

The Architects of Fear

From the Teleplay by Meyer Dolinsky

Screenplay by Charlie Haas
First Draft · June 29, 1995

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

PLUNGE into the middle of a CHAOTIC scene we recognize from the more remote version on TV news: civil war in an African country has created a REFUGEE CAMP at the border of a neighboring nation. It's a circle of Hell, seen in several ANGLES:

REFUGEES camp under makeshift SHELTERS of plastic sheeting and foliage. Local MILITIAMEN and outmanned PEACEKEEPERS patrol the camp, leveling guns and nervous stares at the refugees and each other, trying to force order on chaos.

AID WORKERS, exhausted, dress wounds and pass out medicine in an attempt at triage, as the TIDE of new refugees swallows up their drop-in-the-bucket efforts.

Amid the confusion, FIND an American visitor, BOB BOWMAN. He's 50-ish, very smart and capable at home, but overwhelmed here. A USAID WORKER is Bowman's guide.

USAID WORKER

After the first two thousand refugees, the army said they were sealing the border. That lasted about an hour...

As they walk toward a HELICOPTER guarded by a few SOLDIERS, Bowman and the USAID worker SEE:

SEVERAL MILITIAMEN take a REFUGEE MAN away from the camp. A young TEENAGER dances along behind the captive, making rhythmic plunging motions with a two-foot wooden SPIKE.

A TRUCK, driven by AID WORKERS with peacekeeping SOLDIERS hanging on in back, comes into the camp, and is MOBBED by refugees in a FRENZIED grab for relief food.

BOWMAN struggles to take it all in: the face-to-face hopelessness, the tension, the awful air. And now --

A SUDDEN PANIC in the crowd around the relief truck -- as SOLDIERS in motley fatigues, from the refugees' native country, ATTACK THE CAMP.

A BEDLAM of machetes and AK-47s. Peacekeepers and local army try to hold off the raiders and stem the refugee STAMPEDE.

Bowman's handler tries to hustle him toward the revving helicopter --

USAID WORKER (CONT.)

Doctor Bowman!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-- but Bowman has focused on something in the crowd: a refugee WOMAN's tiny BOY has been pulled away from her. He's underfoot, panicked -- his mother can't reach him.

Bowman sees an opening. He PUSHES in, gets the kid... passes him to the mom as the CROWD surges around them. Bowman finds the hand of the aid worker, who pulls him loose --

But a FLANK of raiders moves in to block the stampede, and CUTS Bowman and the aid worker off from the helicopter. There's SHOOTING in their path. They hit the dirt, but it looks bad -- like Bowman's going to die for his good deed.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Abrupt contrast: a pleasant house in Friendship Heights, Maryland, near American University, outside Washington, D.C. It's an older wooden place with a porch and garden, on a morning of sunshine and BIRDSONGS.

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (BEDROOM)

In keeping with the neighborhood, the inside of the house suggests comfortable academia -- plants and wood, books and music, a few computers, paintings by talented friends.

ALAN MOSS, in his 30s, wakes up in the big bed to the SOUND O.S. of beautiful MUSIC: Bach on the solo cello.

From the bedside table he grabs a composition notebook bookmarked with a pen and, and scribbles a fragile idea that came to him as he woke up.

As we PEEK at the page -- dense equations, chemistry diagrams -- we realize the Bach isn't a record: the player gets a phrase wrong, stops and tries it a few more times.

Alan, with an equation half-written, "sticks" exactly where the musician does. He stays stuck as the phrase repeats. Then, as the cellist gets it right and moves on, he gets his answer and goes on scrawling. They're in synch.

INT. THE HOUSE - MOVING WITH ALAN - A LITTLE LATER

The Bach continues O.S. Half dressed for work in casual clothes, Alan pads through the house, notebook in hand, and opens the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The rubber-banded Washington Post is lying there. Alan picks it up, takes it inside. As he walks past an open door, we SEE the source of the music: his wife SYLVIA playing in her MUSIC ROOM.

INT. KITCHEN

On a counter is a large stack of previous days' Washington Posts, still rubber-banded, and unread. Alan adds today's paper to the pile -- "Someday I'll catch up" -- and gets coffee from the automatic maker.

The MUSIC stops O.S. as Alan sits at the table. A moment later, Sylvia comes in, carrying a marked-up score.

SYLVIA

Hi.

They KISS, a solid one. In years of marriage, they've grown into the secure happiness that everyone is looking for and a few couples find.

ALAN

(indicates score)

That's wonderful. What is that?

SYLVIA

The Bach unaccompanied cello.

ALAN

Wonderful.

She gets coffee, sits with him.

SYLVIA

What time did you get in?

ALAN

About a million o'clock.

SYLVIA

You have to slow down.

ALAN

I know. Bob's getting back tonight. He wants us to show the new work to some guys.

SYLVIA

Outside guys?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN

God, no. That's what Bob says -- the hard part isn't how to do the science, it's how to break it to people.

SYLVIA

That's because he doesn't do the science.

ALAN

Yeah, but you see his point. Like if you get a senator from a farm state in there, and you say, "Well, you see, we have these machines, but they're only a few molecules in size, and they rearrange matter at the atomic level. So you give them some water and cattle feed, and they work on it just like a cow does, and when you get back from having coffee, there's beef."

SYLVIA

That is disturbing.

ALAN

And those aren't even the people we're worried about.

SYLVIA

I know.

A beat, as Alan goes back to coffee and scribbling.

SYLVIA

By the way.
(he looks up)
You don't have beef.

He lifts his eyebrows: oh, maybe.

CUT TO:

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP AS BEFORE

Bowman and the USAID worker are still pinned down, the distance to the helicopter impassable -- and the soldiers guarding the helicopter are fighting back PEOPLE trying to storm it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A PEACEKEEPER fights his way to Bowman and the USAID worker. He gets them on their feet and hustles them toward the helicopter, SHOOTING bursts over combatants' head for interference. But as they near the helicopter:

A SOLDIER from the raiding party DRAWS A BEAD on Bowman and the aid worker. A frozen instant, and then the peacekeeper SHOTS the raider, and hurries Bowman and the USAID worker into the helicopter.

THE HELICOPTER LIFTS OFF -- a few PEOPLE grab the runners, but are pulled off by militiamen.

INT. HELICOPTER

Bowman stares down at the receding SCENE as the helicopter climbs to cruising altitude.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. ALAN'S CAR AND INSTITUTE GATEHOUSE - MORNING

In hilly Virginia, not far from Washington. Alan's four-year-old Accord is stopped at a shingled GATEHOUSE at the top of a long, private one-lane road. The GUARD greets him warmly:

GUARD

Doctor Moss. You just went home.

As Alan answers, he puts his palm against a SENSOR panel in the gatehouse window...

ALAN

It's true, Fred. Probably be another long one.

...and we look over Fred's shoulder at electronic DISPLAYS that contrast with the gatehouse's folksy outer look:

An OSCILLOSCOPE pulses to Alan's voice, his fingerprint WHORLS are blown up on video, and LEDs read VOICE VERIFY -- PRINTS VERIFY. Visual recognition isn't enough here.

The GATE opens, and Alan drives onto the one-lane road. The modern BUILDINGS he's heading for are set far back from the public road, on several acres of rolling, wooded hills.

INT. ALAN'S LAB - OFFICE AREA - AFTERNOON

Alan and his TEAM -- six other scientists and technicians -- work in a LAB divided into two parts: a relaxed, open-plan OFFICE AREA (COMPUTERS running CAD, Mathematica, etc.), and an airlocked CLEAN ROOM full of high-tech instruments.

More security stuff here: ID badges on everyone, discreet video cameras.

In b.g., a few technicians are in the clean room, wearing all-body "moonsuits." Here in the office area, Alan and his closest friend and colleague, FRANK WALLER, are putting on the same kind of suits, saving the head pieces for last.

FRANK

...when I was young, you went out with a woman for a while, she would start saying, "I want you to meet my parents." Now you go out for a while and she says, "I want us to go to therapy together."

ALAN

That's just you, Frank.

FRANK

You think?

Three other GUYS come in, also in moonsuits and carrying the cowls: KEMPER and REILLY, mathematicians here at the Institute, and its director, Bob Bowman -- the guy who escaped the refugee camp. He just got back, and he looks wiped out.

ALAN

Bob, hey...

BOWMAN

Frank, Alan... you know these guys, right?

Yes -- AD LIB greetings among the scientists.

ALAN

You okay?

BOWMAN

I'll tell you about it.
(indicates clean room)
World of wonders?

They pull on their headpieces as they go over to the AIRLOCK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REILLY
(re moonsuit)
Do you ever get used to this?

FRANK
Oh, sure. It's like a condom.
In fact, mine has the little
bumps on here. For added
pleasure.

KEMPER
Oh, I see that.

They pass through the airlock doors, Alan talking to Reilly...

ALAN
I'd love to get some help from
you on our math stuff.

REILLY
If you think we can help, sure.

...and now they're inside --

INT. CLEAN ROOM

It is a world of wonders. The speckless room is full of dazzling EQUIPMENT used in nanofabrication -- the making of molecular-scale machines. Vapor deposition systems, ion milling machines, and the most powerful microscopes made.

AD LIB greetings from the technicians already in here, who continue working.

ALAN
We'll start you off with one of
our old tricks...

He leads the way to a SCANNING TUNNELING MICROSCOPE. The visitors look through the viewer, and so do we:

POV THROUGH MICROSCOPE

Metallic, sharply etched LETTERS spell out HI BOB.

BOWMAN (O.S.)
Sucking up to the boss here.

FRANK (O.S.)
You bet.

BACK TO SCENE

ALAN

The letters are one atom tall.
The whole message is forty atoms
of nickel. Here, we don't need
a microscope for this one...

He leads them to a table where a demonstration is set up: an
abused piece of scrap metal, a jar, and a MONITOR running
COMPUTER ANIMATION of nanotech in action: molecule-scale
"assemblers," in glossy 3-D, rearranging atoms.

ALAN (CONT.)

You want mechanisms you can
program to rearrange matter at
the atomic level. So in this
suspension...

He opens the jar, and towels out some of the PASTE inside.

ALAN (CONT.)

...you have assembler arms, about
a million atoms long. They take
carbon out of the CO₂ in the
atmosphere...

He wipes some paste on the sheet metal. At first, it's just a
dull smear...

ALAN (CONT.)

..and convert it. Nature uses
Brownian motion. That's too slow
for us. We program four billion
iterations a second. And we
get...

...but it quickly becomes a brilliant, gleaming solid FILM over
the metal.

REILLY

Diamond.

The last part of the trick: Frank puts the metal sample on a
protective tray, opens a vial marked CAUTION - ACID, and spills
some over the sample. The metal without the film SMOKES and
dissolves; the metal under the film is unscathed.

KEMPER

Jesus.

REILLY

This is alchemy. This is what
they were talking about in the
Middle Ages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
Yeah, but they didn't have the
funding.

ALAN
Okay. You want to see what we're
really into?

He leads them to the most powerful viewing instrument in the
place, an ATOMIC FORCE MICROSCOPE.

ALAN (CONT.)
We're getting some very good
results, building with
cyclodextrin. You can make
things on the same scale as DNA,
even a little smaller...

Again, we join the visitors in looking in:

POV IN MICROSCOPE

We SEE what appear to be DNA's graceful helices, SPIRALING
against a black backdrop.

KEMPER (O.S.)
Right. Synthetic DNA...

BACK TO SCENE

FRANK
Look what it does.

Alan shows them a soft, sealed bag, holding what appears to be
an animal BONE. He taps the upper part with a pipette -- it
clicks. He taps the lower part -- it's soft tissue that gives.

ALAN
This was all bone.
(indicates soft part)
This is something very much like
muscle.

The visitors stare -- the implications sinking in.

ALAN
The next generation of
equipment... if it does what
it's supposed to, and if we're
right? We can make certain sick
cells into healthy cells.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN (Cont'd)
We can make a large molecule with
an electron pilot that goes in
and destroys cells we don't like.

REILLY
Cancer.

BOWMAN
We can make organic cells out of
inorganic material.

ALAN
We think.

KEMPER
That's more than alchemy.

ALAN
Yes.

As Alan leads the dazzled visitors back through the airlock:

ALAN (CONT.)
You know, the theory for this
stuff has been out there a long
time.

BOWMAN
Hey, the theory for time travel's
been out there a long time.

FRANK
Are we doing something on that?

ALAN
No, that's the guys down the
hall.

INT. OFFICE AREA

As they remove their cowls:

KEMPER
Amazing stuff.

ALAN
Thank you.

REILLY
Thank you.

Waves, and the mathematicians take off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN
That's very frightening.
Congratulations.

ALAN
Thanks. You should go home.

BOWMAN
Yeah, I should. Can I buy you
guys a drink?

FRANK
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - A LITTLE LATER

An upscale, windowless BAR, with a good-sized after-work CROWD.
Alan, Frank and Bowman are drinking at a corner table.

BOWMAN
...the U.N. people act like,
"Hey, this is just like the last
one" here are the war lords, here
are the religious
fundamentalists...

FRANK
Why do you go on these things?

BOWMAN
It helps me worry.

ALAN
I don't think you need help with
that.

BOWMAN
Supposedly, one of the warlords
is getting biological weapons
from the Iraqis.

ALAN
Jesus.

BOWMAN
And, you know, I come back here,
and the work is more wonderful
by the day, and so what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN

Well, not so what. I mean, one of the problems is food scarcity, right? If we keep doing this work, we can --

BOWMAN

Not really. When they have food, they kill each other because God said to. Like a guy who goes nuts on the subway. If you made your work public right now, the people most fascinated are terrorists. In six months they're making plutonium out of their couch.

A despairing beat, and then Frank looks at his watch, pushes away from the table.

FRANK

Well -- I'm going to kill myself now, and I want to go over my will, so...

As they get up:

BOWMAN

See, but that's not the feeling you come out of there with, killing yourself...

As they go out, SPOT the Institute ID BADGE on the BARTENDER...

BARTENDER

Good night, guys. Thanks.

...and FOLLOW Frank, Alan and Bowman out the door, into

EXT. INSTITUTE COURTYARD

We REALIZE we're still among those modern buildings: the WINDOWS show us more labs and offices. The bar is part of the Institute -- if it wasn't, they couldn't talk there.

BOWMAN

The feeling is, if you could change it? You would do anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
You should take off tomorrow.

BOWMAN
Ho ho. I've got that hearing in the morning. With the wonderful Eric Laney.

FRANK
You'll have to be folksy.

BOWMAN
Uh huh. Half an hour of that, I'll be ready to go back to Africa.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Alan and Sylvia have just made love. They untangle themselves, but only part way. They're good together:

SYLVIA
Special...

ALAN
Really.

SYLVIA
Yes.

A winding-down KISS. He rolls onto his back, a little brooding coming onto his face.

SYLVIA (CONT.)
What?

ALAN
(shakes his head)
The stuff Bob was talking about...

SYLVIA
That's why he's a leader. He can't have an obsession on his own. He has to take everybody with him.

ALAN
True.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gets his shorts from a hasty tangle of clothes beside the bed, pulls them on and gets up. As he heads for the closet:

SYLVIA
It's in the other closet.

ALAN
What is?

SYLVIA
The blue sweatshirt.

He turns around, looks at her -- a little chill down his spine.

ALAN
I haven't worn it in months.

SYLVIA
That's why it's in the other closet.

ALAN
Yes...

SYLVIA
You don't like it when I do that.

ALAN
No, no. The time when you would have been burned, that's centuries ago.

SYLVIA
Don't you sometimes know what I'm thinking?

ALAN
Almost never, actually.

SYLVIA
Well, if you don't believe in it, it shouldn't bother you.

ALAN
So, if I don't believe in it, it's what -- we've been married too long?

SYLVIA
I don't know. Have we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN
(means it)
Uh-uh.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAPITOL - MORNING

Establishing the U.S. Capitol, the next day.

INT. CAPITOL - SENATE HEARING

A Senate committee HEARING is in progress -- not as high-profile as Watergate or Clarence Thomas, but the gallery seats are full, and C-SPAN and other PRESS are there.

The guy testifying is DR. ERIC LANEY, a 50-ish scientist who's made a half-time profession of demanding more disclosure from big science in general and the Institute in particular.

Like Ralph Nader, Laney may be a "type," the self-serious crusader, but he seems well-grounded in reality -- definitely not a crank.

LANEY
...They're funded by tax dollars, extremely generously. They have a large part of the best scientific talent, and neither the public nor the rest of government has any access to information about their work. The CIA is more accountable than they are.

BOWMAN
Well, that may be the right -- I mean, those guys have license to kill and so forth, and we're a bunch of people in lab coats...

A few laughs from the senators and the gallery. This isn't what Bowman likes to do, but he's good at it -- disarming without giving anything up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN (cont.)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be smart about this, but... you know, we go through this kind of questioning periodically, and we're compelled to explain that we're not some kind of shadow government, planning a, what was it, a "doomsday scenario," or a --

LANEY

None of which I said --

CHAIRMAN

Doctor Laney --

BOWMAN

We're research scientists, working on problems that would probably appear very dry and bewildering to most people, and I don't mean that to be condescending, because a lot of it's pretty bewildering to me.

LANEY

When science is conducted in secret, you get some terrible results.

BOWMAN

Well, I wish we lived in a world where all the information could be shared. I would love to be in that world. I mean that very sincerely.

CHAIRMAN

I think that may be an appropriate place to break. If no one has anything further, the Chair is going to excuse Doctor Bowman, who needs to get back out to Virginia...

People start to stand up.

INT. CAPITOL LOBBY

After the session, REPORTERS crowd a lobby near the exit. A contrast: Laney earnestly works the press, while Bowman politely waves off those reporters who get close to him...

EXT. CAPITOL

...and gets into a waiting CAR for the quickest possible exit.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - AFTERNOON

Friday dusk. Alan is packing casual clothes; Sylvia helps.

ALAN

You could go down to the shore or something...

SYLVIA

I'll have a great weekend right here. I'll catch up on my reading.

ALAN

No human being has ever caught up on their reading. It's an abstract concept.

SYLVIA

You're just jealous.

ALAN

Yes I am.

SYLVIA

You don't even get paid for this?

Alan shakes his head. Sylvia sifts through the day's MAIL as she speaks:

SYLVIA (cont.)

I keep picturing it as one of those men's things. You know, where they pound on drums and everything.

ALAN

Oh yeah, this is just the crowd for that.

SYLVIA

I wouldn't put it past Bob...

She trails off, looking at a piece of mail. Alan goes over and looks at it over her shoulder.

SYLVIA (cont.)

From Denise and her husband.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The mood shifts: it's a BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT, with a couple of photos of the newborn.

ALAN

Cute kid.

Standing behind her, Alan puts an arm across her, squeezes her shoulder.

SYLVIA

Yes, she looks sweet.

A sadness that goes without saying. Sylvia sifts the birth announcement behind the rest of the mail and goes on sorting through it. Alan goes back to packing.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD AND GAS STATION/INT. ALAN'S CAR - SUNDOWN

A rustic Virginia road. Frank and Alan pull into a gas station/quik-stop store, get out of the car and stretch.

As Alan starts pumping gas, the older GUY who owns the place comes out. AD LIB greetings.

GAS STATION GUY

You fellows headed out to Wildwood?

ALAN

Uh, yeah.

GAS STATION GUY

What's doing out there?

FRANK

It's a sales conference -- heavy equipment. Earth movers and so on?

GAS STATION GUY

No kidding. You know, I worked for Caterpillar seventeen years.

ALAN

Really.

GAS STATION GUY

Yep. Now, tell me something: what the hell is the story with the J-twelve? The whole hydraulics thing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
Oh -- the J-twelve, yeah, it's...

FRANK
It's too soon to tell, really.

GAS STATION GUY
Too soon?

Alan hurriedly pays up --

ALAN
There we go. Call it even.
We're running late here.

-- and they're DRIVING again. When they're out of the gas station guy's earshot:

FRANK
By God, we're a precision outfit.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD AND WILDWOOD ENTRANCE - DUSK

Frank and Alan drive on a narrow dirt access road through thick woods, and come to Wildwood, a "CONFERENCE CENTER" that offers miles-from-nowhere privacy. The entrance is a log gate, with a small sign on a stone stile.

EXT. PARKING LOT AND WILDWOOD GROUNDS

FOLLOW Frank and Alan as they carry their bags onto the grounds: nice porched CABINS, a big DINING HALL, sports fields. AD LIB greetings with casually dressed Institute PEOPLE, who are settling in and hanging out.

A FRISBEE sails at Alan's nose -- he snags it, forwards it to the intended recipient. It all looks like a normal company outing... though Fred, the Institute's gatehouse guard, is here too, keeping a discreet eye on arrivals.

FRANK
Oh, my God: Marge Blaustein from the medicine group, essentially naked.

FOLLOW his eyes -- MARGE, an attractive scientist, is playing tetherball in shorts and a small top. The ball comes her way, and she WHAPS it around the pole with one shot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
Strong, too.

FRANK
I'm fine with that.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DINING HALL - MID-DAY

It's the next day, Saturday. KNOTS of Institute people, finished with lunch, come out of the dining hall, heading toward a wooded area.

FIND Alan and Frank, walking with Marge Blaustein:

MARGE
Does anyone have a clue what this is about?

FRANK
Yes. Someone at the Institute has not been putting a quarter in the thing by the coffee. If they come forward now, there won't be any punishment...

EXT. CLEARING - A LITTLE LATER

The CLEARING, near a pretty, lapping LAKE, is a man-made meeting room in the woods. SUNSHINE through the tall trees touches rough wood benches and chairs, some carved from still-rooted stumps.

Everyone at the retreat has taken seats. This isn't the whole Institute, just 60 or so selected people. Bowman, pacing on the sandy ground, addresses them:

BOWMAN
Does anybody here know how many regional wars are going on right now, worldwide?

SCIENTIST 1
Sixteen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN

Close. Eighty-seven. The Cold War, at least, was organized. This is three-year-olds with revolvers. And there's a crescendo now -- fanaticism, pandemic disease, environmental disaster. It's like the human race is...

SCIENTIST 2

Digesting itself.

BOWMAN

Yeah. All of you are doing wonderful work for the future, and we're starting to see very good odds that the future will be canceled. So I think we need to be concerned.

ANGLE on Alan, Frank and Marge. Frank whispers to Alan:

FRANK

He's getting to the coffee thing.

Marge shushes him.

BOWMAN

I mean, you can leave it to the politicians...

He doesn't even need to finish that thought.

BOWMAN (CONT.)

...but historically, this is the smart people's job -- to find a way through these things.

SCIENTIST 3

What's the pitch, Bob?

BOWMAN

If you thought it would save everyone else, would you give up your own life?

FRANK

I think that's a question you ask when you're sitting around in college smoking pot.

BOWMAN

Does that make it a bad question?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGE

I would give up mine.

Several people nod: okay, me too, so what?

BOWMAN

If somebody invades the United States tomorrow -- say there are massive air attacks... then it becomes, "Okay, I'm black, you're white, he's Rosicrucian -- you know, screw all that, we have a problem. We have a common enemy." The internal conflicts go on hold.

ALAN

You'd have to invade every country.

BOWMAN

Ah. You'd have to invade the whole planet.

SCIENTIST 4

Who would?

BOWMAN

A being.

SCIENTIST 5

Like a monster from outer space?

BOWMAN

I didn't say "monster." An intelligent being, representing a hostile planet...

SCIENTIST 3

Where do you get this being?

BOWMAN

You build it. Not from scratch. You need a... chassis to build on. A human being.

A beat. Survey this group: the youngest and strongest of the Institute's scientists...

FRANK

Bob? This is crazy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOWMAN

Well, that's -- I'm willing to have that conversation, any time. I think it is crazy. I think everything sane has been tried.

MARGE

Would anyone believe it?

BOWMAN

Sixty-four percent of Americans believe in life on other planets. Forty percent say they've communicated with angels. This is one of the more rational societies.

SCIENTIST 6

This would be a hoax.

BOWMAN

Yes. Absolute flim-flam. Anyone who objects...

He gestures: feel free to leave. No one does.

SCIENTIST 5

Bob? Assuming, for the sake of argument, that this is a good idea... can you make a -- a creature that fools scientists?

BOWMAN

That's what tonight's session is about. Alan Moss will fill us in on it.

ALAN

I will?

Bowman nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE AND GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

A couple of hours later. Alan, Marge, and Frank come out of the lake and towel off after a swim. FOLLOW them as they walk on a dirt road, back toward the conference center buildings.

ALAN

So... what did you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Oh, I think he's snapped. To get up and say something like that seriously? What do you think?

MARGE

I don't know. I think part of the deal with science is to consider everything that's possible.

FRANK

(to Alan)

Is this possible?

They're on the main grounds now. The mood of the retreat has changed -- SEE groups of people in heated conversation brought on by Bowman's talk.

ALAN

Maybe.

FRANK

But --

He's interrupted as HANS, a European scientist carrying some softball equipment, accosts them:

HANS

You guys want to play softball?

FRANK

Now? With the fate of the world in the balance?

HANS

You think they didn't play sports at Los Alamos? They just invented the bomb all day?

ALAN

Thanks, Hans. That's very comforting.

FRANK

You coming?

Alan shakes his head. As Frank and Marge follow Hans toward the field, he heads for his cabin, thinking.

CUT TO:

EXT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Warm LIGHT from inside the dining hall. Outside, CRICKETS in good voice.

INT. DINING HALL - AROUND THE FIREPLACE

Alan, feeling strange about the whole thing, addresses the same group that gathered in the clearing earlier.

I went on-line this afternoon and pulled up some of the literature that speculates on evolution on other planets. We may be at a stage where we can duplicate what they're talking about. We're talking about all new organs --

SCIENTIST 7
Including the brain.

ALAN
Yes. You have to offload the information that's in there and transfer it to a new protein storage medium. You go cell by cell. We've done some work on it, for brain damage cases, but it's still pretty basic.

SCIENTIST 3
It's not just the physiology. You have to go down to the cell level.

ALAN
Yes. It's molecular biology. It's nanotechnology that's out beyond anything we've done.

MARGE
If you change every cell in someone's body, are they still human?

SCIENTIST 4
Philosophical question.

BOWMAN
Ideally they're not.

ALAN
I should stress, this is all theory. Whether the person you did this to would survive it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN
If you had to guess?

ALAN
(the deep breath)
I... probably. With enough
money, with everybody here
working on it. That's not saying
it should be done.

BOWMAN
Absolutely. And we shouldn't
decide that as a group. We
decide as individuals. Three
weeks from yesterday, five-
thirty, in the main conference
room. If a majority of this
group shows up, we go ahead.

SCIENTIST 3
And "go ahead" means --

BOWMAN
It's a lottery. To show up is to
volunteer.

PANNING the faces...

BOWMAN (CONT.)
Everyone should feel free not to
show up. This has nothing to do
with anyone's status at the
Institute, except that we're all
bound by the secrecy agreement.

He looks around for questions -- nothing.

BOWMAN (CONT.)
I think that's it.

SCIENTIST 6
Bob? What happens tomorrow?

BOWMAN
(what else?)
General swim.

CUT TO:

EXT. A WASHINGTON STREET/INT. ALAN'S CAR - DUSK

Alan is back in town, driving in thick TRAFFIC through metro Washington on his way home from work. He turns on the RADIO and gets a phone-in show:

CALLER (V.O.)

-- because if I know who these, these forces are -- that are controlling the government -- and these are evil forces -- then I've got an obligation to take up arms...

HOST (V.O.)

I hear you, Mike.

Alan switches stations.

HOST 2 (V.O.)

...absolutely right to be enraged. If you're not enraged, then I think there's something seriously wrong --

He turns off the radio, as he SPOTS a couple of GUYS on the sidewalk, having a shouting CONFRONTATION that seems like the video portion of the radio broadcasts.

He can't hear their voices, but as one of them takes a SWING at the other and they get in a fighting CLINCH, he slows down -- only to get a FURIOUS HORN BLAST from the angry GUY driving behind him. He moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MORNING

The usual morning routine at Alan and Sylvia's house -- although, unlike the last time we were here, Alan pages through today's Washington Post, taking in fresh disasters with his coffee. Sylvia comes in, sits down with him.

SYLVIA

You have a minute?

He's grateful to put the paper aside.

ALAN

Sure.

SYLVIA

I was thinking, I might go see --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's interrupted by urgent RINGING of the doorbell. They exchange "Search me" looks.

FOLLOW them to the door. It's Frank, who's clearly been through some kind of catastrophe -- he's bruised up, has a bandaged cut, and he's badly shaken. They hurry him inside.

SYLVIA

Frank!

ALAN

What happened?

FRANK

It's okay. Everyone's okay, I'm just...

SYLVIA

Here --

She points him to a chair; he sits.

FRANK

This morning, like five o'clock, Marge and I were asleep, at her house --

(explains)

We've been keeping it kind of quiet... anyway, there's a noise and I wake up, and I look up, and there's three guys in ski masks --

SYLVIA

Oh, Jesus.

FRANK

And they're yelling, you know, "Where's the money, give us the money." We didn't have a lot of cash, so they made Marge go to the teller machine, one of them stayed with me, he's holding the gun and yelling at me the whole time --

SYLVIA

Where's Marge now?

FRANK

She's okay. She's at the hospital. They get back from the bank, and the guy starts hitting her in the head with the gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN
Jesus. Horrible.

FRANK
She does everything they want and
the guy hits her with the gun
anyway. And laughing. I mean,
what is that?
(beat)
So she had ten stitches and
they've got her knocked out now,
I just came from there.

Beat.

SYLVIA
Frank -- God, I'm so sorry. can
we do anything?

FRANK
No. Thank you. I just wanted to
come over.

SYLVIA
I'm supposed to go to work now.
I'll call up in the afternoon and
see if she wants to see people...

She gives Frank a hug, Alan a little squeeze, and goes. Alan
pulls a chair closer to Frank's, sits down.

ALAN
Do you want anything, a...?

Frank shakes his head. A beat, then:

FRANK
Can I tell you something weird?
I'm going to go to the thing on
Friday. Bob's thing. I was
going back and forth about it,
but I'm...

ALAN
Why?

FRANK
I don't know.
(beat)
I mean, there are places where
that's your alarm clock. Guys
coming in...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALAN
We don't know if it will do anything.

FRANK
No. We don't know.

ALAN
What about Marge?

FRANK
She's always been planning to go. That's what she said on the way to the hospital, was make sure they let her out in time.

ALAN
You said you thought Bob had snapped.

FRANK
Yeah. Well, if he was the only one, that'd be that.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - AFTERNOON

The Institute buildings, Friday afternoon.

INT. INSTITUTE - CORRIDOR

Alan walks down a corridor, stops at the head of a short cross-corridor, and confronts the door looming at the end of it: obviously, the main conference room. His colleague Hans has been loitering nearby.

HANS
Hello, Alan. You know, there's a scientific way to approach this.

ALAN
Like go get a drink?

HANS
That too. No, I mean, you stay over here, and you're fascinated by the garage sale announcements...

He indicates a bulletin board nearby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HANS (CONT.)
 ...and you see how the turnout is going.

As he speaks, a couple of people we recognize from the retreat go past on their way to the conference room, nodding greeting at Hans and Alan.

HANS (CONT.)
 If it's small enough, you go in, and you're a self-sacrificing hero and you all go home. If it's big enough, they don't need you.

ALAN
 Is that what you're doing?

HANS
 No. Too nerve-racking.

He goes down the corridor. Alan follows, half a step behind.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Hans and Alan enter to find a good turnout indeed: almost everyone from the retreat is here, milling with coffee, cookies, and small talk -- painstakingly casual.

Bowman greets Hans and Alan AD LIB, and adds two small, folded slips of paper to a glass bowl full of such slips on the conference table.

Alan goes over to Frank and Marge -- he looks better; she's still bruised and bandaged. Alan gives her a careful hug.

ALAN
 How are you doing?

MARGE
 Okay.
 (indicates bowl)
 I wouldn't mind changing into something else right now.

FRANK
 (to Alan)
 I wish you hadn't come.

ALAN
 Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
(indicates bowl)
Because if you get the thing, I
have to run the project.

ALAN
You'd be fine. Anyway, I never
win anything.

Bowman checks his watch, addresses the group:

BOWMAN
Okay, I think we're at the cutoff
time... By the way: I didn't
expect to see so many people
here. This is a remarkable group --

SCIENTIST 4
Can we do it, Bob?

BOWMAN
Sure.

They begin filing past the glass bowl -- HANDS reach in to take
the slips. Most people open theirs right away, but a few keep
them closed, afraid to look or maybe thinking it's more polite
to wait.

But before everyone's taken one, Alan's hand is up, holding his
slip open to the room, displaying the round black SPOT on it.

Heads turn toward him, and the room goes quiet: this is
actually happening to someone, the nicest guy.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (HOME OFFICE) - NIGHT

The room is an orderly jumble of work stuff and household
finance. Alan's in there late at night, working at a COMPUTER
on-line with the Institute.

He stares at the screen, concentrating fiercely, and we SEE
what he's working on:

ALAN'S SCREEN

CAD schematics of a human body, its organs exposed. Over the
course of the series of drawings, organs -- even the brain --
disappear, replaced by a translucent "webbing" of fluid-filled
FINS. It's a plan for transforming him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He says it with such sudden urgency that she's startled -- they stare at each other for a beat as he goes to her. Then he resumes, in a rush:

ALAN (CONT.)
I'm sorry. We can't spend our
time this way.

He embraces her.

SYLVIA
Alan, what's going on?

CREATURE ALAN
(shakes his head)
Nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. STANHOPE'S OFFICE - DAY

A business office at the Institute. STANHOPE is the Institute's top financial person -- we recognize him from the retreat and the conference room. He puts a couple of business forms in front of Alan.

STANHOPE
And sign these two -- put a date
back in 1988...

As Alan does:

ALAN
This is the life insurance?

STANHOPE
Yeah. And then, in 1989 -- here,
use the other pen on these...

He gives Alan some other papers.

STANHOPE (CONT.)
...you bought these stocks
through the payroll savings plan.
Who would have known they'd go
through the roof like that?

ALAN
How high did they go?

STANHOPE
Sylvia will have about two
million dollars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
That's very generous.

STANHOPE
You're the one being generous,
Alan. Let me know if you need
anything.

ALAN
Thanks.

He hands the papers over, and leaves the office.

CUT TO:

INT. NANOTECHNOLOGY LAB - DAY

This place is busier now -- the mood is crash-program mobilization. The STAFF has been beefed up, and new equipment is fighting for elbow room. Alan and Frank are consulting with a TECHNICIAN when Bowman comes in. AD LIB greetings, then:

BOWMAN
We're meeting with the visual
design people at two-thirty --
can you make that?

ALAN
I think so, yeah. Have you seen
this brain stuff?

Bowman shakes his head. As we FOLLOW the three of them over to Frank's work station, Alan wearily rubs his eyes.

ALAN (CONT.)
I was due for a new brain anyway.
I can feel it...

He punches a few keys on the computer, and an IMAGE comes up on the screen: a man's outlined body, limbs spread in the DaVinci pose. There are five small black OVALS -- one in the torso, one in each arm, one in each leg.

BOWMAN
Five brains.

FRANK
(nods)
If you space them out, it's more
efficient. You portion the
information and the tasks out, so
the impulses have less distance
to travel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN

When we transfer the information
over --

(points to ovals)

Identity... language... memory...
physical coordination... and
they're all in touch with each
other through the fibers.

BOWMAN

They can really be that small?

ALAN

Sure. I don't know very much.
Here...

FOLLOW them to the window of the clean room. Alan points out
a TECHNICIAN working with a dense, black, spongy material.

ALAN (CONT.)

Encodable protein.

As he did for the show-and-tell with the mathematicians, Alan
points out a MONITOR, where computer ANIMATION shows molecule-
scale assembler arms at work, making matter.

ALAN (CONT.)

We've got the molecule assemblers
making up to three grams of this
stuff a day now. It doesn't need
oxygen like our brains do, it
doesn't have to have blood
washing through it...

FRANK

Which is good, because he won't
have any.

BOWMAN

(nods)

Alan was telling me, the
circulatory system and the
muscles are basically the same?

ALAN

Actually, I'll be digesting
nutrients by...

(beat)

That's something I haven't worked
out yet.

BOWMAN

The nutrition? I thought you had
a --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN

No, I mean -- when I talk about
what it will be like...
(indicates daVinci man)
Do I say "I will" or "He will"?

BOWMAN

"He." That's the more accurate.
The things he does -- you won't
be responsible.

FRANK

What kind of things?

Bowman puts a hand up -- no answers now.

BOWMAN

We're working on it. Great stuff
here.

As he leaves,

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (MUSIC ROOM) - NIGHT

Sylvia is alone in the music room, practicing Brahms' intensely
romantic First Cello Sonata -- she plays cello as the PIANO
part plays on a TAPE RECORDER.

Sylvia's playing is beautiful, but she's unhappy with a
passage. She runs the tape back, then resumes. She's absorbed
in the music -- and STARTLED when she sees Alan standing in the
doorway. She stops playing.

ALAN

Sorry.
(gestures "Go ahead")
It sounds wonderful.

SYLVIA

No, I keep screwing up the
time...

She makes a rueful face, blows away a stray hair as she lifts
her bow again -- but finds Alan looking at her with an
expression that makes her stop.

SYLVIA (CONT.)

What...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He comes over to her, touches her hair. On his face: love, and the fear and loss he's hiding from her. He bends down -- they KISS. She lays her cello on the floor as the taped piano MUSIC continues...

They're kissing, embracing, starting to make love right here. The piano builds to a crescendo.

Alan: throwing himself desperately into this moment, refusing to believe he'll be leaving her. Sylvia: knowing once again that something unsaid is going on... and then swept away.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - DAY

Reestablishing the Institute grounds, on a bright midday.

INT. INSTITUTE - OPERATING THEATER

A state-of-the-art medical operating room. About 25 people we recognize from the retreat and lottery are sitting in a glassed-off, med-school style GALLERY overlooking the floor.

The surgeons, preparing with help from several ASSISTANTS, are Marge and DENNIS, another doctor who was at the retreat. Frank, other nano lab people, and Bowman are on the floor in surgical garb.

The "patient" is Alan. Sitting up on the operating table in his prep gown, he addresses the gallery through the microphone that hangs over the table.

ALAN

...we have to introduce these changes to the body one at a time and get each one fully established, especially while we still have blood and a heart and oxygenation. That's a much more fragile system than what we're going to end up with...

He points to a huge glass TANK beside the operating table. It's filled with a clear, viscous liquid.

ALAN (CONT.)

This is the synthetic lymph. Frank Waller and Phil Davis have been the project leaders on developing this. I'm going to hand this over to Frank...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gives the microphone to Frank, and lies back on the table. An assistant begins administering general anesthetic.

FRANK

The synthetic lymph is going to do what real lymph does, which is circulate and bathe the organs. By doing this first, we increase the stability of our vital systems. That way, we shouldn't have any nasty surprises when we're changing things over, such as a transplant rejection or sudden death...

ALAN

Could you wait till I'm out before you say this part?

An appreciative chuckle from the gallery. Alan's voice is already woozy -- now his eyelids flutter closed.

FRANK

Any questions at this point?

None. Marge and the others go to work, piercing Alan's skin with needles for a half-dozen drips and drains, and attaching electrodes for a battery of monitoring devices.

INT. OPERATING THEATER GALLERY - A LITTLE LATER

Up in the gallery, scientists watch the work in progress as Marge talks to them:

MARGE

...so that each organ, as it's removed --

She's interrupted -- Alan, still unconscious, suddenly LURCHES on the table, a little SHOUT coming from his lips. Marge, Dennis, and others rush to restrain him gently, as monitoring lights and needles SURGE out of line.

The gallery holds its breath... and then Alan's breathing, and the gauges, subside into a reassuringly even rhythm.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

Alan, in his bathrobe, is leafing through papers at the kitchen table when Sylvia comes in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIA
I'm going to bed.

ALAN
I'll come too.

He indicates the papers as he sticks them in his briefcase.

ALAN (CONT.)
They send you all this junk
you're supposed to read...

SYLVIA
What about?

FOLLOW them toward the bedroom.

ALAN
Oh, I bought some stocks a few
years ago. One of these payroll
savings things.

SYLVIA
I didn't know that.

ALAN
Yeah... Mister High Finance. I
think they're doing okay. I
always mean to check and I always
forget.

INT. BEDROOM

As Sylvia gets into bed, Alan heads for the bathroom off the
bedroom.

ALAN
Be out in a second.

INT. BATHROOM WITH ALAN

He comes in, picks up his toothbrush -- and then a sudden stab
of PAIN makes him drop it. He FALLS back against some shelves,
SPILLING stuff.

SYLVIA (O.S.)
Alan? Are you okay?

He just manages to answer:

ALAN
I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A KNOCK on the door. Alan LURCHES as he did on the operating table.

His lips draw back; his mouth stretches open. For a moment, it looks like a turning-savage moment in a monster movie, and we're scared for Sylvia --

SYLVIA (O.S.)
Alan? Let me in.

...and then we realize he's trying not to cry out in pain. He opens his bathrobe and gets a shock:

One whole side of his torso is DISTORTED in shape -- as if the organs are trying to fight their way out, stretching the skin. This is horror. He touches the area -- the pain doubles. TEARS well in his eyes as he PUSHES his rebellious skin.

SYLVIA
Alan!

INT. BEDROOM WITH SYLVIA

She tries to open the locked door as Alan's strained voice comes back at her.

ALAN (O.S.)
Just...

INT. BATHROOM WITH ALAN

Whether from Alan's pushing or on its own, the distended skin comes back into place. But the pain leaves him drained. He rallies to stand up straight, throws some cold water on his sweaty face, towels it off, unlocks the door.

INT. BEDROOM

Alan comes out of the bathroom, trying to look okay.

ALAN
I'm okay. Sorry.

SYLVIA
What -- ?

ALAN
I slipped on the thing in there,
I should fix that...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He has to get out before it starts again. He walks over to the bed, Sylvia following -- then stops as if he's suddenly remembered something.

ALAN
Oh, shit.

SYLVIA
What is it?

ALAN
I left an assembly going in the
vapor depositor...
(checks watch)
I have to go pull it.

He goes to the closet, starts taking clothes out.

SYLVIA
You can't do it tomorrow?

ALAN
No, it'll blow the experiment if
it stays in there that long.
It's like six weeks' work, these
guys have been...

SYLVIA
Alan? Is that true?

ALAN
Yeah What -- I'm having a wild
affair?

SYLVIA
No...

ALAN
I left the thing in. That's
what's true.

He even manages a smile...

ALAN (CONT.)
See, that's a relief. You can't
read my mind.

...but she doesn't.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN'S CAR/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A little later. Alan drives on the Interstate, heading into Virginia. He clicks his cellular phone on.

Another wave of PAIN -- he can barely drive straight, much less dial the phone... but he does.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Nobody in the gallery now -- just Frank, Marge, and Dennis, standing over Alan, who's out cold on the operating table, hooked up to the same needles and electrodes he was for the first operation. Marge, scanning a few meters, is relieved:

MARGE
Much better.

FRANK
Here we go.

He indicates Alan's eyes, flickering open. As Alan comes around, he tries to sit up -- the others ease him back down, and he remembers where he is.

ALAN
Are we okay?

FRANK
Fine.

He hands Alan a cup of water -- Alan drinks.

ALAN
What was it?

DENNIS
The synthetic lymph reacted with the membranes around some of the organs. We brought in some lysine and tyrosine to smooth things out.

Dennis and Marge start disconnecting Alan from the various hookups.

MARGE
You'll still have a few of those reactions, but they'll be milder. Then, when we --

ALAN
We can't stop them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENNIS
Not completely.
(shows a printout)
Here, this is the --

ALAN
(waves it off)
No, I believe you.

Now he does sit up.

ALAN (CONT.)
So we have to speed the thing up.
The "trip." Do it tomorrow.

FRANK
I'm sorry.

ALAN
It's a couple days' difference.
I'm not ready now, and I won't be
ready then. So.

He gets up, moving stiffly, and goes to take his clothes from
hooks nearby. Marge follows him, indicates where the pain hit:

MARGE
Better?

ALAN
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Alan puts a packed overnight bag on the floor, lays his
overcoat down on top of it. He's dressed for a long flight --
loose but presentable clothes. Sylvia comes in from another
direction, carrying a man's cloth cap.

SYLVIA
I know you hate this, but you'd
hate getting skin cancer too.

She sticks it in his bag.

ALAN
I don't hate it. Thanks.

He sits on the couch, pats the spot beside him -- she sits, and
he puts an arm around her. They'll never see each other again,
and he can't tell her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN (CONT.)

I'm sorry there's no phone number, but we can get messages back and forth through the office. They're very good about that stuff.

SYLVIA

You're awfully trusting.

ALAN

Of who?

SYLVIA

Of Bob. You don't even know where you're going.

ALAN

Well, no. We can't have that. The guys from, you know, James Bond...

SYLVIA

THRUSH.

ALAN

SMOOSH. Something. They come and torture it out of you.

SYLVIA

But you'd never tell. Would you?

Watch his face: every time he thinks she's on to him, he's afraid, but a little excited, too -- as if he didn't have to go through this so alone.

ALAN

No.

(beat)

All we know is, there's some guys in a lab, and they have something they want to show us. Somewhere in the southern hemisphere.

SYLVIA

That narrows it down.

ALAN

Uh huh. Listen -- when I get back? Let's go up to the lake for a few days. Okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SYLVIA

Sure. It's been forever since we've been up there.

ALAN

I know. I know this hasn't been the greatest time...

SYLVIA

I wasn't complaining.

ALAN

No, I know, but -- I've kind of put the work ahead of everything else.

SYLVIA

Maybe that was the right thing to do.

ALAN

Maybe. Yeah.

SYLVIA

I have nice memories of up there.

ALAN

I have nice memories of everything we've done. Just sitting like this...

SYLVIA

I have to tell you something. I was going to wait till you got back, but... Tuesday, after work, I went in and saw Doctor Kaplan? He says it's -- okay now. We can try and have a baby again.

On Alan: stunned.

SYLVIA (CONT.)

I guess we've tried already, we just didn't know it.

ALAN

I thought --

SYLVIA

I know. But something was telling me to go see him. Are you happy?

It's the hardest this charade has been yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALAN

Yes. Yeah, I'm... a little stunned, but --

CRUNCH of tires in the gravel driveway outside. Sylvia starts to get up, but Alan pulls her back -- KISSES her as a car door CLOSES O.S.

ALAN (CONT.)

I am. Listen -- take care of yourself when I'm away...

She reads something in his eyes...

SYLVIA

Alan --

The DOORBELL RINGS. Now it's Alan who pulls himself away. He opens the door to find Frank there. AD LIB hello's, and:

ALAN

Well, we should get going.

SYLVIA

You know what? Let me get my coat. I'll go with you.

FRANK

Uh, I don't think -- I mean, I have to go right out to the Institute afterwards, so I really couldn't run you back here...

SYLVIA

I'll take my car.

ALAN

I don't want you to do that drive by yourself this late. That area... I'll just be worried about you the whole time.

He kisses her. She searches his face; and he makes himself meet her gaze, but he wonders what she's seeing there. Frank picks up Alan's bag...

ALAN (CONT.)

Back soon.

...and they're out the door, as Sylvia watches.

INT. FRANK'S JEEP/EXT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Frank and Alan are in Frank's Jeep, out of Sylvia's sight. Alan is a wreck, but he puts a lid on it.

ALAN

Let's go.

Frank starts the engine.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S JEEP/EXT. ROAD NEAR INSTITUTE - NIGHT

Frank and Alan DRIVE on the public road that passes the Institute. They go past the driveway and gatehouse the Institute people normally use for entry.

A hundred yards later, Frank slows the Jeep, rolls it onto the rough SHOULDER, and heads for the tall CYCLONE FENCE set ten feet back from the road.

FRANK

Did you know about this?

Alan shakes his head.

FRANK (CONT.)

Me neither.

He takes a remote-control gadget from the glove compartment, aims it at a "RESTRICTED PROPERTY" sign on the cyclone fence, and pushes the button.

A length of the cyclone fence seamlessly separates itself and SLIDES out of their way. Frank drives through, onto the rough, downsloping terrain of the Institute grounds.

The fence CLOSES behind them. Frank steers onto a faint, overgrown-looking TRAIL that takes the Jeep BOUNCING down to low ground.

FRANK (CONT.)

I've had this thing for four years and this is the first time I've used the four-wheel drive.

ALAN

You don't go around roping steers in Arlington?

FRANK

Never have the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's the first time Alan's spoken on the drive -- Frank's relieved. In a rocky hollow set off from the Institute buildings, the Jeep SLOWS to 5 miles an hour... creeps OVER a rock outcropping --

-- and the big rock HINGES DOWN, so that THE EARTH OPENS in front of the Jeep.

It's a steep drop -- for a moment, the Jeep is pointed straight down. Frank and Alan slam their hands on the dash --

FRANK (CONT.)

Jesus!

-- and then the Jeep is PITCHED back to level, as its wheels grab a paved, underground ROAD surface. A few yards more, and we're in a narrow, lighted TUNNEL...

FRANK

Your tax dollars at play.

ALAN

And everybody's going to go in and out of here...?

FRANK

(shakes head)

There's some kind of secret-panel deal under the cafeteria. This is just for things like getting you in.

...leading into the FORECOURT on an underground BUILDING. Bowman is waiting there, with Hans, Marge, and Dennis. As Frank and Alan get out of the Jeep, Bowman takes Alan's bag.

BOWMAN

Any problems?

ALAN

No.

FOLLOW them into

INT. UNDERGROUND LABS

This complex is as modern-looking and fancily equipped as the Institute proper -- but this part is off the books. Alan and the others walk into the HUSH of never-used subterranean rooms.

ALAN

How long has this been here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN
 Oh, I made them build this first.
 I always knew there'd come a day.
 You know?

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

The next day. Sylvia is making coffee when the PHONE rings.
 She answers it:

SYLVIA
 Hello?

INT. BOWMAN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Bowman's back in his office at the "official" part of the
 Institute.

BOWMAN
 Sylvia, it's Bob Bowman. I'm
 afraid I have very bad news...

Bowman's SECRETARY looks on, distraught -- she's not in on it.

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - SYLVIA AS BEFORE

Sylvia answers Bowman's "news" with a firmness that could be
 shock -- or it could be certainty:

SYLVIA
 No.

BOWMAN (V.O.)
 We're trying to get the details
 on what --

SYLVIA
 No. It isn't true...

BOWMAN (V.O.)
 Sylvia --

She lowers the phone so she can't hear him, covers her face
 with her other hand, and speaks through TEARS:

SYLVIA
 It isn't true.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Establishing a modern church near the American University campus.

INT. CHURCH

Alan's memorial service is well-attended -- everyone we know from the Institute and a few dozen FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. Bowman addresses the crowd:

BOWMAN

Alan and I were talking one day, about a year ago, and he was saying how lucky he felt to be doing the work he was doing, to have the friends he had, and to be married to Sylvia. He said, "You know, I think the number of lives as good as mine statistically approaches zero." I was thinking about that this morning, because I think the number of people like Alan who come into our lives also approaches zero...

FIND Sylvia, in the front row -- grieving, but also watching Bowman hard.

EXT. CHURCH

As the gathering disperses, Frank, Marge and others cluster around Sylvia outside. Bowman comes over and joins them.

SYLVIA

Thank you for the talk. That was nice.

He puts an arm around her shoulders, squeezes her.

BOWMAN

Sylvia -- you have a lot of people who love you. You have to let us help out a little now.

SYLVIA

Have they found anything?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN

(shakes his head)

It's a very remote area, and the plane was so small -- the locals are still looking, and we have a couple of people down there. That's not what we should think about now.

SYLVIA

I just want to know.

BOWMAN

No, no, I realize. We'll let you know the second we know something. I'm going to be calling you up anyway, if that's okay -- see if you need anything, see when you're when you're ready to see people... okay?

SYLVIA

(nods)

Thanks.

She waves goodbye to Frank and the others, gets loose from the crowd, and heads for the parking lot alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE - NIGHT

A cold, starry night. PAN from the Institute buildings to the "empty" terrain that hides the underground installation.

MARGE (V.O.)

This is what we're talking about...

INT. OPERATING ROOM

A room set up for surgery. Unlike the operating theater in the Institute proper, this one has no gallery. Bowman and a dozen or so scientists, with surgical masks at half-mast, watch as Marge points to pictures on an easel.

Beside them, Alan is awake on an operating table, shifting around helpfully as Dennis and his team hook him up to many more machines than last time: dialysis, heart-lung apparatus, and other LIFE-SUPPORT DEVICES are prominent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The picture Marge is displaying: a "visible man" view of the body with its skin off. We see the five black "satellite" brains, and a couple of other, very small organs.

But most of the body in the picture is filled by a network of WEBBING -- groupings of translucent, half-moon shaped "fins."

MARGE

The fins do a whole range of jobs. The way you move is essentially hydraulic. You want to move a limb, fluid comes into the fins in that area...

BOWMAN

So no muscles.

MARGE

And the fins sustain structure, so no bones. They pass signals among the brains, so no spinal cord, no nerve network...

SCIENTIST 4

How does he eat?

FRANK

He'll have nanoreplicators in the soles of his feet, and they can take in matter off the ground. He can turn almost anything into nutrients, burn it clean, and disperse it by osmosis. No digestion, no waste, no blood...

MARGE

We do need to keep the fluid filtered. That's what this organ does. We're putting it in tonight, with the first group of fins...

She indicates the organ on the diagram: thumb-sized and deep blue.

BOWMAN

What are we taking out tonight?

FRANK

Kidney, liver, and pancreas. The GI tract in a couple of weeks. We're working up to the lungs and heart, and then the brain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SCIENTIST 1

Skin?

MARGE

Skin is pretty straightforward.
We'll start trying the grafts in
a couple of days, and then do it
in stages.

ANGLE on the table. The team is prepping the blue ORGAN and a batch of the FINS. The fins are weirdly beautiful -- translucent and filled with thick, clear liquid. They remind us of thick cactus pods, or tide-pool creatures.

SCIENTIST 5

It's like the guy's pocket watch
where he replaces every part
until there's none of the
original watch left, right?

BOWMAN

It's like from the guy's pocket
watch to the Navy atomic clock.

SCIENTIST 6

Could we evolve into this from
where we are now? Is that...?

FRANK

Not so likely. But if you had a
planet with a nitrogen-rich
atmosphere, where the reptiles
won more battles than they did
here --

MARGE

And a few million more years.

She looks over at Alan, lowers her voice.

MARGE (CONT.)

This is a radical series of
operations. If we could get away
with mechanical devices, or if he
could have some normal human
tissue in him, it would be
easier. But this will be pretty
bruising.

(to Dennis)

How are we?

DENNIS

Any time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They tug their masks into place as they approach the operating table. SURVEY the machines -- they're performing and monitoring a score of body functions.

DENNIS

(to Alan)

I'm afraid we need you with us for the first part of this. After about fifteen minutes we can put you under.

Alan nods, talks with slight haziness:

ALAN

It's strange -- the machines are doing everything for me? I feel like I weigh about three pounds. Floating around...

FRANK

Hold that thought.

Dennis looks inquiringly at Marge. She nods, takes Alan's hand, and gives him her arm to grip.

Dennis brings his scalpel up over Alan's naked torso. As he starts the first deep INCISION, Alan's hand CLUTCHES Marge's arm hard, and we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

Sylvia, alone in bed, WAKES UP suddenly. She sits up fast, startled and breathless, as if waking up from a bad dream.

No: she wasn't dreaming anything.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSTITUTE GROUNDS - DAY

Reestablishing the hollow that hides the underground facility, this time by daylight.

INT. CORRIDOR/CONFERENCE ROOM

Alan walks down the corridor, with Frank and Marge "spotting" him in case he stumbles: the first surgery's trauma has left him banged up and a little shaky. But he makes it okay, to a big, blank DOOR. They open it, and enter...

INT. CRAFT ASSEMBLY ROOM

A big, high-ceilinged room, where a CREW of two dozen people are working on the SPACE CRAFT that will fly Alan to earth.

It's not finished, but it's beautiful: a sleek metallic ORB whose surface color and texture CHANGE every several seconds. Marge hasn't seen it before:

MARGE

Oh my God.

FRANK

I know.

MARGE

I didn't realize it changes while you're looking at it.

ALAN

To keep people guessing. They go to analyze it, one minute it's carbon-fiber steel, the next minute it's a copper alloy...

Bowman comes in -- minimal AD LIB greetings, with everyone's attention still gripped by the craft.

MARGE

What does it run on?

ALAN

A type of turbine. Which is very basic -- I mean, anything that makes tools could have come up with it.

BOWMAN

Yeah, but there's no gas tank. The molecule assemblers can make fuel out of a hundred different elements.

Marge looks wistfully at the craft.

MARGE

Why couldn't we have built one of these for, you know -- peacetime?

BOWMAN

Peacetime? When was that?

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

The main library at American University -- STUDENTS coming and going in the quad outside.

INT. LIBRARY

FOLLOW Sylvia, walking past the stacks and study carrels, her finger marking her place in the PHONEBOOK she's carrying. She goes to a "lounge area" of vending machines and pay phones.

As she picks up a phone and dials an access code and international number, SPOT the cover of the phonebook -- it's the directory for Caracas, Venezuela.

Sylvia waits a beat for her connection, then speaks in passable SPANISH:

SYLVIA

Yes. Good morning. I need to speak to someone in the Office of Aviation, please... yes. Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. TREATMENT ROOM

A room like a doctor's examining room, in the underground labs. As Frank stands by, Dennis works with Alan, who sits on an upholstered examining table.

Though he's fighting it, Alan is groggy from more surgery. We see the progress: the SKIN on his arm is cut open and peeled back. Inside, more of those hydraulic fins full of "thick water" have been implanted, replacing blood and muscles.

(Note: we SEE only one profile of Alan's face until the reveal below.)

Dennis holds up a physical-therapy gadget in front of Alan: a Wiffle ball perched on a big plastic tee.

DENNIS

Okay -- grasping the ball.

Alan is tentative at first, then moves his arm -- about four times too hard. His hand SHOOTS at the ball and tee, FLINGING them across the room.

FRANK

Whoa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENNIS
Can't slow it down?

ALAN
(shakes head)
That's the least I can do.

FRANK
It's too much fluid. Let's take
it down about twenty percent.

Dennis nods, and inserts a needle into the webbing of fins to tap some fluid out. Not a twinge from Alan -- no nerve endings in there.

As Frank retrieves the ball and tee, he bumps into JOYCE, a white-coated Institute worker we recognize from the retreat and the lottery. AD LIB hello's as Joyce comes in.

JOYCE
Okay if I take a look at your
face now?

Alan and Dennis nod okay -- and we REVEAL the side of Alan's face that's been turned from us. The first skin graft has been made, and the result is a shock: porous, off-white SKIN, with areas of reptile-like green and yellow scales.

For now, Alan's own features are still in place. Joyce probes the surface around the graft with cosmetologist's tools.

JOYCE
This is taking very well.

ALAN
The hardest thing will be the
hands and feet -- we're putting
a few billion nanoreplicators
right on the surface.

JOYCE
So you can change things by
touching them.

Alan nods.

JOYCE (CONT.)
Can I ask you something? How do
your people reproduce?

FRANK
It's very lovely. The male and
female get together and make the
embryo cells out of water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOYCE

Do you have sex?

ALAN

Yes. That's a different thing. We grow the sex organs each time we do it. If they were around all the time, they'd get in the way. Too big.

JOYCE

Why do I have the feeling that men came up with this?

FRANK

Hey, we invited everyone's input.

Joyce finishes her checkup.

JOYCE

See you Tuesday.
(indicates face)
Don't touch that.

As she leaves, Dennis pulls the drain out of Alan's arm, and Frank tees up the Wiffle ball again. This time, Alan's motion is perfectly measured: he picks up the ball, lofts it gently into the air, catches it and puts it back.

DENNIS

Very good. Let me close this up.

He goes to see to Alan's arm. As he pulls the peeled-back skin back into place, REVEAL it's the same new type of skin as on Alan's face.

Dennis lines up the two sides of the cut, and RUNS a finger down the split as if sealing a Zip-lock bag. And it's that easy: the new skin JOINS together seamlessly.

DENNIS (CONT.)

Okay?

Alan nods. Frank and Dennis head for the door.

FRANK

Light off?

ALAN

Yeah.

He lies down, alone in the dark, as they leave.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTE CORRIDOR - DAY

In the "official" buildings, it appears that all the Institute's normal work is going on -- the BUSTLE of scientists, researchers, etc.

As Sylvia comes down an open-plan corridor, wearing a Visitor badge, people along the way come over to greet her warmly.

INT. BOWMAN'S OFFICE

Bowman gives Sylvia a hug, settles her into a chair.

BOWMAN

So. How are you doing?

SYLVIA

You know -- one day at a time.

BOWMAN

Sure...

SYLVIA

I have to ask you about something.

Bowman nods.

SYLVIA (CONT.)

The plane you said Alan was on. I talked to the Office of Aviation in Venezuela. They said there couldn't have been a flight over that area. There are no --

BOWMAN

No landing facilities, no towers... did they mention the winds?

SYLVIA

(a little thrown)

Yes.

BOWMAN

Even the smugglers won't fly through there. You're right.

SYLVIA

What...

BOWMAN

It's a cover story. It's not a great cover story, but it's good enough for the press.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIA
Then what's the truth?

BOWMAN
The truth is that Alan is gone.

SYLVIA
How?

BOWMAN
It was something no one could have prevented. He was on Institute business when it happened. That's not what caused it, but that's why we have to keep it --

SYLVIA
I don't believe you.

He goes over to her.

BOWMAN
I know you don't. I'm not even going to give you the bullshit about "Denial is a stage of grief." I mean, if nobody can tell you what --

SYLVIA
It's not denial.

BOWMAN
If I was told something had happened to Marianne --

SYLVIA
Something?

BOWMAN
That she was dead --

SYLVIA
What's the truth, Bob?

BOWMAN
I can't tell you the truth. It's dangerous to know the truth. There are people who would love to know everything we're doing out here --

SYLVIA
Yes. I'm one of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Beat.

BOWMAN

Look -- I don't presume to know how it is for you. But everybody here, since it happened, we've been walking around like...

(no words for it)

It takes time. It takes time, and then you move on.

SYLVIA

To where?

BOWMAN

I'm sorry.

She stands up and goes, too fast for him to see her out.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTEROOM TO "ART STUDIO" - DAY

Alan has undergone more SKIN GRAFTS, and more "fin" surgery -- he walks with a non-human "spring," into an anteroom in the underground labs. Bowman is waiting there with JERRY, an Institute guy we recognize from the retreat and lottery.

BOWMAN

How you feeling?

ALAN

Okay. Better.

BOWMAN

You know Jerry, right?

ALAN

Yeah, hi. Psychology...?

JERRY

(nods)

Behavioral and motivational. We call it Department of Hearts and Minds. The stuff I'm mostly known for, I did on the outside. You know the commercial the President had, in the last campaign, with the bull running at the little girl?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
No, I'm sorry. I think I kind of
tuned those things out.

BOWMAN
It was very powerful. Anyway --

JERRY
We're starting to narrow in on
some ideas for the face, and I
thought we'd look at some
things...

As they head into the big office:

BOWMAN
How much time do you have?

ALAN
They have to hook me up to some
machines for a while at four,
clean my blood up.

JERRY
We'll have you out of here.

INT. "ART STUDIO"

The room they enter looks like a graphic arts studio: drawing
tables, Macs running Photoshop, and rough SKETCHES -- on poster-
size printouts and big flat-panel computer DISPLAYS -- of ideas
for Alan's future face.

Three ARTISTS are waiting beside their work.

JERRY
Guys, this is Alan, obviously...

AD LIB greetings. Alan takes his first, unsettling look at the
roughs. They're from the "advanced human" school of alien
conjecture, not the "bug-eyed monster" side. There's something
very disturbing about the features. Alan understates it:

ALAN
Creepy.

BOWMAN
Would you buy it? In terms of
evolution?

ALAN
Yeah...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alan points to a poster. The face up there has two eyes, an abbreviated nose, and a mouth. They're differently shaped from ours, but the arrangement is the same.

ALAN (CONT.)

All the parallel evolution literature lets you put the features like this if you want to. It turned up on so many Earth species, nobody wants to rule it out.

BOWMAN

The nose is vestigial?

ALAN

Yes. We used to have to breathe like you do.

ARTIST 1

(looks to Jerry)

Does everyone know about the scanning?

JERRY

No. Let me talk about that a little...

He goes over to a Macintosh that controls two flat-panel DISPLAYS. One shows the most detailed composite of the "monster" face, the other a rougher sketch. Jerry blanks the rough one.

JERRY (CONT.)

The question we keep coming back to is, What's the scariest thing for the most people around the world? So, this area in here, for instance --

He points a CURSOR at the eyes of the composite, and light-pens a CIRCLE around an area on the screen. Then he brings up a PICTURE on the blank display: the AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI. Jerry circles the matching area.

JERRY (CONT.)

The texture is different, but that doesn't decrease the effectiveness.

ALAN

You said "around the world." There are parts of the world where he's a hero.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jerry nods, draws a circle around an area beside the composite "monster"'s eyes...

JERRY
This part here...

...and replaces the Ayatollah with a new PICTURE:

JERRY (CONT.)
Salman Rushdie. And then here...

Another circle on the composite, another PICTURE: Charles Manson.

JERRY (CONT.)
Manson has recognition everywhere.

ALAN
And that really registers?

JERRY
Oh, absolutely. Marketing isn't about what people know. It's about what they respond to.

ARTIST 2
We're also working on the first face --
(to Alan)
When you come out of the thing, before it changes.

As the conversation continues, Alan goes over to the flat-panel DISPLAY showing the composite "monster" face, and looks at it closely...

ARTIST 3
Yeah, it's strange -- the friendly one is a lot harder.

JERRY
You're looking at some Kennedys, right?

ARTIST 1
(nods)
Kennedys. Royal families. Children. But you don't want it to be obvious...

Alan and the "monster" composite seem to study each other --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

close together, the LIGHT from the display bathing his face. With the grafts, he's already partway there. He STARES into those eyes as we

CUT TO:

EXT. LANEY'S HOUSE - DAY

A two-story cottage, out near the University of Maryland.

INT. LANEY'S HOUSE (STUDY)

Eric Laney, the guy we saw questioning the Institute's secrecy at the Congressional hearing, is working in his study. It's a pack rat's nest -- overflowing files, stacks of the newsletter he puts out, etc. His PHONE RINGS; he unearths it and answers:

LANEY
Center for Scientific Disclosure.

INTERCUT Laney's end of the phone call with:

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE

Sylvia on the phone. She's read the number from a copy of Laney's newsletter, Science & Secrecy Bulletin. She's uncomfortable approaching this guy, but doesn't know where else to turn.

SYLVIA
Doctor Laney? Hi, you don't know me, my name is Sylvia Moss. My husband was Alan Moss --

LANEY
Yes. I was very sorry to hear about what -- seems to have happened to him.

SYLVIA
"Seems to have."

LANEY
I'm sorry, I just mean the information they put out, was very -- do you work for the Institute also?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIA

No, that's -- I was wondering if I could come and see you. There are some things I'm trying to find out...

WITH LANEY

LANEY

Sure. How's tomorrow at two-thirty for you? Could you come here? Fine.

He hangs up, goes over to his COMPUTER, and clicks up a DATABASE program. CLOSE on the screen as he scrolls to Alan's name, and

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Alan's in a WHEELCHAIR today, pushed by an ASSISTANT, and has several drips and drains attached to his body. He's halfway to the alien look in the composite: more new skin, and a changing BODY SHAPE, as more "fins" replace muscle and bone.

The assistant wheels Alan into

INT. "COURTYARD"

An artificial courtyard, with TREES under discreet Gro-Lites and a sky-blue ceiling. Bowman is waiting there on a park-like bench, holding a book. The assistant leaves them alone.

BOWMAN

How are you doing?

Alan's VOICE is different -- a little strained.

ALAN

Okay. Better if I could see the sky. The real one.

BOWMAN

(nods)

Have you read this?

he hands Alan the book: Villages of Peace, by MATILDA RUIZ.

ALAN

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The author's PHOTO is on the cover. She's an activist-humanitarian, as famous as Mother Teresa, but younger, with a face full of radiant good humor.

In the photo, Ruiz is in a Third World setting, happily greeting a prominent (real) STATESPERSON as a few poor CHILDREN tug excitedly on her long skirt.

BOWMAN

I met her once. One of these benefit things, "People Who Make the Difference" or something? They were raising money for her rain forest thing. I actually had a moment with her, face to face. It practically knocks you over. It's corny, but the thing in her eyes -- that's the real thing.

Alan studies Bowman, wondering where this is going.

BOWMAN (CONT.)

You know, the government has a standing plan -- is something from space lands in the U.S. How to handle it, who'll be there... We've seen the list. She's on it.

A beat -- then Alan gets it. he's horrified.

ALAN

Jesus, Bob. No --

BOWMAN

We talked about this.

ALAN

(indicates picture)

Not about this.

(beat)

Does anyone in the government know about this? Any of it?

BOWMAN

God, no. Government -- they're so well-meaning, you want to take them home and tuck them into bed, but... look -- you want everyone in the world to be mad. You can't just knock over a vase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN

There have to be other --

JERRY

Everywhere you go, they love her. Across the board. That's what it takes. You feel horrible about this, that's why it's the right idea.

ALAN

Bob --

BOWMAN

See -- you get this deep into something, you forget what the objective was. Here...

He takes out some papers, with heavy Classified stamps, and hands them to Alan.

BOWMAN (CONT.)

I'm giving you a lot to read today. This is the latest on how close some of the crazy countries are to having the bomb.

ALAN

I don't give a shit.

BOWMAN

No, you do give a shit. Now. Remember what you told me -- when we do the brain stuff...? The information maps over, but a lot of the emotions, the capacity for empathy, all that is diminished. You'll be someone else --

ALAN

We think.

BOWMAN

-- and you're not going to feel this way.

Alan stares at Bowman. It's a little late to decide the guy is crazy...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOWMAN (CONT.)
(indicates book)
You really should read it. It'll help. She's one of those people, you know -- she thinks the world can be saved.

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN'S ROOM/CORRIDOR

Alan has just fallen asleep. Frank backs quietly out of the room, into the corridor -- and finds Hans there, tapping him on the shoulder and beckoning him along.

HANS
A fresh crisis.

INT. BOWMAN'S OFFICE

In the underground labs. Frank, Hans, Dennis, and Bowman, who shows them a computer printout.

BOWMAN
This is the phone log on Sylvia Moss. She's gotten in touch with Eric Laney.

FRANK
Do we know why?

Bowman rubs his face -- the end of a weary day.

BOWMAN
Sure. She knows the story about Alan dying is bullshit, and she wants to know what the truth is. She came to see me.

DENNIS
Has she met with Laney?

BOWMAN
Not yet. And I don't think we want to get too concerned about this, we just...

HANS
No, but if she finds out --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENNIS
She won't find out. Laney
doesn't have --

FRANK
You don't know that. We don't
know everything Alan said to her,
if something slipped out.
Sylvia's very smart. More than
smart, she figures things out...

BOWMAN
Say she finds out. Would anyone
believe her?

HANS
I don't think so.

FRANK
So now we're saying, people won't
believe there isn't a monster
from outer space.

DENNIS
No. Not when we get through.

BOWMAN
(to Frank)
Have you stayed in touch with
her?

FRANK
Sure.

BOWMAN
If she meets with Laney, I'd like
you to see her.

FRANK
And do what?

BOWMAN
Get a sense of what she's
thinking. If there's a natural
way to work it in that this guy
is a flake, you could do that.

Beat.

FRANK
Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM

The same room where Alan got his first set of webbing. Alan, just-recognizable after successive surgeries, lies unconscious on the operating table, attended by Marge, Dennis, and other doctors, as Hans, Frank, and Bowman look on.

Marge and Dennis are fixing BANDAGES to Alan's hands. Alan STIRS, mumbling something indistinct. Dennis leans over him.

DENNIS

Alan, it's Dennis...

Alan's eyes flutter as Dennis bends over him. He raises his raw hands near his face, as if in grogginess --

-- and then, with a fierce, incoherent SHOUT, he grabs Dennis and THROWS him across the room with the webbing's superhuman strength. Dennis TUMBLES into a monitoring machine, SMASHING it up.

Alan SPRINGS from the table, TEARING needles and electrodes from his skin, and facing off the others as they back off. His voice is strained, like before, but now sounds almost bestial:

ALAN

Don't you fucking come near me!
Do you know what you're dealing
with here?

Frank, behind the others, makes a tentative grab for a fire extinguisher. Alan is there with blinding SPEED, knocking it out of Frank's reach like it's weightless.

ALAN (CONT.)

No, Frank... we don't extinguish --
we create! We're the top
minds...

He LAUGHS -- scarier than the shouting.

ALAN (CONT.)

Even when it looks like we're
extinguishing...

Hans tries to move on Alan's blind side -- Alan TOSSES him back without even turning to look.

ALAN (CONT.)

Jesus, boys, we've got a monster
on our hands here. Make a note
of that. We should have thought
about it, back in the design
process. But we had so much on
our minds. We had all the
troubles of the world...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN

Alan. You're with people you
don't want to hurt --

Alan WHEELS on Bowman.

ALAN

Bob, that's so true. That's a
real insight. You're so
reasonable... What did you say,
you're happy to have the
conversation any time. How about
now, is now a good time?

Marge has ducked to the back of the room, not even trying to
talk to Alan -- and now she comes forward with a DART GUN, the
kind used to tranquilize charging animals. As Alan stalks
Bowman, she surprises Alan with a SHOT.

The dart hits Alan on an area of new "skin." Instead of
sticking, the dart is ABSORBED, disappearing into him... but it
works. He stumbles groggily, squints at Marge --

ALAN (CONT.)

Marge. Shit. It was just
getting fun...

-- and falls to the floor, KNOCKING the operating table into a
wall. The scientists move in cautiously, lift him back onto
the table, and cautiously back away again.

FRANK

(indicates dart gun)
In a couple more weeks, that
won't work on him. Nothing will.

HANS

This has to be physiological. We
need to look at brain activity,
go back over the chemical balance
samplings...

Marge goes over, puts a hand on Alan's arm as if to comfort
him. Frank's concerned for her safety:

FRANK

Marge --

MARGE

It's okay. He'll be out for
three hours. Dennis?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He comes over and joins her at work, reattaching leads to Alan's skin.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Sylvia comes out of the house, gets in her five-year-old SAAB, and pulls out. As she does, ANGLE favors a DELIVERY VAN down the street -- it pulls out too, and FOLLOWS her at a discreet distance.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM

The same operating room as before, with the same people present, a few hours later. Alan is still out, hooked up to the full battery of machines. A few leather RESTRAINTS have been fastened, holding him in place.

Marge, Hans and Dennis are hard at work, scrutinizing EKGs, MRI and PET scans, chemical screens, etc.

MARGE

Much better.

HANS

Shall we bring him out?

She nods. Dennis fixes a breathing mask to Alan's face, turns the hose valve for a few seconds, takes the mask away.

Alan stirs, and looks up at the familiar faces. At first he doesn't remember what happened earlier, but when he starts to lift his arms and feels the restraints, it all comes back.

ALAN

Oh, my God. Did I hurt anybody?

FRANK

(shakes head)

Little equipment damage. We'll put it on your bill.

As Frank and Bowman undo the restraints, Marge and Dennis remove the bandages from Alan's hands.

ALAN

What was it? Boy, I was...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hans shows him an MRI PHOTO: Alan's brain, with some bright FLASHES circled.

HANS

The discharge from Organ Five reacted with the muscle fluid. That made ethanol aceto-acetate, which your brain didn't like. Simulation of psychosis.

ALAN

Let's not do that again.

He sits up, examining the palms of his hands -- it looks like more of the same pale and scaly reptile skin.

BOWMAN

How do they feel?

ALAN

Okay. A little raw.

BOWMAN

You want to try it now, or...?

ALAN

Yeah.

He stands up, a little unsteadily -- Frank and Marge flank him on the way to a small, plain wooden TABLE to the side of the operating area.

Alan stands over the table, looks at his hands.

DENNIS

It should be like tensing a muscle different ways...

Alan nods, and slowly lowers a hand to touch the table. He concentrates, MOVES his hand over the surface...

...and TURNS a swath of the wood table top into ROCK: rough, gray, unquestionably real.

BOWMAN

My God...

Alan raises his hand, lowers it again, and does a second swath: a shallow pond of clear WATER fills a trench in the tabletop.

Then another stripe, one that takes more work: SKIN, like on somebody's arm, complete with freckles and a fine down of hair.

They're all awed, including Alan. He stares at his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGE
Is it hard?

ALAN
(shakes his head)
You make a wish.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sylvia parks in front of Laney's house. As she goes to the door, ANGLE spots that delivery van pulling over to the curb, 100 yards down the block.

INT. LANEY'S HOUSE (ENTRY AND LIVING ROOM)

Laney and his wife DORIS welcome Sylvia -- AD LIB hello's and introductions. Doris, like Laney, is 50ish. The house is a more modest version of Alan and Sylvia's -- the same clutter of books, music, etc.

Over the following, Laney and Doris serve coffee; AD LIB sugar and cream dialogue.

DORIS
We were very sorry to hear about
Doctor Moss.

SYLVIA
Thank you. I've been trying to
find out what really happened,
and it's very hard to get
anything out of the Institute.
I guess that's what you...

LANEY
It's kept me busy part time for
twelve years.

DORIS
"Part time" meaning every second
he's not in the classroom.

SYLVIA
What do you teach?

LANEY
Molecular biology. U. of
Maryland.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIA
That was Alan's field.

LANEY
(nods)
Doris teaches sociology there.
And you teach...?

SYLVIA
Music. At American.

DORIS
Oh, I envy that. I took piano
once, for two years. I finally
got my left and right hands doing
different things, but then I
would forget to swallow.

Sylvia laughs.

DORIS (CONT.)
Really, my mouth would fill up --
I was going to be the famous
drooling concert pianist.

LANEY
This is a wonderful thing to tell
someone you just met.

SYLVIA
That's not that uncommon.

DORIS
Really? I'd feel so much better
if that's true.

LANEY
Anyway...

DORIS
Yes. I have my office hours, I
should get going. It's good to
meet you.

AD LIB goodbye's. As Doris leaves, Laney steers Sylvia into

INT. LANEY'S STUDY

They take seats amid the clutter. Laney has printed out some
stuff about Alan -- SPOT an out-of-date photo and a few pages
of credit-report type information.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANEY

I haven't been able to find that much about Doctor Moss, which is typical. People go to work out there and they kind of drop off the edge of the earth.

SYLVIA

(nods)

I never understood how they could all live with nobody knowing what they were doing. I mean, not Alan, but there are some very big egos...

LANEY

It's a strange place. They have very good reason to keep what they're doing secret. You know about that tendency in science, to do things because you can?

Sylvia nods.

LANEY (CONT.)

Do you know Bob Bowman well?

SYLVIA

Does anyone?

LANEY

I take your point. I think he's one of these people... you know, there's no greed there, no personal ambition -- he's just a very sincere, very smart lunatic. I don't say that lightly, because it's what people say about me.

SYLVIA

What kind of lunatic?

LANEY

The kind who thinks he can fix things. The kind who knows best. You said he was straight with you about the airplane story.

SYLVIA

Yes. But he wouldn't tell me anything.

Laney nods, indicates his computer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANEY

I've been able to hack into the Institute's computers, at a shallow level. They hacked into mine first, so I don't feel bad about it. I found something interesting. If I tell you about it, will you keep it private? I realize, I'm being like them...

SYLVIA

Yes.

LANEY

You and your husband own some stocks. It says here...
(indicates screen)
...he bought them in 1989. But it says here...

He brings up a different screenful of information.

LANEY (CONT.)

...he didn't. Do you know which is true?

SYLVIA

He... never said anything about them until a few weeks before --

LANEY

Before he died. If he died.

Beat.

SYLVIA

What you were saying before, about the Institute? Alan always believed he was doing good work there. I mean, positive work. It wasn't like they were trying to get away with something. He would never do something like that.

Laney nods, picks up the printout photo of Alan.

LANEY

This is a lousy picture of him. Do you have a good one?

Sylvia takes a picture out of her purse -- Alan in a pretty outdoor setting, with a LAKE prominent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SYLVIA

That's at Christopher Lake, in Delaware. That was our favorite place to go. We were going to go there when he got back.

Laney puts the photo on a SCANNER connected to his computer.

LANEY

Let me look around a little more, and see what I can find.

SYLVIA

Thanks.

She stands up, as Laney hands the photo back -- Alan's face now smiles from the computer screen. Sylvia hesitates, then:

SYLVIA

I don't know where Alan is. But he isn't dead.

LANEY

Why do you say that?

SYLVIA

(shakes her head)
Something I can feel. I'm sorry -- it seems like I'm always annoying scientists, saying things like that. It used to annoy Alan, anyway.

LANEY

Annoying scientists is my job. But we can always use volunteers.

SYLVIA

Thank you.

As he sees her out the door,

CUT TO:

INT. ALAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Frank has come in to say goodnight. Alan, in bed, is farther along in his transformation -- now it's the few patches of human skin that stand out. SPOT the Matilda Ruiz book on the nightstand.

FRANK

How are we doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN
Okay. I can't really get warm.
But we knew that.

FRANK
Just a phase.

ALAN
Yeah. Have you talked to Sylvia?

Frank nods.

ALAN (CONT.)
How's she doing?

FRANK
It takes time. You're a hard
person to lose. I'm having lunch
with her Wednesday.

ALAN
That's nice of you. Thank you
for that.

Frank feels crummy -- it's the meeting with Sylvia that Bowman
asked him to have.

FRANK
Sure.

ALAN
That's good, that it's Wednesday.
You can tell me about it. We'll
do the brain thing on Thursday.
After that, I don't know who
you're going to be talking to.

FRANK
To you.

ALAN
(shakes his head)
Just someone with the same
information as me. I'm scared of
that. I guess I am a hard person
to lose.

A beat.

FRANK
A little late to turn back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN
Oh, I don't know. I could walk out of here tomorrow. Then, you know, people who know me -- "Have you seen Alan Moss lately? What's the deal with the scales?"

FRANK
"Oh, yeah, the scales -- I didn't want to say anything..."

ALAN
(more serious)
No, the time to turn back was a long time ago. I was thinking -- maybe it's not such a fraud.

FRANK
What do you mean?

ALAN
The monster is a person. That's kind of accurate.
(beat)
You know what the worst thing was? Having to lie to Sylvia. I don't think I ever lied to her before...

FRANK
I can imagine.

ALAN
I still have dreams about that. You think I'll still have dreams after Thursday?

FRANK
We don't know.

ALAN
God, I hope not.

CUT TO:

INT. "COURTYARD"

A meeting is in progress under the sky-blue ceiling: Alan, Bowman, Hans, Jerry, Dennis, Frank, Marge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN

...after that happens, I think you want to wrap it up relatively soon.

ALAN

Wrap it up. Right. Do we know how?

HANS

There are several things the military will try. Caustic chemical foams. Intense heat. You can stand most of those...

JERRY

The timing is up to you. You should trust your instincts. You know the feeling we want to have: it's a victory for earth. Earth worked together and we did this. But there could be more of you guys coming...

Bowman puts a hand on Alan's weird arm.

BOWMAN

I'm sorry that's the ending.

ALAN

(recites)

"There are many people who want to kill me, and I think one day they will. If I worried about this, I could do nothing. But when they do, they will find that their problem was never me. Their problem was a thousand thousand who stand at my side. And so dying is the smallest of my worries."

FRANK

Who's that?

ALAN

Matilda Ruiz.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Establishing a neighborhood restaurant in Georgetown.

INT. RESTAURANT

FIND Frank and Sylvia at a table. Below the surface, it's a very uncomfortable encounter -- each wondering what the other knows, and Frank guilty about this being a "mission" for Bowman.

FRANK
How's teaching?

SYLVIA
It's good. It's good for me. I don't think I would ever stop, even with the money. Did you know I have millions of dollars?

FRANK
Millions? No...

SYLVIA
These stocks Alan bought. I never even saw him read the business page. I guess someone recommended them.

FRANK
They take good care of us out there.

SYLVIA
They have a lot to make up for...

A beat. Frank hates this.

SYLVIA (CONT.)
...not being able to publish and everything.

FRANK
That, yeah. It's amazing how much Alan did. I've been going through his notes, ever since... he's been gone, and --

SYLVIA
He's not gone, Frank.

FRANK
I believe that. I believe -- I mean, some cultures, I guess they call it "the spirit," or...

SYLVIA
I don't know. I'm not into that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
Well. I should get back...

He stands up, leaving money for the check, and finally takes the awkward plunge as they walk out:

FRANK (CONT.)
...we have a lot going on.
They're going to hold another
hearing with Eric Laney. The
disclosure guy?

EXT. RESTAURANT (CONTINUOUS)

Sylvia and Frank come out the door, stand on the sidewalk.

FRANK
This guy... everything they ever
had in Amazing Wonder Stories, he
thinks we're doing it out there.
I mean, the level of paranoia
these days is --

SYLVIA
Frank? Take care of yourself.

FRANK
Sure. You too. It's good to see
you.

Sylvia nods, accepts his handclasp, and smiles in a way that does nothing to reassure him as she turns to go.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM

It's Alan's final surgery: the transfer of the information in his brain to the five "satellite brains" implanted in his body.

Alan's on the table, unconscious but RESPONDING sharply to what his brain sees and hears. His head has been OPENED, as if for brain surgery. A jumble of CABLES connects his brain, the sites of the satellites, and a massive parallel COMPUTER.

There are elaborate computer DISPLAYS in the room -- GRAPHICS of Alan's body, its several brains, and the electronic network working on them, along with real-time updates of his vital signs, etc.

Alan stirs against his restraints, CALLING OUT something we can't understand. And WE SEE:

WHAT ALAN SEES

Alan's POV is a BOMBARDMENT of images and sounds, by turns fiercely disorienting and eerily beautiful.

Random BITS OF MEMORY, sensations, real and imaginary LANDSCAPES... as if a hallucinogenic drug or a schizophrenic episode were blasting all the "furniture" of the brain into the air and letting it fall.

A long CORRIDOR with a sad singing VOICE echoing off the tile. PAGES of handwriting. A STREETLIGHT in the rain, a warm-lit DOORWAY, a blue POOL. A HUNDRED VOICES, layered on each other like radio chaos.

And Sylvia.

ALAN AS BEFORE

On the operating table: his body TWITCHING as if tormented, his new lips speaking nonsense to answer the too-many voices, his eyes open and staring at too many sights.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OPERATING ROOM - LATER

The round-the-clock operation is over -- doctors and scientists are leaving the operating room, exhausted. Through the open door, we catch a look at Alan, resting peacefully now, with Marge and Dennis keeping an eye on him.

SPOT a medical ASSISTANT carefully wheeling a cart out the door of the O.R., bringing up the rear. On the cart, suspended in a jar of fluid: Alan's old brain.

CUT TO:

INT. LANEY'S STUDY - DAY

Sylvia's visiting Laney in his study again. He pulls up a file on his COMPUTER as he talks:

LANEY

Did your husband talk to you about researching life on other planets?

SYLVIA

No. That was out of his field.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANEY

Yes. Until a few months ago.
(indicates computer)
He started pulling things up for
research...

On the SCREEN, along with Alan's name, is a list of scientific
books and papers.

LANEY (CONT.)

All the literature worth reading
about how evolution might have
gone on other planets. It's all
he looked at for weeks. Ran
hundreds of data searches.

SYLVIA

Like -- UFO's? Aliens?

Laney senses an old argument coming on -- he's a little
defensive.

LANEY

That's too weird, right? These
people who make sightings, who
have encounters -- they're all
flakes. That's what people
generally think. Probably you do
too.

SYLVIA

I don't really think about it...

LANEY

Trailer trash in the desert.
Clowns on a talk show. The
government says, "We don't know
anything." Which is true. But
our friends at the Institute --
well. They have an unlimited
budget, secret proceedings...

He SCROLLS the CITATIONS on the computer -- "Alternative
Scenarios for Natural Selection," "Evolution in a Low-Nitrogen
Atmosphere"...

SYLVIA

What do you think Alan was doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANEY

I don't know. Maybe he's still doing it, and it needs very deep cover. Or maybe he found out something that would compromise the nice clean silence they keep over this thing, maybe he wanted to talk to someone in government about it. Maybe he became more of a liability to these guys than an asset.

SYLVIA

No. They would lie about what happened to him --

LANEY

They are lying about it.

SYLVIA

Yes. But they wouldn't...

LANEY

Because they're not evil? They think it's beyond good and evil. As long as they're the only ones who can have the information, that's --

SYLVIA

I've been to see Bob Bowman. I would know.

LANEY

You think he doesn't know you're here now?

Beat.

LANEY (CONT.)

Okay. No theories. Only facts.
(back to computer)
A week before Alan died, he had been through everything academic he could find. He was getting down into the accounts from hermits whose pack mules got abducted to Altair Four. The bottom of the barrel. Why?

On Sylvia: is this guy paranoid? Is his information true? Is there anyone I can believe?

CUT TO:

EXT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Sylvia returns from her meeting with Laney, goes into the house...

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE

...and immediately looks through the little window in the door, WATCHING that DELIVERY VAN pass the house.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTE ANNEX (CORRIDOR)

WALKING down the corridor with Bowman, Frank, Hans, Jerry, and Joyce.

JOYCE

How does he get up in space?

BOWMAN

The launch happens in China. They think they're putting up a satellite for a telecommunications guy in the south Pacific. The guy in the south Pacific thinks he's fronting for the Iraqis and it's actually a spy satellite, so he's not going to talk...

HANS

"He's not going to talk," you hear that?

FRANK

He won't rat us out, Lefty.

HANS

I never even jaywalked, and you've got me in the criminal class.

BOWMAN

Tell me you don't love it.

But the mood becomes sober as they approach a closed DOOR at the end of the corridor -- the one to the conference room where the lottery was held. They all exchange looks of "Are you ready for this?" before Bowman opens the door.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Marge and Dennis are in there with Alan... if Alan is still who he is. This is our first look at the completed creature. Those who have just come in the door stop and stare.

Their finished creation is magnificent: the ultimate Other.

He is sitting in a chair. He is nine feet tall. The limbs and features are placed where ours are, but proportioned differently.

The white-and-scale skin and the long, tapering fingers may remind us of reptiles. The hyper-alert face may suggest a lemur's, the big trunk a bear's... but all of those are stretches. There is nothing really earthly about him.

Alan seems to stare back at the people who've come in. Bowman indicates a bunch of equipment Marge has been working at. It includes a fast computer, a set of stereo speakers, and skin-contact sensors of the type used with heart monitors.

BOWMAN

Does that work?

MARGE

We don't know. We were waiting for you.

She starts to attach skin sensors to Alan's flanks -- the sites of two of the five brains. He puts his hand on hers, completes the motion with her. His movements aren't stiff, but there's something formal, almost ritual, about them.

BOWMAN

Hello, Alan.

DENNIS

(to Alan)

Just relax, and think of what you want to say...

A long beat, and then a VOICE comes out of the speakers:

CREATURE ALAN

I...

Everyone is startled. The voice starts again, halting:

CREATURE ALAN (CONT.)

I see the sky.

What is that voice? It's not Alan, and it's not some cold voice-synthesis microchip. But there's something so familiar about it, so intimate...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREATURE ALAN (CONT.)
The old sky. The sky before.

Of course: it's the voice in your head -- the voice you think in. But what is he talking about?

FRANK
Can you see us?

CREATURE ALAN
Yes. Seeing... is what tasting was.

We're CLOSE on his eyes, and then we SEE:

CREATURE ALAN'S POV

It's less chaotic than what we saw during the brain operation, but no less stunning. It's a different way of seeing -- not only different from ours, but changing from moment to moment.

There is the "old sky" -- a SKY we saw in his onrushing memories during the operation. It TOWERS in the upper part of our vision, while a transformed vision of the conference room has the lower part.

There's Bowman -- but it's a thousand Bowmans, receding back into infinity like cardboard cutouts that move along with the one in front.

But Joyce isn't multiple -- she's one figure, but with soft edges, a gorgeous smear of LIGHT surrounding her. And Frank is like a balloon-animal version of himself...

And so on, a different vision of each person. But the people who are here now aren't alone: PEOPLE and THINGS from Alan's memory MOVE through the room among them. Not colliding, not passing through each other -- every one is equally real.

Near-term TIME is transformed too. Bowman says something new, but then Marge SAYS what she said a minute ago: "We were waiting for you." Then SEE that sentence in racing LETTERS that become tumbling wooden balls...

Seeing all this, HEARING the cross-current of voices, it's amazing to us that Creature Alan can hear the scientists and answer them. But even seeing from his POV doesn't tell us how the five brains process it all.

And just as it's overwhelming us, we PICK OUT Bowman's VOICE and we're

BACK TO SCENE

BOWMAN

Alan -- do you remember what
you're going to do?

CREATURE ALAN

Yes, Bob. China. New York.
Dying. You can put me in the
craft any time.

A little relief in the room -- he hasn't lost it.

CREATURE ALAN (CONT.)

Bob? There are too many of you.

Bowman indicates the others in the room with him.

BOWMAN

Too many of us. Should we -- ?

CREATURE ALAN'S POV

We're back in Creature Alan's minds, FOCUSING on the THOUSAND
BOB BOWMAN'S stretching back to the horizon. When we (Creature
Alan) talk, it cuts through the noise:

CREATURE ALAN (O.S.)

No, Bob...

BACK TO SCENE

CREATURE ALAN

...too many of you.

BOWMAN

Ah.

He fakes understanding, and waves an uncertain goodbye. He and
the others (but not Marge and Dennis) back out of the room,
unable to turn their backs.

CUT TO:

INT. CHINESE MISSILE LAUNCH FACILITY - DAY

One of the several Chinese facilities that put up commercial
satellites (weather, communications, etc.) on a for-hire basis.
The atmosphere here is more business-as-usual than early-NASA
excitement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The WINDOWS of this utilitarian CONTROL ROOM look out on a well-used LAUNCHING PAD where a multistage ROCKET is about to go off. Its payload is a SATELLITE bearing the LOGO of Pacific-World Telcom.

A COUNTDOWN from one of the Chinese TECHNICIANS... the button is pushed, and the rocket LIFTS OFF.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - LATER

In the blackness of space, 200 miles away from Earth, the second stage of the rocket exhausts its fuel and DROPS from the satellite. The third stage IGNITES --

-- and BLOWS UP... a blazing explosion that gives way to a CLOUD of smoke and debris. The satellite's antennae, solar cells, and gas jets are tossed into useless orbit: space junk.

INT. CHINESE MISSILE LAUNCH FACILITY - SAME TIME

One of the technicians CALLS the other to his tracking computer. We don't understand the language, but we get the idea: the rocket has blown up -- the satellite is lost.

EXT. SPACE AS BEFORE

The explosion has left a survivor: the SPACECRAFT we saw being built at the Institute.

At first it's hard for us to make it out. The cloud from the explosion covers it, and -- at the moment -- the craft's surface is dull black metal.

But now we get a better look, as the craft LIFTS clear of the satellite's horizontal orbit path... CLIMBING fast, with terrific, SILENT power.

CUT TO:

INT. LANEY'S STUDY - DAY

He's glued to his computer, with a communications program up -- incoming information STREAMS past. The PHONE rings. He grabs it fast.

LANEY
Yeah... Yeah, I'm getting it
too. I'll call you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hangs up fast -- then SCRAMBLES in his mess on his desk for a phone number, finds it and dials.

INT. ALAN AND SYLVIA'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - DAY

Sylvia answers the phone. INTERCUT her end of the call and Laney's.

SYLVIA
Hello?

LANEY
This is Eric Laney. You need to get out of your house, right away. Go someplace where they can't get hold of you.

SYLVIA
Why, what --

LANEY
The government is about to stop denying UFO's. Because one is going to land.

As she answers, Sylvia clicks a remote control to turn the bedroom TV SET on, and MUTES the sound. On TV: a SOAP OPERA.

SYLVIA
I see. So I should --

LANEY
They're not saying so yet. Don't wait for that. They know you know something. Just get going.

He hangs up before she can answer. Sylvia turns on the TV
SOUND --

SOAP ACTRESS (ON TV)
...you think you can just come back, after everything that's happened...

-- and the DOORBELL rings. She goes to answers it.

INT. ENTRYWAY

It's Frank.

SYLVIA
Hi --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Sylvia, I need to take you out to the Institute. We, ah, got some advance notice on something that's going on. Things might be a little crazy for a while. We don't want you to be alone.

SYLVIA

Why, what's going on?

FRANK

I -- better tell you in the car.

SYLVIA

Okay. Let me just grab my purse.

She waves him into the house, closes the door. As Frank waits in the entryway --

INT. BEDROOM

Sylvia returns to the bedroom, where the soap opera is still on TV. Time for a a decision...

Sylvia CLIMBS out a window and RUNS around the side of the house.

After she's out, HOLD a moment on her TV set, where a NEWS BULLETIN finally interrupts the soap opera.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

-- special news bulletin, and we want to emphasize, this does not appear to be a hoax or a prank of any kind -- space observatories around the world are reporting that, and this is quoting, "a clearly visible, unidentified craft of an unknown origin" is moving toward the earth...

INT. ENTRYWAY WITH FRANK

Impatient, he CALLS O.S. --

FRANK

Sylvia?

Too late: her CAR BACKS OUT FAST, Y-turns away, and is turning off the block by the time he opens the door. Not liking

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

himself, he goes for the phone as we

CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND CENTER - AFTERNOON

An emergency deployment room at the Pentagon. It's a just-controlled FRENZY of activity: there's a plan for this, but there's a plan for World War III too.

Government PEOPLE, half in military uniforms, cram the room, moving, shouting conversation with each other or over secure phones. Wall-to-wall EQUIPMENT: tracking stations, communications computers, big display MONITORS.

CAMERA MOVES through the room, catching BITS of conversation on the fly. These are the people in charge, and none of them knows the craft is a phony.

GOVERNMENT PERSON 1
No markings on this thing?

GOVERNMENT PERSON 2
Nothing.

GOVERNMENT PERSON 3
...all troop movements from New Jersey to be by helicopter, no road transport to be used...

GOVERNMENT PERSON 4
All heads of state will be back behind the Force One troops...

GOVERNMENT PERSON 5
...observatory just put the trajectory out on the Internet, that'll be everywhere in a few minutes...

GOVERNMENT PERSON 6
...the religious leaders on the list, it's their call, but they have clearance and escort if they want it...

GOVERNMENT PERSON 7
...close off access routes into the city, order people to stay home, but you count on a million people getting there...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOVERNMENT PERSON 8
What about people running away?

GOVERNMENT PERSON 9
Roughly the same.

SETTLE on a cluster of people watching a big computer MONITOR. The software is MODELING the trajectory of the space craft.

In a LOOP that repeats on the monitor as the information is updated, we SEE the craft in motion, and then a series of views of Earth that ZOOM closer to the apparent target: Manhattan.

GOVERNMENT PERSON 10
(shakes head)
It has to be fucking New York.

GOVERNMENT PERSON 11
Well, you scan down and look for the most warm bodies...

CAMERA moves off through the room again:

GOVERNMENT PERSON 12
I got the guy that talks to dolphins, he's on standby...

CUT TO:

INT. BOWMAN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

A little crowd has formed in Bowman's office (at the above-ground part of the Institute) to watch TV COVERAGE of the craft's approach. Some of the people here are in on the plan, others aren't.

A PHONE rings -- not the one on Bowman's desk. He unlocks a desk drawer, takes out a phone with SCRAMBLER equipment attached, answers:

BOWMAN
Bob Bowman... yeah. We're glued to TV like everyone else, it's... sure. It's not really our field, but -- let me bring, like, five people? Great...

He points around -- Frank, Hans, Marge, Dennis, Jerry -- and clicks up an address-book program on his COMPUTER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOWMAN (CONT.)

Let me, real quick, I can give you some names of people who really are good on this stuff, who you should try -- you've probably got most of these, but just in case...

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - AFTERNOON

ARMY TROOPS in combat gear load onto waiting HELICOPTERS, double-time.

CUT TO:

INT. SYLVIA'S CAR / EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

Sylvia's driving on Highway 189, near home. It's a weirdly normal scene -- afternoon TRAFFIC in an everyday landscape -- but DRIVERS are intent on what their RADIOS are saying, Sylvia included.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...this just in, and again not confirmed, that the object appears to be moving toward the vicinity of New York. But we emphasize again, unless you are active military or emergency personnel with specific orders...

Just ahead, an EXIT is marked I-40 NORTH. Sylvia's too far over -- till she FLOORS the gas and SKATES across three lanes, cutting off cars in an un-Saab like desperation move, and FISHTAILING a bit as she joins the thickening I-40 TRAFFIC.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - SAME TIME

A gathering CROWD stares at the Jumbotron TV screen overhead: a jerky LIVE CAMERA tracking the craft's slow descent.

Look at FACES in the crowd. It's as if Bowman is right: there's finally something so unknown, so full of threat and promise, that everything else is pushed aside...

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - SAME TIME

On the RUNWAYS at Kennedy, the commercial AIRLINERS' takeoffs have been held up. They've been lined up out here for a long time -- most have shut their engines down. PAN past these planes, whose PASSENGERS crane for a look...

...at a couple of nearby runways that have been cleared and SECURED by a heavy complement of military and Secret Service.

Small, Air Force One-type JETS are landing here. Political and religious LEADERS, flanked by SECURITY DETAILS, are getting off -- mainly white guys in suits, but also an AFRICAN LEADER in military uniform, MIDDLE EASTERNERS in kaffiyehs, etc.

U.S. Secret Service agents, tense and fast, move the visitors quickly from their jets into waiting HELICOPTERS.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - THE CRAFT

The craft, SILVERY now, continues its slow descent. There are LIGHTS on it -- not bulbs, but areas of the surface that GLOW. These lights are BLINKING -- calm series of four pulses each.

The message seems clear: "I'm coming in slowly, with nothing to hide..."

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS - AFTERNOON (A LITTLE LATER)

A big presence of COPS in riot gear and combat-equipped SOLDIERS -- but they're greatly outnumbered by the surge of PEOPLE in the streets.

The cops' agenda: get BARRICADES up and CLEAR several streets of cars and people. The crowd's agenda: find out where the craft is landing and get there. An atmosphere jumping with rumor and anticipation.

CUT TO:

EXT. N.J. TURNPIKE / INT. SYLVIA'S CAR - SAME TIME

The TRAFFIC is heavy but still moving as Sylvia pushes north on the New Jersey Turnpike. But up ahead, she SEES:

STATE TROOPERS with barricades are CLOSING OFF the Turnpike, and waving all the traffic onto Church Highway west. DRIVERS are stopping to argue with the adamant cops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sylvia stops, bogged down in the traffic. She looks around for a way out of this...

...and SEES a TROOPER looking at her LICENSE PLATE. He WAVES her to the shoulder, approaches her car --

-- and she uses the nearly-clear shoulder to make a break for it. She GUNS around the Trooper and a couple of state CARS, and BLOWS OFF a sawhorse barricade as she makes it back onto the Turnpike.

The Trooper runs to his car, PEELS OUT after Sylvia.

ANGLES - THE CHASE

At first the road is clear, thanks to the barricades, and Sylvia drives fast. But after a half-mile, she has to slow for TRAFFIC...

...and the Trooper's LIGHTS and SIREN boil up behind her, cutting into her head start.

Sylvia SLEWS her car off the road, onto the grassy EMBANKMENT that runs alongside. The Trooper quickly does the same thing and comes after her hard, closing the gap to a few hundred yards...

...and up ahead, the embankment RUNS OUT -- there's a BRIDGE.

Sylvia desperately pours on speed, but she'll have to make a move soon: the TRAFFIC next to her is thick, with few gaps between cars, and their speed is less than half hers.

Just feet from the beginning of the bridge, she does it -- BLASTS her horn, NOSES in front of one furious DRIVER and CREAMS her brakes to keep from slamming into another.

Sylvia SIDESWIPES the guardrail, almost losing control, but gets it back --

-- and puts a bunch of traffic between herself and the Trooper, who pulls the same stunt and just makes it onto the bridge.

WITH THE TROOPER

His SIREN is useless on the narrow bridge -- no place for cars to pull over...

...and, after the bridge, the Trooper runs into the back of a serious traffic jam -- spurts of 5-mile-an-hour movement. He gets out of his car (angry HORNS behind him) and starts RUNNING...

WITH SYLVIA

...while, a couple hundred yards ahead, Sylvia is RUNNING too, taking risks in the narrow spaces between cars as traffic starts and stops. She YELLS to a COUPLE in a Volvo:

SYLVIA

Excuse me --

CLACK -- all four door locks dip. She tries a youngish GUY driving a VAN:

SYLVIA (CONT.)

Excuse me! My car broke down.
Can I ride with you?

He gestures "Get in," and she does.

INT. VAN / EXT. TRAFFIC

Sylvia finds herself sharing a ride with a half-dozen COLLEGE TYPES.

SYLVIA

Thank you.

DRIVER

Sure. God, what a time for your car to break down...

COLLEGE TYPE 1

Oh, you think it's a coincidence?
What if the aliens possess some sort of powerful ray?

COLLEGE TYPE 2

(re College Type 1)
He thinks it's all bullshit.

COLLEGE TYPE 1

You'll see. You get there and it's a thing to change your long distance company...

As Sylvia gives a nervous glance in the rear-view mirror --

EXT. ROAD WITH TROOPER

-- the Trooper finds her car abandoned on the shoulder. He runs back toward his own car, but she's lost them for now.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOYCE KILMER PARK - AFTERNOON (A LITTLE LATER)

The craft now HOVERS, a few hundred feet over the small uptown PLAZA. It's still blinking its "lights" in four-pulse series.

It's been up there a little while: the cops and soldiers are working hard to move people back from the area.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE APPROACH - SAME TIME

TRAFFIC is backed up on the New Jersey side of the bridge, where blinking emergency SIGNS say BRIDGE CLOSED. The bridge, too, is full of stopped cars in both directions...

...as a crush of PEOPLE hurries between those stopped cars -- half of them on the westbound side, fleeing the city; the other half, eastbound, rushing to get in.

It's too big a wave of humanity for the COPS to stop without starting a riot -- they're just trying to keep the flow orderly enough so no one gets trampled.

Two faces of MANKIND, in close quarters: the westbound people, panicked, hurrying with their kids and valises so the spacemen won't get them... the eastbound people, buoyant, some with blankets and coolers, like this will be a great show.

Among the eastbound group, FIND SYLVIA. She hurries as much as the crush permits... but she slows to make sure there are PEOPLE blocking her from view as she passes a couple of COPS.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOYCE KILMER PARK - AFTERNOON (A LITTLE LATER)

The CROWD, barricaded a block back from the plaza, fills the surrounding streets. Inside the barricades, SOLDIERS AND SECRET SERVICE seal off the area under the LOWERING craft.

Between that ring and the barricades: a pool TV CREW... LEADERS we recognize from the scene at the airport... and SCIENTISTS -- including Bowman, Frank, et al -- being passed through a barricade checkpoint...

...as THE CRAFT TOUCHES DOWN.

Its "lights" stop blinking, and its SURFACE CHANGES from silvery metal to something like old copper -- warm, a little rainbowed by "tarnish." A SYMBOL, two lines under a circle, APPEARS in relief on the surface.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

For a long moment, that's all, and it's plenty. PANNING the faces of the prominent people on this side of the barricades and the commoners behind them, we're so caught up in the fear, awe, and anticipation that we could forget this is fake.

ANGLE - IN THE CROWD

Outside the barricades, way back, Sylvia catches up with the crush of people. She stops, quickly hemmed in by the crowd, and cranes to LOOK...

ANGLE - THE PLAZA AS BEFORE

...as a previously indiscernible DOOR in the craft seamlessly SLIDES OPENS. The crowd STARTS, holds its breath --

-- and CREATURE ALAN COMES OUT.

Nine feet tall, with that reptilian skin and strange shape... but the design people have done a great job on the "benign" face. Without being Yoda-cute, his face is friendly, tentative, smart and curious.

He walks out in front of his craft, a completely convincing alien, holding his hand out to feel the strange air. He looks around as if everything is strange and fascinating: pavement, sky, buildings, the crowd...

CREATURE ALAN'S POV

...and, in Creature Alan's POV, it all is strange. This is more "here and now" than what we saw after the operation, but still very different:

The scene STRETCHES OUT farther and deeper than we could see, an INFINITY of city blocks. The crowd's noise ORCHESTRATES itself into a musical hum, from which individual VOICES jump out:

VOICES (V.O.)

-- it probably thinks -- it's
scared -- the soldiers -- I think
it talked --

And Creature Alan's VISION finds Bowman, Frank, Hans, Marge, Dennis and Jerry -- in the middle of the cordoned-off block, playing it cool. When he SEES them, they're in sudden sharp RELIEF against the crowd...

EXT. PLAZA - CREATURE ALAN AS BEFORE

Creature Alan walks a few feet, to a stone STILE beside a plaza pathway. He runs his hand around the top few inches of the stile, and that knob of stone SLIDES off easily into his hand.

He looks around a moment -- SEES a pair of pigeons. One of them sees him and TAKES OFF; the other continues pecking pretzel crumbs on the ground. Creature Alan studies him, and seems to massage the stone...

...which BECOMES A BIRD. Not identical to the pigeon, or to any other Earth bird. Graceful and brilliantly iridescent, but with a mammal's expressiveness in its face. Creature Alan releases it, and it FLIES over the crowd for blocks.

The crowd's BUZZ of awe (and a few outbreaks of people holding LIGHTERS aloft) seems to frighten Creature Alan at first, and he backs toward his ship. But then he seems to study faces, and decide he's okay. He comes forward again...

...as the military circle parts, to allow the world leaders to MOVE tentatively toward him. He sees that, backs away again -- they stop. Then he turns aside, to the nearest barricades and the "regular" people behind them.

He "points," making a turning gesture with his hand, at a MAN AND WOMAN in the front row. Nothing special about them -- maybe office workers from a building nearby.

The man and woman look at each other: what the hell do we do? Creature Alan keeps making that gesture. The woman takes a deep breath, and edges between two barricades to move toward Creature Alan.

Now Creature Alan makes that gesture only toward the man. He comes out beside the woman. They keep walking, haltingly, and Creature Alan puts his hand down, seemingly satisfied. A SOLDIER quickly adjusts the barricade to keep others back.

This John and Jane Doe, with billions of eyes on them, slowly come to Creature Alan. They stop a few feet from him, and he comes close to them.

There is no silence like a million people being quiet. The man and woman are thrilled and terrified -- is he going to turn us into something? Maybe so: Creature Alan reaches to touch the man...

...but instead of working magic on him, he tugs on the man's shirt. The man hesitates. A second tug. The man starts unbuttoning his shirt -- "is this what you want?" Creature Alan puts his hand down, and watches with obvious interest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns to the woman -- the same deal. She starts to undress too. A billion people watching. Well: he's curious. We're different animals. This is history...

ANGLES

FACES -- of the military, the crowd, the world leaders, the whispering TV pool REPORTER. Sympathy for John and Jane, envy of them, the weirdness of the whole deal...

CREATURE ALAN AS BEFORE

John and Jane are naked, holding their clothes. Creature Alan inspects them -- playfully curious, like nothing so much as a scientist. Then he holds his hand up, and HIS HAND ROTATES 360 degrees on his wrist. They get it: turn around. They do.

Creature Alan holds his hand fingers-upward and makes an up-and-down gesture: "finished, " or maybe even "Thank you." He turns away from them, and they shakily slip some clothes back on as they return to the crowd.

Creature Alan turns his attention to a different edge of the crowd -- there's a teenage GIRL with a DOG. Creature Alan makes that "Come to me" gesture at the dog.

The girl comes forward with the dog, thinking this will be another inspection. But Creature Alan looks the dog over only briefly before he TOUCHES the pavement in front of it.

The pavement under the terrified dog starts MOVING -- though no cut or seam appears in it. The MATTER itself is in motion...

...and it carries the dog, conveyor-belt-like, into Creature Alan's craft, and out of sight. The teenage girl is startled, but Creature Alan has forgotten her already...

...and, as we look at his face, we SEE a subtle change underway -- his look becomes just that much less friendly and playful...

And now he does something strange: an eccentric WALK in the plaza, DRAGGING one foot. At first it's hard to tell what he's up to, but then we see that he's using the nanoreplicators in the sole of that foot to MARK the ground...

...with the same SYMBOL that's on the side of his craft, the circle and two lines. The message might be "Kilroy was here," or it might be "This is ours."

Now Creature Alan turns his attention to the world leaders -- they've been standing there on hold since he stopped them. He uses the same gesture he used to bring John and Jane Doe over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The committee starts forward, but Creature Alan singles out one member -- MATILDA RUIZ -- and gestures her forward. Friendly, afraid of no one, she playfully tugs the top of her shirt -- "Maybe I'm supposed to undress too."

Some people in the crowd actually laugh appreciatively. Creature Alan seems not to mind, and she shows him a look of sincere welcome and openness. She's everything we expected -- one of those un-stuck-up saints who hold the world together.

But Creature Alan puts a hand on her, and her body instantly CONTORTS IN PAIN.

On the other leaders -- terrified, helpless.

On Creature Alan's FACE -- the "monster" design taking over from the friendly one.

But now we SEE:

CREATURE ALAN'S POV

Of the horrified crowd. The POV "eye" RACES through blocks full of people, as if PROPELLED at a target:

SYLVIA. Way back there, etched against the crowd the way Bowman and the others were earlier. Watching clear-eyed. We almost SCOPE all the way to her...

CREATURE ALAN AS BEFORE

...before Creature Alan DROPS Matilda Ruiz on the ground. She's gasping, but alive. A couple of leaders rush forward to help her back behind the soldiers --

And now everything happens in fast, sharp GLIMPSES:

CREATURE ALAN'S FACE: he's feeling what they told him he wouldn't feel...

BOWMAN'S FACE: maintaining the facade, but there's a flicker of anguish...

SOLDIERS raise automatic weapons and level them at Creature Alan...

THE CROWD starts SURGING away from the plaza, a panicked mob. The crowd-control cops are swept into it, hopeless to slow it down...

BULLETS from an automatic weapon hit Creature Alan, but DISAPPEAR into his skin...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A MILITARY DETAIL rushes the world leaders back from the plaza...

SYLVIA, back in the crowd, tries to fight the tide, but it turns her away from the plaza, SWEEPS her along...

CREATURE ALAN SCOOPS UP a handful of pavement, as he did with the stone stile. He WORKS it in his hands, turning it into a covey of FLYING INSECTS with SHARP-EDGED WINGS.

THE INSECTS FLY at a soldier who shot at Creature Alan. Their wings SLICE at him. A horrible glimpse of him FALLING...

FOOT SOLDIERS RETREAT as military BOMBERS move in fast overhead. A retreating SOLDIER launches a GRENADE at Creature Alan...

THE GRENADE EXPLODES, and SMOKE covers Creature Alan for a moment. When it clears, he's already closing the door of the craft, which LIFTS, silently and very fast. FOLLOW it up...

EXT. SKY

...high into the air overhead. STEALTH-TYPE AIRPLANES move in on it.

INT. STEALTH COCKPIT / EXT. SKY

In the cockpit of the plane nearest Creature Alan's craft. For a moment, it seems like the craft can be followed, and the PILOT radios:

PILOT
We are pursuing --

But then the craft PULLS effortlessly away, SOARING so high and so fast that it DISAPPEARS from the pilot's screens and instruments --

PILOT (CONT.)
Jesus.

-- and from our sight.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND CENTER - MINUTES LATER

The same Pentagon room where we were before. There's a new frenzy of mobilization. It's all military personnel here this time, and a lot of people are glued to monitoring screens, but no luck so far.

Again, we tour the room fast, hearing snatches of conversation:

MILITARY OFFICER 1
...bombers up and on standby
worldwide...

MILITARY OFFICER 2
...any observatory that even
thinks they see something...

MILITARY OFFICER 3
...says its whole chemical
structure is different, so you
start with flammable gases --

MILITARY OFFICER 4
Sir?

He indicates a monitor screen to a senior OFFICER. CLOSE on a tiny DOT moving on the screen, and

CUT TO:

EXT. CHRISTOPHER LAKE - SUNSET

The place in Delaware where Alan promised Sylvia they'd go when he got back from his trip. There's a LAKE, sparkly at sunset, a LODGE, and a lot of WOODS...

...where Creature Alan's CRAFT LANDS now -- a messier, more hurried job than the gentle touchdown in New York.

Creature Alan quickly has the door open, and comes out of the craft --

-- and ANGLE REVEALS ERIC LANEY standing there in the woods, waiting for him. This monster kills people, but Laney is unarmed, braving it...

Creature Alan registers seeing him, but walks past him.

LANEY
Alan Moss.

No pause for that -- Creature Alan keeps walking. Laney follows him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Some PEOPLE appear on the deck of the lodge in b.g., then hurry back inside to watch from windows. FOLLOW Creature Alan and Laney, out of the woods, toward the lake.

LANEY (CONT.)
 You give me one sign, anything...
 and I can tell the truth. You're
 a scientist, Alan. Truth.
 Openness...

SOUND O.S. of a hundred ENGINES -- the military planes and ground troops on the way.

LANEY (CONT.)
 Bowman thinks people need a
 story. How about the story about
 the guy that gives everything up
 for the rest of us? That's a
 great story, Alan. People always
 like that one...

Creature Alan stops walking, but still doesn't look at Laney. Instead, he begins to MELD into the earth. It's a weird but peaceful process: his cells MERGING with the leaves, twigs, dirt... disappearing feet-first.

LANEY (CONT.)
 Alan, don't --

The first PLANES are visible overhead, streaking in fast. Down here on the ground, a CAR drives fast up the little road to the lodge, pulls off onto the dirt and stops. Sylvia gets out...

LANEY (CONT.)
 Sylvia!

She looks around, SEES the abandoned craft in the woods, and heads for it...

HIGH ANGLE

...as THE MILITARY MOVES IN. It's an operation of high speed and coordination, SEEN from above:

TROOPS block the access roads, and a RING of soldiers and armored vehicles forms around the lake, lodge, and woods. Sylvia, running, is inside that ring; so is Laney, running after her.

ON THE GROUND

Laney chases Sylvia, calls after her:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANEY

We have to get out of here.

She shakes her head, keeps moving -- but a few MOON-SUITED SOLDIERS, securing the area around the craft, confront her with weapons raised.

SOLDIER

We need you out of this area immediately.

SYLVIA

No --

They move toward her --

-- and CREATURE ALAN EMERGES from the ground, right here -- a fast reverse of his melding into it. He's near enough to the soldiers to scare them back from Sylvia.

Creature Alan starts back toward the lake, the middle of the ring.

MORE SOLDIERS move in, and rush Sylvia and Laney back behind the barricades.

Behind the barricades: a much smaller crowd than in New York. No civilians or world leaders, just military and scientists.

BOWMAN, FRANK, and the others from the Institute are at the front. AS Bowman WATCHES, the SOLDIERS hustle Sylvia and Laney far back from the barricades --

-- but suddenly, Frank leaves Bowman's side and goes back there, arguing with the soldiers, taking Sylvia away from them.

On Bowman: he knows she knows.

BIG ANGLE

As Frank brings Sylvia with him to the front -- but away from the Institute people -- a MISSILE is LOFTED into the sky overhead. It hangs over Creature Alan, begins to fall...

...as Sylvia BREAKS past the barricades and RUNS toward Creature Alan. She's made her move too fast for anyone to stop her, and now nobody dares to -- the missile is right over her head.

Quick ANGLES of people watching: Frank, Bowman, Laney...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sylvia reaches Creature Alan at the same time the missile HITS, several yards away from them. Its payload BLOSSOMS into garish chemical FLAME that spreads out, its radius heading for them...

Creature Alan turns to face Sylvia. He runs his hands over the front of his body once, then EMBRACES her. They're face to face for a moment... and then, just before the chemical fire reaches them --

SYLVIA MERGES into Creature Alan's body, as he merged into the ground. The last thing he SEES is her face, in half-sexual, half-spiritual release --

THE FLAMES HIT their combined body. Creature Alan doesn't burn, he disappears -- letting his cells join up with the fire, so that after a moment there's nothing left.

A beat... and then the flames subside.

SOLDIERS move in with chemical foam to put out the fire. The crowd moves in past the barricades -- and Bowman finds himself looking at Laney, across the center of the charred circle.

Neither looks away -- they study each other's faces. Silent questions and answers. We CLIMB again...

HIGH ANGLE

... until they're just two men standing still as the crowd SWIRLS around them... and the SUN FALLS over the lake in the Delaware woods.

FADE OUT.