattened subway train.

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL #3 (QUINN)

Quinn moves by a "T" intersection. The old TUNNEL BORING MACHINE (TBM) is parked on the tunnel going off to his right.

Quinn keeps moving straight ahead. It's there he sees

THE ENTRANCE TO THE CAVE

from which The Ashley originally emerged.

Quinn is frozen. Listening. He can't hear anything indicating the Great Dragon is at home.

He decides to chance it. Barely making a noise, he moves into

INT. CAVERN

No sign of Ashley. However, the chamber is filled with THOUSANDS OF EGGS. Clinging to the walls, ceiling, etc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quinn swallows his fear, begins to set his charge there.

INT. VICTORIA STATION - ESCALATOR PLAZA (COLLEEN)

Colleen finishes placing the charge.

It's then she hears it: a DISTANT RUMBLING sound, like a subway train approaching.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan hears it, too. ECHOING through the cavernous tunnels. No way to tell which direction it's coming from.

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

Quinn's sweating profusely, trying to ignore the sound and vibrations that resound in this open chamber. Hands shaking, he places the last of his charges near the eggs.

INT. VICTORIA STATION - ESCALATOR PLAZA

WIND picks up through the plaza, as if a train were coming.

Colleen presses her back against as the sound becomes DEAFENING. Suddenly, Van Zan's voice echoes in her headset.

VAN ZAN (O.S.)

Which way's it heading? East or West?

Slowly, trembling, she peeks round the corner at

INT. VICTORIA STATION - PLATFORM (COLLEEN)

The *MIND THE GAP* sign swings violently as

THE ASHLEY

speeds past, filling the length of the tunnel. She's so long that only her scaly midsection is visible as she rockets through like a biological subway train.

COLLEEN

darts back against the wall.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Colleen's voice echoes in his headset.

COLLEEN (O.S.)

She's heading right toward you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Van Zan fixes the last of the charges, takes out the trigger.

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

Quinn tries to fix his last charges.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan takes a stand, ready to meet the creature head on.
He raises the trigger, thumb on the button...

WIND washes down the tunnel...

The RUMBLING BECOMES DEAFENING...and then...

Silence. Sudden, utter, absolute.

Van Zan stares suspiciously at the darkness before him.

VAN ZAN
(Into headset)
Colleen...

INT. VICTORIA STATION - PLATFORM (COLLEEN)

The *MIND THE GAP* sign stops swinging. Colleen stares down the platform.

COLLEEN
(Into headset)
She's gone. I'm okay.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

VAN ZAN
(Into headset)
Quinn. What's your status?

Quinn's voice is unusually tense.

QUINN (O.S.)
Y'know, it's funny...

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

Quinn stands stock still at the right end of the cavern.

QUINN
...but I've been better.

a shadow slowly falls over him as

THE ASHLEY RISES BEFORE HIM

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's entered the cave and moved to the left, wings spreading to each side, shielding the eggs around her. The scars of her massive injuries leak pus; she hisses with the venom of a wounded animal cornering its hunter.

And yet, she does not attack.

It's then Quinn notices: the beast's one remaining eye is fixed on the explosive in his hand.

Ashley starts to move forward.

Quinn raises the explosive up.

Ashley stops, as if in reaction.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Quinn's whispers voice over Van Zan's headset

QUINN (O.S.)

Get out and blow the charges. Now!

Van Zan stares at the trigger. He looks up uncertainly, then begins to move down the tunnel.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (COLLEEN)

Colleen begins to run east down her tunnel.

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

Quinn's engaged in a staring contest with the serpent.

Ashley makes her fire rattle.

QUINN

You gonna use that fire around the kids?

Ashley snarls. The rattle fades in her throat.

VAN ZAN (O.S.)

(Over headset)

Quinn, listen to me...

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL - (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan has reached the "T" intersection. He is staring at something to his right o.s.

VAN ZAN

I wanna try something.

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

VAN ZAN (O.S.)
Walk back toward the tunnel.

Quinn glances at the opening to the cavern.

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan moves down the intersecting tunnel to his right.

QUINN (O.S.)
(Over headset)
Van Zan, I told you...

VAN ZAN
Do it!

INT. CAVERN (QUINN)

Quinn slowly edges toward the opening, keeping the explosive raised, keeping his eyes locked with Ashley.

Ashley watches with her working right eye, looking for a chance to strike without activating Quinn's explosive.

INT. INTERSECTING TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

CLOSE on Van Zan's foot as he steps on a piece of machinery.

INT. HOLE BETWEEN CAVERN AND TUNNEL (QUINN)

Quinn walks backwards into the tunnel as

Ashley slides forward, keeping pace.

INT. INTERSECTING TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan's hand brushes dust from a CONTROL PANEL.

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL (QUINN)

Quinn comes to the intersection of the t-junction.

Ashley's tongue snakes out of her mouth toward him, just waiting to get a taste.

QUINN
Any time you're ready. Really.

Quinn passes the t-junction of the intersection.

VAN ZAN'S POV - THROUGH A DUSTY WINDOW

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashley comes into view. She can't see what lies in the tunnel to the left of her because of her blinded eye.

VAN ZAN (OS)
That'll do.

Van Zan's hand comes down on a gearshift.

And the tunnel is filled with the ROAR of

THE TUNNEL BORING MACHINE

Barrelling down the tunnel right at Ashley's blind side. Van Zan in the driver's seat, like a knight on his mount.

Ashley realizes the trap. She tries to pull back...

Van Zan floors it....

THE TBM DRILLS INTO ASHLEY'S NECK, PINNING HER TO THE WALL.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (COLLEEN)

Running to the eastern tunnels, Colleen hears Ashley's scream, amplified a hundred-fold. She rounds a corner to see

ASHLEY

struggling against the TBM. Her tongue LASHES OUT, knocking Quinn backward.

VAN ZAN

keeps his foot on the TBM's accelerator, keeping her pinned.

COLLEEN

runs to Quinn, helps him to his feet.

VAN ZAN
I've got her here! Get out!!

COLLEEN
No!

QUINN
Van Zan!

VAN ZAN
This is my deal, Goddammit!

Quinn and Colleen look at him. It's as if Van Zan is pouring all his fury into this final attack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN ZAN

GO!!!

There's no time to argue. Quinn and Colleen take off.

INT. TUBE TUNNELS (QUINN AND COLLEEN)

The two race for the construction hole.

Ashley's amplified shrieks mix with the metallic grind of the TBM. It sounds like a mythical battle between two subterranean giants.

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

The dragon THRASHES. The TBM starts to become DISLODGED.

Van Zan keeps up the pressure on the accelerator. But SMOKE is beginning to pour from the TBM's engines.

INT. BOTTOM OF CONSTRUCTION HOLE

Quinn and Colleen make it to the bottom of the hole. They start to climb like hell.

INT. UNCOMPLETED TUBE TUNNEL (VAN ZAN)

Van Zan puts all his effort into the TBM's forward motion. Machine smoke fills the air.

It's fighting the inevitable. With a horrible grind, the TBM's motor LOCKS...

...and Ashley tosses her head to the side.

THE TBM

is knocked backward, slamming against the wall with such force that the cab compartment is CRUSHED.

INT. SIDE OF CONSTRUCTION HOLE

The crash echoes up to the ears of Quinn and Colleen, in the middle of their ascent.

QUINN

COME ON!!

They double time it toward the surface.

INT. TUBE TUNNEL - BY TBM

Van Zan lies crushed in the wreckage of the cab. He looks up to see Ashley's face right over him.

Ashley's eye falls upon Van Zan's hand. It has reached the trigger mechanism.

Van Zan smiles a bloody smile.

VAN ZAN
Kiss my human ass...

Ashley rears back.

Van Zan presses the button.

INT. TUBE TUNNELS - VARIOUS

The explosives DETONATE all along the tunnels...causing A CHAIN REACTION of even greater explosions from the eggs.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - TOP OF HOLE - NIGHT

Quinn and Colleen have just made it to the surface when the earth underneath shakes from the underground explosions.

INT. CAVERN

The egg-filled chamber IGNITES. A GIGANTIC BLAST SLAMS through into

INT. TUBE TUNNEL (ASHLEY)

the concussion is so great it BLASTS the dragon down the tunnel like a missile through a silo.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - TOP OF HOLE - NIGHT

Huge rents in the ground BREAK OPEN, followed by GEYSERS OF FLAME. It's as if hell has come to trade places with earth.

Colleen's THROWN BACK by one explosion, falling onto twisted metal. One shard pierces through her leg. She cries out.

QUINN
Colleen!

Quinn gets to her, picks her up in a fireman's carry.

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Quinn races with Colleen down the street. Its like running through a war zone. Earth shaking...eggs exploding in fireballs...

EXT. NEAR THAMES - NIGHT

Nearing the bank, Quinn sees their chance at escape.

THE MOSQUITO

parked in the dry river.

Quinn begins to make for it when suddenly behind them

ASHLEY BURSTS OUT OF THE CONSTRUCTION HOLE

Her whole body is AFLAME. A fiery angel, she blasts into the

EXT. SKY OVER LONDON - NIGHT

Climbing hundreds of feet in seconds...higher...higher...

And then begins to DROP, like a flaming comet down to earth.

EXT. NEAR THAMES

Quinn and Colleen look up.

COLLEEN
Smart bitch...

EXT. SKY OVER LONDON

CLOSE ON ASHLEY diving down. She is using the velocity of her descent to PUT THE FIRE ON HER BODY OUT.

At fifty feet, the fire's extinguished. She arcs up...

...and sails over Quinn and Colleen. The force of her passing is like a jet; it knocks both the humans down on the ground.

Ashley doesn't even bother with them now, but heads STRAIGHT INTO THE INFERNO OF LONDON.

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Ashley beats her wings furiously, driving the fire away from an area where some of her eggs lie undamaged.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She gathers her eggs to her belly. A FLAP OF SKIN folds out, revealing a MARSUPIAL-LIKE POUCH. Into this she pulls her progeny.

ON QUINN AND COLLEEN

looking on in horror.

COLLEEN

Jesus Christ, she's saving her kids!

Quinn makes a snap decision. He immediately heads for

EXT. BANK OF THAMES - NIGHT

With Colleen over his shoulder, Quinn quickly climbs down the bank into the glassy surface.

EXT. LONDON STREET - BY ASHLEY

Her stomach now BLOATED TO CAPACITY WITH EGGS, Ashley opens her mouth, catches a dozen or so more under her tongue.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - NIGHT

Quinn gently lays Colleen down by the glassy bottom.

QUINN

Winds blowing north. Fire won't touch you here.

Quinn turns toward the Mosquito.

COLLEEN

Where are you going?!

Quinn doesn't answer, just books toward the plane.

EXT. LONDON STREET - BY ASHLEY

Now loaded to capacity with her eggs, Ashley begins to take to the air. She's like an overloaded B-52.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - NIGHT/DAWN

Quinn taxis the Mosquito down the glassy bed, into the air...

EXT. SKY OVER LONDON - NIGHT/DAWN

Dawn starts to break over the burning city, framing

Ashley, sailing the wind eastward...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And Quinn's Mosquito, right on her tail.

INT. MOSQUITO

Quinn's pushing the damaged plane to its limit to catch up. It starts to SHAKE, barely held together by gum and string.

EXT. OVER THAMES - DAWN

Ashley swoops over the Thames River Barrier to the wet part of the river.

INT. MOSQUITO

QUINN
Come on, luv...

He lines up the sights on his forward guns.

QUINN
Show me your belly.

He FIRES.

EXT. OVER THAMES - DAWN

Machine gun fire RAKES over Ashley's back. Barely an annoyance, but she seems to know what Quinn is trying to do.

In reaction, she pitches down toward the river.

INT. MOSQUITO

QUINN
Dammit!

EXT. OVER THAMES - DAWN

Ashley's SKIMMING THE SURFACE OF THE RIVER. Barely 10 feet above it, the tips of her great wings touch the water on every downbeat, forcing a wake to form.

The Mosquito follows behind, skimming the surface as well.

INT. MOSQUITO

Quinn maneuvers for a way to get to her egg-filled gut.

EXT. OVER THAMES - DAWN

The Mosquito swerves left, trying to get under Ashley's wing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLICK! The dragon's tail SNAPS out, nearly striking the Mosquito's wing.

Quinn swerves just in time.

FLICK! FLICK! The dragon's tail is like a giant fly swatter, trying to bat the plane out of the sky.

But each slash of the tail leaves her underside exposed.

INT. MOSQUITO

And Quinn takes advantage, firing his guns.

EXT. OVER THAMES - DAWN

CLOSE ON Ashley's belly. The bullets tear awfully close to the eggsack.

Ashley counters with a move of her own. She opens her mouth, begins to release some of the eggs there.

The eggs fall right in the path of the Mosquito which is still firing. Its tracer bullet rip into the eggs.

BOOM! The eggs EXPLODE near the plane like depth charges.

INT. MOSQUITO

Jolts rock the plane. Quinn's barely able to stabilize her. He knows the aircraft can't take much more of this.

EXT. THAMES ESTUARY - DAWN

Ashley speeds down the estuary, headed toward the open sea.

INT. MOSQUITO

Quinn sees accelerates the plane in a final burst of speed.

EXT. COASTLINE - DAWN

Still skimming the water, Ashley passes over the coast and makes the freedom of the open ocean.

However as she's flies from land to sea

The Mosquito accelerates, FLYING RIGHT OVER HER BACK.

INT. MOSQUITO

Quinn looks down. It's like passing over an island of reptile skin, her wingspan nearly the size of a football field.

EXT. OVER FOGBANK - DAY

And sees...nothing. The plane's DISAPPEARED.

But the buzzing is now getting louder. It's then she notices
THE MOSQUITO

arcing hundreds of feet above her UPSIDE DOWN. It's at
12:00, EXECUTING a wild LOOP over the dragon.

INT. MOSQUITO

In a last desperate move, Quinn, upside down, guides the
plane back over the dragon...

EXT. OVER SEA - DAY

Too late, Ashley realizes what Quinn is doing.

The Mosquito is now diving BEHIND the dragon. Its loop now
is accelerated by its descent.

At the 7:00 point, it begins to PULL UP with huge speed.

What happens next is so quick, it's nearly simultaneous.

QUINN

opens the canopy of his plane.

ASHLEY

tries to dive.

THE MOSQUITO

arcs upward.

QUINN

releases his belt and is sucked from the cockpit.

SLAM! He hits the water at an angle at a savage 70 miles an
hour. His body SKIPS LIKE A STONE over the ocean just as

THE MOSQUITO

is carried in its course by the force of its acceleration...

...heading right into Ashley's egg-filled stomach.

ASHLEY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

tries to avoid it, but

THE MOSQUITO

strikes home, SLAMMING INTO HER BELLY.

Ashley's stomach EXPLODES!

AND THE GREAT DRAGON IS LITERALLY RIPPED IN TWO.

EXT. SEA

Quinn recovers his sense barely in time to see

A SHOCK WAVE

from the blast, swelling right towards him.

QUINN

SHIT!

He dives just as the WAVE hits him full on.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Quinn is jostled to and fro under the wave.

EXT. OVER SEA

The fiery remains of the dragon fall from the sky like rain.

EXT. UNDERWATER

With his last strength, Quinn kicks with all his might toward

EXT. SEA - SURFACE

Quinn breaks the surface, GASPING for air.

The water around is filled with burning debris.

And there, not ten yards away, floats THE ASHLEY'S SEVERED HEAD. Bobbing lifeless as it sinks.

Quinn watches it, sees himself reflected in the cornea of its one eye, just as he had seen himself as a child.

Soon, the reflection and eye and the last of the dragon disappear under the water.

HOLD ON the burning debris

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. SEA - A WEEK LATER

Burning debris CROSSFADES into BOATS. All shapes and sizes, filled with refugees heading toward the coast of England

EXT. HYDE PARK - DAY - SEVERAL WEEKS LATER

CLOSE on a pile of dragon eggs arranged in a huge PIT in the ground.

CREEDY (OS)
FIRE IN THE HOLE!

An explosive charge DETONATES in the middle of the pit, reducing the their embryos to lifeless shreds.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Creedy supervising a CREW OF MEN AND WOMEN in the orderly disposal of remaining dragon eggs.

PULL BACK FURTHER to reveal the rest of the park. A myriad of TENTS are pitched throughout the park. A CARAVAN full of new arrivals are busy preparing a campsite.

TUFTS OF GREEN GRASS speckle the blackened hills. There's even a bit of sunlight peeking through the clouds.

PAN OVER to a distant hill where a lone figure stands.

EXT. HYDE PARK - HILL - DAY

It's Quinn standing before what looks like a rough military graveyard. British flags fly from some; The American from others. The dead in the war with Ashley.

Quinn kneels down by one that flies the *DON'T TREAD ON ME* early American flag with the snake. It's there he places the flask he took from Van Zan in the boat.

COLLEEN (O.S.)
He actually stole that flask from me.

Quinn turns to see Colleen behind him. No longer wearing her flight suit, but a dress that covers her arms and legs.

Quinn smiles.

COLLEEN
French delegation's here. They want to talk about an expedition to retake the continent.

QUINN
You wanna be in on it?

(CONTINUED)

COLLEEN

Do you?

Quinn shakes his head, looks down at the grave.

QUINN

Guess we owe it to him to keep fightin'.

COLLEEN

Just him, huh?

She nods at Beth and a group of the castle kids, playing soccer nearby.

COLLEEN

Won't exactly be a cakewalk. They say there's at least four of 'em in Paris.

QUINN

That's not what bothers me, Col.

(Looks at her.)

What if Van Zan was wrong about Ashley?
What if there still other females? What do we do then?

Colleen takes his hand.

COLLEEN

We live.

Hearing his own words thrown back at him, Quinn has to smile.

He kisses her gently, puts his arm around her.

They walk together from the graveyard.

Toward a city being reborn.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END