

Third Draft

SWAMP THING

a
screenplay
by

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Based on
the DC COMIC HERO

ST3/A

1 EXT. SWAMPS. DAY 1

The SCREEN IS DEEP GREEN/BLACK; the soundtrack alive with wild and primitive CALLS of animals and birds.

CRAWL ROLLS:

In the unexplored reaches of the deepest swamps, there are creatures and plants still unnamed by science. Most have flowed naturally through endless births and dyings from time's fountainhead. All but one.

For in an unmapped swamp in our own time, when the genius of one man collided with another's evil dream, something unknown saw its first light in our own age. And a monster was created.

Too powerful to be destroyed, too intelligent to be captured, this being still pursues its savage dream.

This is its story.

FADE CRAWL

BURST IN TITLE

SWAMP THING.

CONTINUE TITLES
AS WE:

FADE UP ON MOVING HELICOPTER SHOT, LOW ALTITUDE, the MUSIC driving and darkly romantic. Deep swamps sweep by -- great reaches of water shimmering green with duckweed and sawgrass, flecked by pine-cloaked islands. There is no sign of man. AS TITLES END WE

SURGE UP WITH

HELICOPTER'S ENGINES and

CUT TO:

2 INT. CARGO HELICOPTER. DAY. 2

ANGLE FORWARD past packing crates stenciled 'U.S. Govt -- Top Secret'. DR. ALEC HOLLAND, unconventionally handsome in his late-twenties, climbs down from the flight deck into the cargo area and leans out the helicopter's door as if to touch the trees blurring beneath.

CHARLIE, 35, pulls him back, shouting over the engine.

CHARLIE
Easy, Doc -- Jeez..

ALEC
(still looking out)
Good to get back to the swamps.

CHARLIE
All things considered, I'd rather
be in Philly.

Holland grins and looks off screen.

ALEC
New Electronics Officer?

WIDER ANGLE, REVEALING an intent woman hunched over a console. Twenty-five, very good-looking, very professional.

CHARLIE
Cable, you met Doctor Holland yet?

She looks up with a pleasant, noncommittal smile.

CABLE
Doctor. Alice Cable.

ALEC
How's it looking?

CABLE
All sensors quiet. Nothing hostile.

Charlie hunkers against the bulkhead between the door and Alec Holland, still very much alert.

CHARLIE
(clarifying)
Nothing moving.

As he's settled back in place, he's cradled a large automatic weapon in his lap. His eyes remain locked on the swamps below.

CUT TO:

ST3/B

2A EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 2A

The helicopter flashes overhead, rattling trees and sending leaves and spanish moss swirling. PAN DOWN to deep swamps and, among the thick cover, MEN, dressed in camouflage, carrying weapons. Not moving a hair.

ANGLE ON FERRET, a man chipped from slate. His face has a cruel handsomeness, with eyes bright and hard as broken bottles. When the copter's out of sight Ferret makes a gesture. Like shadows the men are gone without a sound.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. COMPOUND/ BARN. DAY. 3

The CRIES of ANIMALS and INSECTS criss-cross through gleaming sinks and bogs. Inpenetrable vegetation. A place forsaken by time.

But as the helicopter appears and we PAN WITH IT, hints of another world are REVEALED FOREGROUND. Vine-wrapped fences on a slight rise, a rusted pump, weed-choked outbuildings. And then a hulking BARN, sagging and abandoned.

The helicopter drops quickly, squatting amid a HOWL of ROTORS. The doors to the 'deserted' barn fly open and a young woman, LINDA HOLLAND, runs out in greeting. Alec darts through the duststorm and hugs her.

AT THE COPTER -- Cable exits, glancing over at Linda -- no more than 26 years old -- a pretty, perky blond in jeans, T-shirt and an open lab coat.

MEN have materialized behind Alec and Linda -- young, anonymous types in conservative sport clothes and sunglasses, faces expressionless as gun muzzles. The sort one sees in presidential parades jogging before the largest limousine.

LINDA

(shouting to be heard)
Well -- they go for the extension?

ALEC
(shakes his head)
They moved our deadline up two weeks.

LINDA
What!

ALEC
We go back and work in Washington
in a week, success or no success.

LINDA
The jerks. Don't they read the
reports we send in?

ALEC
They read them.

LINDA
How about your work on chlorotropic
DNA -- there's real indication of
mutation -- just like you postulated.
Alec, you're close!

ALEC
They know we're getting close; it's
not that.

He turns and goes into the barn, preoccupied. Linda chases.

LINDA
Well then what is it?

3A EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 3A

ANGLE ON a young AGENT. Unlike the armed men we saw earlier in
this area, he's much more clean cut, and dressed similarly to the
other body guards in the Holland encampment.

He cuts the motor on his small boat, listening. More and more
alert.

ANOTHER ANGLE, deeper in the cover. The agent appears on foot,
pauses. Scared. Easing out around a clump of undergrowth, hand
now on gun, he sees several of Ferret's men clustered around some
sort of electronic device about the size of a flashlight.

They're about fifty feet away.

CLOSE ON THE AGENT as he slips the walky-talky off his belt. He's just about to whisper into it when he freezes, his face loosing its color. He turns and stares into the barrel of Ferret's automatic weapon.

Ferret puts his hand out. The agent turns over the radio. Ferret drops it into the swamp; puts his hand back out. The agent turns over his gun. At this moment another man, BRUNO, appears as if from nowhere. He's bulkier, perhaps 300 pounds. Ferret, without even turning, widens his smile to a tiger's leer and tosses both the agent's and his own weapon to Bruno. Then he takes out a wicked-looking knife.

The agent turns and runs.

With a WHOOP, Ferret is after him.

SEVERAL ANGLES. The agent runs with the energy of pure desperation -- but Ferret closes the gap. The agent is cut off by Ferret's men, who have flanked him, then tackled by Ferret.

The men haul the agent up; Ferret already moving away, his eyes already having seen something.

ANOTHER ANGLE, AWAY FROM THE GROUP. Ferret advances with great stealth. ZOOM IN as his lightning move snatches up the water snake we've just discerned. Ferret turns and looks at the agent. The man begins to struggle even harder as Ferret comes back towards him, the big cottonmouth lashing in his hand.

We stay distant, but we can hear the SCREAMS as the hand with the snake jams forward.

3B EXT. COMPOUND/BARN. DAY. 3B

ANGLE ON THE COPTER -- its engines SHRIEK and the craft lifts off. Everybody crouches and covers his eyes. Except for one big man in his fifties, HARRY RITTER.

RITTER

(shouting)

Come on -- get this stuff inside!
You want t'get picked up on some goddam
Russian spy satellite?! Charlie --
move it!

MOVING WITH Charlie and Cable, lugging equipment towards an old

shed.

CABLE
That must be Ritter.

CHARLIE
That's Ritter. Field Supervisor for
the project. A sonuvabitch. But our
sonuvabitch.

He clumps into the falling-down shed. Cable dutifully follows.

4 INT. SECURITY SHED. DAY. 4

She finds herself in a surprisingly clean place loaded with state-of-the-art electronic equipment. There's a galley and bunks; most of the comforts of a field H.Q. Cable drops her personal gear and turns to the equipment.

CHARLIE
You probably haven't seen half this
stuff -- it's all new. This here, for
instance, is a --

CABLE
-- lasar-induced sub-sonic field gener-
ator.
(raps the device)
Gives double readings in the 3200
band, right?

Charlie stares at her a second, then laughs outright.

CABLE (cont'd)
I got a trick for fixing that.
(scans the rest of the room)
What's he working on, anyway?

CHARLIE
Who?

CABLE
Holland.

CHARLIE
(shrugs)
This things so hush-hush no one asks.
Something to do with plants.

A BUZZING. Charlie picks up a telephone. Cable walks to a large console.

CLOSER ON HER, almost casually alert. IN HER POV we see a warning light BLINKING. It reads 'Sensor Out/ Sector 3.'

Charlie reappears.

CHARLIE

The Emperor calls. You might as well tag along and see the layout. C'mon.

CABLE

Hey, you know, there's a sensor...

But he's already gone.

4A EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 4A

ANGLE on the young agent, face contorted, eyes glazed, staggering through knee deep water. No one else is in sight.

4B EXT. COMPOUND. DAY. 4B

Cable catches up with Charlie just as Charlie meets Ritter. Ritter immediately goes off for the barn. Charlie and Cable chase after.

CHARLIE

You met our new electronics officer?
Alice Cable, Harry Ritter.

Ritter nods.

RITTER

Everything squared away?

CABLE

Pretty much. I want to run a check on all the sensors right away; at least one is reading malfunction.

RITTER

No surprise. They rot in a week in these damn swamps.

(to Charlie)

Thank god Washington'd wised up and ordered Holland back.

CHARLIE
Tell you what did it.

RITTER
What?

CHARLIE
(grins)
A rumor. Somebody heard that Arcane
had got wind of the project.

The name turns heads.

CABLE
Arcane? I thought Arcane was dead.

Ritter interrupts sharply.

RITTER
He is.
(to Charlie)
Who said that? Who said Arcane was
on to this?

CHARLIE
(uneasy)
No one was taking credit for it.
You know Washington...

Ritter looks at him a cold moment, moves his eyes to Cable, then
back to Charlie.

RITTER
All it takes is for one asshole to
get hold of a rumor like that and
this whole operation'll go to hell
in a handbasket. You agree?

CHARLIE
Yessir.

Ritter breaks it off and throws open the old door to the barn.
Charlie wipes the sweat off his face, avoiding Cable's look.

5 OMIT 5

6 INT. BARN/LABORATORY. DAY. 6

With a loud SQUAWK of RUSTED HINGES, the doors swing open. Ritter, Charlie, and Cable step inside; an ARMED AGENT closes the doors behind them. Cable finds herself in a shadowy space between the crumbling outer face of the barn and an inner, gleaming shell covered with modern ducts and cables.

RITTER
(indicating a device
to Cable)

I keep the number of people near him to a minimum. This admits only the three of us and the Hollands. Your prints were programed in this morning. try it out.

CABLE
How hot is this operation?

Ritter appraises her coolly. She shuts up and sticks her fingers into the reader. With a THUNK of SERVO-MOTORS, the door slides open.

Cable immediately reacts to what she sees inside.

ST3/C

7 INT. BARN/LABORATORY. DAY. 7

CABLE stands in the doorway, stunned.

WIDE SHOT OF THE INTERIOR OF THE BARN. They enter a bio/botanical laboratory of the most modern design. Racks of chemicals, work tables, and super-sophisticated instruments surrounded by walls of books and topped by balconies leading to living and sleeping quarters.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Gotta gotta hand it to Ritter, he gave the guy everything he asked for.

Ritter reappears almost on cue, grabbing Charlie by the elbow.

RITTER
Charlie, I wanna hear everything about this Arcane business. Now.

Ritter bulls into a back room.

CABLE
About that sensor out, in sector 3...

CHARLIE

(harassed)

Right. See if you can get somebody
to take you out there -- take a look.

He trots off after Ritter. Cable does a take.

CABLE

Me? Go in the swamps?

Cable turns towards the far end of the first-floor level, where a marvelous arboretum, lit by vaulting skylights framed in the barn's beams, harbors an astonishing profusion of plants. A glass wall overlooks a small dock, an airboat, and, beyond, the untamed panorama of swamps.

ALEC (O.S.)

Any luck?

LINDA (O.S.)

Wiggle your fingers...

MOVING WITH Cable as she reacts to the voices and enters the arboretum, discovering Linda and Alec on their hands and knees at opposite ends of a large plastic tub, groping for something beneath the mossy water.

Cable stares down in curiosity.

CABLE

Drop a contact lens?

ALEC

Funny. Take a look, would you,
about in the middle. Dropped a
Cooper's Digger.

Cable does so, making a face at the green water.

CABLE

(feeling around)

What's a Cooper's Digger, some
kinda shovel?

Alec gives a final grab beneath the surface, gives a satisfied grunt, and hauls out a huge water rat -- the size of a house cat, with rank black fur and flashing red eyes. Cable recoils in horror.

ALEC

Naw, just Alessandro.

Holding the squirming animal by the scruff of its neck, Alec pats its head and walks into the lab. Seeing Cable's shock, Linda smiles apologetically.

LINDA

You don't have to be crazy to be around him, but it sure helps.

CABLE

I qualify, just for taking this job.

LINDA

Trouble is, Alec sincerely thinks everyone must like the swamps and every critter in them as much as he does.

Cable turns and looks after Alec.

ALEC (O.S.)

Don't you, uh, what's your name, Roper?

ANOTHER ANGLE, as Cable finds Holland daubing the animal's fur and spreading the stuff on a microscope slide.

CABLE

Cable.

ALEC

Ah. Knew it was something like that.
(indicates animal)
Got a one-celled animal living in his fur that makes a terrific host.

He jots down something in a notebook covered with abstruse notations.

CABLE

I'll remember that next time I throw a party.

Alec grins and looks a second at Cable.

ALEC

Understand you have a sensor out. Want to go take a look?

CABLE (cont'd)

How'd you know that?

ALEC

Heard you talking to Charlie.
How about it? I'll give you
the Cook's Tour.

CABLE

(a bit off-guard)

Guess I could ask Charlie. Maybe
he could get some men to give us
an escort.

ALEC

(laughs)

The only dangerous thing out there
is all these government Eagle Scouts
and their popguns.

(takes off his lab coat)

Anyway, Ritter's always begging me
to get some fresh air. He'll be
tickled pink. Might even give you a
raise.

Cable cracks a grin. Alec looks innocent.

ST3/D

8 OMIT 8

9 EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 9

MOVING SHOT skimming over the water of a cypress tunnel, then
breaking out into the intense sunlight and a panorama of broad
swamps.

9A EXT. ABOARD A SMALL MOTOR BOAT. DAY. 9A

Alec spreads his arms open in the sunlight, letting the little
boat find its own way across the thriving water. Cable grins.

CABLE

You look like a tree.

ALEC

(laughs)

I feel like a tree sometimes.
(looking around)

Like the swamps?

CABLE
My favorite things. I love mosquitoes,
snakes and aligators.

ALEC
(taking it as sincerity)
Me too.

Cable looks at him a bit askew.

CABLE
(beat)
What happened to the guy I'm replacing
on such short notice? A gator got him,
right?

ALEC
(defensive)
The gator was only doing what comes
naturally for him.

He looks at her with a mixture of humor and something else so
intense that Cable shifts her glance away.

9B EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 9B

ANOTHER ANGLE, FROM HIDING IN THE BRUSH. It's a HAND-HELD SHOT,
a POV that's clearly watching the two. Their boat bumps ashore
on a small island, and Holland hops out. The POV MOVES BACK INTO
HIDING.

10 EXT. SWAMP ISLAND. DAY. 10

DEEP IN VEGETATION -- Cable slogging her way after Alec -- eyes
swinging left and right.

CABLE
I hate swamps.

ALEC
A neatness freak, I'll bet.

CABLE
You got it. You could eat off my
kitchen floor.

ALEC
You could eat off this swamp.

CABLE

Yuck.

She stops, picking some sort of vegetation goo off her pants.

ALEC

Keep moving. And keep your eyes open.

CABLE

(instantly alarmed)

For what?

He takes a beautiful flower from the side of the path and holds it up, laughing.

ALEC

One of these Orchids might jump out and do you in.

(admires it)

Over a hundred species of Genus Orchia here. It's why I came to the swamps. The life is here. Lots of beauty in the swamps. If you only open your eyes.

He takes puts the flower carefully into his pack, then points into the nearby tangle; Cable stops, arrested by the beauty.

REVERSE ON MANY MORE OF THE FLOWERS, airy, beautiful things growing among the trunks of ancient trees.

BACK ON CABLE, CLOSE, AND A BIT LOW IN FRAME.

CABLE

Beautiful.

(grins nervously)

Guess I shouldn't be so nervous. I've got a feeling I'm safer in the swamps with you than if I was home in my own bed.

ANGLE ON ALEC, some ways ahead. He stops and turns. A funny grin on his face.

CABLE

(beat)

I mean...

(stumbling)

I mean quicksand and gators and all that...

ALEC

(grins)

Nothing wrong with you that a couple months without TV wouldn't cure. There is quicksand all through here, 'course, but it's not bad if you keep moving...

BACK ON CABLE. VERY LOW IN FRAME.

CABLE

Oh...

She sinks lower.

WIDER ANGLE, Cable up to her knees in the muck. Alec comes back and hauls her out. Lifts her up onto a hummock of solid ground. Cable stares at her trousers in disgust.

ALEC

I know what we're all taught, that cleanliness is next to godliness...

CABLE

I just paid a fortune for these boots!

ALEC

(he leans closer)

But to me life's next to godliness. Look inside God's most astonishing creation -- a human -- what do you see?

Calbe looks as if seeing him for the first time.

CABLE

You nuts, or what?

ALEC

Formica? Straight lines, chrome and deodorant? Heck, no, you see blood and bone, pump and flow and a million messy miracles.

Cable starts to sink again. She hops away and sinks in up to her hips.

CABLE

(through her teeth)
Holland, get me the hell out of here.

He comes up and puts his arm around her shoulder.

ALEC
Look at the most creative, personal
thing a man and woman can do, and
you'll see things growing... Unpre-
dictable... Magical. Hot.
(kisses her)

Cable gives him a good shove backwards, pulls herself out of the mud with a mighty heave and tramps off onto more solid ground.

CABLE
Save the malarchy for your wife, Holland.
Now if you don't mind, I'll go take a
look at that sensor.

She turns and slogs off. For some reason Alec's grinning as he picks himself up and follows.

MOVING WITH THEM. The MUSIC comes up. We remember that Cable is pushing ahead into brush occupied somewhere by very dangerous men.

ANOTHER ANGLE. Cable and Holland break out into a clearing and a view of the water once more. Visible in the distance is the barn. By now Cable is drenched with sweat.

Alec stops and points.

ALEC
There's your burned out sensor.

ANOTHER ANGLE. SHOT WIDENS as Cable scrambles towards us, REVEALING the tall ROD FOREGROUND which we saw Ferret's men around earlier, with the small cylindrical device painted dull green at its top.

Cable sloshes up and expertly removes its cover. Immediately she's acting like something is suspicious. She pokes a thick section of wet mud from the thing's innards. Alec ENTERS FRAME, puzzled.

ALEC
Thing's six feet off the ground.
How'd mud get in here?

Cable now has the whole thing opened. All the wires have been cut cleanly in half. She looks up at him, then nervously around at the jungle.

Next instant someone stumbles out of the bush and crashes into Cable from behind! A HUGE MUSIC STING. Then whoever it is falls flat on his face in the tall grass with a GROAN.

By now Cable has thrown herself back with a SCREAM. But Alec seems more alarmed than frightened. He stoops and rolls the man over. We recognize the agent assaulted by Ferret. His face is black and swollen, his lips caked with dark froth.

Alec takes his pulse, looks at his eyes, then pulls up the man's pant legs. He finds nothing on the first leg, but on the second he finds what he suspected. Two small puncture wounds, atop a mound of inflamed flesh.

ALEC

Water Moccasin, I'd say.

He's instantly treating the man with a snake bite kit he pulls from his day pack. The man tries to talk, but only an incoherent babble results.

ALEC

Easy, Randy. Don't try to talk.

Cable stares at the man, her face white.

CABLE

You know who this is?

ALEC

One of the guards. Must've been on patrol. Weird...

CABLE

What?

ALEC

Snake got him really high in the leg. Must've been a big one --

Without another word he hauls the man up over his shoulder and starts back for the boat. Cable looks after, dazed.

CABLE

I thought you said these swamps weren't dangerous...

Alec doesn't stop. Cable runs after him, afraid to be left behind.

ST3/E

11 EXT. COMPOUND/BARN. DAY. 11

ANGLE ON MOTORBOAT racing over the water, slowing just enough to make the dock in front of the barn. While it's still moving Cable leaps off and races ahead.

At the barn, Cable slows, noticing the eirey stillness.

CABLE
(calls)
Charlie?

After a moment Charlie eases out of the command shed. He looks grim.

CHARLIE
Cable. What the hell's your story?

CABLE
Charlie, we've got trouble. We --

CHARLIE
You sure as hell do -- Ritter's
gonna have your ass for --

He stops, seeing Alec with the delirious guard. Immediately Charlie swings into action, shouting ORDERS, rushing to help. AGENTS materialized from the command shed -- Ritter bursts from the barn. The agents decend on their stricken comrade, but Ritter just turns and looks at Cable for a long moment, as if it's all her fault. Then he wheels and barks --

RITTER
Bring my jeep around -- move!

A driver races off.

11A EXT. BARN. DAY. 11A

JUMP CUT TO a large four-wheel-drive vehicle roaring into the clearing, doors being thrown open, the agent being loaded aboard, Alec at the center of it.

ANOTHER ANGLE, ASIDE, ON CABLE AND CHARLIE. Cable leans over and

speaks in a low voice.

CABLE
Charlie. Anything suspicious happen
while --

RITTER (OS)
(interrupting)
You're damn right something suspicious
happened!

WIDER ANGLE as Cable and Charlie are decended upon by Ritter,
who's absolutely fuming.

RITTER (cont'd)
A stupid broad of an agent, first
day on the job, takes the scientist
we're all supposed to be guarding,
and exposes him to god knows what
on an unguarded lark in the bush!

ALEC
Now look, Ritter, I --

RITTER
-- And if I've got my way, and by
god I will, she'll be on the next
copter back to Washington! A woman's
got no place around a guy like you!

He turns and stalks for the car, Cable shouting after.

CABLE
If we hadn't gone out there he
wouldn't have been found at all!
Besides that -- there's a cut sensor
out there -- what about that?

Ritter gets into the vehicle.

RITTER
Which sector?

CABLE
Sector three.

RITTER
Hank was working on that one when he
got bitten by the gator.
(as if to a child)

Needless to say he didn't put it all back together before he collapsed.

Next instant the car's moving down the narrow road into the swamp and Ritter is gone. Cable's uneasy eyes follow; the rest of the agents eyes are on her. She turns, sees this, and tightens her lips.

CABLE

(to Charlie)

As far as I'm concerned, Charlie, we should be on full alert.

CHARLIE

Well, when you start running the defense here, you can put us on full alert. But right now I'm in charge, and I'm telling you to get back in the electronics shack and do the job you're supposed to do.

He turns and begins to walk away. There's an awkward silence. Alec looks at her.

ALEC

Sorry, Cable.

CABLE

Tickled pink, huh?

She turns to go too. Then the silence is shattered by SHOTS -- four of them in quick succession from inside the barn -- coupled with a sharp SCREAM from Linda!

The guards swing around with weapons ready. Charlie is already running back as Alec and Cable charge through the door.

CHARLIE

Three men with me, the rest keep watch! Move it!

ST3/E

12 INT. LABORATORY. NIGHT. 12

The automatic door shoots open and the guards burst in, guns drawn, followed by Cable, Alec and Charlie.

Linda jerks around. But rather than looking in distress, she has a big grin on her face. With noticeable care She holds up the

large vial Alec filled in Sc 7.

LINDA

The damndest thing... this newest batch you cooked up...

She dips her fingertips gently into the beaker.

LINDA (cont'd)

I knew you were trying to formulate something revolutionary, but this is literally dynamite. Watch...

She flicks her fingers over the bare floor. Several drops sail off her fingers and EXPLODE when they strike the floor, burning with a strange green fire.

Charlie and Cable jump back, startled. Alec stares at it.

ALEC

Incredible...

LINDA

Weird, huh?

Alec gives his characteristic laugh. Charlie shakes his head, half amused, half out of patience.

CHARLIE

Sixteen weeks I been on this job, and all you've come up with is one thing after another that either stinks so bad or looks so bad or blows up or...
(shakes his head)

If the taxpayers only knew, Holland, they'd string you up by your budget.

He turns and goes out, followed by his men. Cable turns and looks at Holland.

JUMP CUT TO:

A computer CHATTERING up its readout. PULL BACK MOVING as Alec slams a wall safe and walks PAST CAMERA carrying a worn notebook.

CABLE

(almost accusing)

I thought you must be working on some sort of weapons system. I knew it

wasn't --

ALEC
(shaking his head)
Plants. The only way I thought my
work might be explosive was socially.

About to get back to work, he takes the day pack off his shoulder and tosses it aside. Then remembers. He goes back and pulls out the Orchid he gathered out in the swamps with Cable. It's now crushed and wilted from the effects of Alec carrying the agent over his shoulder.

ALEC
(to plant, sympathetic)
Been a rough day for all of us,
huh?

He puts the plant down, takes the notebook and vial of the new formula and goes over to a huge, periscope-like thing, flipping a mass of switches. An attached TV screen lights.

ALEC
You like gadgets. Ever see an
electron microscope before?

Cable, despite herself, has to come closer. A strange lunar landscape has come into focus on the video monitor.

CABLE
What in the world is it you're doing
here, anyway, Holland?

He twirls some knobs. The screen PANS over the jagged surface until a cluster of circular, segmented organisms is REVEALED. Alec jabs at the screen with his finger, fascinated.

ALEC (cont'd)
See these little guys here? DNA
chromosomes from the common laboratory
bacilli e. coli.

He replaces the slide in the thing with one with a drop of his new substance on it.

We PAN with the SCREEN until another series of clusters is REVEALED...of rod-like creatures.

ALEC
Now this is the new stuff -- just

another laboratory bacilli -- a plant matrix called D complex.

(looks at her)

Each of these organisms have been around labs for years. But always separate. Not surprising, since one's animal, and the other's vegetable.

He adjusts the controls until something very different centers ONTO THE MONITOR'S SCREEN. It's similar to the e. coli bacilli chromosomes, except it has one of the dark spurs grafted into its ring, jutting off at a right angle.

Alec, delighted at what he sees, taps the screen like a proud father outside the nursery window.

ALEC

See this guy? It's never existed before on the face of the earth!

He turns and grins at Cable. She looks from the screen to Holland, uneasy.

CABLE

Recombinant DNA...

ALEC

Know about it?

CABLE

Just enough to be scared. What do you want, tomatoes the size of weather balloons?

Alec laughs.

ALEC

It wouldn't mind tomatoes that would grow on a desert, for instance, or in burnt-out Biafrica, or even in the South Western United States, say, in 2001 when there's gonna be six and a half billion people on this planet, most of them hungry, and our own water tables will be low as our oil reserves are now.

Cable just stares at him. He's serious for the first time since she's known him.

ALEC (cont'd)

Maybe I can make just a little difference with this stuff, if it ever works.

CABLE

And what if it falls into the wrong hands?

He just stares back at her, as if he can't believe she's so negative. Linda walks over, fascinated by what she sees on the screen.

LINDA

That the new formula? It's replicating.

Alec takes a fresh look at the odd little bulbs of energy. They're joining and splitting, many of them now in the new "Q" mode. He takes the vial and holds it up to the light, then looks at his sister.

ALEC

Let's try this stuff out on something.

Linda laughs.

LINDA

Why not? Who knows, after eight years and fifteen formulas, we're due for one that works.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Alec returns with the shriveled Orchid. Cable looks at its drooping and pale leaves.

CABLE

Looks like the plants in my apartment.

Linda picks up a the notebook and a pencil. Alec measures a small quantity of the fluid into a beaker of water.

ALEC

One part formula to one hundred of water.

LINDA

(glancing at her watch)
Time...4:30 p.m., March 23rd.

Alec waters the plant with the solution, then places it back on

the table. Cable stares at it a moment.

CABLE
How long before you'll know?

Alec looks at her.

ALEC
What? You expect it to leap out
of its pot and dance a fandango?
It'll take a week, maybe longer.

Cable looks back at the plant and shakes her head.

CABLE
This assignment has all the thrills of
watching grass grow.

Alec reacts sharply, completes his recording of the process in the thick notebook, then turns on his heel. Cable watches him slam the notebook back into the wall safe, then walk to the far end of the lab without a look back. Linda shrugs, watching Cable's dismay.

LINDA
Ridiculously sensitive, under all his
jokes... Our dad was the same.

Cable looks around, still more off-balance.

CABLE
Your dad?

LINDA
Never heard of Walter Holland, the
biophysicist? Noble Prize? He used
to throw a mean bunsen burner, I can
tell you. Alec and I spent half our
childhood cleaning up after his tantrums.
Perfectionist to the day he died.
Alec's the same.

Having said this Linda leaves the room, off on other business.

CABLE
(to herself)
His sister... The rat let me think...

Over Cable's startled face we HEAR Alec's exclamation from across the lab.

ALEC (O.S.)
Oh, my god. Linda...

Cable turns and sees Alec standing as if frozen, his back to her, looking down at the floor at his feet. She rushes over.

ST3/G

ANGLE NEAR ALEC. Cable stops, confused.

CABLE
(quietly)
What...

WIDER. What they both are looking at is half a dozen bright green shoots, about three feet high, grown up directly from the floor. It's as if they've sprouted in a meadow.

Alec drops to his knees, astonished.

TIGHTER, Cable coming INTO FRAME as she kneels beside him, their faces together like children looking at a new bug. A wonderful smile sprouts over Alec's face.

ALEC
Cable... I don't believe this...
(looks at her)
The places where Linda threw the drops
of the new formula ...the boards grew
shoots...

Cable looks up, remembering, and her face registers even more delight.

CABLE
Oh, Alec...

REVERSE ANGLE FROM THE INNER LABORATORY. As Alec and Cable rush towards us, our SHOT LOWERS TO INCLUDE THE ORCHID they fed with the formula. But now, instead of the crushed, withered thing that was there before, we see a plant nearly twice its size, thickly leaved, with a powerful, wiry trunk and gnarled finger-like roots grown at such an enormous rate they've shattered the pot. In fact, the plant has taken root around the corner of the table in a grasp so powerful it's buckled the wood's veneer.

Alec stares at it, transported.

ALEC
I don't believe this!
(jumps up)
LINDA!! GET IN HERE QUICK!!

Cable shakes herself, then Alec grabs her and laughs. Then he kisses her, and the kiss holds, and holds.

Until Linda comes in.

LINDA
What?
(seeing them kiss)
Oh...
(then seeing the shoots)
Ohhh.... Alec.

Alec looks from his sister to Cable, catching his breath, his eyes alight.

ALEC
Ritter. He's got to be told right away! I want to see that bastard's face when he realizes we've done it!

Cable, unable to believe quite what's happening, turns and heads for the door.

13 DELETE 13
14 DELETE 14
15 DELETE 15
16 DELETE 16
17 DELETE 17
18 DELETE 18
19 DELETE 19

20 EXT. COMPOUND/BARN. SUNSET. 20

A WIDE, WILD SHOT, as the sun burns down through the horizon. Still the swamp is seething with life, and the SOUNDS of BIRDS and ACQUATIC ANIMALS are everywhere.

Halfway across the clearing she spots an armed man, presumably a guard, just standing in the gathering dusk.

CABLE
Guard -- is Ritter back?

The man stares at her a split-second, caught off-guard, then

snaps a semi-salute.

MAN
In the Command Shed.

CABLE
Thanks!

Cable rushes off; the man steps forward slightly, making sure she's gone. And enough light hits his face to tell us it's Bruno.

21 INT. COMMAND SHACK. DUSK. 21

Cable rushes in.

CABLE
Ritter?

No one's there. She punches a communication button and speaks into a mike.

CABLE (cont'd)
All units, this is Cable calling
for Ritter. Anybody seen him?

There's not only no answer, but no line noise from the instrument. Cable pulls it out from the panel and finds all the wires cut. She freezes a moment, then turns to the control panel. Several of the sensors now read 'Malfunction.' Then a persistent BEEPING begins.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Cable turns and scans the control panel, coming to a bank of TV MONITORS. A LIGHT beneath one is flashing.

CLOSER, ON MONITOR. The button is labeled "Penetration"

Cable swallows hard. Grabs several buttons and knobs and begins manipulating the remote camera. The picture on the monitor PANS JERKILY as Cable sweeps its sector. Suddenly it REVEALS someone on the road. Crawling.

Cable makes it ZOOM. IN AND IN it goes, until its so tight we can definitely identify CHARLIE, clawing his way forward a few more inches. Then he collapses.

TIGHT ON CABLE'S FACE.

WIDER. She darts to the radio and picks up the mike. It comes

away in her hand, its wire cut too. She stares at its severed wires a moment, unable to believe --

Next instant Ferret SMASHES into her from behind!

WIDER ANGLE. The powerful man hauls her up, kicking and SCREAMING, and throws her against the wall. He then picks up the radio and smashes it with all his strength. on the floor. But by the time he turns, Cable is up and running.

She's fast, but Ferret's faster, catching her a step from the open door, hauling her backwards into a small galley. He whirls her around, his arm raised to strike. But, with incredible swiftness, Cable brings her head forward and SMASHES straight into the bridge of the man's nose. Ferret reels backward, clutching his face. Cable grabs a frying pan off the stove and backhands his head with a tremendous RINGING CONCUSSION.

Ferret timbers backwards -- Cable makes it out the door!

ST3/I

24 EXT. THE CLEARING/BARN. DUSK. 24

At the dead run, Cable bursts from the command shed, and runs to the guard house. Then jams on the brakes as she sees the legs of the guard thrust out from behind the building. She turns and SCREAMS at the barn.

CABLE

ALEC!!!

Before she can get another word out, BRUNO catches her from the blind side. The two sprawl in the dirt.

CLOSER ANGLE. Cable rolls up on one elbow as Bruno lunges for her and catches him full in the face with a kick. He drops with a GRUNT.

Cable claws her way for the barn, but now Ferret is careening towards her, his face streaming blood, a ROAR of rage in his throat. Cable dodges sideways. The man's momentum carries him past.

She runs for the slain guard's body. Another MAN runs at her from still another direction.

Cable snatches up the guard's weapon, turns and FIRES A BURST with lightning ferocity. The anonymous assailant cartwheels backwards. Cable wheels and levels her sights at Bruno.

CABLE

Hold it!

Bruno stops in his tracks.

CABLE

Hands in the air!

Bruno throws his hands in the air. Next moment something metallic prods into Cable's spine.

FERRET(O.S.)

Your hands in the air.

WIDER ANGLE, REVEALING FERRET, backed up by two armed COMMANDOS. He prods his pistol into her back. Cable drops the weapon and wheels on Bruno.

CABLE

You filthy traitor!

BRUNO

(surprised)

Who? I'm loyal. Just not to Uncle Sam.

25 INT. BARN. NIGHT. 25

The double doors are thrown open and Ferret and his armed crew enter, dragging Cable after.

CABLE

Who the hell are you, anyway?

FERRET

Trouble.

He grabs her hand and shoves it into the reader. Cable janks it back out and SCREAMS --

CABLE

ALEC! LOOK OUT -- !!

With a lightning chop of steel, Ferret brings his gun down across her skull. Cable goes down hard. Ferret rams her hand into the reader.

26 INT. LABORATORY. NIGHT. 26

FERRET

Freeze!

Alec and Linda start around, incredulous at the guns.

CLOSER ANGLE. Ferret struts in front of Alec, his face twisted in a pleased leer. He nods towards the plant.

FERRET

Interesting specimen, Dr. Holland. I
I don't think I've ever seen anything
like it.

He fondles the leathery leaves, then hauls up on it with all his strength. Alec surges forward but is jammed back with gun barrels. Ferret is lifting the entire table with the orchid as handle. But the plant holds on.

He lets it all down with a BANG and points into Alec's face with his pistol.

FERRET

We know you've found the formula.
I represent a private party that
would give an arm and a leg to own
it. Your arm and leg, if
necessary.

ALEC

Get out of my lab, you --

Ferret cocks his gun.

LINDA

(low)

Alec. Don't...

At that moment somebody enters through the security door behind them. All eyes turn at the SOUND, and Alec and Linda react in surprise -- almost hope -- as Ritter stalks into the room.

He stops, scowling.

RITTER

What's the holdup?

FERRET

He's being difficult.

Alec looks from his assailants to Ritter, stunned.

ALEC
Ritter... not you...

Ritter advances, an awful smile on his face.

RITTER
No, Dr. Holland. Not Ritter...
Ritter, poor fellow, is long dead.

Then "Ritter" performs a totally unexpected feat of black magic. He grabs his right ear and with a single motion pulls off the face we've known him by, revealing the MAN disguised beneath.

It's a sharper, extremely intelligent face...a hawk's nose and eyes...a broad, thin mouth with a startling smile of canine teeth. The visage of an extraordinary adversary.

And he speaks with a totally different voice. Reasonant. Cultured. Electric.

ARCANE
You've heard of but never seen me,
Dr. Holland, so please permit me to
introduce myself. My name is Arcane.

The faces of Cable, Alec and Linda drain, their expressions going from fright to numb terror. The man has removed a silver pistol from his jacket.

ARCANE (cont'd)
Of course I've planned this whole operation to look like a strike from outside, so there'll be no suspicion. Besides, since I'm the only link with the organization in Washington monitoring this operation, no one will even know anything's gone wrong for weeks.

ALEC
You'll never get the formula, Arcane. Never.

ARCANE
Oh, nonsense.
(to Ferret)
You see, Ferret, is to threaten this man.
(smiles)
Threaten those he loves.

Arcane swings his revolver at Linda's head. Ferret jumps back out of the line of fire.

ARCANE

(hard, to Alec)

All materials pertaining to this substance -- now, or she dies. We'll see what sort of rejuvenation you can perform on her.

LINDA

Don't, Alec.

Arcane cocks the pistol. Alec shakes his head and moves to a wall safe, removing a thick stack of worn notebooks. Bruno takes them.

ARCANE

The actual solution as well.

Alec hesitates, then turns for the vial -- but next instant Linda, with no warning whatsoever, drives her elbow into Bruno's gut. Bruno staggers backwards -- Linda grabs the notebooks and runs for the door.

Arcane wheels and FIRES. Linda sprawls.

ANGLE AT DOORWAY -- the notebooks spill along the floor, the last one skidding through the opening. Linda lies motionless.

ALEC

Linda!

He tears over, trying her pulse desperately. But her body is limp as a doll's in his arms.

ARCANE

You've only yourself to blame, Holland.

Alec leaps up, his hands bloody, and charges into the laboratory. With incredible swiftness he dodges to the vial of formula and grabs it.

Ferret makes a lunge for it -- Alec darts away, tearing for the door. But half-way there a GUARD throws a body block -- Alec sprawls face forward and crashes with a SHATTERING OF GLASS.

Instantly, he's enveloped in a WHOOSHING EXPLOSION OF GREEN FLAME.

Arcane and all his men are driven backwards by a wall of flame. The SCREAMS of Alec are deafening -- he staggers to his feet -- careening towards them. Everyone dives out of the way.

ST3/J

27 INT. BETWEEN OLD FACADE AND NEW SHELL/LAB. NIGHT. 27

CLOSE ON CABLE. Face down in the shadows, just her eyes wedge open as Alec flames by above -- she struggles to get up, then collapses. Over one of the notebooks.

28 EXT. COMPOUND/BARN. NIGHT. 28

The burning figure of Dr. Alec Holland bursts SCREAMING from the barn, staggers across the compound, seeking the only relief he can -- the dark waters of the swamp.

The instant he plunges in there's a tremendous BOIL OF WATER AND VAPOR, some sort of strange reaction between the water and the compound coating Alec's body. A second EXPLOSION occurs and then a THIRD. WATER, STEAM, and a eerie GREEN VAPOR pour out.

The entire cove of swamp lights in the verdant effulgence. Birds whorl skyward, glowing clots of moss spiral up in the chimney of heat.

REVERSE -- on Arcane and Ferret at water's edge. Arcane looks indifferent. Bruno comes up behind, looks at the boiling fire a moment almost fearfully, then hands Arcane the stack of notebooks and looks away.

Arcane takes them with a pleased smile, nodding towards the barn.

ARCANE

Strip it. And no bodies, no witnesses.

He stalks away.

FERRET

Yes, sir.

Arcane enters a waiting four-wheel-drive vehicle and a moment later is gone. Bruno turns and looks at the swamps. Uneasy. Ferret looks at the barn. A huge LOW EXPLOSION rolls through its gut. Ferret turns to his men.

FERRET (cont'd)

Dump the bodies! Let's go!

PAN AND ZOOM INTO THE BUSH OFF TO ITS SIDE. We glimpse Cable, bloodied and dazed, but alive. She slips into deeper hiding. It seems she's holding something -- like a notebook...

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT II

29 EXT. THE SWAMPS/BARN. DAWN. 29

A deep red sky over a windless, forboding morning, caped with dark smoke off the ruined barn. Ferret smokes, watching like a hawk in a treetop.

His men poke through the mess of the barn, but there is little to save. At the water's edge, the last weighted body is thrown into the deep swamp.

TIGHT ON the brush near the barn. A SLIGHT PAN REVEALS CABLE, bloodied and dazed, but far from out.

IN HER POV WE SEE BRUNO and another MAN, not fifteen feet way in the ruins. Bruno yawns and shakes his body against the morning chill.

MAN

I say we get back and have breakfast.

BRUNO

Sounds like a good idea.

MAN

Hasn't been any fun since we killed that crazy professor. Boy, you see him burn?

He troops laughing back towards the four-wheel-drive station wagon where the others smoke and stamp their feet, anxious to be gone.

ANGLER ON CABLE. The shock of the news has just hit her anew.

She takes in a quick sob of breath, then stifles it. But Bruno hears it.

He turns, and walks to the edge of the brush. This time Cable is well hidden, behind a great twisted tree. But she's still just a few feet from the armed man.

TIGHT ON HER. We see her slip the notebook it into a cleft in the twisted trunk of the tree. Then crawl farther back into the bush.

BRUNO

Ferret?

Of course, no answer from the brush. The man hefts his weapon a moment, then shrugs and walks back towards the car.

CLOSER ON CABLE. She leans back with a careful sigh of relief. Next moment Ferret leaps from behind her with an awful SHOUT and grabs her with both arms!

FERRET

Gotcha!

ANOTHER ANGLE--NEAR THE SWAMP. Ferret drags her struggling, down towards the dark, misted water.

ANGLE FROM THE WATER-- he forces her into Alec's motor boat -- now joined by several other laughing men. They shove off. Bruno watches from the shore, his face twisted with unwelcome sympathy for the girl.

30 EXT. SWAMP/WATER. DAWN. 30

The rocking boat lurches farther out into the black pool, the girl's kicks ECHO hollowly from its aluminum sides.

EXTREMELY LOW ANGLE -- AT WATER LEVEL. With a tremendous SPLASH, Cable's thrown overboard by Ferret. She comes up choking and struggling -- Ferret shoves her head back under -- a moment later she gasps up on the far side. Ferret gives a shout of cruel delight -- it's like a game to him.

He prods at her with an oar; Cable grabs it from his hand, flings it away and swims for shore. The men begin rowing after her with the remaining oar, the boat going in crazy scoops and twists.

They catch her again, and now she's nearing exhaustion.

CLOSER ANGLE. Ferret leans out and shoves her under. She grabs his hand, but she doesn't come up. BUBBLES begin bursting all around his wrists... a pause, more BUBBLES... Then nothing. A second goes by...ten seconds... fifteen seconds.

Cable's hand falls away from Ferret's and goes under.

And then, just when it seems no one could last a second longer -- a TREMENDOUSLY POWERFUL GREEN HAND HAND snaps up from under the water and seizes Ferret's wrist!

The man is pulled headlong into the water. A split second later, a GREEN GIANT OF A FORM looms up out of the water with an astonishing burst of energy, spilling the boat, sending its crew sailing twenty feet through the air!

There are SCREAMS, SPLASHES AND SHOUTS in the dim light.

ANGLE ON THE THING -- A DIM SHAPE surging through the deep mist like some incredible leviathan. Whatever it is, it makes the far shore and lumbers out carrying the limp body of Cable like a rag doll. Despite the FIRING from the men still on shore, the creature is soon gone.

31 EXT. SWAMP/BARN. DAWN. 31

ANGLE ON Ferrit scrambling ashore, eyes wide. He directs the FIRING until all weapons are spent, then, as the swamp is plunged into silence, shakes himself like a wet, ferocious dog.

FERRET

Get it! Kill it! And her!
Kill them both!

32 OMIT 32

33 EXT. DEEP IN THE SWAMPS. DAWN. 33

Cable's dumped unceremoniously into thick, snakelike grass. The legs of something clump around her -- whatever this thing is, it's big as hell, and really rough. We can hear its harsh breathing, hear the brush cracking and breaking from his huge body, OUT OF FRAME ABOVE.

CLOSE ON CABLE'S FACE. The girl is still only semi-conscious...her eyes flickering in delirium. A huge green HAND COMES INTO FRAME and blunders into the hair of her face. The girl jerks away, reliving the drowning. It's not clear to use whether this beast is going to kill her, rape her, or what.

Fortunately for Cable, the attention of the thing is drawn away by the SOUNDS of MEN -- SHOUTS, and WEAPONS being readied. Approaching.

ANOTHER ANGLE. A huge greenish head swings up, seen from the rear. A big flap of verdant ear cocks to the sound. A low RUMBLING, HISSING sound comes from the thing, of utter rage and hatred boiling just beneath the surface of a huge chest.

A moment later the head is GONE FROM FRAME. PAN DOWN TO CABLE, dazed and helpless.

ST3/K

33A EXT. DEEP SWAMPS AND THE ROAD. DAWN. 33A

ANGLE ON one of Ferret's men, easing through the brush, an automatic weapon poised in his hands. Behind him in the brush we can see two other men, flanking.

The man FOREGROUND stops suddenly. Smiles.

IN HIS POV we SEE Cable, struggling up on her knees, then sagging back down, too weak to move. She doesn't even see the man.

REVERSE ON THE MAN. He lifts his weapon and eases off the safety.

MAN
(quietly)
So long, baby...

He puts her into his sights. His finger moves to the trigger.

Next instant something huge and green snakes around his head and snaps it back -- the man's body flies FROM FRAME. The weapon strikes the ground and FIRES. There's a MUFFLED SCREAM from the dying man. Then, with the same deep, snuffing BREATHING we heard before, a POV swings around and takes Cable INTO FRAME. The girl sees whatever it is that's looking at her, and reacts in dawning horror.

Next instant SHOUTS and approaching RUNNING FOOTSTEPS SWING THE POV AWAY.

ANGLE ON FERRET -- running through the brush, accompanied by Bruno and two other men. They stop, trying to figure out where the shots came from.

FERRET

Willie?

No answer. Suddenly something big lurches through the brush a hundred feet ahead, splashes through shallows and into deeper shadow. The men give chase, now looking a bit spooked. Ferret directs one to flank off to their right.

ANGLE ON CABLE. She presses down into the damp grass; Ferret and two men race past her, deeper into the swamp. She turns and crawls off in the opposite direction.

ANGLE ON FERRET, BRUNO and one other MAN. A SNAP off to their right. The third man, nervous as a cat already, turns and FIRES -- there are SCREAMS and SHOUTS. Ferret immediately orders the firing broken off. They all run over and look.

IN THEIR POV we SEE Ferret's fourth man dead. Ferret wheels on the trigger- happy man.

FERRET

You crazy, or what? Jesus!

Then another SOUND, directly ahead. They all hunch down.

FERRET

Spread out -- go!

ANGLE IN SWAMPS -- the men running, fanning out.

ANGLE ON FERRET AND BRUNO, the third man visible through the brush. ANOTHER SOUND. Both duck down. Bruno looks at Ferret.

BRUNO

Maybe we should...

Suddenly there's a TERRIBLE SCREAM from the direction of the third man's hiding place. Something huge thrashes up in the bush. From the SOUNDS, it's coming directly after them.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Maybe we should get the hell out
of here!

Without another word both men turn and race off into the swamps.

ST3/L

33B INT. DEEP SWAMPS. DAY. 33B

Cable pushes herself ahead by sheer will power, splashing through

knee-deep green water, then grabbing her way up an embankment onto a crude trail. A moment later she breaks out on an old asphalt road. At the same instant the swamp is pierced by a tremendous SEETHING ROAR. She stops, chilled, then turns and runs even faster, goaded now by terror.

34 OMIT 34
 35 OMIT 35
 36 OMIT 36
 37 OMIT 37
 38 OMIT 38
 39 OMIT 39

40 EXT. SWAMPS AND AN ESTATE. MORNING. 40

THROUGH A TELESCOPIC ESTABLISHING SHOT we see a huge antebellum estate of great splendor and isolation, surrounded by wild swamps and towering cypress. FOREGROUND is a sign reading:

PRIVATE PROPERTY
 NO TRESPASSING

Violators Will Be
Violated

ZOOM TO THE HOUSE and

CUT TO:

41 INT. LABORATORY. DAY. 41

WIDE ANGLE ON a darker laboratory than Holland's. Stuffed hawks, boar's heads, ranks of tomes, and, in one place, a patch of light where a man hunches over a desk. OUR MOVE IN REVEALS Arcane.

He is in a dressing gown, his face pale, his bright, sleepless eyes poring over Alec Holland's notebooks. A beautiful young GIRL enters with a serving tray. Arcane speaks to her as if she'd always been there.

ARCANE

The work with DNA I expected -- but the attempt to combine plant and animal is, I must admit, audacious! His notes are quite generous, but...

Arcane tosses the notebook aside and takes up the next number, weary.

ARCANE

So far I'm merely well informed on
all his mistakes and dead ends.
Maybe in this one...lucky fourteen.

The girl comes to him with a silver thermos of steaming coffee,
replacing the one by his elbow. She pauses, almost shyly.

GIRL

You should sleep, sir.

ARCANE

(smiles)

Sleep is for fools. I prefer
power, which, though in a fool's
hands is dangerous -- in mine
is beautiful as a bullet.

(looks off)

If you would have seen that plant --
you'd've glimpsed the key to a
world that will bow to me or starve.

ANOTHER ANGLE, his eyes back to the complicated masses of symbols
and notations.

ARCANE (cont'd)

If only I could find the damned
formula that did it...

Throws down the notebook and reaches for another. Scrambling
through them, suddenly on edge.

ARCANE (cont'd)

Ten, three, twelve --
(realizing)

Oh, my...

He turns to the girl.

ARCANE

The notebooks... how many were there?

GIRL

Um, fourteen, I think.

ARCANE

(beside himself)

Liar!

GIRL

You counted them yourself, sir!

Arcane bristles in fury.

ARCANE

But fourteen ends with notes two
weeks old -- there's another!

He's interrupted by a MESSENGER, who bursts into the lab with a
hasty knock. Another stunning girl.

MESSENGER

Ferrett has just radioed, sir.
(cautious)
Something's happened.

Arcane recoils slightly.

ARCANE

What's happened?

MESSENGER

He said he couldn't discuss it
over the radio -- he asked for
a rendezvous --

ARCANE

What's the matter with his own
vehicle?!

The messenger swallows.

MESSENGER

He just said something about
destroyed all the cars.

Arcane stares at the girl, then looks back at the notebooks.

CUT TO:

42 OMIT 42

43 OMIT 43

44 OMIT 44

ST3/M

45 EXT. DEEP SWAMPS. DAY. 45

EXTREME WIDE ANGLE on the deep reaches of the swamp. Birds
SCREECH up in fright as another BELLOWING, HALF-ANIMAL,
HALF-HURRICANE CRY ECHOES BACK AND FORTH across the immense

watery wasteland, like the threat of some primeval banshee.

46 EXT. TAMIAMI TRAIL. DAY. 46

There are only two signs of humanity on this two-lane ribbon stretched across an infinity of cypress and water -- a pair of black dots APPROACHING at great speed.

Seconds later a huge black limo and a second sedan skid to a stop on the shoulder. TWO MEN with bulges in their jackets get out of the sedan and post themselves. The limo's HORN EMITS A LONG BLAST.

ANGLE ON THE SWAMP. We HEAR MUFFLED CURSES, SPLASHING, AND PANTING BREATH, then Bruno and Ferret emerge from the swamp. They look like they've been in a pit with a tiger.

There's another long, frightening HOWL, far back in the swamps. The men throw uneasy glances over their shoulders as they scramble up the embankment to the road.

TIGHT REVERSE ON the limo's rear window. In its dark mirror Bruno and Ferret stop. Then the window slides down, and the face of Arcane is REVEALED.

He's dressed now in a shining, dark silk suit, deep purple silk tie and a gleaming stick pin: the full regalia of an immensely rich and powerful man. But an unhappy rich man.

FERRET

You're not going to believe this...

ARCANE

Where are the others?

BRUNO

S...something incredible came out of the swamps.

(swallows painfully)

And got them.

ANGLE ON Arcane. A face like a guillotine.

ARCANE

If this is your idea of a joke...

FERRET

It's no joke, Arcane. We wouldn't even be here if it hadn't gone after

the girl first...

Arcane's eyes harden still more.

ARCANE
Girl? What girl?

Bruno looks at Ferret guiltily. Ferret looks away.

47 OMIT 47

48 EXT. GAS STATION. DAY. 48

MOVING WITH CABLE -- as she staggers into the pump area of a small gas station. The place is manned only by an young black boy, JUDE, who's tipped back in a wedge of shade at the station's front stoop, fly swatter in hand. He's thirteen, rangy, with big eyes and the face of a straight-man saint.

CLOSER ANGLE ON JUDE -- watching Cable, arrested by her appearance. Her trousers mud-caked, her shirt clinging soaking wet, as she runs to a telephone booth out by the road.

ANGLE ON CABLE -- whacking the telephone. Out of service. She turns and looks towards the station.

JUDE
Uh huh. There come trouble.

Cable walks up and tries a grin.

CABLE
Hi.

Jude returns her look with unblinking wonder and reserve.

JUDE
You in a plane crash?

CABLE
Uh. Just... been out walking.

JUDE
Uh huh.

CABLE
Got lost.
(beat)
Got a phone that works?

The boy points at an old telephone inside.

48A INT. GAS STATION. DAY. 48A

ANGLE ON Cable dialing. She listens desperately to a series of ELECTRONIC SWITCHOVERS, THEN A RINGING BUZZ. She bites her lip.

CABLE
(desperate)
Operator -- give me Mobile X3974645,
please, and hurry!

Jude hovers in the doorway, face grave. No longer a child's look at all.

49 INT. ARCANE'S SPEEDING LIMO. DAY. 49

TIGHT ON A LONG, PALE HAND picking up a mobile telephone, and WIDEN TO REVEAL Arcane. The limo is moving extremely fast.

ARCANE
Yes...?

Abruptly he straightens, his whole voice and manner changing. Once again in everything but appearance he is Harry Ritter.

ARCANE (cont'd)
(Ritter's voice)
Put the call through.
(beat -- then, very strong,
and reassuring)
Cable -- what's happened -- what?
What?!
(face alters, he glances
at Ferret)
Listen, just hold on -- we'll get
to you -- you can explain later
-- where are you?

He punches a button and Cable's VOICE comes over a conference-call speaker.

CABLE (filter)
A gas station a mile south of the
road to the lab.

ARCANE

We'll be right there -- Oh...
(hoping against hope)
You didn't manage to save anything,
did you?

CABLE
Damn right. I've got the last note-
book.

Arcane's face is transformed.

ARCANE
Good soldier! Be there before you
know it -- stay by the telephone
and don't move!

50 EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP. DAY. 50

The big limo brakes and hooks around with a SCREECH OF RUBBER,
PEELING OFF in the opposite direction. The car full of body
guards squeals right after it.

DISSOLVE TO:

ST3/N

51 OMIT. 51

52 INT. GAS STATION. DAY. 52

CLOSE ANGLE ON CABLE. Trying to look casual; the boy's eyes are
still on her. She fishes in her ruined pockets, comes up with a
quarter and shoves it into the Coke machine. Nothing happens.

CABLE
Doesn't anything work around here?

JUDE
Just me.

Cable gives the machine a swift kick.

JUDE
Don't kick it, don't kick it!
(arrives, stiffens)
You gotta punch it!

He hauls off and delivers a round-house to the machine that would
kill a horse. An icy bottle clatters into the delivery trough.
The boy hands it to Cable.

Thanks... CABLE

Nothin. Name's Jude. JUDE

Cable. CABLE

The boy sticks out his hand. Cable smiles and shakes it. At a loss for something to say, she looks around at the wretched place as if it were Versailles.

Nice station. Your dad own it? CABLE

Jude looks at her gravely. Then past her.

Looks like your ride's got here. JUDE

Cable looks out the window.

53 EXT. GAS STATION. DAY. 53

CABLE'S POV REVEALS a big black limo pulled up by the empty phone booth. A second dark car slides among the pumps.

54 INT. GAS STATION OFFICE. DAY 54

BACK ON CABLE. She reacts in mounting concern. Then real alarm.

54A EXT. GAS STATION. DAY. 54A

Ferret, the man who nearly split Cable's skull back at the barn, has emerged from the limosine. He looks first towards the deserted phone booth, then towards the station itself. He carries an automatic weapon as casually as a grouse hunter stalking a treeline with his shotgun.

54B INT. GAS STATION. DAY. 54B

Cable darts behind the desk, colliding with Jude, who's crouched like a doughboy in his trench. She looks at him with quick sympathy, faking it.

Don't be afraid, Jude. CABLE

JUDE

You better try that line on someone
who desk you aint hidin behind.

Cable takes a quick peek over the top of the desk, then ducks
back even quicker. Scared.

CABLE

There a gun here, Jude?

JUDE

What kinda place you think this
is?

(1/2 beat)

Course there is.

Jude reaches up and jerks open the drawer of the desk. There's
an ancient revolver nested among the greasy receipts. Cable
grabs it.

CABLE (cont'd)

Stay here.

JUDE

Took the words right out m'mouth.

55 EXT. GAS STATION. DAY. 55

Cable darts from the back of the station, fifty feet from
Ferret. She drops into a crouch.

CABLE

(top of her lungs)

Hey -- you -- drop it!

Ferret wheels and OPENS FIRE.

The SPRAY OF BULLETS throws a storm of dust and fragments around
Cable as she dives for cover.

She somersaults behind a stack of old tires. Then she HEARS
Ferret's firing pin fall on an empty chamber. She jumps up in a
crouch and FIRES.

The old gun gives off a terrific EXPLOSION -- fire kicking out
sideways through the rusted cylinder -- then literally falls
apart in her hands.

ANGLE ON Ferret, who's dived hard in surprise, seeing what has

happened. He gets back up, ramming a fresh clip in his weapon. A terrible grin twists his face. Behind him, the dark car full of body guards wheels into view.

Cable spins and runs.

55A INT. GOONS' CAR. DAY. 55A

Ferret leaps into the front seat with Bruno and the driver, his hateful eyes locked on Cable, visible through the windshield, running for her life down the road a hundred yards ahead. The car leaps ahead.

55B EXT. SWAMP/TWO-RUT TRAIL. DAY. 55B

Cable sprints hard down the old road, deeper into trees and marshland. A scant fifty yards behind her, lurching and bumping like a maddened beast bent on revenge, comes the dark car full of Arcane's goons.

55C INT. GOONS' CAR. DAY. 55C

ANGLE ON BRUNO. He's distracted by something off to the side ahead.

55D EXT. DIRT ROAD/THROUGH WINDSHIELD. DAY. 55D

BRUNO'S POV REVEALS something big and fast CRASHING through brush off to

55E INT. GOONS' CAR. DAY. 55E

Bruno's face contorts with fear.

BRUNO

It's back -- Ferret -- it's back!
Stop the car!

The driver slows. But Ferret twists and shoves the muzzle of his weapon into the driver's ribs.

FERRET

Run her down!

BRUNO

But it's that thing!

FERRET

Screw that thing -- I want that

bitch before he gets her!

55F EXT. DIRT ROAD/THROUGH WINDSHIELD. DAY. 55F

For a moment the path to Cable is clear, and it's certain she'll be overtaken and struck down. But next instant a giant, moss-encrusted monster of some sort -- human shaped but much bigger -- crashes out of the brush and plants itself dead center in the road. It looks at Cable a heartbeat, as if to rush her, then turns in fury at the car. The horn BLARES -- but the creature isn't about to retreat. Behind, Cable trips and falls hard.

55G INT. GOONS' CAR. DAY. 55G

The men brace -- Bruno's foot jams the floorboards, searching for a brake that's not there -- but Ferret is too consumed with rage and the challenge of the beast to be afraid.

FERRET

(screaming)

Don't stop!

The driver grimly jams the accelerator to the floor.

55H EXT. THE DIRT ROAD. DAY. 55H

The car rockets ahead.

TIGHT ANGLE ON the creature. It rears up, hatred blazing in its eyes, planting itself resolutely between Cable and the speeding machine.

REVERSE ANGLE ON THE CAR'S WINDSHIELD -- the men brace for the impact.

ANGLE ON CABLE -- she twists her head away from the inevitable collision, and from the confused horror of what's she's seeing. The creature, even in these glimpses, is huge, strangely hued, and ferocious.

WIDER ANGLE -- the thing shoves out its huge arms -- the expression on its face like a man about to give his life rather than back down. Next instant the car hits.

It's a GRINDING, GRATING CRASH -- a RENDING OF METAL AND GLASS as if the car had hit a tree -- the thing shatters and buckles around the great creature's stance, stopped dead so quickly that Ferret is catapulted through the windshield with a terrible SCREAM. WIDER -- SMOKE AND STEAM gush from the ruined hood. The

doors flop open, revealing Bruno and the other gunmen, dazed in the back seat.

The beast reels back, shaken but unhurt. It turns and looks again at Cable, a direct, fiery look of strange, frightening intensity.

ANGLE ON CABLE. Terrified.

The monster lurches back around, something strangely like astonishment in its own face. It stares from the ruined car to its own two great hands -- at its own huge body, as if realizing its strength for the first time. Then it lets out a SHRIEK OF RAGE and lumbers around the side of the ruined car, tearing off the passenger door as if it were paper.

BRUNO

No--!!!

Bruno must weigh three hundred pounds; the thing flings him into the bushes as if he weighs fifty.

But now a gunman is scrambling out of the wreckage on the far side, his weapon in his hands. The huge creature charges; the man OPENS FIRE.

A TREMENDOUS ROAR FROM THE AUTOMATIC WEAPON -- the monster's body is pummeled and spun. Next moment a bloodied and furious Ferret pops up and also begins pumping bullets into the monster. Pieces of green matter spiral from the beast's back, shoulders and legs -- but he somehow recovers and, incredibly, starts for Ferret -- even more enraged.

Ferret backs up, gun empty, face falling into panic. The only thing that saves him is Cable's SCREAM.

The big thing wheels and sees one of the gunmen with Cable jerked up before him as human shield. The beast immediately goes for him.

The man fires the last of his shots. The beast comes on, seizes the man by the head and shoulders, lifts him above its head and dashes him onto the dirt like a man killing a monkey. The concussion is so terrifically hard that the man bounces, but then he doesn't move again.

The beast wheels around to the car. Everyone, men and Cable, is gone.

CLOSER ON THE BEAST. It SNUFFS the air for scent and starts off

after the men. But he's gone no more than a few steps when he stops at a sound. He turns, then advances towards a bush.

When he's five feet from it, there's a movement from behind it. The monster lets out a bloodcurdling SCREAM and charges, tearing out great gouts of the bush. This results in a second SCREAM -- female this time. A second later Cable breaks cover and runs in terror.

Something strange happens then; the monster appears startled. It shakes its head, takes a few tentative steps towards her, then stops again.

We SEE Cable has waded out into the swamp, dangerously deep. The monster takes another step towards her. Cable staggers even farther out into the quicksand. The monster stops, then, slowly retreats.

Cable watches it as long as she dares, making sure it's well out of reach, then pulls herself out of the dangerous mud -- and not easily either. It's clear she's come close to being stuck for good.

She looks at the monster. The beast is immobile, perhaps fifty feet away. Just staring at her.

CABLE

Shoo! Go on -- get! you ugly
sonuvagun -- go on!

Cable picks up a rock and makes as if to throw it.

CLOSE ON THE MONSTER. It watches her a moment more, unafraid, and the strangest expression comes over its face. Then it turns and shambles off into the swamps.

BACK ON CABLE. Her expression is a mixture of relief, puzzlement and amazement. She backs up, her heart just returning to some kind of normal beat
-- and then bumps into a hand!

She whirls around in fright, then sees it's only the wide-eyed Jude.

CABLE

Jude -- what the hell you doing
here?

JUDE

You think I stayin around that

station with everybody pumpin
it fulla holes, you mistaken.

As is his manner, Jude has been looking at Cable with his big X-ray eyes the whole time he's spoken, sizing her and the situation up as best he can. Then he looks from her to the shattered car.

JUDE

What happened to that thing?

CABLE

Um. It hit a tree.

Jude looks around. There's vegetation everywhere, but mostly vines and bushes. There's not a tree in sight more than a few inches in girth.

JUDE

Uh huh.

Then he looks down at the ground. CLOSE SHOT ON THE MUDDY GROUND NEAR HIS SHOE. There's a naked human-like foot print there, sunk by some great body's weight twice as far into the mud as Jude's foot. And its size is five times that of the boy's. He turns and looks at Cable.

JUDE (cont'd)

(quietly)

Some tree.

He turns and looks off gravely into the bush.

ST3/Q

56 DELETE 56

57 DELETE 57

58 DELETE 58

59 DELETE 59

59A (FORMERLY 43) NOW REPOSITIONED AFTER 82A 59A

59B (FORMERLY 44) NOW REPOSITIONED AFTER 82A 59B

ST3/P

60A DELETE 60A

DISSOLVE TO:

60B INT. THE LIBRARY. DAY. 60B

ANGLE ON Arcane. Brooding, folding his hands over and over, staring into space. Bruno and Ferret sit across from him, in fresh clothes, but still battered and on edge.

BRUNO

(helpfully)

Some of the men say it's a Yeti.
One of those abdominal snowmen or something.

Arcane fixes him with a look of immense distain.

ARCANE

Nonsense. It's something from Holland's experiments. Something really quite extraordinary, to be sure, but it has to be from Holland's work.

FERRET

But he was working with plants.
He --

ARCANE

-- He didn't half know what he was working with -- he was a little boy playing in his father's lab.

(strokes his jaw)

Or something he was working on in secret, even from those around him.

(warming to this theory)

In collusion with that woman, Cable, perhaps. Why else was she spirited in so mysteriously right at the end -- and the two were together alone out in the swamps just before -- he must have been keeping the thing out there. Hasn't she always been present when you've seen this thing?

BRUNO

Well, yeah, but...

ARCANE

(admiring)

Not really bothered by carloads of bullets, immensely powerful. I must confess I didn't realize just what Holland was on to, either. My thought was to steal a formula for enhanced crops,

and instead have stumbled onto something even greater -- a formula that's created an ape of some sort able to stop a car with its bare hands.

He stops and looks at them. Making his declaration with chilling simplicity.

ARCANE

It want it. I want this... this Swamp Thing. And I want the notebook. Now.

Bruno squirms in his chair.

BRUNO

But how can we find it now? It's gone into the swamps. We'll never...

ARCANE

Every time you've seen the girl, you've seen the beast, correct?

FERRET

(shudders)

Right.

ARCANE

Then we'll start with the girl.

60 DELETE 60
61 DELETE 61
62 DELETE 62
63 DELETE 63
64 DELETE 64
64A DELETE 64A
65 DELETE 65

ST3/Q

82 EXT. SWAMPS. MORNING. (REPOSITIONED) 82

LONG SHOT ON an OLD SKIFF as it bears through a deep, mysterious area of swamp, powered by a pole and the elbow grease of Jude. It's as if they're passing through an underworld, a vast cave with floor of water and lilly pads, and soaring walls and roof of luxurious vegetation -- vines, flowers and trees.

CLOSER. Cable looks up at it all, hearing the calls of the birds

and reptiles, smelling the dense, sensuous fragrance of the blossoming plants.

CABLE
(to herself)
He was right. It is beautiful.

JUDE
Who was right?

Cable comes back to the here and now, straightening.

CABLE
Guy I knew.

Jude glances at her, staying as discrete as he can.

JUDE
(beat)
Aint got nobody you can call?

Cable's cracks a smile.

CABLE
Thought so. But when I did, those goons back there showed up and made Swiss Cheeze out of your gas station.

JUDE
All right. Belonged to some S.O.B. in town, anyways.
(beat)
You didn't pay your bookie or something?

CABLE
Or something.
(changing the subject)
Much farther?

The boy surveys her carefully.

JUDE
Little ways. You know how we gonna get through? This whole part o'th' swamp's been patrolled for the last year or so.
(beat)
Some folks say gov'ments in there, doin somethin.

Cable sees the unexpressed questions in his eyes. Looks doesn't give an inch.

CABLE

I'll get what I need and be gone
in two minutes, Jude. Nobody'll
be bothering us.

(quietly)

Anyway, they're all gone now.

82A DELETED 82A

59A EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. (FORMERLY 43 - REPOSITIONED) 59A

WIDER ANGLE. Birds EXPLODE from their nests and swoop off in retreat. A moment later the vines are torn asunder and Swamp Thing returns to the pool that gave him his birth. As he wades through the shallows and we PAN WITH him, the smouldering remains of the barn and laboratory are REVEALED B/G.

CLOSE ON the monster. He stops and stares long and hard at the ruins, then stumbles towards them.

59B EXT. COMPOUND/LABORATORY. DAY. (FORMERLY 44) 59B

Swamp Thing picks his way through the charred timbers in a ghostly pall of SMOKE, making his way to the ruined arboretum.

CLOSER. The monster moves among the shriveled corpses of a thousand plants, and oddly, it touches them tenderly as a father would lost children.

NEW ANGLE -- the monster moves into what's left of Holland's laboratory.

He passes from one disaster to another...the gutted remains of the electron microscope, the sooty melt-downs of exquisite instruments, the shattered racks of beakers and vials. It ends at the burned socket of the wall safe where the notebooks were secured. Like a pilgrim at the last station of the cross, he sags at the emptiness.

59C EXT. THE COMPOUND. DAY. 59C

Out by the shore where Cable was nearly dragged to her death, she now is beaching with the boy, dragging the skiff's prow onto the long grass. Jude stays by the boat, his eyes canvassing the area just as nervously as Cable's.

CABLE

Stay here.

JUDE

Don't worry.

Cable takes a step, stops and adds:

CABLE

If you see anyone coming, give a yell.

JUDE

(gulps)

Don't worry.

CABLE

(trying to sound casual)

And if I don't come, then just go on and get yourself out.

Jude by this time is starting to shake a little.

JUDE

Don't worry.

Cable smiles.

CABLE

I'm not worried.

She turns and starts towards the twisted tree where she hid the notebook. Jude watches her go with wide eyes.

JUDE

(to self)

Well I is.

MOVING WITH CABLE. Cautious, alert for the slightest sound. MUSIC adds to the feeling that something lurks in the offing. Suddenly the music stops. Cable stops too. Listening. There's a SOUND from the burned shell of the barn. Cable freezes, looks back towards Jude. The boy's eyes are locked on her, and now that he sees she's acting like something wrong, he's looking even more uneasy. Cable waves him away. Jude turns and jumps into the boat and pushes it out from the shore, heading for a thicket of mangrove trunks.

Cable turns and looks towards the barn. Swallows and heads for

it.

59D INT/EXT. THE BARN. DAY. 59D

At first the place seems deserted now. But then we see the beast, nearly motionless, over by the door to the living quarters, doing the strangest thing. Kneeling, its great back to us. Rocking silently.

Suddenly it wrests itself upright and stands.

CLOSER ANGLE ON THE BEAST. Another expression is entering the monster's face. It looks almost certainly to be determination. And ... hope.

ANOTHER ANGLE as he paws through a jumble of charred wreckage and pulls out a rack of beakers that have somehow escaped damage. Carefully, almost tenderly, he carries the rack to a table still upright.

ANGLE AT THE HALF-COLLAPSED WALL AND ENTRANCE. Cable, silently as a picture materializing in a darkroom tray, appears. And her eyes are on the creature. We can hear the SOUNDS its making, louder and louder now. Cable looks terrified. But fascinated as well. She can't look away.

REVERSE, WIDE ON THE BEAST, IN HER POV. He's casting about more quickly now

-- tearing through buckled cabinets and charcoal drawers, collecting a small hoard of things still intact: a few instruments, a few materials... Perhaps for the first time, we begin to realize that this monster, this huge beast, is at least miming the actions of someone absolutely familiar with this laboratory and its furnishings.

The monster then picks up the first vial. For a moment everything is fine -- but then without realizing he's doing it he shatters the glass container with nothing more than the normal pressure of his great hands. The monster reels back in frustration and disgust and ERUPTS in a SHARP CURSE OF A SNARL.

REVERSE, CLOSER ON CABLE. Looking closer. As one might look at the face of a native in a foreign land -- a face that looks unmistakably familiar even though one knows no one there.

BACK ON THE CREATURE. With shaking, fierce concentration, it's beginning again, trying to decant the contents of a beaker into a test tube. But the fragile beaker slips from his clumsy hands and smashes to smithereens on the floor. The monster's lunging

attempt to prevent this only heaps disaster onto disaster, upsetting the entire rack. There's a terrible chain reaction of CRASHES AND SPILLS, and soon the wretched beast is HOWLING amid the final ruins of everything it's attempted to do.

He spins round and SPLINTERS the table in a single blow.

ANGLE ON CABLE, edging back, scared.

WIDER ANGLE ON THE BEAST. He reels through the charred timbers of the lab, SMASHING everything he sees -- cabinets, shelves, tables materials. Then he stops, staring. Straight in the direction where Cable hides.

CLOSE ON CABLE. Shrinking down as far from sight as she can, terrified. The huge legs of the monster appear, and then go right on by. It's as if a tree walked by. Olympian; unconcerned with her.

CLOSE ON THE MONSTER, slowing. The big root-like fingers reach out as our shot widens to REVEAL the Orchid plant so transformed by Alec Holland's final formula. It now is three feet high, triumphant, virile green amid the black ashes. And in exquisite, rambunctious bloom.

The monster lowers its shaggy head and buries its nose in the largest flower. Its eyes close for a long moment.

Then it jerks upright, and turns at a SOUND behind it.

Cable, who's ventured from her hiding place for a better look, freezes, frightened once more. She seems torn between her terror at the beast and some sort of primal draw between it and her. But her terror gets the better of her. She begins backing away blindly, bumping into things -- when she turns to run she trips over a timber and falls flat on her face.

CLOSER ON CABLE -- struggling up, twisting around to see where the thing is.

It's still standing where it was. Only now it's holding one of the blossoms from the Orchid tree in its hand, extended to her.

Cable very nearly stops breathing. There's something downright spooky about it all. She looks near tears. The monster seems strangely affected too. The muscles at its throat are moving -- it's brow is contracting as if with a great effort.

Then it speaks.

It's a weird, deep, earthy sort of voice, strained and unpracticed. But the word is quite recognizable, and said almosts with tenderness.

SWAMP THING

Cable.

The color drains from Cable's face. Her mouth works but no words come.

The great beast takes a step towards her -- Cable scuttles backwards against a charred wall, her whole body shaking. The beast kneels before her and places the flower in her lap.

SWAMP THING (cont'd)

(struggling to speak)

Genus Orchia... Over a hundred
species here... So much beauty...
in the swamps... If you just look...

As the realization sweeps over her, Cable looks more and more like a person seeing a ghost.

CABLE

I can't believe...

(low)

Alec...

She turns her face from him and begins to cry.

Swamp Thing watches her.

SWAMP THING

Am I so ugly, then?

(shakes his head)

I was going to try to find a mirror,
but...

The great beast stands and shambles for the door. Cable jumps up, looks after it a moment then runs after.

59E EXT. RUINS AND COMPOUND. DAY. 59E

Cable catches up with the beast a few steps outside the door, plucking at its great fingers like a child at her father's sleeve.

CABLE

Wait -- I'll go get help -- I'll

get through to Ritter somehow --
or to the FBI, or --

The beast merely looks and her and shakes its great head.

SWAMP THING
Ritter is Arcane.

Cable does a double take.

CABLE
But how can he be? I know people
who were working with Ritter in
Washington back when Arcane was
running riot in the Balkans.

SWAMP THING
He killed Ritter. Took his identity --
even his appearance -- but it was all
a diguise. Perhaps even what I saw
wasn't the real Arcane.

CABLE
Jesus...

SWAMP THING
(watching her carefully)
Who knows how far up the rot goes in
Washington. You're ^{not} safe calling any-
one. Not until I get Arcane.

Cable stares at the creature, alarmed.

CABLE
But you can't get him.

Shyly, she reaches out and touches the torn holes in his body.

CABLE (cont'd)
Look what he's done to you already.

SWAMP THING
They're healing already. Besides,
there's no choice. Arcane's got the
notebooks. If he fabricates the
formula...

CABLE
But he can't -- I've got the last
notebook!

The monster stops, incredulous.

SWAMP THING

How?

CABLE

Just used my head. Come on.

ST3/R

59F EXT. THE TWISTED TREE. DAY. 59F

CLOSE ON CABLE'S HANDS lifting the notebook out of the cleft in the gnarled old tree.

WIDER as she holds it out to Swamp Thing. He looks at it an instant, then gently pushes it back to her.

SWAMP THING

Put it back. It's safer here until I get him.

CABLE

But now you don't have to. We can get out now -- we can --

SWAMP THING

Where can I go?

(looks to the barn)

Besides, he'll never leave us alone. There's only one way out. That's to go through.

He stops, listening.

CABLE

What?

Next moment she hears it too, the sharp drone of an OUTBOARD MOTOR approaching. Swamp Thing turns and looks out into the swamps.

IN HIS POV we SEE the MOTOR BOAT filled with ARMED MEN approaching through the hummocks and columns of the melancholy cypress grove.

SWAMP THING

You'll have to take the note book now. He'd find it if we leave it

here. Now go -- I'll get rid of these.

(beat)

If it comes to it, destroy this before you let it fall into his hands.

He thrusts the notebook into her hands, then without another word vanishes into the tall grass. With his color and texture, he's immediately lost in the vegetation.

59G EXT. THE MOTOR BOAT. DAY. 59G

We recognize one of the dangerous-looking men in this boat -- one of the gunmen from the car attack. The others are stamped in the die of Arcane's hoodlum/commandoes. Their eyes are all on the ruins of the barn, whose blackened collapse and ghostlike plume of smoke is visible ahead through the trees.

MAN

I don't understand this plan.

ANOTHER

You aint exactly a mental heavy-weight -- when did you understand what Arcane was up to?

MAN

(leers)

I understand it when he brings the women back to the mansion, I understand that.

The others laughs roughly, relieving fond memories. Suddenly the man in the prow sees something.

MAN @

Hey! There she is!

ANOTHER

Who's the kid?

MAN

(laughing)

Corpse number two!

They all enjoy a good laugh as the boat surges forward at high speed.

59H EXT. JUDE'S SKIFF. DAY. 59H

CLOSE ON Cable and Jude in Jude's skiff. The boy poles the old boat with the powerful energy of fear -- looking constantly over his shoulder. They slip into a tiny channel that Cable couldn't even see.

JUDE

Hope they don't fit in here --
those gov'ment men can be tough!

CABLE

Those aren't government men, Jude.

JUDE

Well thank goodness for that!

CABLE

They're worse.

JUDE

Worse than the gov'ment? Oh,
shit.

He poles even harder.

59I EXT. A MORE OPEN AREA OF SWAMP AND ISLANDS. DAY. 59I

The skiff emerges from the tiny channel, Jude and Cable looking around cautiously. No one in sight. Jude pushes out with the pole and the skiff glides out over the water.

JUDE

We get back to the road, I gonna
say goodbye to you, Miss Cable.
Nothin pers'nal, but my Mama told
me never mess in white folks' problems,
an I beginnin to think she's right.

CABLE

I understand, Jude. And I appreciate
your help.

JUDE

Oh, shit.

Cable looks up. The boy has turned gray. She turns around and looks where he was looking and sees the motor boat nosing around

the end of the shoreline, and turning towards them.

JUDE

We gotta get --

He's cut off by a tremendous ROAR, which lifts up from somewhere a hundred yards away and echoes over the entire swamp. Next instant the huge bulk of Swamp Thing crashes out of the undergrowth at a point halfway between Cable and the motorboat of thugs, splashes into the water like a log at a lumber camp, and disappears beneath the surface.

59J EXT. THE MOTORBOAT. DAY. 59J

The men are all distracted, the motorboat already drifting to a glide. Every one of them is marked by astonishment and fear.

MAN

You see that?

ANOTHER

Looked like a moose or something.

A THIRD

Moose! There ain't no meese around here -- that was that goddam swamp thing!

ONE FROM CAR

Sure as hell was -- recognize that face anywhere. He --

Before he can get another word out, the monster pops up behind them, fifty feet away, with the most god-awful SCREECHING HOWL anyone could imagine. The men in the boat jump around as if stung by bees -- the boat rocks and tips, someone pitches overboard, another falls backwards over the thwarts. Pure panic, and by the time they get themselves stabilized, the thing is gone beneath the surface again.

They jump around, haul the man overboard back in, rev the engine up to high and start to get out of there -- the monster emerges far down the channel, and begins to run away from them.

MAN

Hey -- the big monkey's running!
To hell with the girl -- he's the
one Arcane'll pay for!

OTHER

Let's get him!

They roar off after the monster with WILD LAUGHTER -- REBEL YELLS
 -- HOOTS and the HOWL OF the POWERFUL ENGINE --

60 DELETE 60
 61 DELETE 61
 62 DELETE 62
 63 DELETE 63
 64 DELETE 64
 64A DELETE 64A
 65 DELETE 65

66 EXT. A YACHT. DAY. 66

ESTABLISH A LARGE CABIN CRUISER, nearly hidden in the overhangs
 of Spanish Moss. TWO MEN are at its rail. An airboat is tied at
 its stern.

67 EXT. ABOARD THE YACHT. DAY. 67

CLOSE ON ARCANE, watching with Ferret. Both men sober. Wary.

FERRET

Wouldn't you rather have him
 destroyed? A lot safer.

Arcane turns on the man. But his icy voice remains even.

ARCANE

Alive. What value is it to me
 unless its alive? That poor dumb
 creature can speak volumes if I
 can study its living flesh.

FERRET

And what about the girl? Can I
 kill her?

ARCANE

In time, Ferret, in time.
 (looking off)
 Right now It's time ~~the~~ for the
 second phase. You'd best go.

Ferret shrugs and climbs overboard to the stern platform and from
 there into the airboat. Arcane turns and looks back across the

swamp's dark waters.

ARCANE

So. It seems it will all be played
out in the swamps, just as Holland
said...

CUT TO:

ST3/S

68 EXT. A GREAT SWAMP LAKE. DAY. 68

The motorboat with Bruno and the other men ROARS up and slows to a stop in the water. The laughing men, like boys chasing a rabbit, look around, perplexed in their game. Swamp Thing has vanished once more.

MAN FROM CAR

Damn thing's slippery. Where the
hell...

The swamp is eerily quiet.

BRUNO

Maybe we better go back for the
girl...

They twist around. The skiff, of course, is vanished.

68A EXT. SWAMP LAKE/ANOTHER PART. DAY. 68A

The water is clear and broad. FOREGROUND is the only place there's even a ripple on the surface. There, a ring of bubbles is growing. Suddenly, silently, the monster emerges into the air once more.

He turns and looks back towards the motorboat. The men are looking the other way.

Swamp Thing turns and walks the other direction, into skeins of vines and looming trees.

Then there's a sound. Mechanical. Racing. Approaching fast.

VERY TIGHT, ON THE EYES OF THE BEAST -- suddenly alert.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. DEEP SWAMPS. DAY. (& DELETE 69) 68

ANGLE ON A POWERFUL airboat looming out from behind a spur of shoreline like a huge ROARING MONSTER -- and ANOTHER follows behind it.

MOVING ANGLE WITH THE AIRBOAT -- two alert men, ramming shells home into their weapons --

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- seeing the two crafts. He turns and sees the motorboat starting for him.

SWAMP THING
Alright, suckers. Come and get it.

Swamp Thing turns and splashes through the shallows -- looking for all the world like a hunted beast running for deeper water --

ON THE FIRST AIRBOAT -- the men see the Thing -- wheel the craft after him
-- a huge form ducking behind an island --

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- falling -- stumbling out into deep water in a narrow channel -- suddenly spinning around --

THE AIRBOAT -- appearing at seventy miles an hour from the monster's blind side -- slashing by with a DEAFENING DIVE-BOMBER'S SCREAM --

CLOSE ON GUNBARRELS -- a blistering FUSILADE --

ANGLE ON THE MONSTER -- SCREAMING IN RAGE AND PAIN as the searing bullets slam through his body -- knocking him backwards, crashing into the water -- but raging right back up --

ANGLE ON AIRBOAT, in a HOWLING turn -- the men SCREAMING IN DELIGHT.

And now we SEE the SECOND AIRBOAT -- BEARING DOWN FROM BEHIND --

At tremendous speed it flashes by the first like a berserk knight with a blinding lance of firepower -- hauling sideways and SLAMMING into the monster

-- knocking him head over heels!

ANGLE AT NEARBY MARSHY BORDER -- a huge SWAMP BUGGY lumbers out of the tall grass like some monster from a madman's drawing board -- skewing up huge black roostertails of mud -- coming in for a share in the kill!

ANGLE IN SWAMP BUGGY -- Bruno at the controls -- Ferret screaming at him to go faster!

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- cut off from his planned escape by the swamp buggy --

EXTREME TELESCOPIC, STRAIGHT ON the monster -- his breath shooting out in frantic steam -- every hair on its body raised in terror by the even more huge mechanical monster bearing down on it from behind -- distances so sandwiched by this lens that it seems the machine will crush him at any second --

AN AIRBOAT BLURS BY from the side -- GUNS RATTLING -- chunks of the monster spin up in the intense backlight --

Somehow the creature, lunging and HOWLING in rage, makes a small island -- claws his way into the brush.

SIDE ANGLE -- the island is long but no more than a finger -- the pauses at its very tip, leaning out of the bush on one shore. When one of the airboats ROARS into view, the monster ROARS right back at it, drawing it right towards it. As soon as that's happening, Swamp Thing races across the spit of land to the other side and bursts out onto the shore there. Another airboat spies him on that side, and wheels around, making for him. The monster ducks back around the tip of the island.

ANGLE AT ISLAND'S END -- the first airboat skips around in a reckless turn, the man riding shotgun leaning far out, lacing the water with TRACERS. Neither he nor his driver sees the second airboat until it's too late --

The two COLLIDE head-on at a combined speed of over one hundred sixty miles an hour --

EXTREME SLOW MOTION -- a SHUDDERING -- RENDING CRASH -- SPIRALING PROPS -- LOOPING BODIES AND FIRE.

ANGLE ON THE SWAMP BUGGY -- suddenly slowing -- Bruno and Ferret staring in horror --

FERRET

Oh, Jesus!

ANGLE ON THE FIRE -- a BODY slips beneath the surface. Another man splashes in dazed terror -- yelling for help!

69A EXT. THE YACHT. DAY. 69A

Arcane puts down the field glasses, face drawn. The sound of the explosions and screams are quiet clear across the distance.

ARCANE

Not a bad tactic. Brilliant, actually.
Holland somehow has given this beast
every brain cell he had himself.
The man was more clever than I thought.

69B EXT. SWAMPS. DAY. 69B

ANGLE NEAR FIRE AND WRECKAGE -- another AIRBOAT, engine off, drifts near one of the men in the water. Suddenly the man gives a startled CRY and disappears beneath the surface.

The others stare in astonishment. There's no sign of the guy.

LIT BY THE INTENSE FIRE, the boats gather, now all of their engines off. A spooky silence.

ONE MAN

Jesus -- went down like a rock.

ANOTHER

I thought he could swim...

STILL ANOTHER

We better go tell Arcane...

He turns around and gestures. But at an empty airboat.

OTHER (cont'd)

Hey, where'd Phil and Spike go?

All the men jerk around -- when suddenly Spike claws his way over the boat's transom for one instant -- then is janked back with a drowning SHRIEK!

WIDE SHOT -- the men stare open mouthed.

Next instant Swamp Thing erupts from behind the remaining airboat with a HEART-STOPPING BELLOW -- seizing a man and flinging him against his gunman with such ferocity that both are gone into the black water -- then disappears beneath the water himself --

Bruno and Ferret and the few remaining men react in near panic -- unleashing everything they have from their weapons -- a stupid wave of reaction that EXPLODES the airboat in a geyser of flame and fragments.

ON MOTORBOAT -- again from behind, Swamp Thing explodes over the side -- moving with incredible agility and rage -- grabbing a rifle -- swinging like Dimaggio -- the man cartwheels backwards -- the monster upends the boat and is gone!

ANGLE ON Bruno and Ferret's swamp buggy -- Ferret pounding on Bruno's shoulders to get them the hell out!

ANOTHER ANGLE -- the swamp buggy SCREAMS off into the distance. After just seconds the swamp is quiet except for the low rush of flames and smoke.

THEN FOREGROUND, the monster slowly lifts from the water.

TIGHT ON HIS FACE. A look of profound satisfaction. He turns back to the ruins of the boat house, and sees that the Swamp Buggy has hooked around behind him and is over that direction now, and pulling up beside a large white yacht.

Swamp Thing begins rushing back.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. THE YACHT. DAY. 70

Arcane watches as Bruno and Ferret climb over the rail onto the yacht.

FERRET

Hell, if I just could've gotten
a clean shot at him.

BRUNO

(wild-eyed)
Smart. That thing is smart!

Arcane nods.

ARCANE

Thoroughly familiar with the swamps,
powerful, and as home in the water
as on the land. A worthy adversary.
(smiles/says to Bruno)
Tell the captain to draw up anchor.

BRUNO

(overjoyed)
We going home?

ARCANE
Certainly not. I've not yet begun
to fight. Neither have you.

On Bruno's uneasy look from Ferret to Arcane we

CUT TO:

71 DELETE 71
72 DELETE 72
73 DELETE 73
74 DELETE 74
75 DELETE 75
76 DELETE 76
77 DELETE 77
78 DELETE 78
79 DELETE 79
80 DELETE 80
81 DELETE 81
82 REPOSITIONED 82
82A REPOSITIONED 82A

83 EXT. A MANGROVE TUNNEL/ CHANNEL. DAY. 83

As the skiff moves through the tunnel-like channel, we COME IN
TIGHT ON CABLE. Watchful, worried, wondering...

CABLE
What do you think, Jude?

ON JUDE, looking off in the same direction, face grave.

JUDE
Explosions. Guns. And a hell of
a big fire... Sounds like World War
Three started.

CABLE
(tenderly)
You've been a big help, Jude. More
than you know. I know it's been
scary for a boy, but we'll get out now.

JUDE
I'm a man. Sides, we ain't out of
the fire yet.

He glances down. Cable turns and looks at the notebook.

JUDE (cont'd)
Thought you was s'posed t'destroy
that or something.

Cable shakes her head, torn.

CABLE
Just can't bring myself to do it,
Jude. There's just too much great-
ness in it.

JUDE
Too much trouble in it, I think.

Just then they break out into a clearer, more open area of water,
and Cable's eyes immediately are caught by something.

ST3/W

JUDE
Now what?

CABLE
Somebody out there...
(looking closer)
The bastard.

JUDE
Uh oh. Here we go again.

CABLE
I recognize that guy. He hit me
over the head.

IN HER POV we SEE Bruno, standing along on a small beach along
the edge of the swamp. Unarmed. Apparantly lost.

JUDE
Oh, great, then I think you should
go right over there and talk to
him.

Cable looks at Bruno, then back at the boy.

CABLE
I gotta get the bastard.

JUDE

I knew it.

CABLE

Look, you stay here in hiding,
and keep this notebook, Jude.
If anybody shows up anywhere
near you, then by god sink the
thing with a stone and run for
it.

JUDE

You don't need to tell me to run
for it. You ain't even gonna see
me, I'm gonna be movin so fast.

Cable gives the boy a hug and slips into the water..

JUDE @

(to himself)

My mama told me, and I shoulda
listen. But noooooo...

84 EXT. A LONG ISLAND. DAY. 84

ANGLE ON CABLE wading ashore, ducking along the shoreline of this
tiny, long island.

An instant late Bruno, now about a thousand yards off, leans
forward, squints harder, and realizes he's been spotted. He
turns around and runs like hell into the swamp.

JUDE

(loosing his cool)

Get that motha, Cable -- look
at that white boy run!

ST3/X

MOVING ANGLE ON BRUNO. The big man splashes through the shallows
like a bear with dogs on his tail. He makes the thick brush of a
mangrove thicket, tears his way through its canopy with the
strength of pure panic and is gone.

REVERSE. Cable's already into the water and running for the
mangroves.

MOVING ANGLE -- MANGROVE THICKET. Cable moves with surprising
speed, her face a mask of determination and alertness. Then she

stops suddenly and listens. For a moment there's silence, then renewed CRASHING ahead and to her right.

DEEPER IN THE GROWTH -- MOVING WITH BRUNO. The man's running raggedly, not used to such exertion. He follows a ridge of more solid peat for as long as he can, then is forced once more into the thigh-deep muck. He gets stuck -- frees himself with a mighty heave of terror and claws his way onto firmer ground once more. He dives into the dense underbrush and is gone. A moment later there is silence.

ANGLE ON Cable, listening. No sound now. She looks around, head cocked for the merest sound. Ahead, after a heartbeat or so, the slightest CRACK of a TWIG.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Cable advances into a small patch of sunlight in the otherwise dark pocket of bog...then stops, melting like a shadow into the deeper darkness of the place. Fifty yards ahead of her Bruno breaks suddenly from cover and sprints across an open glade for all he's worth.

CABLE

Hold it right there!

Bruno wheels, loses his balance and falls backwards. He lands out of sight with a big THUD.

ANOTHER ANGLE. Cable darts low, circling, and within moments is at the spot where the man fell. But he's gone.

She hears a SPLASH. Not far away. Like someone slipping in panic and falling headfirst into the water. Cable crouches and moves for it.

ANOTHER ANGLE. A shadow, almost without sound, Cable fades down an embankment to the edge of the water. Then stops, confused.

She's nearly back where she started, and there is Bruno, bold as daylight, just out of pistol range, wading directly to a boat. A rather large boat. As if the fight is over for him. He even turns and looks back at her once, then climbs aboard.

A tall, elegant man at the rail watches him, then turns towards her. This man even seems to make a gesture at her, as if he knows she's there.

SOMETHING RUSTLES before her, down in the water. Then the skiff of Jude drifts out on the current. The boy is face down in its bottom.

Cable stares at it in horror.

CABLE
(barely audible)
Oh, Jude...

Next moment, with a MUSIC STING -- Ferret slams into her back, grabbing her around the neck!

A SHRIEKING MUSIC CUE, and we

CUT TO:

85A EXT. COMPOUND AND SWAMPS. DAY. 85A

Near the sunken hulk of the burned barn, the monster wades ashore. Looks around. No sign of Cable now. The beast calls as best it can.

SWAMP THING
Cableeee...

No answer but its own echoe from the four corners of the swamp. But there is one sound. The low purr of a big, muffled engine. The monster turns and reacts in alarm.

IN HIS POV we SEE Arcane's yacht sliding away through the water in the distance, a phantom easing through the trees and then gone.

85B EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP AND BRUNO'S ISLAND. DAY. 85B

Swamp Thing splashes through the water and up onto the same island where Cable was taken, snuffing and tracking like an enraged predator.

ANOTHER ANGLE, in the cove where the yacht was moored. The monster wades through, stops, then sees the drifting skiff.

CLOSER AT THE SKIFF -- Swamp Thing leans in the sees the boy in the bottom of the boat. With the greatest of tenderness he lifts the light body out and carries it through the water towards land.

CLOSER ON SWAMP THING. A great amber tear wells out of its eye.

CLOSER ON JUDE. The boy's face is deathlike.

ANGLE ON THE ISLAND'S SHORE. The beast lays the boy down in deep, soft moss and touches the bloodied bump of the kid's head with his big mitt. It's clear that by now the awkwardness and roughness we saw at the lab have been conquered. Perhaps because he cares even more now.

CLOSER ON THE HAND LAYING ACROSS THE BOY'S HEAD. There's almost a glow there, although it's so subtle we might imagine that it's merely the light of the sun finding a way through the thick leaves to this place.

Then, perhaps from the touch, perhaps by chance, one of the boy's eyes cranks open a crack. Then the other. Jude looks up. Sees the face of the creature looming over him. His eyes open wider -- much wider.

JUDE

Ohhhhh, sheeeee-it...

A huge smile of surprise and delight dawns across the monster's face. It's the first time we've seen such a thing from him, and it transforms the fierce visage into something surprisingly, achingly human for a split second.

Jude just stares, like a man who went to sleep in Cleveland and woke up on Mars.

SWAMP THING (cont'd)

Don't worry. I won't hurt you.

JUDE

(faintly)

What? Me worry?

SWAMP THING

Jude. Right?

The monster takes away its hand. The swelling has already gone down some. The boy struggles into a sit, clearing his head more and more.

JUDE

How you know my name?

The monster shrugs.

SWAMP THING

Remember Alec Holland?

The boy's eyes light.

JUDE

Crazy dude used to stop in the station once in a while? Drink three Cokes at once and do magic tricks? Sure, I remember him. He and me was buddies.

He takes the monster in from top to bottom.

JUDE (cont'd)

You... uh... a associate o'his?

SWAMP THING

Something like that.

JUDE

(wisely)

Seems there's a regular epidemic of 'Somethin like thats' around here today...

(beat)

But thanks...

He straightens his spine, then sticks out his hand.

The monster stares at it a moment, then, almost shyly, takes it in his own huge fist, and tenderly shakes it.

SWAMP THING

Don't mention it.

(beat)

There is one thing you could do, though...

Jude swallows.

JUDE

Oh, shit.

85C EXT. THE SKIFF. DAY. 85C

LONG SHOT, on a vast body of swamps and water, with Jude's little skiff making its way across them, the boy in the prow poling, the monster sitting in the stern like a big black mountain. Its weight tips the boy up in the front so high he can hardly reach bottom with his pole.

His voice floats over the water.

JUDE

Mama always told me not to mess
in white folk's troubles. But she
never told me nothing to cover
my dealings with green folk.

ST3/Y

85 DELETE 85
86 DELETE 86
87 DELETE 87
88 DELETE 88
89 DELETE 89

90 EXT. BIYOU. DAY. 90

Visible beyond the treetops are the turrets of Arcane's mansion.
A broad body of water and swampy islands lies between. The yacht
of Arcane moves across this expanse like a death ship.

CUT TO:

ST3/Z

91 EXT. ARCANE'S YACHT. DAY. 91

TIGHT ON ARCANE. He smiles, then laughs evilly. WIDEN to REVEAL
CABLE, handcuffed to the stern rail. The craft is moving across
a vast, deserted lake, with wild, untamed swamps on all sides.
Except for the boat's passengers, there is no sight of humanity.

ARCANE

It was too easy, really. You're
such an amateur for a professional.

CABLE

Don't count your chickens yet, Arcane.
You still don't have him.

ARCANE

Who? That silly green lug out there?
(smiles)

No problem. He follows you like a
lovesick puppy.

Cable registers surprise at this observation, but quickly hides
it.

CABLE

You'd better not underestimate
the power of love, either, jerk.

ARCANE

I've found it hard to underestimate
anything about either of you, my
dear.

(smirks)

Certainly love, has a certain charm.
But like any flower, it's too vulnera-
ble to be taken very seriously. Same
for him.

Cable looks up.

CABLE

What's that supposed to mean?

Arcane taps the notebook with his long fingers.

ARCANE

I had samples of his 'flesh', if you
will, analyzed -- pieces we retrieved
from the shootout back at the car.

(raises an eyebrow)

You see the reason the bullets didn't
harm him is that he's half plant --
your friend is little more than an
overgrown weed. And you can't shoot
a weed.

(smiles)

You've got to cut it down. Pull
it out by the roots. Burn it.

The man stands, yawns genteelly.

ARCANE (cont'd)

I've earned a nap, I think.

He starts away. Cable calls after him.

CABLE

You'll never catch him.

ARCANE

Watch me.

ANGLE AT THE LADDER TO BELOW DECKS. Arcane crosses with Ferret.

FERRET

She tell you where he was hiding
out? What about the notebook --
she tell you where she hid it?
I can make her talk.

Arcane gives Ferret a smug look of infinite patronage.

ARCANE

Really, Ferret. What do you
suggest, bamboo splinters? Chinese
water torture? She'd die first.
(pats Ferret on the
head like a dog)
My plan is alive and well, in
these very swamps. Meanwhile,
why don't you entertain our guest
a spell? Show her your charm.

With that inigmatic pronouncement, Arcane goes below. Ferret
turns and looks towards Cable. Jiggles his drink. Smiles his
greasy smile.

ANGLE WITH CABLE. Ferret unlocks her handcuffs with a flair of
magnanimity, then offers her the drink; she refuses it, rubbing
her wrists. He lifts' it to her in mock toast.

FERRET

You'd do well to drink with me.

He drinks it down.

CABLE

Go to hell.

Ferret lays his finger over her lips, just hard enough.

FERRET

What I could do for you. Take you
out of these miserable swamps.
Make you so happy.
(strokes her hair)
If you'd just be nice.

Cable jerks her head away.

CABLE

I like the swamps just fine.
It's the slime thats crawled
out from under the rocks
that makes me want to puke.

Ferret raises just an eyebrow.

FERRET

Nasty mouth. But a pretty one...

He lunges forward and kisses her hard. She doesn't resist. He takes his pleasure, then stands back, sure of having won her over.

FERRET

What do you say to that?

Cable looks at him, wipes her lips with the back of her hand, and speaks in an altered voice. It's as if the kiss has affected her against her will.

CABLE

(softly)

Actually, you're face is rather beautiful with your eyes closed. Makes you look angelic.

Ferret laughs, delighted.

FERRET

Really?

CABLE

I swear, it gave me a little thrill, I must admit.

Ferret comes closer, his vanity preening.

FERRET

How was I? Like this?

He strikes his most angelic pose, his eyes fluttering closed.

CABLE

Perfect.

With lightning move Cable kicks out and catches Ferret square in the groin. With incredible swiftness she follows through with a hard shove backwards, sending him cartwheeling over the side with a horrendous SCREAM of outrage and pain.

ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE. Bruno and the Captain wheel around.

REVERSE ON CABLE -- she leaps the rail and strikes the water far

out from the side of the boat.

ANGLE ON A GUARD as he grabs his weapon -- but he freezes just as quickly as Arcane's voice cuts through the air.

ARCANE (O.S.)

No!

ANGLE ON ARCANE, leaping up from below like a Jack in the Box.

ARCANE (cont'd)

Ferret first -- he can't swim!

ANGLE ON THE CAPTAIN -- he grabs the wheel, swinging the boat around.

91A EXT. WATER. DAY. 91A

ANGLE IN THE WATER. Cable looks around terrified. She sees her opportunity will be short-lived. The yacht speeds for Ferret at full throttle and will soon be on its way back for her. She turns and swims for all she's worth for the nearest swampy island.

91B EXT. YACHT. DAY. 91B

ANGLE WITH BOAT -- it reaches Ferret. He's pulled cursing and kicking back aboard as Arcane watches.

ARCANE

Well, I must say, you have a rather droll idea of how to entertain a woman.

FERRET

I'll kill her! Kill her!

Arcane smiles his cobra's smile.

ARCANE

Precisely.

91C EXT. WATER. DAY. 91C

ANGLE AT WATER LEVEL ON CABLE swimming desperately, tiring. Behind her perhaps a quarter mile, Arcane's yacht WHINES UP to FULL THOTTLER and spins around, setting a course dead for her.

92 EXT. SHALLOWS / THE SWAMP AND LAND. DAY. 92

Cable claws her way out of deep muck shallows onto a tangled embankment, and into the thickets of a deep, wild swampland. The boat is very near now, she has no choice. She turns and runs into the undergrowth.

93 EXT. BOAT. DAY. 93

The craft bumps into the shallows -- Ferret leaps like a man possessed over the rail and onto the shore. And he's gotten his hands on the biggest, wickedest knife he could find.

ANGLE AT THE RAIL, ON ARCANE AND BRUNO. Bruno looks terribly upset, Arcane terribly calm.

BRUNO

Should I send some of the other
men with him?

Arcane gives his head the merest shake.

ARCANE

Ferret is doing just fine.

94 EXT. DEEP SWAMP. DAY. 94

ANGLE ON CABLE -- tearing through briars, tripping over vines.

An alligator rears up with a GRUNT and splashes away like a huge roach -- birds wheel and SCREAM -- Cable is blind to it all. She plunges on.

ANGLE ON FERRET -- stopping. Listening. He hears her. He wipes his face with a shaking hand and tests the long, gleaming blade.

FERRET

Bitch.

He creeps forward, his feet soundless in the soft moss.

ANGLE WITH CABLE -- running. Now she stops. Scared. There are little SOUNDS behind her, to her sides. The swamp is alive.

At her feet the ground crawls with blood-red crabs the size of large spiders, stampeding over the root systems of the mangroves

with a dry, RATTLING SOUND.

A sharper SOUND behind. She wheels. A large LIZARD moves in a tree, only its head motionless, centered on her.

Cable backs up, listening. Next moment Ferret leaps out of the bushes behind her!

His charge is so enraged it's just a hair clumsy -- his knife WHISTLES past her ear and stabs into a tree. Cable turns and runs, right past the tree-trunk chest of Swamp Thing!

But Ferret crashes straight into him.

Swamp Thing stabs out with a blindingly-fast left arm and grabs Ferret right across the top of the head, his giant green hand covering the scalp, his powerful fingers falling over Ferret's face and ears -- like Walt Frazer might grab a basketball. With a single, immensely strong twist he has the head off.

ANGLE ON CABLE -- horrified -- she reels backwards, clutching herself.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- the body of Ferret crashes down like a felled wall. The monster wheels and throws the bloody head far out into the bog. There's a splash as if a cannon ball had hit, then a boil of armored snouts and tails.

ANGLE ON CABLE. She loses consciousness and slides down the tree.

95 EXT. WATER'S EDGE. DAY 95

Bruno leans against the rail listening. Arcane is pale as a ghost behind him.

BRUNO

Ferrrrrettttt!

No answer to the call. Just the sound the the gators feeding, distant. The nearby guard laughs.

COMMANDO

Sounds like he got her, all right.
Having a little sport about now.

BRUNO

Maybe we should go in and check...

Arcane shakes his head.

ARCANE
(quietly)
We go home.

Bruno looks at him in surprise, sure he hasn't heard right.

BRUNO
Sir? But --

Arcane wheels and barks the order to the Captain.

ARCANE
Home!

He goes below as the big boat begins pulling away. Only Bruno remains at the rail, staring into the gathering dusk of the swampy island.

DISSOLVE TO:

ST3/AA1

95A EXT. DEEP SWAMPS. LATE AFTERNOON. 95A

TIGHT ON CABLE, watching intently, unbelieving. The SOUND OF THE YACHT is audible, FADING. She shakes her head.

CABLE
They're leaving -- I can't
believe it!

WIDEN TO REVEAL SWAMP THING, a shadowy form, only his great golden eyes glowing.

SWAMP THING
Don't.

Cable, too happy to hear the meaning behind this, turns and looks at the big guy in wonder.

CABLE
How'd you get to me over such
a distance, anyway? You have
fins?

The monster smiles gently.

SWAMP THING

Better than that.

He turns to the deep vines behind them and makes a slight gesture. Out steps Jude, big grin on his face.

JUDE

(to Cable)

Ev'nin.

(to Swamp Thing)

Man, did you whup that boy's ass!

CABLE

Jude! I thought you were --

She runs and hugs the boy unabashedly.

JUDE

Gator bait. So did I.

Cable holds him at arm's length, admiring his health and reality.

CABLE

You mean you carried that big lug on your little skiff? That must've been a sight!

Both Cable and Swamp Thing share the humor of it. Then Cable remembers.

CABLE (cont'd)

Jude. The notebook. Did you destroy it?

The boy lowers his eyes and shakes his head.

CABLE (cont'd)

Well what did you do with it?

Sheepishly, Jude reaches inside the back of his shirt and pulls out the notebook! Cable lets out a CHEER.

The monster comes to the boy and puts his arm around his shoulders.

SWAMP THING

You've done well, Jude. Come on.

CABLE

I'm not leaving you. It's... my duty.

(beat)

I want to stay. Please.

Jude looks back and forth between them once, then rubs his chin.

JUDE

I guess I could go out byself, and get a bigger boat. I could be back by morning, and we could all get our asses out of here.

Swamp Thing looks at the boy, at the girl, then turns and looks across the water. Then back at Cable.

SWAMP THING

Go.

CABLE

(stubborn)

Stay.

She takes his big hand in hers. Swamp Thing swings his head over to the boy.

SWAMP THING

Be here at dawn. But not dawn tomorrow. Dawn of the day after tomorrow. We'll all go then.

CABLE

Day after? But --

SWAMP THING

If you want to stay, that's how long it will be.

Cable sobers.

CABLE

Swear we'll leave then?

SWAMP THING

I swear.

Jude shrugs and jumps into his boat.

JUDE

CUT TO:

95B EXT. SHORELINE. LATE AFTERNOON. 95B

Swamp Thing leads Cable and Jude down to the boy's skiff, then stops.

SWAMP THING

Jude, there's one more very important thing you can do for me.

JUDE

Just say it, Swampy.

SWAMP THING

I want you to take Cable out now.

Cable reacts violently.

CABLE

No way -- I'm not leaving!

SWAMP THING

It'll be night soon. You can't stay here -- not with me -- not in these swamps.

CABLE

What about you? Who says you should stay in these swamps?

SWAMP THING

(gives a sad laugh)

Fate. I am the swamps now. And the three of us wouldn't fit in that thing, believe me.

(lower)

Besides, I can't rest until I've destroyed Arcane.

Cable plants herself firmly as a rock.

CABLE

No way. You can't force me.

SWAMP THING

Then I beg you.

Why anyone would want to spend two nights alone in the swamp is beyond me.

Cable smiles at him.

CABLE

Who's alone?

She gives him a wave. The boy blinks, then turns to Swamp Thing.

JUDE

You better watch yourself, Swampy.
(salutes)
Crack o'dawn. Day after t'morrow.
Right here.

He turns and thrusts out into the swamp. Cable watches him go, her face filled with hope. Swamp Thing watches with profound sadness.

Then Cable turns to the monster.

CABLE

Why the extra day?

The monster says nothing. He just reaches down and takes her in his arms. With enormous strength and gentleness.

CLOSE ON CABLE. She can hear his BREATHING. Like a horse's, big and palpable and wonderful. She touches his skin. Soft and hard at the same time, moss on a Redwood.

She dares to look right into his gold eyes. Like molten gold. And for the first time since she or even we have seen him, something valiant and funny dances in his great amber eyes. She gives a short, incredulous, giddy laugh, then stops herself. But his shoulders are shaking, and suddenly something that can only be his form of LAUGHTER comes rolling out of his chest -- a deep, helpless wave of fear and hurt and rage all changed to the release of pure existential hilarity.

Cable's swept up in it -- unable to resist -- half-naked, muddy, terrified in a swamp with a monster recognized and it can only be laughter -- she holds her side, her face racing from one contradiction to the other -- afraid -- laughing -- incredulous -- giggling -- unbelieving -- so unbelieving --

She touches his chest and puts her cheek against it, and suddenly is crying, big, rending sobs that shake her entire body. A great arm comes around her and holds her. The monster rests his huge cheek gently against her hair.

CABLE

Have I gone crazy? Is this a dream?

SWAMP THING

That's what I kept asking. Then I realized everything's a dream when you're alone. A nightmare.

(softer)

But soon now we'll get out.

CABLE

(shakes her head)

How? We can't get around him.

Swamp Thing almost smiles. Saying painfully...

The only way out is through.

(quietly)

Now we'd best get to some rest. We've a big day tomorrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

96 EXT. DEEP SWAMP. SUNSET. 96

A remote, wild, cyress grove. Everywhere is a tangle of the human-like trees, their roots twisted into the water, their giant limbs stretched into the lowering sky, uppermost leaves red with the setting sun.

ANGLE ON A PLACE where these monumental plants form a ring around a hollow of thickest moss. There is a pause in the SYMPHONY OF FROGS AND BIRDS preparing for the night. In a matter of seconds, the swamp falls SILENT. Next moment, Swamp Thing ENTERS FROM EDGE OF FRAME, a shadowy phantom slipping through the thick vegetation into the grove. He carries Cable gentle as a child.

CLOSER ANGLE. The huge beast stop close to the largest trees and puts his friend down. Then stands straight once more. The woman watches him without a word.

ECU ON THE MONSTER. His eyes lift until we can SEE in them THE IMAGE OF THE SETTING SUN REFLECTED in them. He looks directly at it, like a man might gaze towards god, or a child at its mother's face.

MEDIUM ANGLE TOWARDS THE SWAMP THING. We see the cords of his neck begin to vibrate, then a DEEP, CHURLING CRY or UTTERANCE comes from his chest. It's not as if he merely opens his mouth and makes the sound; it's as if it emanates from his whole being.

It lasts perhaps fifteen seconds, then the swamps fall silent again. But then we HEAR an even DEEPER SOUND, similar to Swamp Thing's, but larger -- and somehow older. Swamp Thing's head swings around at the extraordinary SONG.

IN HIS POV, we SEE the largest of the cypress trees, the one that leans over closest to him, and we SEE that its leaves are shimmering in almost the same frequency as the deep, earth-like CHURLING.

It's like the recordings of whales deep in the cellars of the ocean, singing each-to-each.

And no sooner does the first response end than ANOTHER BEGINS--this time from the other side of the pool. Swamp Thing's head turns to it.

IN SWAMP THING'S POV we SEE ANOTHER HUGE CYPRESS: One of its largest branches swings slowly towards the exhausted monster and the woman.

The gesture is unmistakably protective.

This releases a CHORUS OF SUCH SOUNDS...some deeper, some high-pitched. PAN THE SURROUNDING VEGETATION -- ferns, grasses, trees and vines, all exquisite in the last rays of sun. All are vibrating visibly.

CLOSE ON Swamp Thing's face. As he sweeps his eyes almost shyly around him his expression is that of a being at one with everything around him. He turns his eyes back towards the sun.

WIDE ANGLE FROM BEHIND the monster. Slowly, almost like a plant in time-lapse photography, the monster centers again on the burning star. Its photons stream over him and the entire swamp in an audible rush of stellar energy and strength. Then it's gone behind the horizon. Within moments Swamp thing is indistinguishable from the other glowing shapes of vegetation around him.

The ANIMALS, INSECTS, AND REPTILES of the dark swamps begin their own NIGHT CHORUS.

CUT TO THE FACE OF CABLE. Transformed. At once frightened and absolutely at peace.

DISSOLVE TO:

97 DELETE 97

98 EXT. SWAMPS NEAR ARCANE'S MANSION. DAWN. 98

ESTABLISHING deep forests and swamps, the heavy smell of hyacinth and orchids, the sounds of ten thousand diurnal life forms clicking on to the sun's rays -- eyes opening, mouths, beaks and snouts CALLING, WHISTLING, BELLOWING and CROAKING. All in a sea of mist with the mansion of Arcane floating on it like an evil galleon.

CUT TO:

99A EXT. SWAMPS 99A

The area of where Ferret last leaped from the yacht. Peaceful. Serene.

CUT TO:

99 EXT. DEEP SWAMP FOREST. DAWN. 99

A place of enormous natural beauty. Virgin cypress tower up, so thick at their tops there's great space beneath the trees. Orchids grow rampant up the verticals; moss deep-velvets the ground, and ferns make a mystery of the background.

The sun penetrates only in one spot of this cathedral-like place, slanting a shaft of light onto a bed of moss.

CLOSE ON CABLE, couched there within a bowl of Cypress roots, curled like a child, asleep.

A tremor runs through her body, chased by dreams. Her expression mirrors it, her body tenses. The tree she sleeps against moves.

A huge hand smooths her hair. She stills, and her fingers close with their own contentment over one of the monster's.

She wakes. Looks up at Swamp Thing. He sits motionless. Crosslegged. Like one of those enormous stone Buddhas abandoned in deep jungle. Perhaps asleep, perhaps in another dimension, so motionless is it.

Cable slips up, touches his face tenderly, then looks off towards

the light filtering through the trees. She sees the shimmering of the water.

She rises silently and slips off across the moss.

PAN SLIGHTLY TO THE MONSTER'S FACE. His eyes open slowly, but are clear and alert as if he were never gone at all.

ST3/AA2

DISSOLVE TO:

99B EXT. A LAGOON. MORNING. 99B

Cable strips out of her mud-caked clothes and slips into the crystal clear water of this spring-fed lagoon. A slight mist still hangs over it, giving the whole the quality of the finest Japanese watercolor.

The woman washes the mud of a thousand nightmares off her body and out of her hair.

CUT TO ANOTHER ANGLE. We SEE Swamp Thing watching her from a distance. Not as a voyeur, but as a lover who knows he can't stay. He turns away from her aching beauty and disappears into the forest.

99C EXT. THE ISLAND. MORNING. 99C

Swamp Thing slowly walks off into the gloom, carrying the notebook with him.

99D EXT. THE LAGOON. MORNING. 99D

Cable leaves the water, bathed and radiant, and begins drying her hair in the warming sun.

FROM ANOTHER, HAND-HELD ANGLE THROUGH UNDERBRUSH, and a subtle MUSIC CUE, we begin to realize all is not so idyllic as we'd hoped. A SLIGHT PAN then REVEALS ARCANE. Watching.

He makes a motion, and several of his husky, nasty-looking MEN slip into view and make a rush on Cable! They have her before she knows what's happening.

99E EXT. THE ISLAND. DAY. 99E

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- about to tear the notebook into a million

pieces. But he's stopped dead in his tracks by the piercing SCREAMS of Cable! He drops the notebook and ROARS off towards the SOUNDS.

CUT TO:

99F EXT. THE LAGOON. DAY. 99F

Cable, held tight by Arcane's leering men. Half naked. Helpless. Arcane comes before her, delighted with her vulnerability, with her beauty. He leans forward, whispering.

ARCANE

Stop struggling, Cable. You're home free. I'm going to give you everything you've ever dreamed of.

(touches her face)

Everything.

Without warning Cable spits in his face.

Arcane recoils, face twisted by surprise, disgust and rage. He takes a terrible looking machette from one of his men and rears up over her with it.

But an instant before Arcane strikes, Swamp Thing explodes like a bomb from the jungle -- crashing and splashing through the shallows towards them. Arcane whirls and strikes at the girl -- the monster thrusts out its arm -- the blow drives hard -- clean through the monster's arm, severing it!

Swamp Thing bellows around in agony -- his great arm thuds down into the mud. Arcane drops the knife and runs. The men drop the girl and retreat at the terrible sounds.

CABLE

Alec!

The two fly together.

TIGHT ON ARCANE, arrested by that word. He turns and his whole face lights up.

ARCANE

(to himself)

Alec?

(thunderstruck)

Alec Holland! By god I've struck gold!

REVERSE ON THE MONSTER. Seeing the girl is unhurt, it rears up and SHRIEKS out the most blood-chilling roar of hatred and rage ever heard. Arcane just about has cardiac arrest on the spot. His men scatter. Swamp Thing roars over after him -- Arcane seems too terrified to move. But not too terrified to yell at the top of his lungs.

ARCANE (cont'd)

NOW!!!

And then it happens -- from above, a huge net falls -- landing over Swamp Thing and Cable in a terrible tangle of thick ropes.

Swamp Thing whirls in rage, but only entangles the net more tightly. He loses his footing and crashes forward into water, drenching everybody with the spray. More and more MEN APPEAR -- another net is thrown over him -- he twists against it but only entangles himself more. Soon he's unable to move at all. The boldest of the men stitch the nets together with stout rope, and the monster is a helpless captive.

The monster and the girl are taken captive; utterly, absolutely, without any further hope of escape.

CLOSE ON CABLE AND :. Their eyes lock.

CABLE

You knew, didn't you? You knew we'd be caught.

The monster lowers its eyes.

SWAMP THING

As I said, the only way out is through.

ANGLE ON ARCANE as Bruno walks up, a big smile on his face. He places the fifteenth notebook in Arcane's hands.

ST3/AB

101 EXT. ARCANE'S ESTATE IN THE SWAMP. NIGHT. 101

NIGHT SOUNDS. GATORS BAYING -- GHOST BIRDS -- FADE UP PICTURE -- ZOOMING SWIFTLY over the moonlit swamps to the lighted windows of the ominous place -- FADE UP APPLAUSE AND CHEERS and

CUT TO:

102 INT. ARCANE'S CASTLE / A BANQUET HALL. NIGHT. 102

TIGHT ON ARCANE'S PROUD, ARROGANT, JUBILANT FACE. He raises his arms as CAMERA PULLS BACK. A feast has been prepared. Arcane is at the head of the table; Bruno at the foot. The surviving guards are there, as well as half a dozen beautiful SERVING GIRLS. The air is one of celebration and anticipation; the table is spread with the finest of foods and wines; and those gathered are indulging themselves to the limits.

At last the ovation stops.

ARCANE

The occasion for this celebration, of course, is known to you all. We have captured the dragon and rescued the damsel in distress!

CHEERS AGAIN -- LAUGHTER. REVERSE to REVEAL CABLE, bound to a chair near the far end of the table. She has been bathed and dressed in a gown. But she has no food or freedom, and, if looks could kill, hers would disintegrate Arcane in a flash. But looks can't kill, and Arcane is enjoying this fact to the hilt.

ARCANE

Certainly we regret the loss of our esteemed friend, Ferret. But let's face it, he has himself to blame that he lost his head in a moment of panic.

Laughter and applause. Arcane raises his hands for silence.

ARCANE (cont'd)

But we are here in celebration, celebration of an event of profound significance -- the duplication of the Holland formula.

A BURST OF APPLAUSE. Arcane cuts it off with a wave.

ARCANE

For this we must thank the excellence of one man.

(gestures)

Dear Bruno...who acted as willing bait to Cable's stupidity, and even snatched the notebook from which we extracted the final secret.

JUBILANT APPLAUSE AND CHEERS.

ANGLE ON BRUNO, just next to Cable, beaming, pleased, in his cups. A beautiful young GIRL, dressed in a flimsy costume discreetly replaces his empty wine glass with one that's full.

ARCANE (o.s.)
...and so, I propose a toast.

Bruno looks up, eyes gleaming.

WIDER ANGLE. Arcane lifts his glass to Bruno. ALL follow. Bruno lifts the fresh glass before him almost shyly, back to Arcane.

ARCANE
(to Bruno)
...to the keystone to our success...
to our conquest, if you will, of the
world.

ALL (in unison)
To Bruno!

All drink their glasses to the dregs, then put them down and give Bruno a HUGE OVATION.

ANGLE ON Bruno--still drinking his glass to the bottom, savouring each drop of his glory. We might notice that his wine is a slightly different color from all the rest. At last, he puts it down, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

BRUNO
(almost shyly)
But, sir--when're we going to see
the results? I mean, have you tried
it out on a plant yet?

Arcane puts his fingertips together in a precise steeple and smiles.

ARCANE
Plants? That was last year's dream.
Now there is the power held by that
thing Holland's become. Those powers
are all I wish to try for now.

Bruno smiles uneasily.

BRUNO

But, sir--he's a monstrosity. He should be killed, but not...

ARCANE

To walk through a hail of bullets like a man through rain. Who knows, perhaps he's immortal. Any way, I want his power --

(smiles)

And I'll have it soon.

A frightened silence falls over the room. There is something in Arcane's face that even these people fear.

CABLE

Have you...

The woman is afraid to finish the sentence. Arcane shakes his head with a superior smile.

ARCANE

Certainly you don't think I'd be so foolish as to experiment on myself.

He rearranges himself and adds quickly:

ARCANE (cont'd)

--not that there's any danger. But I have given the privilege of taking the first dose to our guest of honor tonight. It's he who will tell us whether or not the formula works. and I'm sure--

Arcane stops, staring past Cable. There is a CRASH OF CRYSTAL. Cable jerks around at the sound, then jumps back in horror.

WIDER SHOT REVEALS Bruno, or what once was Bruno. But now he has altered. What was his nose is now an elongated proboscis, half-root, half-tendrill. His eyes have sunken into knots, his hair turned to seagrass and his mouth opened to a LOW, TERRIFIED GROAN from his mossy lungs.

WIDE ANGLE. The room, including Arcane, recoils in horror. Next instant, everyone is running in all directions, bumping against each other, SCREAMING in horror, as Bruno lurches up, clutching at his throat.

ARCANE

Don't panic! I'm sure it's only temporary. Don't panic--

REVERSE ANGLE. Bruno is still changing. His arms are like roots. His clothes are splitting and falling away. We see his torso is covered with a ragged bark-like substance. Next moment Bruno teeters backwards and falls as helplessly as a felled redwood.

ANGLE ON Arcane's face.

ARCANE

(low)

Hell.

ST3/AC

103 INT. DUNGEONS. NIGHT. 103

BLACKNESS. FOOTSTEPS ON STONE, COMING DOWN STAIRS. A splinter of light, then a heavy BOLT being thrown. The door is thrown open. Arcane is framed.

The guard enters with a torch.

PAN RIGHT THROUGH DEEP SHADOWS UNTIL the face of Swamp Thing sweeps INTO FRAME.

He looks deathly ill, pale and wilted.

WIDER. WE SEE Swamp Thing is chained to a huge timber "X" in the center of the dungeon's floor.

Arcane descends the stone stairs and comes before him, his face dripping contempt.

ARCANE

So. It appears your formula is more quirky than I thought...

Swamp Thing lifts his head as high as he can and stares unflinchingly back at the man.

SWAMP THING

What have you done with Cable?

Arcane lets out a HOOT of delight.

ARCANE

(closer, fiercer)

So you are in there, Holland. I knew your brain was intact. I'd

wager you have all you abilities --
everything -- plus this huge strength.

(lower)

Pity it made you so damned ugly --
must have been the fire.

Swamp Thing simply stares at him. Seething. There's a disturbance in the corridor outside the dungeon door. Arcane turns, and smiles.

ARCANE (cont'd)

Bring him in!

The guards bring in Bruno and throw him in a heap of rags.

Swamp thing looks at him gravely, then back to Arcane.

ARCANE

I am humble enough to admit having
failed at the attempt once or twice my-
self.

(he puts his face right
up to Swamp Things)

We followed the notebooks quite religiously,
but still...

(glances away from the
thicket of Bruno)

I want to know what it was we did wrong --
Why doesn't Bruno there have your strength?

Swamp Thing shakes his great head, looking at Bruno.

SWAMP THING

Because he never had it.

Arcane boils in anger.

ARCANE

No riddles, Swamp Thing. You'll
tell me or pay the price --

(crueler)

and through a very dear agent, my
friend.

(wheels to guard)

Bring her in.

Several GUARDS pull Cable into the dungeon.

As soon as he sees her, Swamp Thing is changed. There's life in his eyes again -- and they never leave hers until Arcane plants

himself directly between.

ARCANE (cont'd)

It is the formula, or it is her.
Which?

CABLE

Alec -- don't !

Her words are cut off by the guard's hand clamped over her mouth. He pulls her back and manacles her to the wall. Swamp Thing looks from her to Arcane, drops his eyes, then looks up, almost sadly. Again, it's a struggle, but he forces himself to form the words.

SWAMP THING

You don't understand...there's nothing hidden. No secret. The formula works in so simple a way. What Bruno took... was probably the same as what changed me. It only amplifies your essence.

(looking deep into him)

It simply will make you...more of what you...already are.

Arcane blinks at him a moment, then shakes his shoulders.

ARCANE

Bruno was a mess inside, now he's the same outside -- fair enough. I am genius within, so I shall be monumental in body as well.

(smiles)

I'll take it.

He turns for the door, then spins and stabs his finger straight at Swamp Thing.

ARCANE (cont'd)

But you had better be right -- for her sake. And for yours. You're vulnerable to steel, it seems, weed. I'll come back here and lay into you with a pruning shears!

He turns laughing and goes out of the place. The guards follow, SLAMMING the door on Cable and Swamp Thing.

UTTER DARKNESS.

Cable?

SWAMP THING

Alec.

CABLE

ST3/AD

104 INT. THE BANQUET HALL. 104

Arcane passes in. Everyone has deserted. Only the ruins of the banquet.

ARCANE

Fools...

He turns and storms from the chamber.

105 INT. ARCANE'S LABORATORY. PREDAWN. 105

Outside his massive windows, the swamp is rousing from the night. The sky is painted in strokes of pink opalescence. Arcane crosses to his great desk and touches the vial of amber fluid there.

CLOSER. His fingers are trembling. He forces himself to pour the stuff into a wine glass, then takes it onto the terrace.

106 EXT. TERRACE OVERLOOKING THE SWAMPS. DAWN. 106

Arcane looks lonely. Driven. Almost haggard. He swirls the fluid against the day's new light, then throws back his head and drinks it to the dregs.

CLOSE ANGLE. His face twists at the taste -- bitter and strange. But once past that, it seems to warm his body like fine Cognac. A slight smile comes over him. He rubs his belly and sets the glass down.

ARCANE

(looks off into the swamps)

How beautiful I shall become.

He turns and RINGS a call bell.

RINGS it again, harder.

A beautiful YOUNG WOMAN in her night shift appears.

ARCANE

Bring me Brandy.

The girl disappears. Her body is wonderful in the light shift. Arcane can smell the musk of her bed. He smiles.

ARCANE (cont'd)

By god, I even feel... a stirring of the beast in me...

He laughs obscenely.

107 EXT. SWAMPS. DAWN. 107

The sun breeches the rim of the planet.

108 INT. DUNGEONS. DAWN. 108

Swamp Thing hangs on his timbered trusswork, sunk in darkness. But there is one window, high near the ceiling, open to the sky. And now, like a brilliant crescent, the rising sun edges up into the window, casting a stark shaft of light down into the cell. It cuts through the air eight feet over swamp thing.

The beast raises his head weakly.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE.

CABLE (O.S.)

Reach for it, Alec.

He turns and looks at her.

IN HIS POV -- Cable, her face to his, urges him.

CABLE (cont'd)

You thrive on light -- reach for the light!

BACK ON THE MONSTER -- WIDE. He turns his eyes back up to the shaft of light, then reaches his one arm high as he can.

No good.

So weakened is his state, he can't keep the art upright. He's a pale, sickly green.

CABLE (cont'd)

Alec! Please!
(very softly)

For me.

ANGLE BACK ON SWAMP THING. He stares back at the woman. Her face has caught the sun.

The monster turns and stretches for all he's worth. His fingers just tip into the brilliance. He strains every fibre in his body to touch more, realizing his very life depends on it.

109 INT. ARCANE'S LABORATORY. DAWN. 109

TIGHT ON A CLOCK. PULL BACK to Arcane, seen from behind, seated in his study. He's watching the clock. He takes his pulse.

The girl KNOCKS gently and enters. Arcane jumps. Settles himself uneasily.

ARCANE (cont'd)

(irritably)

Come, come.

The girl brings the tray before him -- Brandy, a lovely bowl of fruit. Suddenly she drops it all with a deafening CRASH!

ARCANE

Clumsy idiot! Clean it up!

The girl doesn't move. A stupid, peasant face, Arcane thinks. He's irritated by her inattention, by her failing to see how stunning he's already become inside. He stands up.

The girl gives a deep shudder and lets out the most awesome SCREAM imaginable and runs from the room.

ARCANE rushes across the room after her. Then stops, feeling too strange to pursue it farther. He's not slept for days, his beard itches -- his whole body feels odd. Cumbersome and stiff and aching. And his clothes are uncommonly tight. Damn his tailor!

He turns and looks in a mirror.

A twisted, humped creature stares back at him. His jacket splits down the back. His body shoots up another ten inches -- his skin is seething suddenly in a brown boil of foaming flesh and chromosomes -- it soon covers his entire body, and before our eyes hardens into a carapace of ugly umber crust. Arcane is

gone. It's as if he's become an odious cacoon of some horrible insect.

CAMERA BEGINS TO MOVE IN ON IT. MUSIC CUES that something onward still is left. Suddenly, when we're IN VERY CLOSE, something bright pokes through the integument. We see it's a talon, perhaps three inches long. Then another, and then a whole hand of some sort, half eagle, half reptile -- thrusts out.

WIDEN -- the same has happened on the other arm. And now they're reaching up and tearing at the crust over the body.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- the crust that is Arcane reels back -- clutching at his face.

He knocks over the vial of fluid with a viscious slash of his hand -- there's a sharp, -EXPLOSION of fire -- Arcane staggers back, whimpering.

A terrible, deep SNARLING WAIL rends his soul.

ARCANE

Hollaaaaannd! You bloody bastard!

Suddenly without warning the transformed Arcane bursts out of his egg -- a horrendous, lion-maned, hyena-faced monster ten times more horrendous than Swamp Thing. It lets out a terrifying SCREECH that shakes the very walls of the place!

110 INT. THE DUNGEONS. DAWN. 110

TIGHT ON -- the great green hand thrust full into the light -- vibrant, glowing.

ON SWAMP THING'S FACE -- turned into the light -- beautiful.

WIDE -- the shaft of sunlight now falls full on Swamp Thing, rimming him with incandescent gold -- and the most extraordinary thing is happening. A CLOSE SHOT REVEALS his feet are altering -- his toes elongate until they're no longer toes but roots, piercing between the great stones of the dungeon into the black earth beneath.

INSERT. IN CROSS SECTION, we SEE the roots plunge down between the stones, through the earth and into water.

FULL SHOT -- The monster's body swells, powerful, unstoppable. And suddenly, something on his right side waves up -- where his

arm had been severed there now is a thin, vine-like extension of wirey green flesh and sinew -- split at the ends into tendrils -- expanding and growing!

ANGLE ON CABLE -- astonished -- her face a symphony.

CABLE

Alec! Your arm!

CLOSE ON THE MONSTER'S FACE. His new appendage comes INTO FRAME as he holds it before his eyes. Already recognizable as a hand -- more powerful -- tendoned -- fingered.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING'S FACE, lifted to the light -- with a profound innocence and majesty in his great amber eyes. And then the new arm lifts into frame -- complete and powerful as the one it has replaced. MUSIC PEAKS over a WIDE SHOT of the monster, arms lifted to the sunlight, his giant shadow streaming back against the stone walls, his body swelling until the chains that bind him SHATTER.

CUT INSTANTLY

TO:

ST3/AE

111 INT. ARCANE'S CHAMBER'S. DAWN. 111

ARCANE -- SHOT FROM BEHIND -- doubles over as the SOUND of the shattered chains ECHOES through the entire castle. Around him, his laboratory is in flames.

Then the ECHOES die Arcane straightens, up and up -- to monstrous proportions. He turns towards the door, showing himself for the first time. The sight is awesome. A huge, wedge of a head -- red hawk's eyes, a war dog's face with terrifying yellow canines -- a brutal, bear-trap of a body -- all muscle and spring-steel armor-plated scales. Like a man raging through cobwebs, he smashes through the laboratory apparatus and flames. He reaches the far wall and claws at a sprawling display of ancient armaments, flinging aside shields and pikes for one enormous sword. His voice is ancient and devastating.

ARCANE (cont'd)

If Ferret's machete could cut off
your arm, Holland, then ^{it} will cut off
your wretched life!

He races from the room, taking off half the top and side of the doorway as he slashes his great bulk through.

112 INT. THE DUNGEONS. DAY. 112

Swamp Thing SNAPS the chains holding Cable. The two race for the door and SLAM against it -- Swamp Thing tugging at the locks.

ANGLE ON CABLE. Suddenly afraid.

CABLE

Listen!

They HEAR an AWFUL ROARING SOUND, like a hurricane coming down into the cellars.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING. Grave.

SWAMP THING

He's taken the formula.

113 INT. PASSAGEWAY AND STAIRS. 113

MOVING -- with Arcane the monster as he SCREAMS his way through smoking stone corridors and ROARS down stairs, striking sparks off the walls with his terrible sword. His CRY of rage shakes the stones to their foundations.

114 INT. THE DUNGEONS. DAY. 114

The CRIES are coming nearer. Swamp Thing is hammering against the great door with all his strength, but the massive timbers are holding, even against him.

ANGLE ON CABLE. Something is tugging at her skirt.

She turns and finds the mutation of Bruno there. One can just see his little green eyes blinking up out of the hedge of his head.

BRUNO

Please. There is a way.

Swamp Thing stops. He and Cable follow the little monstrosity across the wall to a torch bracket. Bruno points up at it.

BRUNO (cont'd)

I can't reach it, but if you'll twist that to the right, then twice to the

left...

Swamp Thing looks at the little weedpatch, then does as he says. There's a RUMBLING of COUNTERWEIGHTS inside the wall, a RASP of bolts, and the door swings open.

Swamp Thing and Cable look at Bruno with amazement.

BRUNO

Put there in case a guard ever got
shut in by mistake. Now follow me
-- there's a way out for you!

He turns and scurries out. Swamp Thing and Cable are right after him.

115 INT. PASSAGEWAYS. 115

MOVING with them as the two follow Bruno into a labyrinth of passageways leading downward.

116 INT. OUTSIDE CELL. 116

ANGLE OUTSIDE CELL -- Arcane's now massive, nearly werewolfian face contorts with hatred as he CLANGS by, seeing the open door, raging on even faster.

117 INT. PASSAGEWAYS. 117

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING AND CABLE -- with Bruno riding like a vegetable guidance system on Swamp Thing's shoulders -- pointing this way, that way -- as the three are pursued relentlessly. No matter when they turn, Arcane leaps out to block their way.

They're pressed deeper and deeper into the the lower tunnels of the place, through catacombs and thigh-deep drains, until Cable is soaked through to the skin and so terrified that Swamp Thing must carry her.

118 INT. A CHAMBER. 118

At last they enter a small, circular chamber with a bowled floor. In its center is a black pool, perhaps six feet across.

BRUNO

You will have to trust me here --

if you do, you'll survive. If not...

There is a terrible ROAR somewhere nearby.

CABLE

Please -- just tell us.

BRUNO

This is the well of the castle -- fed by a spring from the bottom of the great swamp -- if you follow it, you'll come out there. Can you hold your breath?

Cable, terrified, nods yes.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Then go!

He turns and runs up the gallery just as Arcane bursts in, throwing himself under the monstrosity's feet. Arcane goes sprawling.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING AND CABLE -- they jump into the pool together.

ANGLE ON ARCANE -- SCRAMBLING UP. Bruno already is clear, darting off into the shadowy tunnels with a high-pitched GIGGLE OF TRIUMPH.

Arcane turns to the well. The two are gone.

119 INT. AQUIFER. SPFX. 119

Clinging together in near darkness, swimming against the swift current, Swamp Thing and Cable roll and tumble and fight their way towards a distant glow.

At last, when their lungs are about to burst, they're swallowed by the light.

120 EXT. THE SWAMPS. DAY. 120

They burst out into sunlight and oxygen -- in the middle of a deep pool. All around are wild, pristine swamps -- as if they had emerged at the birth of time.

ANGLE ON THE SHORE as they pull themselves onto land and collapse

in the sun.

But next moment Arcane shoots out from the muck where the underground stream bubbles up -- and now he is fully, awfully monstrous -- a formidable, perhaps overwhelming opponent for the exhausted Swamp Thing, shaking the water off in a huge spray, like a wolf-god.

Swamp Thing scrambles up, but Arcane only wags his enormous head at him.

ARCANE

No use, Holland --

Arcane cocks his great arm to thrust -- but with an extraordinary move, Cable throws herself in front as the blow strikes -- and takes it in her breast.

ANGLE ON CABLE -- she falls, mortally wounded.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING -- rising up in horror -- his bottomless, animal rage at last fully released. The fight is on.

It's a huge, thundering battle of giants that turns the smoking swamp into a shrieking nightmare of mud and shattered water. Arcane fights like a beast, clawing and tearing with his great teeth, first swinging with the sword, then biting like a raging wolf.

At last it seems Swamp Thing prevails. A telling strike and Arcane lies stunned. Vulnerable to a death blow.

But instead, in the first moment he has, Swamp Thing turns to Cable.

ANGLE ON THE TWO. Holding her tenderly in his huge arms, Swamp Thing sees the life draining from her, sees the wound deep into her breast.

Cable weakly smiles, brushing his face with a hand as white as a dove.

Swamp Thing then does something quite extraordinary. He pulls a clot of his own mossy flesh from his side and stuffs it gently into the wound. The bleeding is quelled, but the girl, her eyes shining with a distant light, sags and goes limp.

Swamp Thing stares down helplessly, blinded by tears. He's so absorbed he doesn't see Arcane with his giant dog's teeth and hawk's eyes rearing up behind him, the deadly sword again in his

hand.

But something is happening, though, with Cable as well. She stirs.

Swamp Thing rushes back to her. Her head rolls around, looks at him, then her eyes widen perceptibly --

CABLE
(weak but urgent)
Behind you -- !

Swamp Thing turns and leaps up in a motion of incredible swiftness, literally stopping Arcane in the middle of a killing blow -- he joins with the monster with utter outrage -- wrenches the sword from Arcane's hand and swings a mighty, WHISTLING blow. Arcane is split assunder from the neck to the belly. Great emerald coils and yellow smoke pour out into the spring.

The great armored body teeters, then crashes backwards into the dark pool.

ST3/AF

ANGLE ON ARCANE ... sinking into the bog. The last thing that goes down is his great clawed hand. Twitching and clutching at air.

Swamp Thing goes back to Cable.

ANGLE ON TWO -- he lifts her tenderly. Miraculously, she is recovering strength.

CABLE
I... I don't understand...
(looking at her wound)
It's healing...

She looks up at him. He just touches her face. Very tenderly.

Then he stops, listening. We HEAR the SOUND of an approaching boat.

CABLE
What is it?

SWAMP THING
(looks at her)
You'll be all right, now. It's over.

I've got to go.

CABLE

Alec -- no! Let me go with you --
you can start your work again --

Holding up his hands to her.

SWAMP THING

With these hands?

CABLE

(desperate)

I'll be your hands -- please --
Alec!

He shakes his head.

SWAMP THING

Not Alec. Swamp Thing. There's no
time now -- and you need care.

(touches her)

I'll always be with you. We'll
meet when you're strong again.

He IN HER POV we see Swamp Thing shambling off through great
columns of sunlight, deep into the swamp.

Moments later the someone is coming through the bush. Cable
turns. Jude walks out. Cable's face lights up, remembering the
rendezvous.

CABLE

Jude.

JUDE:

It's day after tomorrow. Where's
Swampy?

Cable turns away and says nothing. Jude looks from her to the
swamps where the monster disappeared.

JUDE

Hadda go, huh?

(lowers his head)

Kinda thought he would.

(raises his head back up)

Kinda think he'll be back, though.
Right?

CLOSE ON CABLE'S FACE. By degrees, a wonderful smile comes across her face.

CABLE

Right.

IN HER POV on the deep impenetrable swamps, we FREEZE and

ROLL END CREDITS