

# **SWAMP THING**

by

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Based on the DC Comic character  
Created by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. LOUISIANA BAYOU - DAY

This is Mother Nature's unruly child, thick with Spanish Moss, jutting Cypress roots, teeming with wildlife, and the incessant DRONE OF INSECTS. Here and there, random rays of sunlight break through the thick green canopy.

CREDITS BEGIN

A HUMMINGBIRD darts through the air, pausing occasionally to sip at an open flower.

FOLLOW THE HUMMINGBIRD as it flies through the swamp.

As the hummingbird passes between two trees, it collides with a vast SPIDER'S WEB, still glistening with dew. The bird struggles in the web as a huge SPIDER, easily the size of the hapless bird, moves in for the kill.

The bird's beating wings tear the web apart and it flies on, depriving the spider of its meal.

The hummingbird skims along the water's edge now, past what appear to be several LOGS half-sunk in the water.

Suddenly, one log LUNGES upward. An ALLIGATOR! The bird passes BETWEEN the 'gator's jaws an instant before they SNAP SHUT. Life here is precarious at best.

STAY WITH THE HUMMINGBIRD as it finally soars OVER a wire SECURITY FENCE onto the grounds of:

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - DAY

About the size of a small split-level house, three of its walls primarily screened-in glass, it stands back from the water's edge about 20 yards. A small PIER juts from the end of the building's walkway several feet out over the water. A metal plaque near the front door reads: SUNDERLAND CORPORATION RESEARCH FACILITY #6.

The hummingbird approaches the building, to a spot where the SCREEN is bent away from a half-open window, allowing access. Without hesitation, the bird flies INTO the lab.

INT. GREENHOUSE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Surely the Garden of Eden must have looked something like this. There are TABLES everywhere, all covered by a vast array of POTTED PLANTS, flowers of every description.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Here and there, we can see various HIGH-TECH MACHINES that seem to be in direct contrast to Nature's glory.

FOLLOW THE HUMMINGBIRD as it flits from flower to flower, pausing to sip the nectar. We see blossoms of every type, from daisies to orchids, and then some so exotic we cannot begin to name them.

Finally, the hummingbird HOVERS before an exotic plant that resembles an orchid, but larger and more beautiful by far. The hummingbird begins to SIP from the flower--

--And the flower's blossom suddenly OPENS like a GIGANTIC MAW, like a Venus Fly Trap, but ringed with TEETH. It SWALLOWS the hapless hummingbird whole, then SNAPS SHUT.

CREDITS END

A WOMAN'S HANDS ENTER FRAME, holding a large GLASS BELL JAR that she quickly slams down over the carnivorous plant. There is a GOLD CHARM BRACELET on her right wrist.

ABBY (O.C.)

Damn it, Alec. You've got to do something about that screen. That's the third bird this month.

ANGLE ON ABBY ARCANE

She's lovely, late 20s, blonde hair so pale it's almost white, yet marked by a DARK STREAK on either side. She wipes her hands, then turns toward:

ALEC (O.S.)

They're your uncle's pursestrings, Abby. You talk to him about it.

ALEC HOLLAND walks past, carrying a large, dirt-filled FLOWER POT. Alec is early 30s, good-looking in an absent-minded professor sort of way, wearing a white lab coat. He puts the pot down on a heavily-laden LAB TABLE, then walks away to get something.

ABBY

Uncle Anton doesn't listen to me. You're his precious golden boy.

Alec pauses to glance at a FRAMED PHOTO on the wall.

ALEC

Not for a long time now.

ALEC'S POV

It's a photo taken a decade ago: Alec smiling at the camera, his arm around a slightly older man who is not nearly as pleased to be photographed. This older man is ANTON ARCANE.

ALEC  
Not for a very long time.

BACK TO SCENE

Alec picks up an EMPTY BEAKER and takes it to his table.

ALEC  
These days our relationship is strictly professional.

He looks up at Abby.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
Besides our work, the only thing we really have in common is you.

ABBY  
How do you always manage to make that sound dirty somehow?

Alec grins.

ALEC  
Practice?

ABBY  
Uncle Anton practically raised me after Daddy died. I will always love him for that...

Abby gives Alec a QUICK KISS on the cheek.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
...But not the way I love you.

ALEC  
I would hope not.

Alec RUBS his right forearm as if to ease some pain as he studies the array of CHEMICALS on his table.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
Feels like it's gonna rain again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

You don't need an old broken arm to figure that out. This is the Bayou, remember? It rains here almost constantly.

One of the high-tech machines behind Alec suddenly BINGS, indicating it has finished its work.

ALEC

Gene resequencer is finished.

Alec moves to the machine and removes a large TEST TUBE filled with a very pale GREEN LIQUID.

ALEC (CONT'D)

I reconfigured the nutrient strand again per your suggestion. If this one works, I owe you dinner.

ABBY

You owe me a damn sight more than that, mister.

Alec returns to his worktable, centers the empty beaker, mixes measured doses of DIFFERENT COLORED LIQUIDS from several TEST TUBES in it, then adds several drops of the liquid he's just removed from the machine. The combined chemical liquids turn a DULL GREEN.

Alec carefully EXTRACTS a small amount of the green liquid with a GLASS TUBE.

ALEC

Finger-crossing time again.

ABBY

Go for it.

Carefully, Alec APPLIES several drops of the liquid to the dirt in his pot. He waits. Beat. No result.

Alec SHRUGS, then turns to a COMPUTER to input the data.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Nothing?

ALEC

Flat line. But we're close. I know it.

ABBY

You say that every time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALEC

Eventually, I have to be right.

ABBY

Right and rich. Let's not forget that part.

Alec measures more chemicals, this time adding twice as much of the liquid from the machine. When he's done, there is a faint GREEN GLOW to the formula.

ALEC

You know it's not about the money. It's never been about the money.

ABBY

I know. I know. It's all about changing the world.

Alec applies a few drops of the new mixture to the next pot in line. He's getting on his soap box again.

ALEC

Don't laugh. Imagine having the power to grow crops where there are now deserts. We'd have no more Biafras. No more Ethiopias. No more hunger. We could finally feed the world. No, we could finally let the world feed us.

Abby has clearly heard this speech before. As Alec continues, she starts MOUTHING the words along with him.

ALEC (CONT'D)

One way or another, we're all connected to this planet, to the great growing gestalt that is The Green. And once I can get this damned formula to actually work, we can use it--

ALEC (CONT'D)

--To transform the future.

ABBY

--To transform the future.

Alec realizes he's been pontificating again.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Sorry.

ABBY

Don't be. Pomposity is one of your most endearing qualities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Alec looks back at the flower pot. Nothing has changed.

ALEC

Well, back to the drawing--

Suddenly, the dirt in the pot STIRS, the surface CRACKS as if something were pushing up from below.

Alec and Abby watch, as a GREEN TENDRIL pushes up through the dirt, sprouting into a BEAUTIFUL FLOWER.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Alec moves to several other empty pots, dripping the liquid into the dirt of each one.

One after the other, they sprout into something wonderful.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ.

Abby hugs him.

ABBY

Never doubted you for a second.

Clutching the formula-filled beaker to his chest like it was an infant, Alec rushes across the room.

ALEC

Abby, call Arcane. Tell him to get over here. Now! I've got to go set up the test scenario.

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - DAY - SOON AFTER

A sleek AIRBOAT, piloted by a SUNDERLAND CORP. SECURITY GUARD, approaches the lab's small PIER. Four men sit in the rear of the boat.

As the boat docks and the Guard ties it up, the four men EXIT the craft. The man in charge is ANTON ARCANE, 40, impeccably dressed, almost brutally handsome. This is the man we saw with Alec in the photo earlier.

Arcane is flanked by his three aides: FERRETT, buzz-cut, ex-Special Ops, a cigarette always dangling from his lip; BRUNO, tall, thin, humorless; and BENNY, short, stocky, eager to please Arcane at all times.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Arcane SWATS something at the back of his neck, then picks it off and looks at the rather unpleasant MOSQUITO he's just killed.

ARCANE

I hate this swamp.

Arcane FLICKS the dead bug away with a flip of his finger as he and his men walk toward the Greenhouse.

INT. GREENHOUSE LAB - ANOTHER AREA - MOMENTS LATER

A bed of dirt, perhaps 3' x 5', rests on a large table. There is a fancy SPRAYER ROD set up above the bed, designed to roll along above the length of the bed and hydrate the dirt. Alec makes some adjustments to the rod as Arcane and his men ENTER, Abby close behind them.

ARCANE

Finally some good news, I take it?

ALEC

Seems so, Anton. So far.

Alec notices Ferrett's lit cigarette.

ALEC (CONT'D)

And you. How many times do I have to tell you...?

Alec cocks a thumb toward a NO SMOKING SIGN on the wall.

Ferrett looks at Alec dismissively, but a subtle NOD from Arcane catches Ferrett's eye.

Smiling coldly at Alec, Ferrett removes the butt from his mouth, and GRINDS it out in the open palm of his other hand. If it hurts (and it does), Ferrett gives no sign. He then sticks the rest of the cigarette behind his ear.

Alec turns his attention back to Arcane.

ALEC (CONT'D)

So how is your pet genetics project coming?

ARCANE

Not nearly as far along as yours, apparently. Maybe we should have traded areas of research.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEC

Yeah, like that was ever gonna happen.

Alec completes his adjustments, wipes his hands.

ALEC (CONT'D)

You've been obsessed with human longevity for as long as I've known you.

Arcane studies the sprayer set-up, trying to figure out what Alec intends to do with it.

ARCANE

We can talk about my professional setbacks later. At the moment, this is your show.

Alec goes to a large WALL SAFE, and removes a fancy GLASS CANNISTER with thick METAL LIDS at either end. Clearly, this cannister now contains the GLOWING FORMULA. Alec then returns to the sprayer rod system.

ALEC

Straight to the point, as always.

Alec carefully EXTRACTS a small measured amount of the formula from the cannister, and POURS it into a LIQUID RESERVOIR in the sprayer rod delivery system.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Okay, basically the situation is this. The plant growth in the outer lab was rapid, and appears to be stable. But that was a concentrated application of the formula.

Alec carefully CLOSES the liquid reservoir.

ALEC (CONT'D)

We're about to see how a properly diluted dosage works on an already seeded bed.

Alec ACTIVATES the sprayer. The rod ROLLS ACROSS the dirt bed, SOAKING it completely. A beat. Nothing happens.

Arcane is becoming impatient.

ARCANE

I thought you told me you had something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Alec smiles, and starts counting down with his fingers.

ALEC

Wait for it...wait...wait...

Suddenly, lush, fully-grown VEGETABLES - TOMATOES, CARROTS, RADISHES, ZUCCHINI - spring up like crazy along the length of the dirt bed. It is something to behold.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Ta-dah!

An amazed Arcane rushes to the bed, his minions close behind him. Carefully, Arcane picks a beautiful TOMATO, holds it up to the light, studies it.

Then he turns and hands the tomato to a startled Benny.

ARCANE

Here. Try this.

Timidly, like he was picking up a scorpion, Benny takes the tomato from Arcane, SNIFFS it carefully, then eyes shut tight, he takes a bite.

A moment later, Benny OPENS his eyes in astonishment.

BENNY

Hey, this tastes great.

Alec takes a humble bow.

ALEC

Gentlemen, welcome to the future.

Alec starts to turn toward the safe to put the cannister away. Arcane reaches for it.

ARCANE

Don't bother. We'll take it with us. I can't wait to show the Board what you've accomplished.

Alec clutches the cannister to his chest.

ALEC

I'm afraid the Board will have to wait. The formula may still be unstable, possibly volatile. A lot more testing needs to be done before it's safe for presentation.

ARCANE

Time is money, Alec.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALEC

And progress takes time. Ironic,  
isn't it?

Alec turns away with the cannister.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Trust me on this. We wouldn't want  
General Sunderland and his cronies  
to go up in a blaze of glory now,  
would we?

Arcane, realizing he isn't going to win this one, smiles.

ARCANE

Very well. Whatever you think is  
best.

Alec moves out of earshot to put the formula back in the  
safe. Arcane turns to Abby.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Why didn't you tell me he was this  
close? Isn't that why I put you  
with him in the first place?

ABBY

First, I had no idea he was so  
close. Second, even if I had, I'm  
sick and tired of playing Mata  
Hari for you. I didn't know Alec  
when I started this, but now...

ARCANE

Keep your voice down.

ABBY

For his sake I will.

Arcane suddenly realizes:

ARCANE

Dear God, Abigail, you and Alec?

ABBY

Why not? Alec is actually doing  
everything you both once aspired  
to. He's trying to make a  
difference. You're just trying to  
make Chairman of the Board. If  
you're going to force me to choose  
sides in this... I choose his.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ARCANE

You ungrateful little--

Alec returns, smiling, runs his hand gently atop the vegetables he's grown, obviously pleased with himself.

ALEC

Care to stay for lunch? I think we can whip up a salad.

ARCANE

Thanks, but we've already eaten.

Arcane heads for the door, his aides beside him.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

I'll leave you to do what you do best, Alec. Call me when you're ready to turn over the formula. If there's anything you need in the meantime...

Alec looks at Abby, then back to Arcane.

ALEC

Well, there is this screen that needs fixing.

Arcane glances at Abby.

ARCANE

Done. Do take care of our wonder boy, won't you, Abigail? The swamp can be so...dangerous.

The glance she gives him in return, unseen by Alec, speaks volumes.

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Ferrett plucks the half-smoked cigarette from behind his ear and lights up from a battered old ZIPPO LIGHTER the second they're outside.

ARCANE

I can't believe Holland actually managed to pull it off. Damn him.

Arcane heads for the boat as the others hurry to keep up.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Is there any way this day could possibly get worse?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At which point, of course, the RAIN that Alec had predicted earlier comes down in a CLOUDBURST, totally DRENCHING Arcane and his men, like drowned rats.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - FRENCH QUARTER - LATER

It stopped raining a while ago. Now there is only the occasional PUDDLE to remind us of the storm and those are drying rapidly. On the street, we see PEOPLE busily decorating the buildings and lamp posts for MARDI GRAS. Various SIGNS we can see read: COUNTDOWN TO MARDI GRAS - 7 DAYS. Clearly, the number is being changed daily.

CAMERA PUSHES through the happy crowds until we reach the very end of the street so we can see:

EXT. PLANTATION - CONTINUOUS

Outside, it looks like an old ANTEBELLUM PLANTATION at the very edge of the French Quarter, but inside it is actually a high-tech complex, containing a variety of different labs. The sprawling grounds are teeming with plants and trees, and a number of heavily-armed SECURITY GUARDS, always on patrol. Off to one corner of the grounds, we can see a HELIPAD with a small HELICOPTER sitting ready and waiting. A fancy sign on the filigreed wrought iron fence reads THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION. This is Arcane's HQ, far from the swamp itself.

ARCANE (O.S.)

Think positive thoughts,  
gentlemen.

INT. PLANTATION - GENETICS LAB - CONTINUOUS

Arcane, wearing a white lab coat, places a small RHESUS MONKEY into a GLASS-FRONTED TEST CHAMBER that fills one wall of the room, then SEALS the chamber door. His henchmen, also wearing lab coats now, stand by, waiting. Several other LAB TECHNICIANS are busy in the b.g. setting up the gauges that will monitor the experiment. Ferrett watches Arcane with interest, while Benny would rather be anywhere else. Bruno leans against the wall, cleaning his nails with a thin SWITCHBLADE KNIFE.

ARCANE

This monkey has terminal cancer.

Arcane moves to a CONTROL PANEL, throws some switches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Instantly, the chamber is filled with a PURPLE GAS that completely obscures the CHITTING monkey.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

With luck, the new alterations  
I've made to my gene resequencer  
will cure that condition.

Arcane watches the chamber as the monkey's chattering becomes a blood-curdling SCREAM. Then there is SILENCE.

BENNY

That don't sound good, boss.

Arcane gets CLOSE to the glass, trying to see through the swirling purple mist.

ARCANE

Patience, Benny. At its best, the  
process is more painful than--

WHAM! A CRAZED CREATURE THROWS itself against the glass, trying to get at Arcane. It might have been a rhesus monkey once, but now it's like nothing we've ever seen before -- a grotesque, misshapen MONSTER! If cancer took on mammalian form, it would look a lot like this.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Damn!

Arcane shouts at Ferrett, who works on the control board.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Vent the gas. Now!

Instantly, hidden VENTS in the chamber's ceiling WHIRR to life, sucking out the purple gas.

Arcane picks up a small TRANQUILIZER GUN from a table, and heads for the chamber door.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Benny, unlock the chamber.

The moment the door OPENS, Arcane FIRES the gun, a DART striking the raging creature in the neck.

Still struggling to reach Arcane, the creature COLLAPSES.

Carefully, Arcane carries the creature from the chamber and lays it on a GURNEY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Bruno, kindly put this one with the others.

Bruno pockets his knife, and very unhappily exits with the gurney as Arcane turns to the other technicians.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

(to the technos)

Shut down the operation. We'll try again later.

The technicians do as they're told, turning dials.

FERRETT

Why do you keep these things around, Sir?

ARCANE

As a reminder. As an incentive. Holland isn't half the scientist I am, Ferrett. I should have succeeded first.

FERRETT

You will.

ARCANE

I must.

Arcane pauses, then finally decides to explain.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Do you know what progeria is?

Ferrett's expression indicates he clearly does not.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

It's a terrible genetic disease that causes premature aging. It makes your bones brittle, wrinkles your skin. My younger sister had it. She was 17 when she died, crippled, senile. She looked like she was 97.

Arcane pulls off his surgical gloves, tosses them away.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

My brother and I watched her die slowly, in agony, watched her wither away before our eyes.

Arcane looks at Ferrett so intently, it's almost painful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ARCANE (CONT'D)

That's not going to happen to me.  
Holland is trying to conquer  
hunger, but I, if I can just crack  
the right genetic code... I intend  
to conquer death.

INT. PLANTATION - STORAGE ROOM - SAME TIME

The walls are lined with REINFORCED CAGES, each containing a GROTESQUERY similar to the one on the gurney Bruno is rolling past. If we work at it, we can almost make out what they once were; dog, cat, rabbit, pig. All alive, all suffering, all ROARING their pain.

Bruno loads the creature into an empty cage, then LOCKS the door just as it starts to REGAIN consciousness.

As Bruno turns to leave, the creature suddenly SPRINGS at the bars of its cage, HOWLING in rage.

The creature unfurls a long serpentine TONGUE, obviously a result of its mutation, that whips around Bruno's neck, CHOKING him.

Instantly, the switchblade knife is in Bruno's hand. With one quick stroke, he SLICES off the tongue, pulls it from around his neck, and tosses it to the floor.

As the poor creature clutches its bleeding mouth, Bruno slips the knife back into his pocket and exits.

INT. PLANTATION - GENETICS LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Arcane glances at Bruno as he returns.

ARCANE

How's the new specimen?

BRUNO

Quiet.

Impatiently, Arcane strips off his lab coat, takes his suit jacket from a hook, puts it on.

ARCANE

I will tolerate no more failures.  
If Holland really has found what  
I've been searching for -- the  
secret of creating life -- then  
perhaps his formula can be adapted  
to my needs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Arcane looks at his three henchmen.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

And since my darling niece has defected to the loyal opposition, it appears we'll have to acquire it some other way.

Ferrett, Bruno and Benny head for the door; they know exactly what he means.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

I trust you won't disappoint me.

EXT. SWAMP ROAD - SUNSET

Alec and Abby, dressed for a night out on the town, drive through the thick of the swamp in Alec's JEEP.

ABBY

You sure about this? Usually an hour away from your test tubes sends you into severe withdrawal.

ALEC

I'll survive. We've earned this night off, Abby. Besides, I promised you a dinner, didn't I? How does the best table at Antoine's sound?

ABBY

Like I'm out with someone else.

They pass a ROAD SIGN that reads: NEW ORLEANS 45 MILES.

ALEC

Your uncle sure was anxious to get his hands on the formula.

ABBY

He has a lot of people to answer to. A lot at stake.

ALEC

I still can't believe we finally cracked it...

Abby decides she has to come clean with Alec. About to confess her sins, she can barely look at him, and thus doesn't notice that Alec's mind is clearly elsewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

Alec, there's... there's something I need to tell you... when Uncle Anton first assigned me to work with you, he... well, he had an ulterior motive. He wanted me to keep an eye on you and I said--

Suddenly, Alec SLAMS on the brakes. The Jeep SQUEALS to a stop, throwing Abby forward. Only her SEAT BELT saves her from hitting the windshield.

ALEC

Crap!

Thinking Alec is angry at her:

ABBY

Alec, I'm so sorry. I...

But the truth is:

ALEC

In all the excitement, I completely forgot to enter the specs on the latest version of the formula into the data bank.

Abby suddenly realizes Alec hasn't heard a word she said.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Honey, would you kill me if we ran back to the lab for a sec?

ABBY

Might as well. You won't be good for anything else until you do.

Alec pulls the Jeep into a tight U-turn and heads back the way they came.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So much for Antoine's.

ALEC

Hey, Carl's Crowdaddy Shack is open all night.

Then Alec remembers:

ALEC (CONT'D)

Was there something you wanted to tell me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABBY

Never mind. It can wait.

And the Jeep is lost in the gathering darkness.

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

Alec pulls the Jeep to a stop outside the lab and hops out. Abby keeps her seat.

ALEC

I'll just be a minute, I swear.  
Don't lose your appetite.

ABBY

Do what you have to do. I'll make  
sure no 'gator carjacks the jeep.

Alec hurries toward the lab.

INT. GREENHOUSE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Alec ENTERS and heads for his computer. Then he pauses, SNIFFS the air. Something doesn't smell right.

ALEC

Hello?

Alec moves to the wall, FLIPS ON the lights.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Is somebody--

He turns back to discover:

FERRETT, BRUNO and BENNY

They stand by the open WALL SAFE, caught in the act. Benny holds the cannister of Alec's formula. He looks at the lit cigarette dangling from Ferrett's lip.

BENNY

He warned ya.

Alec approaches, furious.

ALEC

What the hell are you doing here?  
If Arcane wants something, have  
him call me.

Ferrett smiles that nasty smile at Alec.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERRETT

When Doctor Arcane wants something, he sends us.

Ferrett approaches Alec's computer. Alec, moving to stop him, is grabbed by Bruno, who pins his arms.

ALEC

Don't touch that!

BRUNO

You're done giving orders.

Bruno struggles to hold Alec, as Ferrett TYPES something on the keyboard to Alec's computer.

ALEC

Let go of me, damn you!

BRUNO

What do we do now? He wasn't supposed to be here.

A CD DISK is ejected from the computer on a sliding tray. Ferrett carefully puts the disk into a SLIPCASE and sticks it in his pocket.

FERRETT

Well, since we now have the formula and all the pertinent data, I'm not sure we really even need Holland any more.

Alec realizes the implications. Suddenly, he jams his FOOT down on Bruno's. Bruno GRUNTS, and Alec uses the moment to break free.

ALEC

You're all insane!

Quickly, Alec slams the off-balance Bruno into a startled Benny. Then Alec GRABS the formula cannister from Benny as he drops it, and breaks for the door.

Instantly, Bruno has that knife in hand and open. He THROWS it at Alec.

Alec GASPS as the switchblade catches him in the shoulder, STAGGERING him. But still Alec keeps running.

As Alec passes, Ferrett sticks out a leg to trip him, at the same time pulling the knife out of Alec's back with one hand while he PUSHES Alec forward with the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERRETT

Nobody's perfect.

Desperately, Alec STUMBLES several more steps toward the door, completely off-balance, then he loses his footing completely and SPRAWLS headlong to the floor, landing on the cannister of formula, SHATTERING it.

WHOOM! There is an sudden, violent EXPLOSION. Instantly, Alec's body is enveloped in GLOWING GREEN FLAMES.

BENNY

Jesus!

The three thugs stand SILENT, too astonished to move.

SCREAMING, Alec staggers to his feet and runs to the door, a human pyre. Everything he touches as he struggles to maintain his footing BURSTS INTO FLAME.

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Abby is still sitting in the Jeep as the blazing figure comes BURSTING through the door and races toward the pier, leaving behind a trail of FLAMING FOOTPRINTS.

ABBY

What...?

Then she realizes:

ABBY (CONT'D)

Alec?

Instantly, she's out of the Jeep, running toward him, even as the blazing figure runs across the pier, leaving more flaming footprints. Abby SCREAMS:

ABBY (CONT'D)

ALEC!

WITH THE BLAZING FIGURE

With a desperate leap, he DIVES off the pier and disappears into the water, setting the bog to ROILING, sending up clouds of GLOWING GREEN STEAM.

WITH ABBY

A moment later, she reaches the pier's edge. Without hesitation, she DIVES into the violently bubbling water herself, still SCREAMING Alec's name.

ABBY

ALLLLLLLEC!

For a long moment, Abby is LOST beneath the bubbling water. Then her head breaks the surface. She looks around. Still no sign of Alec. She dives back under.

Abby is so fixated on finding Alec, she fails to notice:

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - SIMULTANEOUS

FERRETT, BRUNO AND BENNY slip out the back of the now-burning greenhouse lab and are lost in the darkness.

EXT. THE PIER - CONTINUOUS

As the last bubbles stop rising from the water, an exhausted, heartbroken Abby, having failed to find Alec in the violently-churning water, climbs out of the muck and sinks to her knees on the pier.

ABBY

Oh, Alec.

ON THE WATER

A final glowing green bubble bursts to the surface. Then all is still.

INT. PLANTATION - GENETICS LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Arcane is sitting at a bank of computers, trying to work out the flaws in his treatment when his CELL PHONE RINGS.

Arcane answers.

ARCANE

What?

EXT. SWAMP ROAD - FERRETT'S HUMMER - CONTINUOUS

Ferrett speaks into his cell phone. Bruno sits beside him, busily CLEANING the blade of his knife. Benny sits in back, uncomfortable.

FERRETT

We got what you asked for, Sir.

INT. PLANTATION - GENETICS LAB - CONTINUOUS

Arcane couldn't be more pleased.

ARCANE

Excellent.

(then, realizing:)

Then why are you calling?

INT. FERRETT'S HUMMER - CONTINUOUS

Ferrett does not want to say this. He PAUSES as he lights up another cigarette with his Zippo, then:

FERRETT

Well, there were... complications.

INT. GENETICS LAB - CONTINUOUS

Arcane doesn't want to hear this.

ARCANE

What sort of complications?

EXT. GREENHOUSE LAB - EARLY MORNING

The greenhouse is half in ruins now from the fire, still smoking hot spots here and there being PUT OUT by a SUNDERLAND SECURITY TEAM using FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.

Other SUNDERLAND PERSONNEL carefully comb through the ruins, looking for anything of value that might have survived, collecting samples.

EXT. THE PIER - CONTINUOUS

Arcane stands with Abby, watching as several DIVERS in wet suits with SUNDERLAND ID climb out of the water. The LEADER of the dive team goes directly to Arcane and Abby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

Anything?

The diver looks at Abby as he replies. He doesn't know quite how to tell her.

DIVE LEADER

Sorry. Water's so thick and brackish, you could lose Mount Rushmore down there. We couldn't find a trace of Dr. Holland.

Abby STIFLES A SOB as Arcane puts a comforting arm around her shoulders and pulls her to him.

ARCANE

Perhaps that's for the best. From what Abigail described, I'm afraid what you'd find would not be very pretty.

The Dive Leader moves away to help his team pack up their gear. An angry Abby pulls herself from Arcane's grip.

ABBY

Happy now? You don't have to worry about Alec any more. You win.

ARCANE

When a good man dies, nobody wins. Whatever rivalry existed between us, Alec was once my closest friend. I feel his loss as deeply as you do, perhaps more.

ABBY

Every day I worked with him, I betrayed him. And I never had the chance to clear the air, to make it right.

ARCANE

In the end, you loved him. Try to find solace in that.

Arcane steers Abby toward a HUMMER parked nearby, where Ferrett, Bruno and Benny are waiting.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Come. There's nothing more for you here.

Arcane looks back at the ruins of the greenhouse lab.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCANE (CONT'D)

There's nothing more here for any  
of us.

As they get into the car, CAMERA SWINGS AWAY and PANS  
PAST Arcane's people until we are CLOSE ON THE WATER.

At first, there is NOTHING.

Then a small GLOWING GREEN BUBBLE breaks the surface.  
Followed by another. Then another.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

The room looks like a much fancier version of Alec's  
greenhouse lab in the swamp, filled with pots and plants.  
Lots and lots of plants.

Putting on a white lab coat, Abby enters to find Arcane  
already in the midst of trying to recreate Alec's  
formula. Ferrett, Bruno and Benny hover nearby.

ABBY

You wanted to see me?

Arcane smiles, gestures for her to join him.

ARCANE

I have something I want to show  
you.

Abby looks at Arcane's experiment in progress, tubes and  
beakers that look exactly like Alec's old lab. Abby  
realizes what it reminds her of.

ABBY

That looks like...

ARCANE

Precisely. Alec's death was a  
tragic accident, but it may not  
have been entirely in vain.

Arcane checks some data on a computer screen, then pours  
a carefully measured amount of some chemical into a  
beaker that already contains another liquid.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

My tech people managed to recover  
all the pertinent data from his  
computer. With your help, I'm  
hoping we can reconstruct his  
work, recover his miracle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abby is hesitant; she knows her uncle's goals are not the same as Alec's.

ABBY

I...I don't know. I'm not sure I can...

Arcane becomes intense. He needs this.

ARCANE

You owe him at least this much, Abigail. Don't you want his death to count for something? Do you want his dream to die with him?

Abby turns away from Arcane. The last thing she needs right now is this kind of pressure.

ABBY

It's just... I...

ARCANE

I swear to you, once we've succeeded, all the credit will go to Alec.

Abby peels off the lab coat as she heads for the door.

ABBY

Look, let me think about it for a while, okay? I'll let you know.

ARCANE

Take your time. I know you'll do the right thing.

Abby exits.

Arcane turns back to his experiment. He looks at the formula he's mixed; it's green but it DOES NOT glow.

FERRETT

Think she'll go for it, Sir?

Arcane pours a small amount of the formula into a dirt-filled flower pot. His aides gather around to watch.

ARCANE

In the end, what choice does she have?

## ON THE FLOWER POT

For a beat, nothing happens. Then a beautiful ZUCCHINI VINE sprouts, growing to full size in instants.

## BACK TO SCENE

Arcane is thrilled -- until the zucchini suddenly turns BLACK and DISSOLVES into a malignant OOZE.

ARCANE

What choice do any of us have?

## EXT. SWAMP - NEAR THE GREENHOUSE LAB - DAY

Alec's Jeep, now hers, parked off to one side, Abby stands at the water's edge, near the spot where Alec went under, looking out at the primitive beauty around her.

ABBY

It's beautiful here, so peaceful.  
I understand why you loved it so.

Abby starts to walk along the water's edge, still lost in thought. She picks a fancy BLOSSOM and casually starts pulling off its petals, tossing them into the water.

ABBY (CONT'D)

You still owe me that dinner,  
y'know... Antoine's... Carl's  
Crawdaddy Shack... whatever...

She gets mad, throws the blossom into the water. The underbrush behind her is so thick, it's impenetrable.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Damn you, Alec, you can't be dead!  
What am I going to do without you?

## ANGLE ON THE UNDERBRUSH

Unnoticed by Abby, a huge shadowy HAND starts to reach through the foliage toward her. The hand is humanoid, but not human; it has five fingers but is covered in MUCK and MOSS and God knows what else. The ROOTS that comprise the bulk of the hand are subtly but CONSTANTLY MOVING.

Just inches from touching Abby's hair, the hand CLENCHES into a frustrated FIST, and pulls back out of sight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

How will I--

Abby, suddenly sensing something behind her, SPINS around; there's nothing there.

Abby SHUDDERS briefly, then moves on.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So what should I do about my uncle, Alec? I could really use some sort of sign right about--

Suddenly, there is a COMMOTION in the thick REEDS nearby.

ABBY'S POV

A flock of HERONS bursts from the reeds and LOUDLY takes to the sky. Abby watches them fly high over the swamp.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby looks back down, to see the king of all ALLIGATORS directly in front of her, moving in for the kill.

ABBY

No!

As the alligator LUNGES toward Abby, its jaws wide, it is suddenly YANKED BACK OUT OF FRAME by its tail, vanishing into the underbrush.

Abby stands transfixed, as we HEAR the SOUNDS OF A TERRIBLE BATTLE coming from the undergrowth, SNAPPING, THRASHING, the HISS of the alligator and the not-quite-human ROAR of something else.

Then, suddenly, there is SILENCE. Even the insects have STOPPED DRONING.

Abby takes a hesitant half-step toward the underbrush.

Then the BROKEN BODY of the dead alligator, its jaw flapping loose, its back broken, is thrown back INTO SCENE, landing directly in front of Abby.

Confused, frightened, Abby looks at the underbrush.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Who? What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, realizing it may be a WHAT, not a who, hiding back there and that she might be its next victim, Abby flees back the way she came.

As Abby runs off, a huge HULKING SHAPE watches her from the shadows, then vanishes back into the underbrush.

INT. RUINS OF THE GREENHOUSE LAB - SECONDS LATER

Running back to her Jeep, Abby starts to climb in, then HESITATES. She looks back over her shoulder; nothing's following her. She's starting to feel a little foolish.

ABBY

Jesus, girl, what are you, six?  
It's a swamp. It's scary. Get over  
it.

Abby notices the boarded-up ruins of the greenhouse lab. She gets out of the Jeep and heads for it.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Y'know, Alec, as signs go, that  
one really sucked.

Abby pulls away a few BOARDS over the door and ENTERS.

INT. RUINS OF THE GREENHOUSE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Abby ENTERS, looks around. There isn't much left. Most equipment has been destroyed. All of Alec's exotic plants have been killed by the fire.

Abby takes a step and HEARS GLASS BREAK under her foot. She moves aside some RUBBLE, picks up the framed photo of Alec and Arcane, now charred at the edges, its glass now a spider-web pattern with the center on Alec's face.

Abby tenderly runs her fingertips over the photo, as if caressing Alec. Suddenly, she YANKS her hand away, YELPING in pain.

She then looks down at her fingertips.

ABBY'S POV

The tips of her index and middle fingers have been cut by the broken glass and are BLEEDING slightly.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby tosses the ruined photo aside.

ABBY  
Serves me right.

She puts her fingers to her mouth, sucking at the blood, then turns toward the back of the lab when:

SNAP! She HEARS A TWIG BREAKING right outside the door.

Abby WHIRLS toward the sound but sees nothing.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
Hello? Somebody there?

Afraid it might be whatever killed the 'gator, she picks up a length of METAL PIPE, perhaps some part of Alec's ruined sprayer apparatus, to use as a weapon.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
I'm warning you, I'm armed. You come through that door, you're gonna get hurt.

For a beat, there is no response.

Then Abby hears a moist SHUFFLING SOUND from outside. She clutches the metal pipe tighter.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
I mean it. Stay away or I won't be responsible.

Nothing. No reaction from outside. Not a sound.

Finally, after several seconds, Abby cautiously starts toward the door.

Abby hesitates for a moment, then steps closer.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
Hello? Someone there?

Finally, she reaches the door and looks out.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
Hello?

Abby looks around, sees nothing. If there was something out here, it's already GONE, back into the swamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY (CONT'D)

Great. Now I can add paranoid to  
my list of--

Then Abby looks down.

ABBY'S POV

There are several oversized wet FOOTPRINTS on the ground,  
ringed with moss and mud, obviously left by whatever had  
been lurking out here. The footprints are humanoid, but  
definitely NOT human.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby looks out across the vast expanse of swamp.

ABBY

What the hell was that?

EXT. PLANTATION - ROSE GARDEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Dressed for gardening, Arcane is carefully pruning his  
ROSES. He looks up as ABBY ENTERS SCENE.

ARCANE

My associates were starting to  
worry about you. I assured them  
you are a competent young woman  
who can take care of herself.

ABBY

Right now that's open to debate.

Arcane cocks his head in curiosity.

ARCANE

Made your decision yet?

Abby hesitates for a beat, then bows her head.

ABBY

All right. I'll do it. I think  
it's what Alec would have wanted.  
And I owe him that much at least.

Arcane puts down his PRUNING SHEARS and puts a friendly  
hand on Abby's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

Excellent. I couldn't be more pleased.

Abby quickly slips out from under Arcane's arm, heads for the house.

ABBY

I'll see you in the morning then.

Arcane watches Abby go as FERRETT ENTERS SCENE.

FERRETT

Think we can trust her?

ARCANE

About as far as she trusts us.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - THE NEXT MORNING

The room is starting to look more and more like Alec's greenhouse lab. Against one wall, we might now notice several tanks labeled DEFOLIANT. Arcane's men, again in lab coats, are busy moving several large plants around. Arcane looks up from working on a large beaker of green liquid as Abby ENTERS.

ARCANE

Sleep well?

ABBY

Not since Alec died.

As Abby puts on her own lab coat, Benny STUMBLES, almost dropping the plant he and Ferrett are carrying.

FERRETT

Hey, careful with that, moron.

BENNY

Quit riding me, will ya?

FERRETT

Y'know, in Special Forces, we had a name for grunts like you.

BENNY

Yeah? What?

FERRETT

Cannon fodder.

Bruno steps between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUNO

Chill. Doc's not paying me enough to put up with this crap.

FERRETT

It's always about the money with you, isn't it?

BRUNO

What else?

FERRETT

Loyalty. Integrity.

BRUNO

Don't buy much these days.

As the argument continues, Abby looks at Arcane.

ABBY

And you keep those three around because...?

ARCANE

Because there is nothing they won't do for me if asked. I find that rather... comforting.

Arcane leads Abby to another part of the lab, where he has another animal in a cage, this time a RABBIT, waiting to be experimented upon.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

We've been making headway with Alec's formula, but there still appears to be something missing. I was hoping perhaps you might double-check our progress and--

Abby notices the rabbit.

ABBY

What's with Bugs Bunny?

ARCANE

Another of my test subjects. I thought that once we had the formula perfected, I might also use it to further my own--

Abby realizes why Arcane is really doing all this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABBY

No! That was never the intent of Alec's work. You'd be cannibalizing it.

ARCANE

An unfortunate choice of words. I prefer to believe we're adapting it to our needs.

Now Benny actually DROPS one of the large plants. Arcane moves off to supervise.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

You're overreacting, Abby. I'm sure, given the circumstances, Alec would approve.

ABBY

(sotto)

Like hell he would.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - NIGHT

The lab is DIMLY LIT and unoccupied as ABBY ENTERS, carrying a LARGE SHOULDER BAG over one shoulder.

Quickly, Abby looks around. Her gaze pauses on the LARGE BEAKER that contains the green formula Arcane had been working on.

From her bag, she removes a glass cannister like the one Alec had used to store the original formula. Slowly, she POURS the formula into the cannister.

ABBY

(sotto)

Sorry, uncle, but if you think I'm going to let you turn Alec's dream into a nightmare, you're--

Suddenly, the LIGHTS go on!

Abby quickly SEALS the cannister, and shoves it back into her bag.

Hiding the bag behind her back, Abby turns to the door to see Arcane, Ferrett, Bruno and Benny.

ARCANE

Abigail? What are you doing in here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

Couldn't sleep. Couldn't find the  
book I've been reading either.  
Thought I might've left it down  
here earlier in my shoulder bag.

She picks up the bag, slings in over her shoulder.

ABBY (CONT'D)

And, lo and behold, I was right.

Abby exits, brushing aside Benny and Bruno.

ABBY (CONT'D)

See you in the morning then?

ARCANE

Sleep well.

Ferrett looks to the doorway, scratching his head.

FERRETT

Not to speak ill of your niece,  
Sir, but I'd swear she never  
brought a bag into this room.

ARCANE

Then why would she--

Looking around, Arcane sees the now-empty beaker.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

--Crap!

Arcane SLAPS an INTERCOM BUTTON on the wall.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

This is Arcane. Lock down the  
whole damn complex! Now!

Instantly, ALARMS SOUND all over the building.

EXT. PLANTATION - CONTINUOUS

The ALARMS CONTINUE. In Alec's Jeep, Abby ROARS out the  
FRONT GATE, blowing past the startled GUARDS an instant  
before the gate automatically SLIDES SHUT behind her.

INT. BOTANICAL LAB - CONTINUOUS

Arcane stands at the window, watching Abby roar away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

I'm afraid something will have to be done about that girl.

EXT. RUINS OF THE GREENHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

Abby SQUEALS the Jeep to a stop, then hops out.

ABBY

What now?

Walking toward the water, Abby takes the cannister of formula from her bag, and studies it.

ABBY (CONT'D)

What the hell am I supposed to do now?

She walks to the pier, starts SHOUTING into the night.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Talk to me, Alec! Tell me what I'm supposed to do.

FERRETT (O.S.)

No need to shout, Miss Arcane. Every bullfrog in a five mile radius has heard you.

Abby turns. Ferrett, Bruno and Benny are approaching.

ABBY

Keep away from me, asshole, or you'll regret it.

FERRETT

Please, let's not make this any more unpleasant than we have to. You have something your uncle wants returned.

Abby holds up the cannister.

ABBY

You mean this?

Ferrett steps forward, holds out a hand for it. Abby FEIGNS as if she's going to hand it to him--

FERRETT

I appreciate you being reasonable about--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--Then Abby KICKS Ferrett squarely in the groin.

As Ferrett doubles over, Abby RUNS.

Fighting his pain, Ferrett pulls his GUN, aims at Abby.

BLAM! Ferrett FIRES, but Benny SHOVES the gun aside so the shot goes wide.

BENNY

You crazy? She's the boss's blood.

Abby jumps into the jeep, REVS the motor, PEELS OUT.

Ferrett SHOUTS after her.

FERRETT

There's nowhere to run, bitch. We didn't come alone.

Abby races away in the jeep.

EXT. SWAMP ROAD - CONTINUOUS

As Abby drives wildly, not even really sure where she's going, she suddenly HEARS the RISING SOUND OF AN ENGINE above and behind her. Abby looks back over her shoulder.

ABBY'S POV

The SUNDERLAND HELICOPTER is trailing her.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby swerves to get out of its sights, but a SPOTLIGHT from the copter pinpoints Abby's location on the road.

No matter how Abby zigs and zags the Jeep, no matter what she does, the SPOTLIGHT FOLLOWS her.

She looks back again, tries waving the helicopter off.

ON THE HELICOPTER

Its PILOT, a zealous spit-'n'-polish military type named BERGER, SMILES as he sees this.

BERGER

Not in this lifetime, sister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Berger taps his HEADSET, feeding directions to the Sunderland ground troops, who also wear HEADSETS.

BERGER (CONT'D)

Straight ahead on the left. Take her. Take her now!

RESUME FOLLOWING THE JEEP

Suddenly, a couple of SUNDERLAND HUMMERS filled with armed SUNDERLAND SECURITY GUARDS come roaring up over a mossy slope close behind Abby.

Abby tries to outrun them, but the Hummers' engines are just too powerful.

The two Hummers pull up along either side of the jeep, flanking Abby. The DRIVER of one Hummer SMILES over at her. In response, she gives him the finger.

Pissed off, the driver YANKS his steering wheel hard to one side.

As he does, Abby STANDS on the brakes. Her Jeep SCREECHES to a sudden stop.

Missing the Jeep, the Hummer SIDESWIPES the other Hummer instead, hitting it hard. The two vehicles struggle to retain control, and just barely manage to do so as the Jeep goes ROARING past them.

Abby checks her REARVIEW MIRROR. She just might manage to outrun these bastards after--

WHAM! A third Hummer roars into frame, hitting the Jeep from the side.

Abby STRUGGLES to retain control, but she can't. The Jeep SWERVES VIOLENTLY--

--And PLOWS head-on into a tree along the edge of the road, SLAMMING to a stop.

The jeep ruined, SMOKE pouring out from under the hood, Abby staggers out of the wreck and starts to run, still carrying the shoulder bag with the cannister.

EXT. THE SWAMP - CONTINUOUS

Abby plunges into the thick of the swamp, hoping to lose the men pursuing her. She runs a broken field course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From one side, she HEARS A SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR GRINDING ROAR HACKING AND SLASHING through the underbrush, coming closer.

In response, she presses herself back against the thick trunk of an old Banyan tree, trying to stay out of sight.

ABBY'S POV

THREE SUNDERLAND GUARDS, also wearing headsets, approach, having come prepared, hacking away at the underbrush with the portable CHAIN SAWS they wield to clear the way.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby presses herself against the tree. It looks like the Guards may go right past her without noticing.

Suddenly, Abby is PINNED by the copter's spotlight.

The lead guard, BISSETTE, SEES Abby against the tree.

BISSETTE

Hey, over here!

Abby BOLTS in another direction, losing the spotlight.

She rushes toward the water's edge now, hoping to lose her pursuers in the high reeds.

As she nears the water, her escape is cut off as an AIRBOAT loaded with several more Sunderland Guards, including a heavy-set guard named REDONDO, slams up onto dry land, coming to a stop.

REDONDO

That's it, girly-girl, just keep coming.

Desperately, Abby whirls and runs in the opposite direction, back toward the thick of the swamp, as the Guards pile out of the airboat in pursuit.

Again, Abby runs a broken course, vanishing into the high brush. For a moment, she pauses to catch her breath.

In that moment, she is once again caught in the glare of that helicopter spotlight.

BERGER (FILTERED)

She's yours for the taking, boys!

EXT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, from the thick of the swamp, a LARGE ROCK comes flying upward, SHATTERING the copter's spotlight.

INT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Berger STRUGGLES to retain control, taps his HEADSET.

BERGER

Berger to Unit One. I've been hit.

BISSETTE (FILTERED)

By what?

BERGER

Damned if I know.

Another rock flies up, SHATTERING the copter's wind-screen, making it almost impossible for Berger to see. Berger struggles to retain control of the copter.

BERGER (CONT'D)

Christ, I'm taking heavy fire up here. Visibility zero. Returning to base. You're on your own.

EXT. THE SWAMP - CONTINUOUS

From hiding, Abby sees the damaged copter arc away into the distance, and breathes a momentary sigh of relief.

SNAP! Abby hears a TWIG BREAK. She looks around from hiding to see MORE GUARDS coming at her from another direction, led by a guard named TOTLEBEN.

Totleben SPOTS her, points.

TOTLEBEN

There!

Abby takes off running. Again and again, she changes course.

Finally, she BURSTS through some undergrowth to find that she's right back on:

EXT. SWAMP ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Abby stands flatfooted in the middle of the road, as one of the Hummers ROARS directly at her, full speed. She freezes, like the proverbial deer caught in the headlights. There's not a chance she can get out of the way in time

The driver, VEITCH, FLOORS the Hummer, rocketing at Abby.

WIDER

Suddenly, that huge SHADOWY FIGURE steps into the road BETWEEN Abby and the oncoming Hummer.

Unable to stop in time, the Hummer SMASHES into the figure.

It's like hitting a great Oak tree. The figure doesn't budge, but the front of the Hummer is CRUSHED; the guards CRASH through the windshield, victims of their momentum.

As the HEADLIGHTS of the other Hummers ILLUMINATE the figure, we can finally SEE exactly what it is...

**THE SWAMP THING!**

Humanoid, 7 feet tall, its body composed of MUD and MOSS and primarily ROOTS THAT CONSTANTLY MOVE AND WRITHE IN A CHANGING CONFIGURATION as if with a life of their own. And yet, there is a HUMANITY, an infinite SADNESS in its glistening EYES.

The muck-monster HOWLS his rage at the Sunderland guards, and then CHARGES at them, fists raised.

The Sunderland Guards pull their guns and OPEN FIRE. The driver, VEITCH, has recovered from the crash but is so scared, he may wet himself.

VEITCH

Wh-what is that?

BISSETTE

Who the hell cares? Just stop it!  
Bring it down!

The bullets pass right THROUGH the monster to no effect. They do nothing to slow its charge.

Totleben looks at Bisette.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOTLEBEN

Sure. Wanna tell us how?

But it's too late. The monster is among them now.

Swamp Thing grabs Veitch by the wrist, flinging him away SCREAMING into the underbrush.

Swamp Thing grabs Totleben's RIFLE BARREL, and TWISTS it out of shape. He then SWATS Totleben aside with the gun.

ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

Ferrett, Bruno and Benny have reached the scene, to see the swamp monster wreaking havoc with the guards, clearly trying to reach Abby.

BENNY

Jesus, what is that thing?

FERRETT

Whatever it is, I think it's after the girl.

ANGLE ON ABBY

Half-hidden in the underbrush, she watches the battle in horror. She's not certain whether to be more frightened by the Guards or this monster tearing a path through them toward her.

Then she looks toward the water's edge, sees that airboat still waiting there, and decides it's time to move.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING

Clearly, all he wants to do is get to Abby, but the Sunderland guards are in his way.

Swamp Thing SWATS THEM ASIDE like they were insects.

WIDER

As everyone's attention is suddenly drawn to the SOUND of the AIRBOAT'S ENGINE starting up.

ON THE AIRBOAT

It swings away from the shore, Abby at the wheel.

ON FERRETT, BRUNO AND BENNY

Ferrett SHOUTS at the Sunderland Guards.

FERRETT

Don't let her get away.

WITH THE GUARDS

Happy to back off from the monster in their midst, several of the Guards, including Tottleben and Bissette, OPEN FIRE on the fleeing airboat.

WITH THE AIRBOAT

Abby SWERVES the boat, trying to avoid the gunfire. Instead, she strikes a large CYPRESS ROOT half-hidden under the water and angled like a crude ramp.

Suddenly, the airboat is airborne, a victim of its own momentum. It makes a half-turn in mid-air, then CRASHES back into the water, upsidedown, EXPLODING in a huge fireball.

WITH SWAMP THING

The monster ROARS in rage, then charges the Guards who had fired on the boat, grabbing a terrified Tottleben by the throat, threatening to choke the life out of him.

TOTLEBEN

(choking)

No... don't...

Desperate to save his friend, a recovered Bissette looks around, sees one of the chain saws laying on the ground, and grabs it. Bissette YANKS the choke cord, starting the chain saw's motor, then--

THWAK! SCREAMING like a banshee, Bissette SLICES OFF Swamp Thing's left arm just below the shoulder.

BISSETTE

Die, you ugly freak!

HOWLING in pain, Swamp Thing BACKHANDS Bissette with his remaining arm, and charges toward the water.

Before any of the other Guards can make a move, Swamp Thing plunges into the water, VANISHING from sight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The various guards look at one another in shock. What the hell just happened here?

EXT. THE WATER'S EDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Ferrett, Bruno, and Benny have joined the guards now. Several of the Guards are still scanning the water for some sign of either Swamp Thing or Abby. Not a sign.

FERRETT

Any sign of the girl?

Bissette looks over at Ferrett and throws his hands up in resignation. The monster and girl are gone.

Ferrett lights another cigarette, then glances down, sees something. He reaches down, slips it inside his coat, then head backs to the Hummer. Bruno and Benny follow.

FERRETT (CONT'D)

Let's get the hell out of here.

BENNY

Boss ain't gonna be happy about this.

BRUNO

When is he ever happy about anything?

The battered Sunderland Guards stagger back to their own vehicles and take off.

INT. PLANTATION - DRAWING ROOM - LATER

The room is decorated appropriately post Civil War, with TWO CROSSED CONFEDERATE SWORDS hanging on one wall. Arcane sits savoring a CUBAN CIGAR and a SNIFTER OF BRANDY as Ferrett, Bruno and Benny enter, looking a little the worse for wear.

Arcane looks up; he knows he won't like what he hears.

ARCANE

The formula?

FERRETT

Sorry, Sir.

ARCANE

And my niece?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

Blew herself to hell and gone,  
boss. Wasn't nothing we could do.

Arcane swirls the brandy in his snifter, studying it, as he considers this, then:

ARCANE

All that manpower and that was the best you could do? Not having a particularly good week, are you?

Arcane rises, looks at his men.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

I promised my late brother I would always look after his daughter. You three have made a liar of me. I do not like that, gentlemen. I do not like that at all.

He starts to leave the room.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, there's nothing to be done about it now. We'll just have to keep working with what we already have.

As Arcane reaches the door, he pauses.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Two strikes, gentlemen. There had better not be a third.

And, with that, Arcane is gone.

INT. PLANTATION - ARCANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arcane leans against the FIREPLACE MANTLE, lit by the fire within, looking at a SILVER-FRAMED PHOTO.

ARCANE

Even as a child, Abigail, you were always such a handful.

ARCANE'S POV

He's looking at a photo of himself paying with a much younger Abby in happier times.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

Headstrong. Independent. Always certain you were right. Frankly, my dear, you were a considerable pain in the ass.

BACK TO SCENE .

Arcane moves as if to put the photo back on the mantle.

ARCANE

Still, you were family and blood must count for something. To lose both you and Alec in the selfsame week is a tragedy. After all--

Then, angrily, Arcane throws the photo into the fireplace, SMASHING it.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

--How am I supposed to recreate his Goddamn formula without you?

EXT. THE SWAMP - NEXT MORNING

CLOSE ON ABBY

A drop of water falls on her cheek, rudely AWAKENING her.

She looks around, realizes she's still alive, elsewhere in the swamp, with what appears to be some sort of tree looming behind her.

Then another drop of water hits her cheek. She looks up.

ABBY'S POV

What she thought was a tree behind her is actually the Swamp Thing. He stands over her, holding a LEAF cupped to hold water. He offers it to her.

BACK TO SCENE

Still sitting on the grass, Abby backpedals away from Swamp Thing as fast as she can.

ABBY

N-no. Stay away from me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing lets the leaf fall from his hand. He starts to move toward Abby slowly.

Abby keeps backpedaling, until her back is against a large tree and she can't go any further.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I mean it. Keep away!

Swamp Thing stops moving. He looks at Abby, sadly, then:

SWAMP THING

Can't say... I blame you...

The Swamp Thing's voice, a LOW GRUMBLING that sounds vaguely like Alec Holland, but with a faint REVERB, stops her cold. The voice speaks SLOWLY, HALTINGLY.

Abby is stunned by this.

ABBY

You... you can... what are you?

The Swamp Thing reaches toward Abby, imploringly.

SWAMP THING

Abby, it's... me...

Abby couldn't be more confused.

ABBY

Me who? What? What are you trying to--

CLOSE ON ABBY

The penny drops. Suddenly, she realizes:

ABBY

(whispered)

Alec?

ON SWAMP THING

The truth is all over his face.

WIDER

Horrified, Abby gets to her feet, looking at the Swamp Thing fearfully, still trying to get her head around this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

No. You're lying. That can't be.  
Alec is dead.

The Swamp Thing looks at her sadly.

SWAMP THING

Right now... I wish I was...

It slowly starts to sink into Abby that this creature might be telling the truth somehow. She starts to study him now; is there something of Alec inside him.

ABBY

Oh, Alec, is it you? But why...?  
How...?

The Swamp Thing turns away, unable to face her.

SWAMP THING

The explosion... My formula, it...  
did this to me...

This is almost too much for Abby to take.

ABBY

No! It's not possible.

Swamp Thing turns back to Abby, desperate.

SWAMP THING

Isn't it...?

Abby recoil slightly, and Swamp Thing, realizing he's frightening her, backs off and turns to leave.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

I'm... sorry. Once I saved you...  
I shouldn't... have stayed...

Slowly, tentatively, Abby approaches the monster.

ABBY

No. Wait.  
(then, softly)  
Alec... please.

At the sound of his name, the Swamp Thing pauses, then turns back to Abby, sadly.

SWAMP THING

No... not Alec anymore... only a  
monster...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Now Abby starts getting pissed.

ABBY

Really? Is that all you think of yourself? Is that all you think of me?

Swamp Thing looks at her; this isn't really the kind of reaction he was expecting.

ABBY (CONT'D)

If you really are Alec Holland, if inside all that muck is the man I remember, the man I love, then prove it to me.

SWAMP THING

How...?

ABBY

Above all else, the Alec Holland I know was never a quitter.

SWAMP THING

Abby... look at me...

Abby approaches him, cautiously.

ABBY

Okay, so you've got the world's worst case of the creeping crud. So what? We'll just have to find a way to cure it.

SWAMP THING

Easier... said.

ABBY

Have you figured out what happened to you yet?

SWAMP THING

My formula... absorbed by my skin during the explosion... interacted with the substance of the swamp... turned me into... this.

Abby pulls out the cannister she stole from the lab.

ABBY

Then we've definitely got a chance to cure you. My uncle duplicated your formula.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ABBY (CONT'D)

Somewhere in here is a way to reverse what happened to you. All we have to do is find it.

Abby notices the stump of Swamp Thing's arm. She reaches toward it, but just can't bring herself to touch it.

ABBY (CONT'D)

But when we do... oh, Alec, your poor arm...

Swamp Thing turns away from Abby, trying to move the stump. As he does so, he steps into a wide shaft of MORNING SUNLIGHT breaking through the trees.

SWAMP THING

Guess I'll have to... learn to get along with one good...

He stops. Bathed in the healing sunlight, Swamp Thing responds as any plant would, feeling stronger, revitalized.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

...arm?

He rubs the stump of his severed arm with his good hand. When he takes his hand away, something has changed.

Now there is a small SHOOT growing out of the stump.

Abby rushes to him.

ABBY

Alec, what...?

CLOSE ON THE STUMP

The shoot continues to GROW in the sunlight, adding more shoots, more roots, writhing, thickening, until the tangle of roots finally forms into a complete NEW ARM.

WIDER

Swamp Thing looks at his extended arm, bends it at the elbow, flexes his new fingers, makes a fist. It works.

SWAMP THING

Cool.

As Swamp Thing touches his new arm, Abby studies him, clearly considering the possibilities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

You see? There's always hope.

Swamp Thing reaches out to Abby with his new hand.

SWAMP THING

Thank... you...

Abby pulls back before he can touch her. Maybe this creature is Alec, maybe it's not. Either way, she's still a little afraid.

Instead, Abby turns and starts walking away.

ABBY

C'mon. We've got a lot of work to do.

Swamp Thing hesitates for a moment, then moves to follow.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - MORNING

Arcane, wearing that white lab coat again, studies a new beaker of what he hopes is Alec's formula. This one is a different shade of green, but still NOT GLOWING. Ferrett, Bruno, and Benny stand by.

ARCANE

Abby may have taken our only sample, but she didn't get Holland's computer data. We're going to keep recreating the formula until we get it right.

A LAB TECH hands Arcane a COMPUTER PRINTOUT.

LAB TECH

Results of the new chromatography tests, Doctor.

ARCANE

Thank you, Moore.

Arcane reads the printout, getting angry as he does.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Damn it! Something's still missing. Whatever Holland added to the formula to make it work, he didn't include it in his notes.

Angrily, Arcane SWEEPS the beaker of formula off the table with his arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Realizing what Arcane is doing, Ferrett makes a desperate lunge for the beaker.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

This piss isn't fit to water my lawn.

FERRETT

Sir, no--!

Too late. The beaker hits the floor, and EXPLODES. It's a SMALL explosion, but effective nonetheless.

Bruno and Benny grab FIRE EXTINGUISHERS and put out the fire started by the explosion. There is minimal damage.

ARCANE

What was that?

FERRETT

Holland's formula is volatile, remember?

BENNY

So whadda we do now, boss?

Arcane picks up another beaker.

ARCANE

Try, try again.

EXT. THE SWAMP - LATE MORNING

Abby and Swamp Thing walk along the water's edge. Swamp Thing is lost in thought.

ABBY

Hello? Earth to Alec.

Swamp Thing snaps out of his reverie, looks at Abby.

SWAMP THING

Sorry.

ABBY

You looked like you were a million miles away there for a second.

SWAMP THING

I think maybe... I was.

Swamp Thing stops by a small BUSH, puts his hands to either side of the bush, almost caressing it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Watch this.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

His eyes GLOW GREEN.

WIDER

As Swamp Thing touches the bush, it starts to GROW, almost TRIPLING in size in seconds, beautiful BLOSSOMS blooming all over the bush. Abby watches in astonishment.

ABBY

Wow.

Swamp Thing PLUCKS one of the blossoms and offers it to Abby. She puts it in her hair.

SWAMP THING

Remember me talking... about the Green? The great spirit... of life? I'm more... connected to it now than ever. I can feel a tulip dying in Amsterdam... hear a great California Sequoia sighing under its own weight... and what I see... God, what I can see...

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING

This is a transcendental moment.

SWAMP THING

It's like I'm suddenly... connected to the world, Abby... part of something timeless... something eternal. And it feels... exhilarating.

Abby looks at him, something serious on her mind.

ABBY

We're going to get through this, you know.

SWAMP THING

How can you... keep saying that...? I'm--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBY

No matter what you look like on the outside, inside you're still Alec Holland.

Swamp Thing gestures at himself.

SWAMP THING

Am I...? Right now... I'm not so sure...

ABBY

What do you mean?

Swamp Thing ponders this for a moment, then:

SWAMP THING

If you could only know... what I'm feeling... what I'm sensing now...

Swamp Thing turns to face Abby. He offers his hand to her again, palm up. Again, she hesitates.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING'S HAND

As we watch, a beautiful BLOSSOM blooms in its palm.

SWAMP THING

Here... this is... for you...

ON ABBY

She looks at the blossom, then at Swamp Thing, unsure of what he expects of her.

ABBY

Uh, you want me to... wear it... taste it... what...?

SWAMP THING

Just... smell it...

CLOSER ON ABBY

She leans forward, cautiously SNIFFS the blossom. We are close enough to SEE her INHALE some of its GLOWING GREEN POLLEN.

SWAMP THING

...Savor its... fragrance...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abby looks up at Swamp Thing and SMILES.

ABBY

It smells wonderful... like all of  
summer in a day.

Abby keeps sniffing, really enjoying herself.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So you wanted to do this as some  
sort of symbolic gesture?

ABBY'S POV

Swamp Thing almost SMILES back at her as he replies:

SWAMP THING

Not exactly.

Slowly, the image begins to BLUR, then becomes intensely  
POLARIZED. The pollen is having its effect on Abby.

ABBY

Alec? Everything sort of looks...  
strange.

SWAMP THING

How do you mean?

Now the Swamp Thing and everything around him seem to be  
made up entirely of brilliant POINTS OF LIGHT.

ABBY

Everything is made of light... and  
fire... and... Alec, what's  
happening to me?

SWAMP THING

You smelled the pollen, Abby...  
absorbed a little... of my  
consciousness... my perceptions...

ABBY

It's... oh...

A MONTAGE OF IMAGES - SHIFTING POV

Abby and Swamp Thing's VOICES CONTINUE OVER as the  
montage constantly shifts and changes. What we're trying  
to accomplish here is to give the impression of two  
spirits, two souls, literally INTERTWINING, becoming one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At first, we see the swamp, alive, vibrant -- THE POINTS OF LIGHT BECOME STREAMERS, SPREADING OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS --

ABBY (V.O.)  
This is how you see things?

SWAMP THING (O.S.)  
Only when I... wish to. Do you...  
like it?

-- NOW THE STRANDS MORPH INTO ALL SORTS OF DIFFERENT PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE IN THE SWAMP, EACH WITH A SINGLE STARBURST AT THE CENTER, LIKE ITS SOUL --

ABBY (O.S.)  
I never realized that the world  
was like this...

-- THE STARBURSTS SWIRL INTO THE NAKED SILHOUETTES OF ABBY AND ALEC --

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
It's so... beautiful...

-- AS THOSE SILHOUETTES EMBRACE, THEY EXPLODE INTO A MILLION BEADS OF WATER THAT SWIRL AROUND ONE ANOTHER --

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
...You're... so beautiful...

-- IN THE CENTER OF THE SWIRL OF WATER, IMAGES OF ABBY AND ALEC EMBRACE, MERGING INTO ONE FIGURE --

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I don't know... where I end... and  
you begin...

-- THE FIGURE SPINS IN PLACE, WITH MULTIPLE ARMS AND LEGS LIKE THAT FAMOUS DIAGRAM OF THE HUMAN FIGURE BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, FIRST SHOWING ABBY'S FACE, THEN ALEC'S, THEN ABBY'S AGAIN --

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
We are... one... we are... the  
world...

-- ALEC'S FACE COMES CLOSER AND CLOSER, SMILING UNTIL ITS EYES BLINK.

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
We are... are...

When the eyes open again, they're ABBY'S EYES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MONTAGE ENDS

PULL BACK QUICKLY TO REVEAL:

Abby sitting on the ground, still blinking, looking up at us with a smile that indicates she's just had a very satisfying sexual experience.

ABBY

Oh my God.

Swamp Thing helps Abby back to her feet.

SWAMP THING

Did you... like it?

ABBY

Like is too mild a word. It was positively... orgasmic.

Overwhelmed by the experience, Abby throws her arms around his neck and impulsively KISSES him. Then, realizing what she's done, she steps back.

Swamp Thing immediately assumes the worst.

SWAMP THING

Sorry it was so... repugnant to you.

Abby touches her lips, smiles.

ABBY

Actually, it tasted like lime... but not as sharp.

SWAMP THING

Do you... like lime?

ABBY

It's my favorite.

Abby looks up at Swamp Thing, almost shyly.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So...ah...does this mean we're going steady?

Swamp Thing pulls Abby into his arms, kisses her tenderly.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Guess that's a yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abby looks down at her charm bracelet. She removes it from her wrist, and clasps it around Swamp Thing's wrist.

SWAMP THING

Abby, what...?

ABBY

Not exactly my Sorority pin, but it'll have to do.

SWAMP THING

I... have nothing... to offer you.

She SMILES at him as they walk into the swamp. Abby has finally accepted that this is indeed the man she loves.

ABBY

You're alive, aren't you?

INT. PLANTATION - GENETICS LAB - LATER

Arcane carries a glass cannister similar to the one Alec used earlier, but this one is filled with a PURPLE LIQUID, the same color as Arcane's gas. He hands the cannister to Ferrett.

ARCANE

Be careful with this.

Benny looks around, realizes there are no other Lab Techs in the room this time.

BENNY

No lab support?

ARCANE

This is one experiment I'd prefer to carry out in private.

Ferrett inserts the cannister into a tube in the glass chamber, then seals it. This will turn the liquid to a gas when the experiment begins.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

I believe I've finally isolated the unique genetic sequencing that made Holland's formula work. I've combined that with the genetic resequeencers from my own formula.

Benny couldn't possible be more confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

Uh, that's good, right?

ARCANE

We'll soon find out. This version should work if anything will.

FERRETT

Isn't it a little premature to be testing it like this?

ARCANE

Time is a commodity I've precious little of. Now all we need is a willing test subject and--

VEITCH (O.S.)

Y-you wanted to see me, Doctor Arcane?

A timid Veitch, face badly battered and bruised, arm in a sling, walking with a limp, basically looking like he's been moonlighting as Mike Tyson's punching dummy as a result of the car crash and his fight with Swamp Thing last night, stands in the doorway.

ARCANE

Ah, Mister Veitch, right on time. Do come in. I hear you had a bit of an accident with one of my Humvees in the swamp last evening.

Veitch nervously looks at Ferrett. Should he tell Arcane what really happened? The look in Ferrett's eyes says no.

VEITCH

Yes, sir. We hit a... a tree. Damnedest thing you ever saw.

ARCANE

Well, it's admirable to see you here on the job today despite your terrible injuries. I'll make a note of that on your permanent record as soon as I--

Arcane pauses, pats his pockets as if he's looking for something.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

--Oh, how annoying.

Arcane turns to Veitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Mister Veitch, I appear to have left my fountain pen in the test chamber. Would you mind very much retrieving it for me?

Veitch looks around at Ferrett, Bruno, and Benny. Why couldn't one of them get the pen? Still, he replies:

VEITCH

Not at all, Sir.

Veitch enters the chamber, looks around for a pen that isn't in there.

VEITCH (CONT'D)

Sir, I don't see anything. What color is--

Suddenly, the chamber door SLIDES SHUT. Veitch is scared.

VEITCH (CONT'D)

Sir? Doctor Arcane, the door--!

Arcane approaches the glass, smiles at Veitch.

ARCANE

Thank you, Mister Veitch, for volunteering.

VEITCH

For what? I--

As he had before, Arcane activates the gas.

ON THE CHAMBER

Terrified, Veitch starts POUNDING on the glass.

VEITCH

Doc, please! It wasn't me. It was that thing what trashed the Hummer! Doc! Doc, PLEASE!

In an instant, Veitch is completely obscured by the PURPLE GAS. His pleas grow quieter, quieter, until there is SILENCE.

Ferrett and Benny approach the glass, trying to look into the chamber. They jump back as Veitch SCREAMS.

Arcane adjusts the controls, activating the ceiling fans that evacuate the purple fumes from the chamber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

Is he...?

ON FERRETT AND BENNY

They look O.S. at whatever is in the chamber. Their expression says it all.

FERRETT

Alive...if you can call it that.

REVERSE ANGLE

If you thought that poor monkey was a monster, you ain't seen nothing yet. Veitch is a monstrosity, larger than before, humanoid but no longer human, his skin, now purplish in color, is covered with festering sores, his limbs longer and twisted. He is not an attractive sight to see. Arcane approaches the chamber, studying the transformed Veitch.

ARCANE

Obviously something is still missing from Holland's formula.

VEITCH

(with great effort)

W...h...y...?

ARCANE

Just consider yourself another noble sacrifice in the name of science.

ROARING with pain and rage now, the transformed Veitch THROWS himself at the glass wall, trying to get to Arcane. Veitch bounces off the glass. The monster tries again and this time, to Arcane's astonishment, SHATTERS it. Arcane backs away quickly.

With animal speed and ferocity, Veitch LUNGES at Arcane, clawed hands outstretched. Arcane remains calm, reaching for something off-camera.

THUT! THUT! THUT! Arcane fires three TRANQUILIZER DARTS into Veitch, who drops like a stone, unconscious before he can reach Arcane.

FERRETT

You okay, Sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

Splendid.

Arcane steps over Veitch's body, and looks at Bruno.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Bruno kindly add Mr. Veitch to our collection of other unfortunates. Oh, and have this room sterilized.

Then, quietly, Arcane turns back to Ferrett.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Some... "thing" destroyed my vehicle? Ferrett, dear boy, I'm starting to think there's something you're not telling me.

For the first time, his ever-present cigarette FALLS from Ferrett's lips. This isn't going to be pleasant.

EXT. THE SWAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

Swamp Thing and Abby have set up a camp. She finishes eating as Swamp Thing turns to her. Abby offers him a piece of FRUIT.

ABBY

Hungry?

SWAMP THING

Not... really. Apparently, I take nourishment... like a plant now... Sunlight... water... and carbon dioxide...

He leans toward her.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

You're welcome to... breathe on me... all you want...

ABBY

Not without a Tic Tac.

He continues, actually becoming excited.

SWAMP THING

Actually, I've been experimenting with... my connection to... the Green. I'm amazed at the... things I can do. Watch this...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing STOPS MOVING completely. More importantly, the constantly writhing ROOTS that compose most of his body STOP MOVING as well.

Abby watches. Seconds pass. Nothing happens. More seconds. Still nothing.

Suddenly, Swamp Thing's body completely FALLS APART, collapsing back into the mud, muck and roots that comprised it.

Abby rushes to it, horrified.

ABBY

Alec!

Abby kneels by the corpse, almost hysterical.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Alec, what's wrong? Alec?

Behind her, a ROOT suddenly *thwips* up out of the ground.

Quickly, more roots join it, merging, mingling, growing until they form an entire new Swamp Thing.

SWAMP THING

Over here.

Abby turns, dumbfounded.

ABBY

What? How?

SWAMP THING

I told you. I'm connected to the Green... and the Green is everywhere. I can send my mind riding through it...

Another Swamp Thing erupts from the ground to the other side of Abby. The previous body stops moving, as the new body continues speaking.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

...Then use the local flora... to construct a new body...

Another new body appears, continues speaking.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Beats hell out of... taking a cab... and there's never... any traffic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABBY

Fascinating. How far can you send yourself?

SWAMP THING

Only a few yards... so far... I'm concerned what might happen... if I try to reach further...

Abby considers this for a second.

ABBY

You'll never know unless you try.

Swamp Thing is a little surprised by this.

SWAMP THING

But... if I reach too far... I might never... find my way back...

ABBY

Then let me be your anchor.

SWAMP THING

You're... sure...?

Abby gently takes the Swamp Thing's hand.

ABBY

Go. I'll be here waiting.

Swamp Thing reaches out with his other hand, and his fingers EXTEND, becoming a ROOT SYSTEM that PLUNGES into the ground.

SWAMP THING

Then here... goes everything...

PUSH IN ON SWAMP THING'S HAND

For a moment, nothing happens. Then, like a pebble thrown into a pond, the ground RIPPLES AWAY from the hand in concentric circles.

PULL BACK FURTHER AND FURTHER

until we're in the sky high above the swamp and can see the GROUND RIPPLING IN CONCENTRIC WAVES as the Swamp Thing sends his consciousness out into the world.

## ON THE TREES

We can almost SEE the SWAMP THING'S FACE shaped in their bark as his consciousness sweeps by.

## ON THE WATER

Again, the SWAMP THING'S FACE can be almost seen in the water's ripples.

## BACK ON SWAMP THING

At first, the body stands empty; Swamp Thing's consciousness is not there.

Then, suddenly, there is LIGHT in the monster's eyes again, and a look of terrible pain.

SWAMP THING

No.

Abby looks at him, realizing he's back in his body.

ABBY

Alec? What is it? What's wrong?

Swamp Thing pulls free of Abby's grasp and lumbers off.

SWAMP THING

Wait here. I'll... be back.

## FAVORING ABBY

Suddenly, she's worried.

## INT. PLANTATION - DRAWING ROOM - SAME TIME

Ferrett sits on an uncomfortable wooden chair in the center of the room as Arcane paces around him, hands clasped behind his back.

ARCANE

Now, care to tell me what Mister Veitch was jabbering about?

FERRETT

C'mon, Sir, your gas made Veitch crazy as a shithouse rat. Can't believe a word that psycho said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

He spoke those particular words  
before the gas transformed him.

Arcane leans in closer to Ferrett.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Just what is this "thing" he  
mentioned? Dammit, man, talk to  
me.

Ferrett realizes it's just easier to tell the truth:

FERRETT

Honestly, Sir, I don't know. We  
were trying to catch your niece  
when this... this swamp thing  
attacked us. We fought it off then  
lost it in the swamp. I don't know  
if it survived or not.

ARCANE

And you didn't tell me earlier  
because...?

Ferrett looks at Arcane for the first time since he  
started talking.

FERRETT

Oh, sure, like that would've been  
a good idea. "Gee, Sir, sorry we  
came back empty-handed, but we  
lost the girl and then a walking  
pile of mulch beat the crap out of  
us." Yeah. That would've worked.

Ferrett looks Arcane right in the eye.

FERRETT (CONT'D)

You and I both know it would've  
been me in that test chamber  
instead of Veitch.

Arcane turns away from Ferrett, looks into the fireplace  
as he considers what he's just heard.

ARCANE

And I'm supposed to believe this  
insanity because...?

Ferrett reaches into his jacket and pulls out what he  
picked up in the swamp earlier, tossing it on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERRETT

Well, for one thing, I've got proof.

ON THE TABLE

The Swamp Thing's severed arm lays there like some grotesque centerpiece.

ON ARCANE

He stares at the severed arm like a man who has just found God.

EXT. THE SWAMP - GREENHOUSE LAB PIER - DUSK

Swamp Thing reaches the water's edge and lumbers into the water, looking grim, disappearing under the surface of the still, dark water.

Not a single bubble breaks the surface.

UNDER THE WATER

The Swamp Thing walks relentlessly across the bottom, the water so thick and murky you can't see a foot in front of your face.

FISH approach the relentless Swamp Thing, then turn sharply and flee in the opposite direction.

Finally, the monster reaches the spot he had sensed earlier. He WAVES his hands in a parting motion, like he was throwing wide a saloon's swinging doors, and all the murk and algae in the water swirl away, leaving the water completely clear, so we can see:

A HUMAN SKELETON

It lies sprawled along the bank of the swamp, skull lolling to one side, bones picked clean.

CLOSER ON THE SKELETON

We can see the healed BREAK in its right forearm, at exactly the place Alec was rubbing earlier.

WIDER

The Swamp Thing rubs its own right arm just as Alec had, reminding us of the connection.

But, if these are the remains of Alec Holland, then who is...?

EXT. THE SWAMP - SHORE - MOMENTS LATER

Swamp Thing rises from the water, carrying Alec's skeleton, HOWLING his pain.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

Arcane studies the Swamp Thing's severed arm under a high-tech MICROSCOPE as Ferrett stands by. Arcane couldn't be more thrilled at what he is studying.

ARCANE

Astonishing. Do you realize what that swamp creature is, Ferrett?

FERRETT

Not a clue.

ARCANE

It's plant life on an astonishing new level, mobile, intelligent. It's Holland's formula come to life, proof that he succeeded.

Arcane turns to face Ferrett.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

And if that's true, then somewhere inside that thing is what I need to correct my own formula.

FERRETT

Why not just use the arm, Sir?

ARCANE

Because it's already dried out, desiccated. I need fresh material to work from.

Arcane turns back to studying the arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Collect Bruno and Benny. Return to the swamp. And do not come back without that creature.

FERRETT

And just how are we supposed to do that, Sir? That freak totaled my entire strike force last time.

ARCANE

You're intelligent, Ferrett. If you know what's good for you, I'm sure you'll find a way.

EXT. SWAMP - THE SHORE - SAME TIME

Drawn by the monster's plaintive roar moments earlier, Abby comes rushing over to where Swamp Thing stands, his back to her.

ABBY

Alec, what is it? What's--

Swamp Thing turns to her, his face a grim mask.

SWAMP THING

No... not Alec...

He holds out the skeleton toward her.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

This... is Alec Holland.

Abby comes closer, sees the skeleton's healed arm, touches it.

ABBY

Then what...?

Swamp Thing lays the skeleton on the ground.

SWAMP THING

Planarian worms.

ABBY

Planarian what?

SWAMP THING

They've done studies... A planarian worm who eats... the body of another planarian worm... knows what it knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing looks out at the water.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
Somehow... the plant life that fed  
on my... his remains... remains  
that were suffused with the  
formula...

Abby looks at Swamp Thing, too stunned to speak.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
They became infected... with his  
consciousness... a consciousness  
that didn't realize... it was no  
longer alive...

Swamp Thing looks at himself, at his outstretched hands.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
...So this plant consciousness...  
built itself a body... that it  
could feel comfortable in... this  
body...

ABBY  
Alec, no...

SWAMP THING  
I am not a man... who became a  
plant. I'm a plant... that  
believed itself a man.

Both Swamp Thing and Abby are devastated by this.

ABBY  
But the cure...

Swamp Thing glares at her.

SWAMP THING  
Don't you... understand? There  
is... no cure. This is what... I  
am meant to be... not a man... a  
thing...

Then the Swamp Thing turns away. He stands over the  
skeleton, unmoving.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
I think it's time... for you to  
go.

ABBY  
Alec...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SWAMP THING

Just... go. It's... better this way.

Then he stops speaking, stops moving, totally lost in a fugue, standing over the remains of Alec Holland.

Abby tries and tries, but gets no response from him.

ABBY

Alec? Alec, please...? Alec?

Finally, heartbroken, Abby touches him gently.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... for everything.

Then she turns and walks away.

EXT. THE SWAMP - MINUTES LATER

Abby makes her way through the underbrush, pushing branches aside angrily, taking out her rage and frustration on the local plant life.

ABBY

Better this way, huh? Better how?  
The universe has given us a gift,  
Alec, and you're throwing it away.

Abby pushes aside a branch. It whips back, almost catches her in the face. She grabs it angrily and snaps it off.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So what if you're a plant on the  
outside. Your soul is still the  
soul of Alec Holland, and so long  
as that soul exists...

Abby finally breaks out of the underbrush, and pauses as she sees something ahead of her.

REVERSE ANGLE - ABBY'S POV

It's the ruins of the greenhouse lab.

ABBY

...There has to be some way to  
make you human again.

INT. ALEC'S GREENHOUSE LAB - SOON AFTER

Almost in a frenzy, Abby tears through the equipment that survived the explosion.

ABBY

There has to be something, damn  
it, something we overlooked, some  
shred of hope.

Finally, exhausted, Abby drops to her knees and buries her face in her hands.

ABBY (CONT'D)

(sobbing)  
Please... there has to be  
something.

FERRETT (O.S.)

You'd think so, wouldn't you?

Abby looks up - Ferrett, Bruno and Benny stand over her. Bruno pulls out his switchblade and FLICKS it open.

BRUNO

Still alive, huh? This is gonna be  
easier than we thought.

As they reach for her, Abby SCREAMS.

EXT. THE SWAMP - SIMULTANEOUS

Abby's SCREAM CARRIES across the swamp. It STIRS THE BIRDS TO FLIGHT, makes the INSECTS STOP DRONING.

ON THE SWAMP THING

If he hears Abby's cry, he gives no sign, still stands inert, unmoving.

Then her scream comes again, ECHOING through the rushes.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

His eyes SNAP OPEN.

SWAMP THING

Abby...?

## BACK TO SCENE

The Swamp Thing ROUSES, turns to move, but finds that his legs are somehow glued to the ground.

## CLOSE ON SWAMP THING'S LEGS

Roots from his legs and feet are now sunk deep into the ground, ANCHORING him. By standing in the same place for so long, he has literally become ROOTED to the spot.

## WIDER

With a terrific ROAR OF EFFORT, Swamp Thing TEARS FREE of the roots holding him, and charges off to rescue Abby.

## EXT. RUINS OF THE GREENHOUSE LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Swamp Thing reaches the greenhouse ruins, too late.

## SWAMP THING'S POV

Struggling Abby is being dragged into a Hummer by Ferrett and the others. Bruno holds his knife to her throat.

## BRUNO

That's it, sister. Scream all you want to. Let's make sure your ugly boyfriend hears you.

## SWAMP THING

Abby!

## BACK TO SCENE

As Ferrett leaps behind the wheel of the Hummer, Benny sees the approaching Swamp Thing.

## SWAMP THING

Hey, here he comes. And he don't look happy.

## FERRETT

That's it. Let's book!

Ferret FLOORS the accelerator and the Hummer ROARS AWAY, Abby still struggling in the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing runs after it but the Hummer is clearly too fast, and quickly leaves him eating its dust.

SWAMP THING

ABBY!

Realizing he can never catch the Hummer, Swamp Thing finally stops running.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

(softly)

Abby.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

His eyes NARROW as he realizes there is only one place Ferrett and company can be taking Abby.

SWAMP THING

Arcane.

Then his eyes GLOW GREEN.

WIDER

Swamp Thing's body COLLAPSES into its component parts, as his consciousness merges with the Green.

SWAMP THING'S POV

We're racing through a ROLLER COASTER TUNNEL composed of EMERALD LIGHT and TWISTING GREEN TENDRILS. This is how Swamp Thing's consciousness moves through the Green.

The roller coaster ride continues for several beats, the green growing brighter and brighter until a BLINDING GREEN LIGHT FILLS THE SCREEN.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - BOURBON STREET - NIGHT

The MARDI GRAS is in full swing here, PARADES, FLOATS, DRUNKEN REVELERS, everyone in costume, the whole works. DIXIELAND JAZZ BANDS MARCH down the street, playing their hearts out. Revelers on the floats throw shiny STRINGS OF BEADS up to the balconies where ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMEN are FLASHING THEIR BREASTS.

Face it, folks, this is the party to end all parties.

## ON A COSTUMED YOUNG COUPLE

They lean against a street light, MAKING OUT like there was nobody around them.

Suddenly, the ground beneath their feet SHUDDERS for an instant, disturbing their clench.

They look down, around. Is this the precursor of an earthquake?

GUY

Did the earth just move?

The girl puts her hand on the back of the guy's neck, pulling him back to her.

GAL

With you, honey, always.

They go back into their clench.

## EXT. BOURBON STREET - A VEGETABLE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

It's in the SIDE YARD of a nearby house, near a heavy CLOTHESLINE filled with DRYING CLOTHING. The VEGETABLES growing there suddenly begin to SHAKE, then they GROW uncontrollably, rising and transforming, finally becoming a NEW BODY for the Swamp Thing, one somewhat DIFFERENT from than his previous body since he's using different flora to form it.

Swamp Thing looks around, realizes where he is.

SWAMP THING

Close enough.

Noticing the clothesline, he grabs an old COAT and HAT off the line, then Swamp Thing moves off into the crowd.

## EXT. BOURBON STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Maneuvering his way through the drunken crowd of gaudily-dressed REVELERS, Swamp Thing accidentally BUMPS into a happy young DRUNK, impact knocking Swamp Thing's hat off.

Swamp Thing braces himself for the man's horrified reaction, but instead:

DRUNK

Hey, righteous costume, dude.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Drunk staggers off in the opposite direction. Swamp Thing looks around, realizing he's no weirder-looking than most of the people in the crowd. He shakes his head.

SWAMP THING

Mardi Gras.

Then, shucking off the ill-fitting overcoat, he moves off to find Arcane's Plantation.

INT. PLANTATION - DRAWING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Flanked by Ferrett and Bruno to keep her in line, an angry Abby sits before her uncle.

ARCANE

You know, I was relieved actually to discover you hadn't died in the swamp. We're the last of the Arcanes, Abigail. The line, the work, it perishes with us.

ABBY

Right now I'm not so sure that's a bad thing. Your work is an abomination. Posterity has no place for it.

ARCANE

Perhaps. But I don't intend to live on in my work. I intend to live on in my mansion.

ABBY

You really are insane.

ARCANE

Am I?

Arcane glances at a GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK against one wall.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

It is only a matter of time now before your grotesque champion arrives to rescue you. Once he does, he's mine.

ABBY

You're going to regret this.

ARCANE

That remains to be seen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As if on cue, they all HEAR A VIOLENT COMMOTION outside, followed by the BLARE OF ALARM KLAXONS.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Ah, right on cue.

EXT. PLANTATION - THE FRONT GATE - SAME TIME

ALARM KLAXONS continues to blare, as Swamp Thing stands before the closed gate, shaking the bars. A squad of SUNDERLAND SECURITY GUARDS, many of the same ones we saw in the swamp, comes running.

ON SWAMP THING

He presses himself against the gate bars, and OOZES RIGHT THROUGH them.

WIDER

Seeing this, the guards HESITATE for a moment. One guard, PASKO, is stunned. His partner, YEATES, is angry.

PASKO

How do we stop that thing?

YEATES

Any way we can.

Now on the plantation grounds, Swamp Thing faces off against the Security Guards.

SWAMP THING

Step aside.

PASKO

What are you?

Swamp Thing moves toward them.

SWAMP THING

Angry... very angry.

With that, the Security Guards OPEN FIRE on our hero.

The rifle slugs pass right THROUGH Swamp Thing, not even slowing him down.

PASKO

He's still coming!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A new Guard, McMANUS, moves to the front, carrying a weapon that's like an high-tech oversized SHOTGUN.

MCMANUS

Leave him to me.

BOOM! McManus fires an EXPLOSIVE ROUND that blows a BASKETBALL-SIZED HOLE through Swampy's chest.

ANGLE THROUGH THE HOLE

We can watch McManus's horrified expression as the hole quickly REPAIRS itself, roots KNITTING together until there's no trace of the hole at all.

ANGLE ON SWAMP THING

He looks down where the hole was, then at McManus.

SWAMP THING

Bad idea.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

Again, his eyes GLOW GREEN.

WIDER

A CYPRESS VINE from one of the many trees on the property suddenly SNAKES DOWN INTO SCENE, WRAPPING itself around McManus's neck.

McManus grabs the strangling vine, tries to pull it away from his throat

MCMANUS

(strangling)

N-no...don't...please...

McManus still struggles as he is violently YANKED UP OUT OF SCENE.

A moment later, we HEAR A LOUD SNAP, as if of a neck being broken.

Swamp Thing keeps coming, his eyes GLOW GREEN, as all hell breaks loose.

Trailing CREEPER VINES suddenly WHIP around Pasko's ankles, dragging him SCREAMING away into the underbrush.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASKO  
 (pleading)  
 No...no...no...(SCREAMS)

Yeates keep FIRING at Swamp Thing as the ground beneath Yeates' feet CRACKS OPEN. A tangle of ROOTS erupts up out of the crack, ENVELOPING Yeates, and pulling him into the hole.

YEATES  
 Help--

An instant later, the hole seals shut, leaving no trace of the man.

Swamp Thing just keeps on coming.

EXT. PLANTATION - ROSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

As Swamp Thing approaches Arcane's rose garden, guards Bisette and Totleben OPEN FIRE, their weapons on full automatic. They back away as Swamp Thing comes closer.

TOTLEBEN  
 It's not stopping. Why won't it stop?

BISSETTE  
 Guns didn't work last time. Why would you think they'd work now?

ON SWAMP THING

His eyes GLOW GREEN again.

WIDER

The rose bushes start to GROW at an uncontrollable rate, the writhing stems and flowers WRAPPING themselves around Bisette and Totleben.

TOTLEBEN  
 No! Oh, Christ. No. No.

CLOSE ON BISSETTE

The rose THORNS LACERATE his cheek, leaving bloody gouges. He SCREAMS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BISSETTE

Not me. Please...not me...

WIDER

Both guards, SCREAMING, are completely ENVELOPED by the writhing rose bushes, until they are lost from view.

A moment later, the SCREAMING STOPS.

Then BLOOD starts to flow from beneath the monstrous rose bushes, lots of it, RIVERS of it.

Swamp Thing moves on.

EXT. PLANTATION - CONTINUOUS

Rounding a corner, Swamp Thing now finds himself in a sort of alleyway between two buildings. He can see Ferrett waiting at the other end.

SWAMP THING

Where... is she?

As he starts to move into the alley, the sound of WHIRLING HELICOPTER BLADES RISES above him.

Swamp Thing looks up toward the sound.

SWAMP THING'S POV

The Sunderland Helicopter, now fully repaired and outfitted with the kind of SPRAYER RODS that cropduster planes use, comes swooping down toward us.

INT. HELICOPTER

Berger smiles as he presses a BUTTON on his joystick.

BERGER

Eat defoliant, you ugly mother!

BACK TO SCENE

The helicopter releases thick clouds of DEFOLIANT from its sprayer rods, enveloping Swamp Thing completely.

Drenched in the spray, Swamp Thing keeps coming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SWAMP THING

Where...?

The helicopter just keeps SPRAYING. Ferrett covers his nose and mouth with his sleeve so he won't breathe the defoliant in as he watches the approaching monster.

Slowly, Swamp Thing's lush GREEN HUES start to turn BROWN, as the defoliant affects him.

FERRETT

Fall, damn you! Fall!

With each step Swamp Thing takes, he becomes more brown, his stride SLOWER. Still, Swamp Thing struggles to reach Ferrett. With his last bit of strength, the now ENTIRELY BROWN Swamp Thing reaches out for Ferrett--

--Then collapses face forward to the ground, just an inch away. The helicopter flies off.

FERRETT (CONT'D)

Ain't payback a bitch?

FADE TO  
BLACK/FADE IN:

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

His color is still primary brown, his eyes closed. Suddenly, they SNAP OPEN.

ARCANE (O.C.)

Still with us? Excellent.

Swamp Thing turns his head to discover he is in:

INT. TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED LAB - PRE-DAWN

There is a small WINDOW high on one wall, basically composed of GLASS BRICKS. Swamp Thing is strapped to a STEEL EXAMINING TABLE, unable to move. There are ELECTRODES attached to his head and other MONITORING EQUIPMENT attached to his body.

Arcane, smiling, wearing surgical garb, steps in to look down at Swamp Thing. Beyond Arcane, Swamp Thing can see Abby, being guarded by Benny, Ferrett and Bruno. There are other LAB TECHNICIANS checking high-tech equipment. The air is so COLD, we can SEE EVERYONE'S BREATH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

For a moment, I was afraid my men had used too much defoliant to bring you down.

Swamp Thing nods his head toward Abby.

SWAMP THING

Let her... go.

ARCANE

And articulate, as well. How marvelous. I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be face-to-face at last with the product of Alec Holland's genius. My own poor efforts have not been faring nearly as well.

SWAMP THING

What... do you want...?

ARCANE

Why, to get to the root of you, of course. To take you apart piece by piece and see what makes you tick.

SWAMP THING

Curiosity... killed the cat...

ARCANE

I imagine it will probably kill you as well. But one must make sacrifices in the name of science.

SWAMP THING

Why...?

ARCANE

You are the living embodiment of Holland's success. Once I extract your essence, I can analyze it and use it to eliminate the flaws in my own longevity formula.

SWAMP THING

You always were... a second-rate poser, Anton...

Arcane is stunned the creature called him by name. Then he realizes:

ARCANE

Alec?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Arcane leans closer, looks deep into the monster's eyes.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Dear God, it is you, isn't it?  
Well, you always did throw  
yourself into your work. That just  
makes the rest of this that much  
sweeter.

Swamp Thing struggles weakly against his bonds.

SWAMP THING

You'll never get... the formula  
right. I never added... the final  
modifications... to my computer's  
data base...

ARCANE

You're lying.

SWAMP THING

No... the only place...the  
perfected formula exists...is in  
my head...

ARCANE

Then we'll just have to get it out  
of there now, won't we?

Swamp Thing struggles harder against the straps.

SWAMP THING

You can't... hold me... forever...

Arcane moves to a large THERMOSTAT on one wall.

ARCANE

Actually, I can. Haven't you  
noticed...?

CLOSE ON THE THERMOSTAT

Arcane dials it down, even COLDER, way BELOW FREEZING.

ARCANE

This room is climate-controlled.  
If I make it any colder, you'll  
react as any plant would...

BACK TO SCENE

Swamp Thing's struggles grow weaker, weaker, then STOP altogether as the light goes out of his eyes.

ARCANE

...You'll become dormant.

One of the LAB TECHNICIANS checks a monitor.

TECHNICIAN

Higher brain functions have ceased, Dr. Arcane. The creature is unconscious.

Arcane turns to a bank of SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS that look more like GARDENING TOOLS.

ARCANE

Excellent. Then let us begin.

Abby is horrified by this.

ABBY

You can't...

Arcane turns to Abby.

ARCANE

All in the name of science, Abigail. Even Alec would have to respect that.

Arcane looks around at his Technicians, attaches a small MICROPHONE to his ear, and picks up a BONE SAW.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

I want every detail logged and recorded here, people. We're about to make history.

Using the saw, Arcane OPENS Swamp Thing's chest.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

And thus we begin...

Prying open Swamp Thing's chest cavity, Arcane looks around inside.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Fascinating. The entire skeletal structure is made of wood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From the cavity, Arcane removes two large POD-LIKE STRUCTURES that resemble lungs, but are dripping with a FAINTLY GLOWING DARK GREEN FLUID. He places them in a large SPECIMEN JAR.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

These look like lungs, but they're made of vegetable fiber. Utterly useless.

Now Arcane removes two vegetable KIDNEYS, also dripping, and places them in a jar.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

As are these pseudo-kidneys...

Then a dripping vegetable HEART.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

...And this non-functioning heart.

ABBY

Uncle, please...

Arcane ignores her. As Abby watches in horror, he removes a dripping sponge-like BRAIN from Swamp Thing's skull.

ARCANE

Even the brain is worthless. There are no synapse gaps.

As he starts to place the brain in another specimen jar, Arcane notices the dripping green fluid. Grabbing a nearby beaker, he starts to COLLECT the glowing fluid.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

In fact, the only real thing of value is the quantity of formula generated by the creature's body.

Arcane hands one of the Lab Technicians the beaker of faintly glowing green liquid.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Take this to my private lab. I'll analyze it there.

Arcane looks back at the gutted corpse of Swamp thing lying on the table.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

We can dispose of that decaying compost heap later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWLING with rage, Abby hurls herself at Arcane.

ABBY

Monster--!

Arcane SWATS her BACKHANDED, knocking her back into Benny's arms.

ARCANE

Abigail, please... what's done is done.

He looks at Benny, who holds the struggling Abby.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Kindly put my niece somewhere safe, Benny. I may yet need her help in finalizing the formula.

Arcane exits.

Bruno and Benny start to drag Abby to the door. She looks back at the dissected corpse lying on the slab.

ABBY

Alec, forgive me.

BENNY

You're wastin' your breath, Missy. He can't hear you no more.

Suddenly, Abby RAKES her fingernails across Bruno's face.

He HOWLS, grabbing his cheek, losing his grip on her.

Abby makes a break for it, but Ferrett grabs her by the arm, swinging her back around so that she SLAMS face first against the wall, her body momentarily covering the thermostat.

Ferrett grabs her, twists her arm behind her back and drags her away.

FERRETT

Don't push your luck, bitch.

ABBY

Screw you!

As they drag her out of the room, Abby glances back toward the thermostat.

## CLOSE ON THE THERMOSTAT

We can see that Abby has adjusted the temperature so that it's now WELL ABOVE FREEZING.

## WIDER

The lab door LOCKS SHUT behind Abby and the others.

## ON THE SWAMP THING

The ruined body lies on the slab, unmoving.

## INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SOON AFTER

As Ferrett and Bruno watch, Arcane fills a VIAL with some of the GLOWING DARK GREEN FORMULA he has collected, then inserts the vial into a small CENTRIFUGE on a table.

## ARCANE

You know, the day Sunderland first put me together with Alec Holland as lab partners, I knew our lives would be inextricably intertwined.

Arcane turns on the centrifuge, watches it WHIRL the vial around at blinding speed.

## ARCANE (CONT'D)

We had the same basic goals, the same total commitment to our work.

Arcane turns the centrifuge off, then removes the vial and holds it up to the light. It's now pure, a GLOWING LIGHT GREEN.

## ARCANE (CONT'D)

The only real difference between us was ambition.

## INT. PLANTATION - CLIMATE-CONTROLLED LAB - DAWN

The body of the Swamp Thing lies on the slab, as the RISING SUNLIGHT slants in through the room's sole window.

## ARCANE (V.O.)

Alec could have happily spent the rest of his life locked away in some lab.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the sunlight slowly sweeps across the body, there is suddenly MOVEMENT.

CLOSER ON SWAMP THING

A fresh GREEN TENDRIL slowly rises from the opened chest of the dull brown corpse.

ARCANE (V.O. CONT'D)

But me, I wanted more.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

Arcane brings out the glass cannister of his purple formula and puts it on a table.

ARCANE

I started playing the political game, worked my way up the corporate ladder.

Arcane pours some of the purple formula into a beaker.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

In a very few years, I'd gone from Alec's equal to his superior.

Arcane looks over at Ferrett and Bruno.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

And do you know what bothered me most, what really ate at my craw?

INT. PLANTATION - CLIMATE-CONTROLLED LAB - SAME TIME

Another green tendril rises from the Swamp Thing's corpse. Then another. And another.

ARCANE (V.O.)

The son of a bitch never resented me for it, not once. Hell, he was my biggest supporter.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

Arcane adds several drops of the glowing green liquid to the purple formula.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

That's when I knew something had to be done about him.

Arcane studies the beaker, waiting for a reaction.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I figured I could use Holland, let his research further my own.

The liquid in the beaker starts to change color, becoming a GLOWING SKY BLUE. Arcane smiles.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

The day Alec met Abigail, that became almost painfully easy.

INT. PLANTATION - CLIMATE-CONTROLLED LAB - SAME TIME

The tendrils come faster and faster, until they form into a whole new lush, green Swamp Thing.

ARCANE (V.O.)

I installed her as his assistant, had her keep an eye on him, to let me know of any new developments.

Tearing himself free of his old body, the furious Swamp Thing heads for the door.

ARCANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Who knew they would fall in love?

SWAMP THING

(whispered)

Abby.

Finding the door locked, he SMASHES it down with his fists and lumbers away.

ARCANE (V.O.)

Who knew it would end like this?

INT. PLANTATION - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Benny is totally preoccupied with eating a BLT SANDWICH as he walks along.

The sandwich is halfway to his mouth when he hears an unpleasant MOIST SHUFFLING SOUND coming from around the corner of the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

What the--?

Benny rounds the corner, to find the Swamp Thing lumbering toward him.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Oh. Oh, jeez.

Benny drops his sandwich.

BENNY (CONT'D)

You came back.

SWAMP THING

I'm like a weed... hard to kill...

Benny pulls his gun, aims it at Swamp Thing.

BENNY

Stay back! I'm warnin' you! This time I'll make sure you stay dead.

If Swamp Thing could smile, this is as close as he comes.

SWAMP THING

Been tried...

Swamp Thing looks at the fallen sandwich, then at Benny. He concentrates. His eyes GLOW GREEN.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Didn't take...

Frightened, Benny OPENS FIRE.

The bullets pass right THROUGH Swamp Thing, harmlessly.

Suddenly, Benny CLUTCHES his stomach, the gun falling from his hand.

BENNY

(in agony)

Wh-what's...wrong? My guts...

Benny puts his fingers in his mouth, and pulls out a half-eaten SLICE OF TOMATO. He stares at the tomato, then covers his mouth as it trying to stifle throwing up.

Benny's eyes grow wide with terror, as a small TANGLE OF VINES suddenly sprouts out of his nostrils.

Benny takes his hand away from his mouth, as more tomato vines start spilling out of his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Now the vines start to grow faster, spewing out of his ears now, sneaking out of the corners of his eyes.

The vines, now spewing out of every orifice on Benny's body, start to grow FULL-SIZED TOMATOES. Through all of this, Benny GURGLES in protest, unable to speak.

Finally, Benny COLLAPSES to the floor, eyes wide, very dead, the tomato plants still growing, covering most of his body.

Stepping over Benny's corpse, Swamp Thing lumbers on.

SWAMP THING

Must've been... something you  
ate...

Suddenly, ANOTHER GUARD rounds the corner, sees Swamp Thing and Benny's body.

GUARD

Oh, shit!

The frightened Guard RUNS.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

Swamp Thing POINTS at the guard, his finger suddenly EXTENDING into a WRITHING VINE.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

The vine wraps around the fleeing guard's ankle and sends him sprawling.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Oh, shit! Oh--

But the guard's forward momentum allows him to SLAP THE EMERGENCY ALARM on the wall as he falls.

Instantly, ALARM KLAXONS echo down the corridor.

SWAMP THING

Damn.

Swamp Thing grows more vines from his other fingers, wrapping the guard up in a cocoon.

Then, shaking the vines from his fingers, the Swamp Thing moves off, deeper into the building.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

Arcane looks up from his work at the sound of the alarms. Ferrett stands nearby, keeping an eye on Abby, who is sitting in a chair.

FERRETT

Now what?

ARCANE

Holland.

FERRETT

B-but he's dead... isn't he?

Arcane glares directly at Abby.

ARCANE

Is he? He seems to have this nasty talent for resurrection.

Arcane turns to Ferrett.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Still, better to be safe than sorry. Go find me Berger.

Ferrett rushes from the room.

ABBY

Alec is coming to kill you, you know.

ARCANE

Let him try.

Arcane glances at the GLOWING BLUE FORMULA, then:

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Soon it won't make any difference.

INT. PLANTATION - CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Swamp Thing moves down the corridor toward a phalanx of armed security guards.

SWAMP THING

Get out... of my way...

The guards OPEN FIRE. The bullets THUD into Swamp Thing's body harmlessly like hitting a tree trunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing thrusts his hand toward the shooting guards, fingers outstretched. The fingers EXTEND again, this time becoming WOODEN SPEARS that Swamp Thing SHOOTS at the Guards, bringing them all down.

Swamp Thing moves on.

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

Berger enters and snaps Arcane a military salute. Ferrett enters behind him.

BERGER

Captain Berger, reporting as ordered.

ARCANE

Excellent. I want you to get your bird into the air immediately.

BERGER

My mission, Sir?

Arcane picks up the cannister of purple formula, hands it to Berger.

ARCANE

If you don't hear instructions from me to the contrary in the next fifteen minutes, I want you to spray this formula over the entire French Quarter.

Berger looks at the cannister, curiously.

BERGER

And, uh, exactly what is this stuff supposed to do?

ARCANE

Let's just think of it as a little diversion, shall we? With luck, it will give me the edge I need.

Berger tucks the cannister under his arm, then heads for the door.

BERGER

Then consider me airborne.

Ferrett lights a cigarette as he watches Berger exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERRETT

Something else to keep Holland occupied, Sir?

Arcane turns back to the beaker of blue formula. Arcane holds up the beaker so it glows in the light.

ARCANE

Whatever it takes. Speaking of which, I have another little task for you...

INT. PLANTATION - CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

It's a beautiful old wood-paneled room with inlaid wooden floors and a long MAHOGANY CONFERENCE TABLE dominating. There are double doors at both ends of the room. Swamp Thing throws open one set of doors and enters.

Suddenly, the double doors at the opposite side of the room are thrown open to reveal:

BRUNO

His cheek is bandaged. He's got a large TANK OF DEFOLIANT strapped to his back, the SPRAYER in his hands. He looks at Swamp Thing, raises the sprayer, and smiles.

BRUNO

Time to get pruned, ugly.

Swamp Thing smiles back.

SWAMP THING

Bring it... on.

Bruno charges toward Swamp Thing, spraying defoliant.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING'S HAND

his fingers EXTEND, penetrating the inlaid wooden floor.

WIDER

The floor starts to SHAKE as Swamp Thing's fingers move UNDER it. Suddenly, jagged SPIKES OF WOOD erupt out of the floor, trying to IMPALE the oncoming Bruno. Clearly, these are Swamp thing's extended fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Like a champion broken field runner, Bruno AVOIDS every spike, still spraying Swamp Thing as he comes.

BRUNO

Cute.

As the spikes come quicker, thicker, Bruno LEAPS onto the conference table to avoid them, without breaking stride.

BRUNO (CONT'D)

Useless, but--

Then, just before he can reach the end of the table and Swamp Thing, a ROOT shoots up THRU the conference table itself, IMPALING Bruno, skewering him like a shishkabob.

Bruno DIES, still erect, supported by the spike through his body. His arms go slack.

The sprayer falls from his limp hand, automatically shutting off without Bruno pressing the trigger.

Swamp Thing glances back at Bruno's body as he exits through the same door Bruno had entered.

SWAMP THING

Guess he got...the point...

INT. PLANTATION - BOTANICAL LAB - SAME TIME

The SOUNDS OF COMMOTION come closer and closer as Ferrett enters. Arcane is finally starting to get worried.

FERRETT

Unlocked all the cages like you asked. It's chaos out there.

ARCANE

Damn Holland. He was never this single-minded before.

Ferrett glances over at Abby.

FERRETT

Maybe he never had a reason to be.

ABBY

Uncle, please...stop while you still can.

Arcane grabs the beaker of blue formula, caps it, and puts it in his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE

No. I will not have all my careful planning ruined by some muck-encrusted mockery of a man.

Then he grabs Abby by the wrist, pulling her after him, and heads for the lab's back door. With his other hand, Arcane snatches up a FLAMETHROWER stored in one corner.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

If that's Holland, keep him occupied.

FERRETT

What about you?

ARCANE

Just do your Goddamn job!

And, with that, Arcane and Abby are gone.

Ferrett looks around, sees the other tank of defoliant against the wall, and straps it on. Then, sprayer in hand, he waits for Swamp Thing's arrival.

He doesn't have to wait for long.

WHAM! The lab's front door comes flying off its hinges, and Swamp Thing lumbers in.

SWAMP THING

Where is... Abby...?

Ferrett brandishes the sprayer.

FERRETT

Keep away from me, freak! I'm warning you.

SWAMP THING

Welcome to...the club...

Frightened now, Ferrett, his ever-present cigarette dangling from his lip, backs away from Swamp Thing into the thick of the plants in the lab.

FERRETT

Look, this was nothing personal, I was only doing my job.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

His eyes GLOW GREEN yet again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SWAMP THING

Tell that to... Alec Holland...

BACK TO SCENE

Unnoticed by Ferrett, all the plants around him start to BLOSSOM and GROW.

FERRETT

But aren't you...?

And that's when Ferrett SNIFFS THE AIR and notices:

FERRETT (CONT'D)

The air... so sweet... why...?

ON SWAMP THING

He smiles.

SWAMP THING

Take a... deep breath...

ON FERRETT

Realizing what Swamp Thing means, Ferrett looks down at the LIT CIGARETTE dangling from his mouth.

FERRETT

No. Too much oxy--

He tries to spit it out, but it's too late.

The super-oxygenated air around Ferrett IGNITES, and he BURSTS INTO FLAME.

Ferrett struggles to put himself out, but to no avail. All he manages to do is to set the entire lab afire.

Ferrett SCREAMS, an instant before the tank of defoliant still on his back EXPLODES!

Swamp Thing quickly exits the burning lab.

SWAMP THING

Now you know...how Holland felt...

INT. PLANTATION - DRAWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Arcane stands in the middle of the room, holding the beaker of glowing blue formula up to the light. Abby stands nearby.

ARCANE

To be or not to be. It all really comes down to that, doesn't it? If I'm right, if Holland's essence has made my formula whole, then I will live forever. If not...

Again, the SOUNDS OF COMBAT grow closer. Arcane looks to the door, then back at the beaker.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Damn you, Alec.

And, with that, Arcane raises the beaker to his lips. Abby shouts:

ABBY

Uncle, no!

But Arcane DRINKS the formula.

ARCANE

Well, either way, my death won't be a lingering one.

He tosses the empty beaker away, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, and awaits a reaction.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

What? No flourish of trumpets? No choir of angels?

He looks at his hands, checks for any changes.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Nothing. Nada. I haven't changed.

At which point, of course, Swamp Thing bursts into the room.

SWAMP THING

Let the girl...go, Anton...! It's over...

ARCANE

Apparently so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Instantly, Arcane snatches up the FLAMETHROWER he'd brought with him.

ARCANE (CONT'D)  
 But if I'm to die, I intend to  
 have the satisfaction of taking  
 you with me.

As Arcane TRIGGERS the flamethrower, Swamp Thing PUSHES Abby out of the line of fire.

ARCANE (CONT'D)  
 Enough... damn you... at least  
 die... with some dignity...

Swamp Thing thrusts out his hand toward Arcane, firing off five long SPEARS OF WOOD from his fingertips.

The spears PENETRATE Arcane like a pincushion as he SCREAMS.

But, to everyone's astonishment, Arcane's included, he doesn't fall.

ARCANE (CONT'D)  
 Well, what do you know?

Arcane looks down at the spears and, one by one, YANKS them out of his chest.

CLOSE ON ARCANE'S CHEST

As each spear is removed, the wound HEALS instantly.

ARCANE  
 Damned formula worked, after all.

BACK TO SCENE

LAUGHING now, Arcane OPENS FIRE on Swampy with the flamethrower, accidentally setting fire to the walls.

ARCANE  
 Die, Alec! Once and for all, would  
 you please just lay down and die?

As Swamp Thing struggles under the flaming barrage, his body starting to CHAR, Abby moves to save him.

Unnoticed by Arcane, Abby snatches one of the crossed Confederate swords off the wall, and charges at Arcane, SCREAMING IN RAGE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before Arcane can react, Abby uses the sword to CHOP OFF Arcane's arm, the one holding the flamethrower, just as Swampy's arm had been severed earlier. The flamethrower is automatically turned off.

Arcane SCREAMS in shock.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

What--what have you done to--

Then, as everyone watches, a sliver of BONE thrusts out of the wound, growing longer. An instant later, MUSCLES and BLOOD VESSELS start to cover the bone. Then SKIN covers muscle. Arcane's ARM GROWS BACK just as Swamp Thing's had. Arcane SMILES.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

New game, Alec. New rules.

Reveling in his new power, Arcane HURLS himself at Swamp Thing, and their battle begins in earnest.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

This time I win.

Arcane throws a roundhouse punch at Swamp Thing with such force that the impact literally TEARS OFF half of Swamp Thing's face.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

Quickly, he grows a NEW face, one that isn't very happy.

SWAMP THING

You missed...

WIDER

Growing one arm until it's like a large TREE TRUNK, Swamp Thing SWINGS it at Arcane, like a baseball bat.

SWAMP THING

...I won't...

The impact KNOCKS Arcane across the room to SMASH into the wall, BREAKING several bones. He GRUNTS at impact.

Even as Arcane rises to his feet, we can WATCH the broken bones SNAPPING back into place, HEALING before our eyes.

ARCANE

Care to try again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swamp Thing transforms his arm back to normal, as Arcane lunges at him again, the fire raging around them. Swamp Thing stands his ground, waiting.

With a superhuman effort, Arcane PUNCHES his fist right THROUGH the charred Swamp Thing's chest.

Swamp Thing TIGHTENS his body around Arcane's arm, holding him in place. Then, Swamp Thing PUNCHES BACK, sending Arcane flying across the room, to land near Abby.

SWAMP THING

Abby, get... out of here.

ABBY

No! I won't abandon you.

As Swamp Thing starts to move toward Arcane, he hears a TERRIBLE GROANING from above, and a huge section of the ceiling, weakened by the flames, COLLAPSES on top of Swamp Thing, BURYING him completely.

ABBY (CONT'D)

(screaming)

ALLLLLLLEC!

As Abby starts to move toward the burning pile of wreckage, Arcane grabs her by the wrist. He drags her, struggling, out the door.

ARCANE

Don't waste your breath. He can't hear you any more.

Dragging Abby with him, pushing aside various technicians and other workers in the building who are fleeing for their lives, Arcane exits the building as it starts collapsing behind him.

ABBY

Alec! Alec!

Barely noticed amidst all the chaos, several of the misshapen animal test subjects we saw earlier also flee the burning building, and one once-humanoid shadow.

EXT. BOURBON STREET - CONTINUOUS

It's still party time out here, big time. Last night's parade is over, but the streets are still filled with lots of DRUNKEN REVELERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Arcane drags a struggling Abby through the thick of the revelers, PUSHING ASIDE anyone who gets in his way.

REVELERS

(walla)  
Hey! / Watch it, asshole! / Back  
off, creep! / Etc.

ABBY

Alec will find you. He'll stop  
you.

Arcane glances back at the SMOKE rising in the distance, all that remains of his plantation complex.

ARCANE

Don't be absurd. Nothing could  
have survived that inferno. This  
time Holland must be dead.

At which point, of course, a small PATCH OF WEEDS growing up through a crack in the sidewalk in front of Arcane suddenly starts to TREMBLE.

Quickly, the weeds THWIP up into another Swamp Thing, no longer charred, who blocks Arcane's way.

SWAMP THING

That's far enough...let Abby go...

Furious now, Arcane pulls Abby to him, locked his regrown bare arm around her neck.

ARCANE

Another step and I snap her neck.

Swamp Thing stops dead in his tracks.

SWAMP THING

No. Don't... hurt her. It's... me  
you want.

Arcane is actually amused by this.

ARCANE

And you really would do it too,  
sacrifice your life for hers, even  
after everything she's done to  
you?

Abby, horrified, realizes what Arcane means.

ABBY

Please... don't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCANE

Why not? After all this time,  
don't you think he's earned the  
right to know the truth?

SWAMP THING

You wouldn't know... the truth...  
if it bit you... in the ass...

ARCANE

Rather an apt analogy, actually,  
all things considered.

ABBY

Uncle... please...

But Arcane is in the moment. He will have his revenge.

ARCANE

This woman you sacrificed so much  
for, this woman you profess to  
love, from the moment you met her,  
she was working for me, you fool,  
spying for ME!

Abby braces herself for the torrent of verbal abuse she  
expects will follow.

Arcane waits expectantly.

Swamp Thing's expression does not change.

SWAMP THING

So tell me something... I don't  
know.

Arcane is dumbfounded.

ARCANE

But how...?

SWAMP THING

I'm not an... idiot, Anton. I knew  
from... that very first day. I  
just... didn't care.

ABBY

Oh, Alec.

SWAMP THING

We were working for... the same  
company. What difference did it  
make... if you wanted to play...  
cloak and dagger? In the end...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

anything I discovered... would  
belong to Sunderland anyway.

Arcane is out of his mind with frustration and rage.

ARCANE

No! I won't let you deny me this  
last little victory!

Arcane TIGHTENS his grip around Abby's neck. Swamp Thing  
lunges toward him.

SWAMP THING

Wait...

And suddenly...

WHAM! The mutated creature that was once poor Veitch  
hurls itself at Arcane, HOWLING in pain and rage.

ARCANE

Noooo!

The impact loosens Arcane's grip on Abby. She breaks  
free.

What few revelers were watching this strange tableau now  
run for their lives.

Out of his mind with pain, the Veitch creature ATTACKS  
Arcane, RAKING his taloned claws across Arcane's chest,  
leaving deep gouges. The impact sends Arcane sprawling.

FAVORING ARCANE

The gouges in his chest HEAL instantly.

WIDER

Looking around for some other target to take his torment  
out on, Veitch moves toward Abby. Swamp Thing sees this.

SWAMP THING

No...!

Before it can reach Abby, Swamp Thing grabs the Veitch  
creature, and the battle is joined.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Keep away... from her... damn  
you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Seeing Swamp Thing is otherwise occupied, Arcane scrambles to his feet and flees.

The monstrous Veitch claws at Swamp Thing, trying to shred him.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Abby, run...!

Swamp Thing grabs the Veitch monster's wrists, trying to hold him at bay. Veitch struggles to break free.

ABBY

No. I won't leave you. I'll never leave you.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

Once again his eyes GLOW...well, you know.

BACK TO SCENE

Instantly, a tangle of ROOTS and VINES erupts out of the ground, attempting to RESTRAIN Veitch. He RIPS them apart easily.

Swamp Thing CONCENTRATES, and more roots and vine erupt from the street, enveloping Veitch. Then more. And more.

Finally, Veitch is entangled from feet to shoulders in the roots and vines, his arms pinned to his sides, totally unable to move.

Still, he SNARLS as Swamp Thing approaches him.

SWAMP THING

Easy, fella... easy...

Gently, Swamp Thing presses his hand to the struggling Veitch's forehead. His hand begins to GLOW GREEN.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Don't know... what Arcane did to you... but I don't want... to hurt you...

Now the green glow SUFFUSES Veitch completely, until his ENTIRE BODY GLOWS GREEN.

As we watch, he is slowly TRANSFORMED back into the Veitch we know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Once he is normal, Swamp Thing GESTURES, and the tangle of roots falls away from Veitch, setting him free.

Veitch COLLAPSES at Swamp Thing's feet. Abby joins him.

ABBY

Alec, who...?

SWAMP THING

One of... your uncle's men...  
Arcane did... something to him...

Swamp Thing WHIPS his head in the direction Arcane had fled, GLARING, FURIOUS.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

...And it's time... I returned...  
the favor...!

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Arcane keeps running, trying to put as much distance between himself and the Swamp Thing as possible.

He glances back over his shoulder; nothing pursues him. Is it possible he's safe?

Suddenly, TREES burst up out of the concrete, blocking Arcane's path, forcing him to veer toward a SMALL TREE-FILLED PARK nearby.

EXT. SMALL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Another Swamp Thing body THWIPS up into existence in front of Arcane, stopping him short.

SWAMP THING

Far enough... Arcane. Time to...  
end this.

Arcane stands his ground.

ARCANE

And just how to you propose to do  
that? You can't hurt me, any more  
than it appears I can hurt you.

Then it hits him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Why don't you join me instead?  
We're above mere mortal concerns  
now, Alec, above the petty  
constraints of time. We can  
bestride this misbegotten mudball  
like Goliaths, you and I. We can  
bend the world to our will.

Arcane reaches out his hand.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

Take my hand, Alec. Take my hand  
and rise to meet your destiny.

Swamp Thing hesitates, stares at Arcane's outstretched  
hand for a beat, then:

SWAMP THING

You know... Abby was right... You  
really are crazy...

Arcane's face goes cold.

ARCANE

So be it then. Let what follows be  
on your head.

The sound of a HELICOPTER ENGINE can suddenly be heard,  
growing LOUDER, coming closer.

Swamp Thing looks up to see Berger's helicopter start to  
swoop low over the French Quarter, getting ready to make  
its spraying run.

SWAMP THING

What...?

ARCANE

I won't let you put me in a cage,  
Alec. You saw what a small dose of  
my formula did to Veitch. Imagine  
what it can do to the whole city.

Swamp Thing starts to move toward Arcane.

SWAMP THING

Call it off...!

ARCANE

Too late. The choice is yours.

Arcane looks up at the approaching helicopter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCANE (CONT'D)

My pilot starts spraying in one minute. You can apprehend me or save the city. There isn't time for both.

SWAMP THING

I'll kill you... For this...

ARCANE

But you can't, Alec. You can't. I'm indestructible now, eternal. There is nothing you can do to stop me. Unlike the dinosaurs, I will walk this earth forever.

Arcane turns and starts to walk away from Swamp Thing.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

But you, Alec, you're a hero at heart. You'd never let the innocent suffer just to gain some petty measure of revenge.

SWAMP THING

Wanna... bet...?

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING

He almost SMILES as his EYES GLOW GREEN.

BACK TO SCENE

As Arcane walks away, several more TREES spring up to block his path.

ARCANE

What...?

Then, as one, all of the TREES in the park start to SPEW THEIR SAP at Arcane.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

No.

Furious, Arcane turns back to Swamp Thing and struggles to reach the creature even as the sap slowly COVERS him.

ARCANE (CONT'D)

No... damn you... you can't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally, just inches from Swamp Thing, Arcane stops, frozen in place, completely ENCASED in a HUGE BLOCK OF TRANSLUCENT SAP, trapped forever like a fly in amber.

SWAMP THING

Can't... I...?

Swamp Thing comes close to the huge block of AMBER, with the frozen figure of Arcane inside.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)

Go ahead... live forever.

CLOSE ON THE AMBER BLOCK

so we can SEE THE HORROR frozen on Arcane's face as he realizes what Swamp Thing has done to him.

We can almost HEAR THE SILENT SCREAM in his head that will go on forever.

BACK TO SCENE

Swamp Thing is distracted from his moment of triumph by the sound of the HELICOPTER ENGINE.

He looks up. The copter is starting its final approach.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

PILOT'S POV

We can see the crowd of revelers spread out below us now fleeing in terror as the copter approaches.

BERGER

It's party time, people!

EXT. BOURBON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Swamp Thing comes rushing from the park. A breathless Abby has just reached him.

SWAMP THING

Get out of here... run...

ABBY

What?

Swamp Thing looks up at the approaching helicopter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SWAMP THING  
The helicopter... Arcane's  
formula...

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

Captain Berger reaches for the SPRAY RELEASE button.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The helicopter RELEASES its load of purple formula.  
Slowly, a purple haze starts to drift down over the city.

SWAMP THING  
Too late...

Swamp Thing looks at Abby.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
Only one way... to stop this...  
now.

ABBY  
How?

Swamp Thing looks at Abby, sadly.

SWAMP THING  
Me... you saw it... the antidote  
to... the formula is... me...

Abby realizes what Swamp Thing is saying.

ABBY  
No, you can't.

Swamp Thing looks up. The purple spray is drifting down  
like a misty rain.

SWAMP THING  
No choice...

Swamp Thing takes Abby in his arms, holds her for a beat,  
then pushes her gently aside.

SWAMP THING (CONT'D)  
Good-bye, Abby... always  
remember... I love you...

Then, Christ-like, Swamp Thing throws his arms wide,  
arches his back, looks up at the sky--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--and he starts to GROW, larger, ever larger, arms expanding, fingers stretching, all becoming branches. Wide leaves erupt all along these new branches until the Swamp Thing becomes a TREE so huge it forms a leafy CANOPY over the area, ABSORBING the purple mist.

As the purple rain INTERACTS with the tree-like Swamp Thing, he begins to CHANGE COLOR from GREEN to a dull BROWN, as he had when affected by the defoliant.

By the time he has entirely absorbed the purple mist, the Swamp Thing is clearly dying.

His dried brown leaves begin to fall, slowly at first, one at a time, then quicker, until they become a torrent.

His bark peels, splinters, as the great weight he carries clearly becomes too much for him to bear.

Seeing his torment, Abby starts to rush toward the Swamp Thing, just as the impossible strain finally becomes too much for him to take--

--And the Swamp Thing EXPLODES, his dried, desiccated body collapsing under its own weight, sending splinters of wood and bark flying in every direction.

Abby turns away from the blast, throwing her arm across her face to protect her from the flying wood.

FAVORING ABBY

She looks around at the shattered fragments of what once had been the man she loved.

ABBY

(fighting back tears)

Alec.

Then she turns and walks away, never noticing the simple bright BLOSSOM that blows PAST CAMERA, caught on an errant breeze.

EXT. THE SWAMP - THE FOLLOWING DAY

A solemn Abby gently places the skeleton of Alec Holland into a GRAVE she's dug. A SHOVEL is stuck blade first into the pile of dirt nearby.

ABBY

I figured you'd rather be buried here, among the things you loved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abby shovels the dirt back in over the skeleton then pats the final clod of dirt. That done, she tops the grave with a crude WOODEN CROSS, jamming it into the earth.

ABBY (CONT'D)

It's not much, all considered, but  
it's the best I could do.

Finally, she places the golden charm bracelet she'd given him over the cross.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I found this where you dropped it.  
It's still yours if you want it.

Abby stands by the grave, head bowed, saying good-bye.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I know you forgave me for  
everything I did to you. The trick  
is gonna be forgiving myself. But,  
for your sake, Alec... I'll try.

Abby turns and walks away from the grave.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Good-bye...my love.

Then, remembering, she pauses.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way, you still owe me  
that dinner.

She climbs behind the wheel of a waiting JEEP, starts the engine. Then, as the Jeep drives off:

ABBY (CONT'D)

And, some day, somehow, I expect  
to collect.

ON THE GROUND NEAR THE GRAVE

The ground CRACKS, and a rich green ROOT *thwips* up from the earth, quickly joined by others, forming a new Swamp Thing.

Almost by instinct, he starts to call after her. Then he stops himself. There really isn't anything more to say.

WIDER

The Swamp Thing lumbers over to his own grave and tenderly takes the gold bracelet off the cross.

As we watch, he MORPHS his hand so it will fit through the bracelet, then restores his hand to normal.

As he stands there, his hand held out before him, looking down at the bracelet, a HUMMINGBIRD approaches.

CLOSE ON SWAMP THING'S HAND

A beautiful BLOSSOM blooms, then opens in the palm of his hand. The hummingbird hesitates for an instant, then flies in and sips from the blossom.

WIDER

The hummingbird, having gotten its fill, flies off.

For a beat, the Swamp Thing just stands there, watching the hummingbird go.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, the Swamp Thing begins to LAUGH. It is the rich, full laugh of one who finally gets the joke.

EXT. ABBY'S JEEP - SAME TIME

HEARING the distant laughter, but unable to place it for what it is, Abby stops the jeep, looks back to where the monster had been standing a moment before.

But it's too late.

The Swamp Thing is gone, vanished into the bog that is now his home.

Abby puts the Jeep back in gear and, as she drives off:

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END