

THE DARK HALF

screenplay
by
George A. Romero

based on the novel
by
Stephen King

Third Draft
August, 1990

THE DARK HALF

In the center of A BLACK SCREEN, a date: 1968.

Then the SCRATCHING SOUND of a pencil on paper.

FADE IN:

INT YOUNG THAD'S BEDROOM AFTERNOON

ECU of a wooden pencil, a Berol Black Beauty. Beneath a title, OUTSIDE MARTY'S HOUSE, it is scratching out, in longhand, the beginnings of a work of fiction.

We were all in school together, but most
of what we learned that year we learned
outside Marty's house...

PULL BACK to reveal THAD BEAUMONT, a boy of eleven, hunched over a table in his small, dimly lit bedroom. His eyes dart, looking beyond pencil and paper, seeing mind-pictures. Those eyes, strange in one so young, are cold, emotionless, almost predatory. The eyes of a creature that is doing what it instinctively knows it must do if it is to survive.

CREDITS BEGIN (placed discreetly on the frames, pausing occasionally to allow dialogue and/or action to play without interference).

After a time, we become aware of A PHANTOM SOUND...like the distant cheeping of a thousand small birds. THE SOUND BUILDS in intensity. Thad hears it now. He looks up, frightened, knowing what is coming.

SNAP! The pencil point breaks leaving a black smear on the paper.

Thad's hands shoot up to a point on the left side of his forehead, just below the hairline. His fingers push in, as though trying to dig out the pain which has just struck him. Terrible, monstrous debilitating pain.

SHAYLA (o.s.)

(Calling from downstairs) THADDEUS!

Thad stands up with a violent motion that knocks his chair to the floor.

SHAYLA (o.s. cont.)

THAD! DO YOU HEAR ME? THAD, COME DOWN HERE.
THERE'S SOME WONDERFUL NEWS.

The headache is subsiding, the sound beginning to fade.

INT YOUNG THAD'S HOUSE AFTERNOON

THAD, looking drained, still rubbing his forehead, opens his bedroom door and steps out into the upstairs hall. At the bottom of a flight of stairs, SHAYLA, his used-up but ever-hopeful mother, is excitedly waving a paper that's come in the mail.

SHAYLA

You got a hon'able mention. The story you sent in got a hon'able mention. Oh, Thad, I knew it was a good story. I told you so, didn't I?

Thad comes shakily down the stairs and takes the paper from his mother. His father, GLEN, never hopeful, never used, sits, disinterested, in a well-worn easy chair sucking on a bottle of beer.

GLEN

If it was so goddam good, why didn't they give him some money.

Thad looks up from the paper with that mix of anger and disappointment which is known to every teen who has a parent.

SHAYLA

He's gonna be a great writer some day.

THAD

(Staring at his father) I don't know if I'll ever be great, but I'm gonna be some kind of writer no matter what.

SHAYLA

(Suddenly concerned at the way Thad looks)
Thad, are you alright, honey?

That SOUND is returning. Birds cheeping. Thad's hand shoots back up to his forehead.

SHAYLA (cont.)

Is it one of your headaches? Is it another one of your headaches?

THAD

(Through gritted teeth) Yes.

GLEN

Sittin' in the dark and writin'. That's what brings it on.

SHAYLA

Poor darlin'. Can I get you a....

Thad whirls around and goes running back up the stairs.

INT YOUNG THAD'S BEDROOM AFTERNOON

THAD runs into his bedroom, slams the door, crumples the "Honorable Mention" and jams the balled up paper into his forehead, into the spot where the headache-demon is chewing on his brain. The SOUND builds...builds...builds. Birds. A frenzy of birds.

INT A DOCTOR'S OFFICE DAY

DOCTOR HUGH PRITCHARD steps over to the window in his office, draws the curtains closed, and turns off the overhead light. Aiming a flashlight at the wall, he flicks a bright circle of light on and off rapidly.

PRITCHARD

Does that make you feel funny, son?

THAD BEAUMONT shakes his head.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

You don't feel woozy? Like you might faint?

THAD

No, sir.

SHAYLA BEAUMONT stands nervously in a darkened corner of the room.

SHAYLA

Maybe it is your writing, Thad. This all started just about the same time you started with your stories. Sittin' in the dark, squintin' to see. (To Pritchard) Glen, that's my husband, he don't like to have the lights burnin'. Could that be it, doctor? Could all this come from strainin' his eyes?

PRITCHARD

Possibly, but....these sounds, these bird sounds he's hearing....sometimes a sound or a smell can be a sign of....something more than eye strain. (He slaps Thad on the knee.) I don't think we have an emer-

PRITCHARD (cont.)
 gency here, but we'll have to watch you,
 Thad. Wanna be a writer, do ya?

THAD
 Yes, sir.

PRITCHARD
 (to Shayla) If he's so determined, y'oughta
 buy the man a typewriter.

SHAYLA
 Already got my eye on a used one. Been
 savin' all our ice cream money.

PRITCHARD
 Who knows. Might help. And here....

Pritchard clicks the lights back on. He opens a cabinet, pulls out
 a four-pack of hundred-watt light bulbs, and hands it to Thad.

PRITCHARD (cont.)
shove these up yer dad's rectum and
 tell him it was doctor's orders.

INT YOUNG THAD'S BEDROOM MORNING

CLACK! CLACK! CLACK! THAD is writing on an old Remington 32,
 strictly hunt-and-peck, forefingers only. Behind him, SHAYLA is
 making his bed.

SHAYLA
 Seven-thirty, Thad. You'll miss your bus.

Thad finishes typing a sentence, snatches up books and a lunchbox,
 and runs out of the room. Shayla un-puckers from the kiss she never
 got, smiles, and steps over to the work table. Six finished pages
 lie beside the typewriter. A seventh remains in the platen.

SHAYLA (cont.)
 My Lord, all this in one mornin'?

She looks out the window and sees....

EXT YOUNG THAD'S HOUSE (POV UPSTAIRS WINDOW) MORNING

....the local school bus pulling up to the curb. FOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

KIDS prepare to board. THAD comes running from the house to join them. He stops suddenly, drops his books, drops his lunchbox which loses its freight. His hands shoot up to his forehead. He reels and collapses to the sidewalk, his body twitching in convulsion.

INT A HOSPITAL O.R. DAY

A SURGICAL TEAM looks on as HUGH PRITCHARD uses a Negli saw to carve a window in THAD BEAUMONT'S skull.

PRITCHARD

I'm opening. Suction.

Suddenly all eyes in the room widen with horror and revulsion. One of the assisting nurses, named HILARY, lets out a shrill and shocking scream. She stumbles backward into a rolling Ross tray, knocking it over, sending instruments flying.

HEAD NURSE

Hilary! Remember where you are, please.

But Hilary can't control herself. She pushes out through the swinging doors and goes screaming off like a runaway fire engine.

ALBERTSON

Get that hardware in the sterilizer. Right away. Chop-chop.

HEAD NURSE

Yes, Doctor.

Pritchard seems to have noticed none of this. He is looking, with rapt attention, at what he has just uncovered.

PRITCHARD

Incredible.

DOCTOR ALBERTSON, assisting Pritchard, applies more suction, clearing blood for a better view.

ALBERTSON

Oh my God. Oh Jesus. Jesus Christ.

Thad Beaumont's brain, gray with just the slightest tinge of rose, is pulsing slightly. Protruding from the smooth surface of the dura is a single blind and malformed human eye. The pulsing makes it look as if it's trying to wink.

ALBERTSON

What is it?

PRITCHARD

It's nothing. Once it was a twin. Now
it's nothing. Except trouble, that is.

Pritchard begins to excise the foreign matter. His assistants collect themselves and become efficient again.

ALBERTSON

I've never seen anything like this. A....twin?

PRITCHARD (cont.)

Unborn. Absorbed into the system. Wound up in his prefrontal lobe. Could have gone anywhere. Intestines, spinal cord. Normally we'd never see it....maybe in an autopsy.

Pritchard pulls down a microphone on a gooseneck and speaks into it.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

I'm removing....an eye. Part of a nostril.

He studies the specimens as he removes them, then plops them wetly into a tray.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

Three....look like fingernails....and two teeth. One of the teeth has a small cavity.

ALBERTSON

The kid's only been symptomatic for....less than a year. If this was with him from birth....the head pain would have been with him from birth.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

A year ago this was probably submicroscopic in size. Somehow, it....got itself going again. Damned thing actually....started to grow. Don't ask me how, don't ask me why. All I know is that I have located and removed a very rare sort of tumor. A benign tumor. It doesn't matter what we found here. The only thing that matters is that it's gone.

THE CAMERA PULLS AWAY as work continues in silence.

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY

HILARY, the nurse who fled the O.R., is still fighting to keep her lunch down. She stumbles over to a window and leans against it. What she sees outside does little to help her state of mind.

EXT VIEW FROM THE HOSPITAL WINDOW DAY

BIRDS. SPARROWS. Hundreds of them. Thousands of them. Roosting in treetops, on power lines. The SOUND of their chirping builds in intensity, swept along by another sound, like that of an angry, howling wind. But it's not wind at all....it's flapping....the flapping of a multitude of wings....as the birds all rise and take to the air in a dark cloud.

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY

HILARY backs away, terrified. The first birds hit the window glass. SMACK! SMACK! More follow. And more....and more....until the window is black with grotesque shapes that flutter madly and afford only brief glimpses of the white sky beyond.

THE FRAME FREEZES and we are left with an abstract pattern made of beaks, wings, tails, talons, deep black against hot white. A thin, blood-red line slashes diagonally through the frame. On the left side of that line, the abstract pattern transforms into its own negative image. What was black becomes white. What was white becomes black. THE FINAL CREDIT APPEARS. It's the main title...

THE DARK HALF

ALL FADES TO BLACK. And in that black we see the words:

TWENTY THREE YEARS LATER

FADE UP ON:

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW MORNING

The chubby faces of two pre-toddler-age babies, WENDY and WILLIAM BEAUMONT, twins, dressed identically in terrycloth jumpsuits. They are crawling around on the floor, one playing with a pair of mommy's shoes, the other with the remote control for a television which is

tuned to the TODAY show. Tiny fingers press buttons causing the channel to change.

A WOMAN'S HAND enters frame, artfully rescues the remote control, and offers a balled-up pair of men's socks in exchange. As the hand pulls away THE CAMERA FOLLOWS, revealing LIZ BEAUMONT, a woman of about thirty. Her hair is tousled from sleep, she's without makeup and wearing an old flannel shirt in place of a nightgown. Despite all that (or possibly because of it) she's lovely. She has a warm, genuine quality, completely without pretense. She clicks off the TV and tosses the remote aside. She's sitting on the floor, leaning against an un-made king-size bed, reading a set of typewritten manuscript pages.

With the TV off, we've become aware of A BUZZING SOUND. We see the source when THAD BEAUMONT (now 34) comes out of an adjoining bathroom running a cordless razor over the thick stubble on his face. Open shirt tossed on carelessly. Jeans and sneakers. Neither trim nor fat, he's somewhere inbetween. He's pleasant enough to look at. He has a broad, intelligent forehead (which carries a small white scar on the left side just below the hairline), and of course he has those eyes. Those incredible eyes.

THAD

Hey! Will-IUMMM!

Liz has been setting the manuscript pages down on the floor after reading them. William has gotten one of them and is scribbling on it with a crayon. Thad steps in and pulls the paper away.

LIZ

Oh, God. Sorry, Thad.

Thad holds up the page, blue squiggles all over the type.

THAD

A born editor. (To William) It's not that bad, is it?

WILLIAM

Gerfungen!

THAD

Guess it is. What do you think, mommy?

LIZ

Last page. Just a minute.

Liz goes back to reading. Thad moves to a night table, gets a memo pad from beside the phone, and hands it to William who scribbles on it happily.

WENDY

Mazzunzena!

Wendy has gotten her own crayon and is jealous of the memo pad. Thad finds a shirt-cardboard in a wastebasket. He brings it to Wendy, quieting her. He doesn't want any more disruptions. Not while Liz is reading. He watches his wife, biting his lip, waiting for a verdict. Finally Liz sets down the last page (there are fewer than a dozen) and stacks it on top of the others.

THAD

Not much.

LIZ

Not much? It's wonderful.

THAD

I mean....there's not a lot there. I stay up all night and produce nine lousy pages.

LIZ

Nine perfect pages. It's really good. It's the best. It's your best.

THAD

But is it a... 'best'... seller?

LIZ

Who cares? It's gonna be a great book. That's all that counts. Oh, Thad, you're doing it. You really are doing it!

She gets up, moves over to Thad, and hugs him. He folds her into his arms.

THAD

Sorry I never came to bed. Did I keep you up....rattlin' around?

LIZ

I'd rather have you up there working than tossing and turning down here. Never heard you. Twins slept through. I got a full eight hours. You should get compulsive more often.

THAD

I wish it was compulsion. Compulsion makes it flow. This was....labor. There's sweat and worry in every sentence on those pages. It's not comin' out of me easy. I feel so....rusty. Out of practice.

LIZ

Small wonder. It's been six years since Thad Beaumont published his last novel.

THAD

Thad Beaumont's last novel was also his first novel, and the fans haven't exactly been clamoring for more.

LIZ

I've been clamoring for more, and I'm a fan. (She kisses him.) I'm your biggest fan. (She kisses him again.)

THAD

Thanks, babe. Thanks for putting up with my craziness.

LIZ

I have seen you crazy, Thad, and this is not it. I'm delighted that you're writing this book. It's been....too long.

Wendy has filled the shirt-cardboard and is crawling toward Thad's manuscript which is still lying on the floor.

THAD

Oh, shit. No, no, darlin'. That's daddy's.

Thad rushes over and rescues the pages. He sets them up on a dresser, out of reach, and in doing so he bumps a small lamp and sets it teetering. In catching the lamp, he upsets an ashtray full of change. In catching the ashtray, he knocks a can of baby talcum to the floor. A cloud of white powder puffs out onto the carpet.

THAD (cont.)

Attack of the Killer Klutz. I'll get the vacuum.

LIZ

I'll get it later. Are you gonna make it through your lecture?

THAD

Yeah. No tellin' what I might say, but I'll make it.

LIZ

If you'd quit teaching you wouldn't have to write at night.

THAD

I like teaching. And I like writing at night.

Thad walks over, scoops the twins up off the floor, and cradles them, one in each arm.

THAD (cont.)

I'll do diapers if you get the coffee. I've started some brewing.

LIZ

Try not to break the children.

THAD

Whooops....

Thad almost drops Wendy. Catches her. Almost drops William. Catches him. Almost drops Wendy again. (He's faking it.)

THAD (cont.)

Whooops....whooops....whooops....

He ends up swinging the babies back and forth in a more deliberate seesawing motion. Enjoying the ride, the twins giggle delightedly. Thad hugs them in to his chest.

INT A COLLEGE LECTURE HALL DAY

THAD stands at the front of a lecture hall addressing a body of students.

THAD

We are human....beings. Plural. Each one of us is two separate beings. One on the outside, one on the inside. The average Joe out there can keep his inner being to himself. Keep it hidden. Keep it private. He never has to let the world see it. Some people don't even let them-

THAD (cont.)

selves see it. The beings inside them are too....frightening, too alien for them to deal with, so they lock them up and throw away the key. Those are the people who.... never fall in love. Never cry. Maybe never even....have an orgasm.

There's a wave of tittering from the students, a few hoots and hollers from some of the boys. Thad waits for silence, then continues.

THAD (cont.)

And there's something else those people will never be able to do. They'll never be able to write good fiction. The fiction writer has to....not only be in touch with that inner being....he's got to....nurture it. He's got to be willing to let it grow inside him, and when it's grown, he's got to be willing to let it out on its own.

Thad has unconsciously started to rub that white scar on his forehead.

THAD (cont.)

The being on the outside can bring the words, the grammar, the structure to a work of fiction. The being on the inside brings the passion.

Thad realizes what he's doing and stops rubbing the scar. He's feeling the effects of no sleep.

THAD (cont.)

I, er....I think we'll....cut it a little short today. I was up all night working. That....inner being kept me awake.

Laughter. Students begin to pick up their things and move out through large double doors at the back of the hall. Their chatter echoes loudly off the walls. Thad shouts over the din.

THAD (cont.)

Your short stories are due on wednesday. Don't forget.

As the students exit, a wiry little man who's been sitting at the rear now stands and positions himself near the doorway. He looks

out of place. Too old to be a student, too grubby to be a teacher. His pants have holes. His fake leather jacket, ridiculously large on him, is stained. He's carrying a duffel with a mis-matched shoulder strap sewn onto it. When Thad looks up at him, he grins.

Thad senses something odd, but shrugs it off. He picks up his briefcase and moves up a center aisle between the rows of seats. The path to the door brings him within a few feet of the stranger who suddenly pulls something out of his duffel.

STRANGER

Would you autograph your book for me?

The man is holding a hardback novel. The title is MACHINE'S WAY. The cover illustration shows a surly looking, badass dude with a smoking .45 in one hand and a gorgeous dame draped over his free arm. The dame is unconscious, or maybe dead. The front of her dress is torn open. She's been shot and is bleeding from two bullet holes just beneath her over-the-shoulder-boulder-holder (that's a bra). The author's name, GEORGE STARK, stands out in larger type than the title. Thad stares at the book dumbly.

STRANGER (cont.)

Make it out to Fred. Fred Clawson.

THAD

That's....that's not my book.

CLAWSON

(grinning again) Isn't it?

THAD

No. No, look. Look here.

Thad grabs the book and turns it over. The author's photo is that of an entirely different man.

CLAWSON

Picture's a phony. Name, too. George Stark. Phony. I know all about it.

A short, slender man (who resembles Hume Cronyn) comes clattering through the open doorway pushing an A.V. cart laden with boxes. The stem of an enormous yellow pipe is clamped between his dentures. (The pipe is not lit.) This is RAWLIE DeLESSEPS.

RAWLIE

Oh....Thad. Thought you were finished. Mind if I set up my projector?

THAD

No. No, go ahead, Rawlie. I'm....I'm just on my way out.

RAWLIE

You're not leaving. You said you were going to attend my talk today.

THAD

I....can't do it, Rawlie. Sorry.

RAWLIE

Thad. You seemed so interested. (To Clawson) The Black Arts in Borneo. Witchcraft among the Aborigines. I've got some spectacular slides from the Smithsonian. I'm the resident Warlock. The intellectuals on campus, like Thaddeus, here, humor me, but their enthusiasm inevitably wanes when it comes time for one of my lectures.

CLAWSON

Maybe you're showin' the wrong kind of pictures. You wanna draw crowds....you gotta give 'em what they want. How 'bout it, Thad?

THAD

Let's go to my office.

Thad leads Clawson away. Rawlie, bewildered and a little concerned, wheels his cart forlornly off down the aisle.

RAWLIE (cont.)

Nobody believes in magic any more. Nobody believes in magic.

INT THAD'S OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY DAY

THAD sits at the desk in his office. The book, MACHINE'S WAY, lies in front of him. He stares angrily at the lurid cover illustration while FRED CLAWSON struts around the room triumphantly.

CLAWSON

It's my turn to be the story-teller, okay? So here's the story. There's this writer, see....let's call him Beaumont. He writes

CLAWSON (cont.)

this high-brow book about yuppies and faggots. The critics rave. Nobody buys. So he changes his style. He starts to write about tits and tough guys. He dreams up this badass character....

THAD

Machine. Alexis Machine. Ain't he mean?

CLAWSON

He calls himself George Stark....I guess so maybe his mother won't find out he's writin' this shit.

Thad looks up at Clawson, those predatory eyes burning.

CLAWSON (cont.)

He slaps a phony picture on the back. Boom! He sells a million copies. He writes three more books. Boom! All of 'em hit the charts. He gets rich.

THAD

Not that rich.

CLAWSON

Rich enough, I think. Rich enough. (He moves in closer.) And what's he gonna write next? He's gonna write me a nice big check if he wants me to keep my mouth shut about this.

Thad has picked up a pencil, a Berol Black Beauty, and has unconsciously begun to gnaw on the wood.

THAD

What if he doesn't want? What if he doesn't care what you do?

CLAWSON

He wants. He cares. And if he doesn't.... the people around him do. They got a major league scam goin' here. There's a million Americans out there just waitin' to lay out a hard-earned twenty-nine-and-change for George Stark to give 'em another hard-on. They believe in George Stark. Believe he's writin' about shit that he knows. Shit that he's maybe even done. They find out they been lied to, that

CLAWSON (cont.)

twenty-nine-and-change might just go back in the pocket. I don't think you....and the people around you....wanna take that chance.

Thad continues to gnaw on the pencil. His eyes are still burning, but a change has come over him. His anger has receded to some inner place where it boils, unseen, behind a face which suddenly appears to relax. An ever-so-slight smile breaks the corners of his mouth. For a moment, he looks like a different person.

THAD

How did you find out?

CLAWSON

I live in New York. I ran onto this babe who works for your publisher. She gimme the whole story. Like Machine says in your book there. 'At nine o'clock, she came. At ten o'clock, she came across'.

THAD

I've written about slime, Clawson, but none of it as low to the ground as you.

CLAWSON

Maybe you'll put me in a book some day.

THAD

Oh, I will. And I'll make you fuckin' suffer....before you die.

That odd little smile again. It's unnerving. Clawson picks up the book and stuffs it back into his duffel.

CLAWSON

I got a bus to catch. Goin' back to New York. Think about it. Talk to your people. See what it's worth to them to keep this little story of mine out of the papers. I'll call you in a few days and we can....negotiate the price.

Clawson struts out of the room leaving Thad to stew.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN LUDLOW DAY

LIZ

The little shit. The smarmy little....
Creepazoid!

THAD

Can you believe this? I mean....can
you BELIEVE THIS?!

Thad shouts this last bit loudly.

LIZ

Shhhh. You'll wake the twins.

Liz picks up a coffee mug, and paces, sipping.

THAD

What should we do, Liz?

LIZ

Your call.

THAD

God. It's such an....invasion! I mean....
(he erupts again) ...who NEEDS THIS SHIT!

First one baby cries. Then the other joins in.

LIZ

Thanks, pal. Now you can help me deal
with them.

INT THE TWINS' ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

WILLIAM and WENDY lie cheerily on twin changing tables while their
privates are powdered and fresh diapers are applied. (LIZ tends to
William, THAD to Wendy.)

LIZ

I know how you could blow this guy off.
Really knock him for a loop.

THAD

How? How can I knock him for a loop?

Thad says this playfully, in a "baby-talk" sort of voice, while
tickling Wendy's fingers and toes. Wendy starts to giggle. So does
William, sympathetically.

THAD (cont.)

How can I knock him for a loop? Huh?
I wanna knock him for a loop. The little
stinker. Dirty little stinker. Dirty
little rat. (Now he's putting on a tough
guy voice.) I ought to go get him. That's
what Alexis Machine would do. Go get him
and cut off his pecker and shove it in his
little rat mouth so when they find him
they'll know he was a squealer.

Wendy howls with laughter at this. William joins in. Thad turns,
chuckling, to look at Liz, who has fallen silent. She meets his
eyes with a look of disapproval. No. Something more than dis-
approval. Something deeper, much deeper.

THAD (cont.)

(Sobered) How can I knock him for a loop?

LIZ

Go to the press yourself. Tell them you're
George Stark.

Thad swallows hard. He almost looks afraid.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN LUDLOW EVENING

WENDY and WILLIAM sit brightly in twin high chairs. THAD and LIZ,
neither of whose mood is at all bright now, spoon baby food into
their hungry little mouths.

THAD

Eat hearty, kids. If I do this crazy thing
your mother wants me to do, we may none of
us ever eat again.

LIZ

Thad Beaumont can certainly sell enough
copies to keep his family off the streets.
(Liz turns to Thad in earnest.) You've
started the new book. It's a serious work,
Thad. Much better than the things you churn
out as George Stark. You know that. You're
too good to be George Stark. You've always
talked about getting rid of him. Here's
your chance. This...Creepazoid could be
a blessing in disguise.

THAD

(Smiling slightly) Creepazoid is not a word.

LIZ

Noun. Used to describe Fred Clawson and all those like him.

They laugh, and so do the babies. Wendy lifts a chubby hand, opens it showing a clean pink palm. Closes it. Opens it. A Wendy-wave. Without looking at her, William lifts one of his hands, opens it, closes it, opens it. A William-wave. Thad solemnly raises one of his own hands, opens it, closes it, opens it.

THAD

I better call George Stark's agent. Tell him he might be losing a client.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW EVENING

THAD paces while talking into a cordless phone.

THAD

So that's the story, Rick. I can't see paying this asshole off. Seems like going public is the right thing to do. I need to know you're alright with it, though. Stark earns a lot more for you than I do.

LIZ comes downstairs, having tucked away the babies.

THAD (cont.)

If you don't want me to do this, I'll....
(He looks at Liz, who tenses visibly)....
I'll give it some more thought.

Thad listens to Rick's response. After a moment, he smiles at Liz and makes a thumbs-up sign. Liz relaxes again.

THAD (cont.)

Miriam? She's still there? You guys stay open late. Or maybe it's not all business. Are you two patching things up on the office couch?

INT RICK COWLEY'S OFFICE IN MANHATTAN EVENING

In a richly appointed office that overlooks Park Avenue, RICK COWLEY snuffs out a cigarette in a book-shaped ashtray on his desk. Slick, in clothes by Bijan, Rick looks very show-biz. His wife, MIRIAM, sits across the room on a plush chair. She shops at Ralph Lauren.

RICK

No such thing. We're committed to making our divorce work. But Miriam is still my business partner, and she should be in on this.

RICK nods to MIRIAM, indicating that he wants her to pick up the extension. She does.

MIRIAM

Hi, Thad. I've been listening. I got the gist. I'm all for it.

Rick lights another cigarette. We get the feeling he's not quite as "all for it" as his ex.

MIRIAM (cont.)

Your new book is gonna win awards and sell two hundred thousand hardback. Who needs George Stark. We'll help you get rid of him. We'll put out a press release, you'll go on the talk shows. I say.... hallelujah!

RICK

You heard the lady, Thad. We're with ya, buddy. Right. We'll talk in the morning.

They each say goodbye and hang up their respective telephones.

RICK (cont.)

Shit.

MIRIAM

He shouldn't be writing trash. We have a lot of other clients who can make us money with trash.

RICK

I like trash. I read George Stark for fun. I read Thad Beaumont because it's my job.

MIRIAM

That's why we are now living across town from each other.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD gets dishes from a cupboard and takes some silverware out of a drawer. LIZ pulls a small turkey out of the oven. When she tries

to transfer it to a serving platter, it falls apart. Soft meat pulls clean away from the skeleton. Stuffing spills out like chunky oatmeal.

LIZ

Shit. Cooked too long. I'm sorry.
Our nice dinner.

Thad picks out a small piece of meat and pops it into his mouth.

THAD

Still tastes good.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

There's a fire in the hearth. THAD and LIZ sit on the floor eating at a low coffee table. Their turkey dinners look like mush.

THAD

Won't you miss old George?

LIZ

Not at all.

THAD

I think I will.

LIZ

I know you will. He lets you do anything you want....say anything you want....be anything you want. He's your drinkin' buddy.

Thad looks hurt by this last remark.

LIZ (cont.)

Sorry. I didn't mean to bring that up.

The apology doesn't brighten Thad. He goes into a sulk.

LIZ (cont.)

Thad, I love you. I want you to be here when I'm old. I want you to be here after I'm gone. You're....important. I don't want to lose you to....

She breaks off, not finishing the sentence. Thad stops eating and drops his fork.

THAD

Liz....I am not an alcoholic.

LIZ

George Stark is.

THAD

(Irritated) Oh, please.

Liz stops eating now and they sit silently for a moment. Liz decides to pursue the point.

LIZ

I hate it when you write one of those awful books. You're a different person. It's Like....Jekyll turning into Hyde.

THAD

That's a little extreme, don't you think. I'm not out raping barmaids.

LIZ

Thad Beaumont gave up smoking and gave up alcohol three years ago. George Stark didn't. And those....godawful moods. The mean, angry things that you say sometimes....

Another silence. Thad becomes introspective.

THAD

I am what I am, Liz. I'm me. It's all me. Even the ugliness....is part of me.

LIZ

It's a part that never showed until George Stark came on the scene. I'll be glad to have him out of here.

THE CAMERA PULLS SLOWLY AWAY from them. We begin to hear A MAN'S VOICE. It starts softly at first, and gets gradually louder.

VOICE (o.s.)

" 'The poets talk about love,' Machine said, running the straight-razor back and forth along the strop. The politicians talk about duty.'"

EXT SOMEWHERE ALONG ROUTE 5 IN MAINE DAY

The Beaumonts' Chevy Suburban moves along Route 5 heading west toward the Lake Region.

VOICE (o.s.)

"'But what I talk about is doom,' he said.
'Because, in the end, doom is all that counts.'"

INT THE SUBURBAN ON ROUTE 5 DAY

THAD is driving. LIZ sits in the back with THE BABIES, who are strapped into twin car-seats. MIKE DONALDSON, a reporter for People magazine (forty-five with a pony tail), sits in the front passenger seat beside Thad. It's Donaldson's voice we've been hearing. He's reading from a George Stark novel.

DONALDSON

"Machine turned the straight-razor down and slashed the strop in two. A long section fell to the floor like a severed tongue."

LIZ

Ugh!

DONALDSON

"'Cut him,' Jack Rangely said eagerly. 'Cut him while I stand here and watch. I wanna see the blood flow.' Halstead squeezed his eyes shut, but it did no good. The razor slid effortlessly through the left lid and punctured the eyeball beneath with a faint popping sound. 'I'm back,' Machine said. 'I'm back from the dead and you don't seem glad to see me at all, you ungrateful son of a bitch.'"

Thad laughs appreciatively. In the back seat, Liz shudders.

THAD

Machine is a vengeful motherfucker. But ain't he righteous?

DONALDSON

(Making notes) The robber robbed. Is that what makes him so attractive, do you think?

LIZ

Attractive?

THAD

Sure. Machine is a bad guy. But when the other bad guys do him wrong, you gotta root for him. Got to.

EXT THE BEAUMONT SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

The Suburban pulls down a gravel drive and stops in front of a multi-level summer house which is cut into a hillside on the edge of a large lake. We can see the rooftops of one or two other houses, but they're quite far away. THAD and DONALDSON get out of the Suburban while LIZ unstraps THE TWINS.

An old maroon and white pick-up truck is parked near the house. A tarp covers something that's been loaded into the bed. Two men have gotten out of the truck and are walking toward the Suburban. One is a crusty Down-Easter, a real character, with a vintage Pentax SLR strapped around his neck. This is HOMER GAMACHE, seventy if he's a day but energetic and spry despite the fact that he has a prosthetic left leg. The other man, much younger, is Homer's ASSISTANT.

HOMER

Mr. Donaldson?

DONALDSON

(Skeptically) You're....the photographer?

HOMER

Yessir. Homer Gamache. (Shaking hands.)
I'm gonna do this up brown for ya. (Turning to Thad) And you're Thad Beaumont. Seen you around town. Who'd o'thought? Who'd ever o'thought? People magazine. This is big. This is big time. Mind if I shoot some pictures of the house?

THAD

No. I guess that'd....be okay.

HOMER

I'm gonna do this up brown for ya. I'm gonna do this up brown.

Homer hobbles off, Pentax clicking, followed by his assistant who juggles lenses while trying to meter the light.

DONALDSON

I hate using locals. Never know what you're going to get.

THAD

I'm sure he'll do fine.

LIZ (o.s.)

Thad.

Liz has unstrapped the twins and needs help getting out of the car. Thad takes the babies. Liz collects a pink diaper bag, an over-nighter, and some groceries from the back seat.

DONALDSON

Sure is....quiet up here.

THAD

Yeah. Nobody around to bother you. We don't get to appreciate it much. We can only get up here in the summer.

DONALDSON

Oh, that's right. You're still teaching. I'm surprised you didn't give that up when you became a celebrity.

THAD

I never became a celebrity. George Stark did.

DONALDSON

Well....we're here to change that.

THAD

Yeah. Guess so.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

It's a comfortable place. Rustic, but with all the conveniences. Sliding glass doors off the living room open onto a deck which overlooks the lake. The young PHOTO ASSISTANT focuses a soft-light on the spot where HOMER GAMACHE has THAD posing against the scenery.

HOMER

A little to the left. Good. Little more.

Thad bumps into a set of wind chimes and sets them ringing.

HOMER (cont.)

Good. Right there. (He starts to shoot.) I'm doing a series of photographs....you might be interested in this (CLICK).... photographs of teddy bears (CLICK) lying in coffins. I wanna make them into a book. The final, perfect comment (CLICK) on the

HOMER (cont.)

American way of death. (CLICK) All this....
folderol we put ourselves through. (CLICK)
Hate funerals. (CLICK) Hate any kind of
folderol. (CLICK) Death and Teddy Bears.
That's what I'm gonna call it. (CLICK) I'll
show it to you when it's done. Who knows?
(CLICK) Maybe you'd like to write the text?

Thad tries to bear-up.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

DONALDSON is in the kitchen with LIZ, who is putting away the
essentials she's brought in cupboards, in the fridge.

DONALDSON

(Reading Stark's "jacket-bio") Stark was
born in Manchester, New Hampshire. He
now lives in....(searching)....er....

LIZ

Oxford, Mississippi.

DONALDSON

Right. He's done time in three different
prisons on charges of arson, assault with
a deadly weapon, assault with intent to kill.

LIZ

Thad made all that up.

DONALDSON

He made Stark a bad guy. Like Alexis
Machine. A righteous bad guy.

All this prying is making LIZ uneasy. DONALDSON is cutting too
close to the bone.

LIZ

Thad made George Stark into something
that he himself could never be.

DONALDSON

But maybe....wanted to be?

LIZ

Maybe. Didn't you ever want to be a hood,
Mr. Donaldson?

DONALDSON

Yeah. When I was a boy. I guess I did.

LIZ

Sure you did. Everybody does. Hoods don't have to take any shit.

INT STAIRWAY AND UPSTAIRS HALL IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

THAD precedes DONALDSON up a flight of stairs and into a hallway which is blocked at the end by a set of book shelves. LIZ follows, somewhat reluctantly. Thad pushes on the book shelves and they it swing aside, pivoting on a central rod, like a revolving door.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

THAD leads DONALDSON into a dark, windowless office. LIZ doesn't walk in after them. She stands in the opening beside the revolving shelves. Pictures, souvenirs, mementos lie here and there, but this is a writing room primarily and its central feature is an enormous dinosaur of a desk on which sits Thad's old Remington 32.

DONALDSON

Not much of a view.

THAD

If I had a window up here I'd sit and stare at the lake all day.

Thad clicks on a goose-neck lamp which casts a circle of light onto the desktop. There are two chairs. The men sit in them. Liz doesn't need one. She doesn't seem to want to come inside.

THAD

This is where George Stark came into being. Right here in this room.

DONALDSON

I notice the old typewriter there.

THAD

Had it since I was a boy. I still use it. George doesn't.

DONALDSON

You're kidding.

THAD

Nope. George doesn't hold with type-writers. He uses these.

From a wide-mouthed mason jar beside the old Remington, Thad draws a Berol Black Beauty pencil. There are a dozen or so others in the jar, all blunted, all with tooth marks in the wood.

THAD (cont.)

From day one he's used these.

DONALDSON

You really are serious.

THAD

Dead serious. It's the truth.

DONALDSON

Was it hard to get George started?

THAD

Not at all. One evening I just....picked up one of these pencils. Next thing I knew, it was the middle of the night. I'd written sixteen pages without a single scratch-out. It was like....George Stark just....woke up and started to talk.

Thad and Liz exchange meaningful glances. Liz is looking apprehensive again.

THAD (cont.)

Guess I oughta toss these things out now that George is dead. I don't use them myself. I tried. It just didn't work. My hand gets tired and stupid.

Thad drops the Black Beauty back into the jar with its mates.

EXT HOMELAND CEMETERY IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

The Beaumonts' Suburban pulls into Homeland Cemetery, the kind of small New England boneyard where tourists do rubbings. Homer Gamache's pick-up sits parked, having come on ahead. The tarp is thrown back. Whatever was in the bed has been taken out. THAD and LIZ get out of the Suburban and are greeted by DIGGER HOLT, another old codger, the cemetery caretaker.

THAD

Hey, Digger.

DIGGER

Thaddeus. 'Lizabeth. Hope ya don't mind.
Crazy Homer....he says he wants to set
up this fake tombstone.

THAD

Fake tombstone?

They start to walk, Digger leading the way.

DIGGER

You don't wanna be walkin' on the dead,
I says, so make sure you use an empty plot
where nobody's buried. Then I remembered.
Hell, I says, Thad Beaumont owns one. That
one yer daddy bought for ya over near where
him and yer mom's layin'. Why don't ya use
that, I says. So....hope ya don't mind...
that's where Homer's settin' up.

They approach the Beaumont plot to find HOMER and his ASSISTANT
setting up their photo equipment. A papier-mache tombstone stands
decorated with flowers. The epitaph reads:

GEORGE STARK

1985 - 1991

Not a Very Nice Guy

HOMER

This here was my idea. I was up here
takin' pictures of teddy bears when I
thought of it. Ain't it a hoot? Told
ya I was gonna do this up brown for ya.

Thad stares at the tombstone apprehensively. A sudden wind kicks up
ruffling his hair. His hand shoots unconsciously to the scar on his
forehead.

DIGGER

Damn if it don't look real. Must be
strange for ya, Thad. Kinda like....
standin' over yer own grave.

LIZ

I think this is....a bit....much.

HOMER

Aw, it's good fun, is all. New York's gonna love it. You wait and see.

THAD

(Quietly) The American way of death.

HOMER

That's it. A little folderol for old George, there. Come on in here now. We're losin' the light.

Homer guides Thad and Liz, who are looking very uncomfortable, into positions behind the stone. The assistant hands Thad a spade, Liz a pick. A prop wheelbarrow with more cemetery implements is wheeled into position.

HOMER

Okay. How about you two....shaking hands.

LIZ

Shaking hands?

HOMER

Yeah. Shaking hands over top of the stone.

Thad and Liz reach their arms over the top of the gravestone and obediently join their right hands together.

HOMER (cont.)

Okay. Now....smiling....big smiles....

CLICK! For all the world to see.

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

Several weeks later, back in Ludlow, THAD, LIZ and THE TWINS, all four of them naked, are lying in a cluster on their big king-size bed with pillows and blankets propped around them. Thad has a copy of People open to the graveyard photograph.

LIZ

Are you sorry you did it?

THAD

I'm only sorry about one thing. We look like a pair of idiots.

LIZ

(Checking the photo) We do, don't we?

THAD

We won't be able to hide from publicity any more. We've had it pretty easy. George never had to do any of this shit.

LIZ

It's done. And Fred Clawson didn't get jack shit, which is just what he deserves.

THAD

Hey, kids. We're in People magazine!

WILLIAM

Bugguyrah!

THAD

Yeah!

WENDY

Divvit!

THAD

That makes sense, too.

They all laugh and curl in closer, enjoying each other's warmth.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT A COUNTRY ROAD IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

Homer Gamache's maroon and white pick-up comes rumbling down a country road, swerving drunkenly.

INT TRUCK CAB ON THE COUNTRY ROAD NIGHT

HOMER, slugging from a pint of V.O., tries to hold the road as best he can.

HOMER

(Singing) There was an old skinflint
named Dave....who kept a dead whore in
a cave....Dave said, 'I admit....I'm
a bit of a shit....but think of the
money I save, I save....think of the....

The truck turns a bend and, through the windshield, Homer sees....

....A TALL DARK FIGURE standing in the road, one hand held high, thumb extended in a hitchhiker's gesture.

HOMER (cont.)

You gotta be kiddin', pal. At one in the damn A.M.

Homer hits the gas, speeding up.

EXT THE COUNTRY ROAD NIGHT

The pick-up blows past THE DARK MAN, who slowly lowers his hand.
(We can't see his face.)

INT TRUCK CAB ON THE COUNTRY ROAD NIGHT

HOMER

Hey....that looks like....

Homer slams on the brakes and the truck screeches to a stop. He looks back through the rear window.

THE DARK MAN stands in the shadows for a long moment, then slowly starts to walk toward the truck.

Homer gears into reverse, backs the truck up about thirty yards, and hits the brake. He looks through the rear window again.

The dark man walks slowly past the truck bed then disappears behind the blind spot on the passenger side of the cab.

Homer looks to the passenger side window, expecting the man to appear there. But the man doesn't appear. For a long time.... an unnaturally long time....there's nothing but silence. Homer slides across the seat and rolls the passenger window down.

EXT THE COUNTRY ROAD WITH HOMER'S TRUCK NIGHT

HOMER sticks his head out the window and looks toward the rear of the truck. No one there. Just a few ghostly feathers of night fog.

HOMER

What the hell....?

WHAM! A powerful hand grabs Homer from behind.

VOICE (o.s.)

The American way of death, Homer. Here it is. Without any folderol.

THE DARK MAN, his face still hidden, pulls Homer out through the truck window. Homer gets stuck briefly at the waist, then something snaps and he comes through clean....except for his prosthetic leg which snags, pulls away from his body, and remains dangling from the window frame.

EXT HOMELAND CEMETERY IN CASTLE ROCK MORNING

A police cruiser pulls in through the gate at Homeland Cemetery and a tall, good looking man steps out carrying a styrofoam coffee cup. This is ALAN PANGBORN, the Sheriff of Castle Rock. His soft voice and collected manner belie his rough-and-tumble features. He walks over to meet DIGGER HOLT, who is waiting beside his truck.

DIGGER

Sorry to roust ya out, Sheriff, but I thought it'd be best to let those who was paid for it do the sortin' out.

ALAN

Where is it?

DIGGER

Right up here.

Digger leads Alan up to the Beaumont plot, to the spot where Homer Gamache set up his phony tombstone. And right on that spot, exactly where the tombstone stood, there's a hole in the ground. The hole has no definition. It's just a blob. But it's deep enough, and big enough, to have once held a man.

DIGGER (cont.)

Don't it look like what I said? Don't it look like somebody dug his way out of there? Like somebody was buried alive and dug his way out?

ALAN

Someone dug a hole in your graveyard. That's all it is, Digger.

DIGGER

Look here.

He points at the loose earth which seems to have erupted from the hole. There are hand prints. Very distinct hand prints.

DIGGER (cont.)

Somebody was in there, Sheriff. Set his hands in the dirt here to boost hisself out.

ALAN

So....whoever dug the hole....got down in it to do the diggin'. You got a clear case of vandalism here. That's the way I see it. You been tendin' the boneyard too long. I'm afraid it's gettin' to ya.

Alan hears a call coming in on his car radio.

DIGGER

This is where they set up for that picture. In the magazine, you know?

ALAN

Picture of the Beaumonts. I saw it.

DIGGER

This here's the Beaumont plot and that hole is sittin' right smack where they set up that fake tombstone. It looked so real. My, that gravestone looked real.

Another squawk from the car.

ALAN

It's just a hole in the ground. Forget it, Digger. Fill the damn thing in and forget it.

Alan walks quickly to his cruiser. He sits in the front seat and snatches up his radio mike.

ALAN (cont.)

This is Pangborn.

NORRIS (o.s.)

Yeah, Sheriff, it's Norris. We just found old Homer Gamache. Deader'n a squashed coon.

EXT A ROADSIDE IN CASTLE ROCK MORNING

Alan's cruiser pulls up, siren wailing. There's another cruiser and an ambulance already at the scene. ALAN gets out and is met by NORRIS RIDGEWICK, one of his deputies, who leads him off the road and down into a ditch.

NORRIS

House across the road there. Woman says she saw Homer stop to pick up a hitchhiker, white male, about one a.m..

ALAN

A hitchhiker. Shit.

NORRIS

Woman says that's who did him. Apparently to get his truck. We got a description out on it.

ALAN

Jesus wept.

They have reached the spot where HOMER lies dead and Alan has gotten his first look at the remains. Homer's head has been beaten into a pulpy, clotted mass which has lost most of its definition. His left leg is missing below the knee.

ALAN (cont.)

He took his leg. He took his damn leg.

NORRIS

Didn't take it. It's over there.

Alan looks off into the high grass where Pritchard's prosthetic leg lies battered and smeared with blood.

NORRIS (cont.)

That's what he beat him with. Beat him with his own wooden leg.

Alan kneels beside the body and tries to wave the flies away.

ALAN

He was just an old man, you son of a bitch. Why didn't you just....clip him one....take his truck and leave him be. Why this? Man, I hope I get a chance to ask you.

A FORENSIC TEAM is waiting to step in. Alan moves out of the way. He and Norris walk back toward the vehicles.

ALAN (cont.)

I want everybody in the world lookin' for
for that truck. I wanna get this bastard.

EXT A USED CAR LOT IN CONNECTICUT NIGHT

It's about two a.m. when Connecticut State Trooper WARREN HAMILTON pulls his cruiser into a used car lot near I-95. The place is deserted. So is the highway. Crickets chirp softly as the cruiser glides to a stop. Hamilton pops his spotlight and trains it on....

....an old GMC pick-up truck, maroon and white, Maine plates. We recognize it as the one that belonged to Homer Gamache. Hamilton gets out of the cruiser and thumbs the strap off his gun.

HAMILTON

Old cops, bold cops, but no old bold cops.

Hamilton pulls his flashlight from its loop and moves cautiously toward the truck. The darkness is thick, the silence stifling. He approaches from the rear, runs his light beam along the bed of the pick-up. It's empty. He crouches and shines the light beneath the truck. Nothing there. He moves on to the cab, steps up to the passenger window, and shines his light inside.

HAMILTON (cont.)

Ask mama if she believes this. He drove
it like this? All the way from Maine,
he drove it like this?

The cab is a sty. Beer cans, soft drink cans, empty potato chip and pork rind bags. Most of all, there's blood. Streaks and blotches of blood, on the seat, grimed into the steering wheel, on the mirror.

ECU: THE MIRROR, as the flashlight beam illuminates an oval shaped blood stain....an almost perfect thumbprint.

There's A SCRAPING NOISE. Hamilton spins, draws his revolver, and almost triggers off a shot....

....into nothing but darkness. There's no one there. A little gust of wind puffs the night. The scraping noise comes again.

On the pavement, Hamilton's flashlight beam finds a Filet-O-Fish box. It skitters five or six feet at the whim of the breeze.

EXT BANGOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT DAY

A jetliner lands in the background as LIZ BEAUMONT pulls up to collect THAD who is returning home from a trip.

LIZ

How was New York?

THAD

Noisy. God, I'm sick of this. The same questions. Over and over. Tell us about the pencils. Why did you give him a prison record? What makes Alexis Machine so popular? What a crazy fuckin' world.

LIZ

We watched you on the morning show. I think Wendy said a word. I think she said 'Da-da' when she saw you. You looked great. You did great. (She kisses him) You are great.

Thad tosses his suit bag into the Suburban. He and Liz get aboard and go motoring off toward home.

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW EVENING

THAD is unpacking in the bedroom when he hears the doorbell ring downstairs. He moves off to see who it is.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW EVENING.

LIZ opens the front door. There are THREE UNIFORMED MEN on the stoop. One of them is ALAN PANGBORN.

LIZ

Alan....?

TROOPER #1

Are you Elizabeth Beaumont?

LIZ

Yes. What....?

TROOPER #2

Is your husband home, Mrs. Beaumont?

LIZ

Alan, what is it? Is there some problem?

ALAN

It's alright, I know these folks. We have to talk to Thad, Liz. Serious business.

LIZ

Come in. I'll get him.

They move into the living room. Liz turns to call Thad, but she doesn't have to. He has come downstairs and is walking up behind her.

THAD

Alan. What are you doing in Ludlow?

Thad bumps into a pedestal and almost knocks over a vase, a Ming imitation with a hundred painted cracks. It holds a half-dozen garden roses. He catches it just in time.

TROOPER #1

Are you Thaddeus Beaumont?

THAD

No, I'm Batman. What's goin' on, Alan?

Thad puts out his hand to shake. Alan doesn't take it.

TROOPER #2

(Reading from a card) We're here to question you in connection with a capital crime. You have the right to remain silent...

LIZ

Oh dear Jesus, please, what is this?

TROOPER #2

....and you have the right to legal counsel. If you cannot afford legal counsel, such will be provided for you.

LIZ

Thad?

THAD

Look. I don't know what you're doin' here a hundred and sixty miles out of your territory, or why you're lookin' at me like I was a splat of birdshit on a new car, but I can tell you that I'm not answering any questions until I find out. What's goin' on, Alan? Talk to me.

ALAN

It's about Homer Gamache.

THAD

Homer? The photographer? (To Liz)
That's the old coot that took those
pictures. For the magazine. (To Alan)
What about him?

ALAN

He's been murdered.

THAD

What? Jesus. Who did it?

ALAN

Evidence says....you did.

LIZ

This is a joke. This has got to be a joke.

TROOPER #1

Can you account for your whereabouts during
the time period from eleven p.m. last friday
until one a.m. saturday morning?

THAD

I was in New York. I just got home today.
Little while ago.

Trooper #1 looks at Alan who purses his lips thoughtfully.

ALAN

How long were you there?

THAD

I left friday afternoon. Four o'clock
flight out of Bangor.

ALAN

Anyone meet you there? Did you do anything
that night?

THAD

No. I just....went to my hotel. I called my
agent....Rick Cowley....to tell him I got in.

ALAN

You called him but you didn't see him.

THAD

Jesus Christ, Alan, what the hell do you think I'm lyin' to ya?

ALAN

There is that possibility and I've got to consider it.

This sobers Thad. He pulls away and drops into a chair.

ALAN (cont.)

I've known you for a long time, Thad, and from what I know you're not the kind that would ever do a thing like this, but none of that counts when it comes to doin' my job. I've got to look at every possibility here including the one that maybe you took a side-trip over to Castle Rock before you went to New York last friday.

Thad jumps to his feet again.

THAD

I don't fucking believe this! Call the airlines. Delta. Call the hotel. U.N. Plaza. They must have a record of when I arrived.

Trooper #2 makes notes.

LIZ

I don't understand, Alan. Why are you so determined to lay this off on Thad?

THAD

Because he thinks I did it. He really thinks I did it.

Thad feels a shiver go up his spine. He hears something. A phantom SOUND that he hasn't heard in thirty years. The sound of birds, screeching. He puts a hand up to his head and touches the white scar there.

LIZ

Thad? Are you alright?

THAD

Hmmm?

LIZ

You look pale.

THAD

I'm....I'm alright. I'm fine.

The bird sound fades and dies. Liz takes Thad's arm and hugs it. They look at Alan Pangborn with pleading eyes. Alan, reading their apparent innocence, turns to the other policemen.

ALAN

If this turns out to be a mistake, I will personally find the man who screwed up this ID and pull his skin off.

THAD

What ID? What's this evidence you have? Why....why me?

ALAN

First off....there's the connection between you and Homer.

THAD

The pictures.

ALAN

One of which was taken in Homeland Cemetery.

THAD

Yeah. So?

ALAN

Someone went into Homeland friday night and dug a hole in your family plot there. A hole big enough to bury a man.

LIZ

Thad, this is....this is crazy!

ALAN

Homer was murdered less than a mile away.

Thad starts to pace, his mind churning.

THAD

So....if I was the killer....and I wanted to bury the body....the family plot would be a logical place. That's what you're thinking.

Alan watches Thad closely, studies him.

THAD (cont.)

It'd be poetic justice, too. Bury the poor bastard on the spot where he set up that tombstone. So why didn't I do it? Why didn't I bury him?

ALAN

You tell me. Scared off maybe?

LIZ

This can't be. This can't be, Thad. Someone is doing this to us. That creep, Clawson.

ALAN

Who?

THAD

There's....there's this guy. Fred Clawson. Lives in New York. I don't know where. He found out that I wrote the George Stark books and he was trying to blackmail me. That's why I went public with the story. Rather than pay him.

ALAN

I'll ask NYPD to track him down.

THAD

What else do you have, Alan? I don't believe you'd come trackin' me just because of some hole in the ground.

ALAN

The killer took Homer's pick-up truck. Connecticut trooper found it in a used car lot just north of the state line. They figure he switched it for one of the cars on the lot and drove on....to New York.

LIZ

God.

THAD

That's still pretty weak. There must be more.

ALAN

There is. They found fingerprints in the truck. Some of 'em stamped in Homer's blood. They fed them into a graphics computer and your service record came back. Your prints match up. Exactly.

EXT THE BEAUMONT SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

SHOCK CUT: to a dead black Toronado, jacked in the back, as it growls to a stop in front of the Beaumont summer house on Castle Lake. THAD BEAUMONT gets out of the passenger door and walks around the back of the car.

The light is very bright. Too bright. Thad looks down at the rear bumper. The car has a Mississippi licence plate and, beneath it, a bumper sticker that reads: HIGH-TONED SON OF A BITCH.

Thad looks up at the house. There's a FOR SALE sign planted in the grass. A VOICE whispers from somewhere behind Thad's back.

VOICE (o.s.)

Nice house, isn't it?

THAD

It's my house.

VOICE (o.s.)

Wrong. The owner of this house is dead.

A large hand, which appears to have no lines in it, reaches over Thad's shoulder and dangles a bunch of keys in his face.

CUT TO:

The front door, as Thad's hand inserts one of the keys....it's a typewriter key....into the lock and opens the door.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

THAD'S footfalls echo as he enters the place. A vase stands on a pedestal. A Ming imitation with a hundred painted cracks. It holds a half-dozen garden roses. Thad reaches out to touch it and it explodes into shards. The roses turn black in mid air and are dead before they hit the floor.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

THAD is in the kitchen. He touches the stove and it splits in two with a dull noise. Peering into the dark hole in the stove's middle Thad sees a turkey, putrescent and noisome. Black fluid filled with unnameable gobbets of flesh oozes from the cavity in the bird.

VOICE (o.s.)

Down here we call that fool's stuffing.

THAD

What do you mean....down here?

VOICE (o.s.)

Endsville, Thad. The place where all rail service terminates.

Thad spins around and trips over something on the floor. It's the pink diaper bag that we've seen Liz carrying.

VOICE (o.s.)

You always were the clumsy one, old hoss.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

Thad moves into the living room. It's dark. The only light comes from a fire in the hearth. Thad turns a corner and sees....

....LIZ, sitting in the dining area, her wrists and ankles bound to a straight-backed chair with clothesline. Her head is drooped, her hair obscuring her face. Thad leaps forward and grabs her. Her body shifts forward, her head lolls back. The skin of her face cracks open in a hundred places, like the surface of the Ming vase, and falls apart. Her glazed eyes roll out of her head like marbles. Her mouth gapes ajar and her teeth fly out in a white storm. Thad screams.

VOICE (o.s.)

I'm not done with you, cock-knocker.
Remember that. You don't want to fuck
with me, because when you fuck with me....

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD wakes with a jerk.

THAD

....you're fucking with the best.

LIZ

~~~~~.....

Beside him, LIZ stirs but remains asleep. Thad takes a moment to recover. Once his breathing is close to normal, he swings his legs out of bed and stands up. He trips over something.

It's the pink diaper bag.

Thad stands in the dark, alone with his thoughts.

INT FRED CLAWSON'S BROWNSTONE IN NEW YORK MORNING

DODIE EBERHART, hooker turned landlady, leads TWO NEW YORK POLICEMEN up the stairs of an old brownstone in Alphabetland.

When they reach the second floor, they find that the door to Fred Clawson's apartment is slightly ajar. Dodie raps with her knuckles and the door opens wider with a creak.

INT FRED CLAWSON'S APARTMENT MORNING

DODIE

Clawson. There's police here to see you.

Looking up the short corridor to the living room, DODIE can see that the shades are drawn and the lights are burning.

DODIE

Clawson. You owe me two weeks rent.  
If these guys are here to take you away,  
I want it now.

She moves up the corridor and edges her head around the corner.  
THE POLICEMEN follow.

FRED CLAWSON is sitting in a chair, naked except for his ridiculous leather jacket. Blood is dripping down from between his legs and plopping into a large puddle on the floor. His head is flopped over to one side. We can't see his face, but his shadow on the wall shows that he has something in his mouth.

Also on the wall is Fred Clawson's tongue. It's been tacked up with a push-pin. Above it, finger-written in blood, are the words:

THE SPARROWS ARE FLYING AGAIN

INT THAD BEAUMONT'S STUDY IN LUDLOW AFTERNOON

THAD sits at his desk and stares at the unfinished manuscript of his new book. There's a typewriter on the desk, not as old as the Remington, though it is a manual, and beside it sits a coffee cup filled with Berol Black Beauties. Thad begins to read the manuscript. He pulls a red editing marker from a drawer and distractedly makes a few minor corrections.

The SOUND starts softly, but quickly builds. Birds. Shrieking.

FLASH CUT: Treetops. (We've seen them before. Outside the hospital where young Thad has his surgery.) SPARROWS, thousands of them, are roosting on the trees and on telephone wires. They take off all at once and darken the white sky.

In the study, Thad's head droops back. His mouth opens.

THAD  
Gonna hook back north, hoss.

He says this in a low, guttural voice that is not his own. It's the voice from his dream.

Gradually, the shrieking sound diminishes and Thad comes back to his senses. He looks down at the manuscript. Slashed across the lines of neat type, written in pencil, in large capital letters, are the words:

THE SPARROWS ARE FLYING AGAIN

The red marker has been tossed aside and in Thad's hand is one of the Berol Black Beauties. He drops the pencil back into the coffee cup, bundles the whole thing into a desk drawer, and slams the drawer shut.

LIZ (o.s.)  
He's back!

The words hit Thad hard. He's disoriented for a moment.

LIZ (cont. o.s.)  
Thad?

Knocking. At the door. Thad gets up from the desk.

INT THE BEAUMONT'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY IN LUDLOW DAY

THAD opens his study door and stares dumbly at LIZ.

LIZ

He's back.

THAD

Who?

LIZ

Alan Pangborn.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

ALAN PANGBORN has brought a six-pack of beer.

ALAN

I wondered if we could all sit down and have a cold one.

He pulls a can off its plastic ring and hands it to LIZ. She takes it without thinking. He holds another can out to THAD who shakes his head refusing. Alan pops the top and keeps it for himself.

ALAN (cont.)

I have no business being here. Socializing with a man who is now a suspect in not just one murder but two.

LIZ

Two?

THAD

Somebody else....was killed?

ALAN

Your buddy. Frederick Clawson.

Thad looks at Liz who sits and absently tries to take a sip from her unopened can of beer. She lowers the can and pops the top slowly.

THAD

When?

ALAN

Night before last. In New York. While you were still there.

THAD

Night....night before last. Night before last. What time? I was....

ALAN

You were at a press reception until eleven o'clock. We think Clawson was killed around nine or ten, but it could have been as late as midnight. Methods of determining time of death aren't that precise. We got another set of fingerprints out of Clawson's apartment. Once again, they match yours exactly.

LIZ

Thad....what is going on?

THAD

I'm surprised you brought beer and not handcuffs. What's keepin' me out of jail?

ALAN

Me, I guess. Homer was murdered in Castle County so the State of Maine is giving me temporary jurisdiction. New York guys think you should be brought in. I'm usin' your alibis to hold them off.

THAD

Why? With all this evidence pointing at me.... how come you're letting me off the hook?

ALAN

I'm not. You're very much on the hook, Thad, and if you killed these people, I'm gonna pull you into the boat.

Sobered, Thad starts to pace.

ALAN (cont.)

I figure you're not goin' anywhere. Hard for a man like you to hide. I'm willin'to let you sleep at home while I work on this some more.

LIZ

I was so sure it was Clawson. Could he.... could he have killed himself? Made it look like Thad did it?

THAD

Pretty lame, Liz.

LIZ

Who else could possibly have a reason....?

ALAN

Clawson didn't kill himself. The way he died....would have been impossible. I gotta say....it doesn't make sense that you'd want to kill a would-be blackmailer after you already told the secret to the press. Did anybody else know that you and Clawson were connected?

THAD

My agent, but he wouldn't have.... (Thinking) Clawson got his information from someone who works for my publisher. Some woman, that's all he told me. I don't have a name.

LIZ

Maybe it's some....lunatic fan doing this. Crazy because there won't be any more George Stark novels. Someone who knew Clawson. Knew he was responsible for Thad's going to the press.

Alan looks skeptical.

LIZ (cont.)

There are all kinds of crazy people out there, and I'm sure a fair percentage of them are big fans of Alexis Machine.

THAD

You mentioned....the way Clawson died.

ALAN

Looked like a classic gangland hit.

THAD

Was he shot?

ALAN

You don't shoot a blabbermouth. You make him bleed. Make him suffer. Clawson's tongue was cut out. He was castrated and his penis was stuffed into his mouth.

Liz jerks in her chair spilling beer over the back of her hand. She looks at Thad who is open-mouthed.

THAD

That's....exactly what I said I wanted to do to him. I was joking. I said.... that if I was Alexis Machine....that's exactly what I'd do to him.

ALAN

There was something written on the wall. Written in the victim's blood. "The sparrows are flying again." Does that mean anything to either of you?

LIZ

No.

ALAN

Thad?

Thad's face has become a mask.

THAD

No.

ALAN

You're sure?

THAD

Yes. I'm sure. I don't know what it means. I don't know....what it means.

INT THE BEAUMONT BATHROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD splashes water on his face from the bathroom sink. He looks at his hands. Sees that they're trembling visibly. Liz, standing in the open doorway, sees it too.

LIZ

You're keeping secrets, Thad. That's no good. It never was.

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD flops onto the bed. LIZ remains standing.

LIZ

Some psychotic out there has killed two people we know and has somehow been able

LIZ (cont.)

to make it look as though you did it.  
This guy is obviously out to get you.  
Hasn't it occurred to you that you might  
be in danger? That we could all of us  
be next on this guy's hit list? This is  
not a good time to hold things back, Thad.

THAD

No, it's not a good time. (He looks up  
at her.) The sparrows are flying again.

LIZ

That means something to you. What is it?

INT THAD'S STUDY IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD leads LIZ over to his desk and clicks on a light. The manu-  
script is still lying there with the phrase scrawled across it:  
THE SPARROWS ARE FLYING AGAIN. Liz stares at it in astonishment.

LIZ

You wrote this....before....?

THAD

Before Alan ever got here.

Liz sinks into Thad's desk chair.

LIZ

Oh, Thad, what is this? What....?

THAD

There's more. I wrote those words, but  
I don't remember doing it. I was....in  
some kind of trance.

Thad moves over to the window and looks out.

THAD (cont.)

The tumor I had when I was a boy. I told  
you about the headaches that it caused.  
Did I ever tell you about the sounds?

LIZ

Sounds?

THAD

I didn't think so. It never seemed very important. People with brain tumors sometimes have symptoms....sensory precursors. They smell things, hear things that aren't actually there. I used to hear birds. Sparrows. (He turns to face Liz) I've started to hear them again. I heard them today. Before Pangborn came. I was sitting there editing that manuscript and I heard them. I....I blanked out. I don't know how long. Next thing I knew....I'd written those words with one of George's pencils.

LIZ

Thad, you have to go to a doctor about this. God, maybe....maybe there's another tumor.

THAD

I thought that, too. That might explain the sounds. But what about the rest of it?

He turns to the window again and stares out into the darkness.

THAD (cont.)

Liz, I blanked out an entire period of time. I wrote those words and I have absolutely no recollection of doing it. What if there are....other things? Other things I've done that I can't remember?

EXT THE BEAUMONT'S SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

SHOCK CUT: VROOOOM! The black Toronado pulls up in front of the house on Castle Lake. THAD gets out, looks at the rear bumper....

HIGH-TONED SON OF A BITCH

....then looks at the house with its newly planted FOR SALE sign. The hand with no lines in it dangles keys in front of his face.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

THAD comes into the living room, dark but for light from the fire that burns in the hearth. LIZ is tied to a straight-backed chair. In another chair, beside her, sits FRED CLAWSON, naked except for

that absurd leather jacket. Something red is stuffed into his mouth. He's bleeding from between his legs.

VOICE (o.s.)

Down here, that's what happens to squealers. They get turned into fool's stuffing. Now he's taken care of. I'm gonna take care of all of them, one by one. Just make sure I don't have to take care of you.

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD wakes in a cold sweat. LIZ is asleep beside him. He rolls his body against hers, wraps his arms around her, and holds onto her as tightly as he can.

INT A HALLWAY AT THE UNIVERSITY DAY

THAD walks down a long hallway heading for his office at the University. RAWLIE DeLESSEPS is drifting dreamily from one side of the corridor to the other looking as though he's lost both his memory and his motor control.

RAWLIE

Thad. Delighted to see that they haven't incarcerated you.

THAD

Sounds like the police have been in touch.

RAWLIE

They wanted me to confirm that you were a man of good character. I lied and told them that you were.

The joke doesn't get a laugh.

RAWLIE (cont.)

Are you in trouble, Thad?

THAD

I'm in somethin'. Just a mix-up, I think, but it's....sure got me goin'.

Rawlie puffs thoughtfully on that big yellow pipe which hasn't been lit for years. It makes an odd whistling sound.

RAWLIE

Any way I can help?

THAD

I'll tell ya....there's some mighty weird  
shit goin' on. I probably could use some  
help from an old medicine man like you.

RAWLIE

Come. Let's talk.

THAD

Not now, Rawlie. I'm....I'm kind of  
scrambled right now.

Thad pulls away.

RAWLIE

Call if you need me.

THAD

I will. Thanks.

INT THAD'S OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY DAY

In his office, THAD pulls papers out of a file cabinet and dumps them into a briefcase. He picks up a large coffee mug and carries that and the briefcase across the room. Halfway to the desk, he begins to hear THE BIRD SOUND. He freezes and for a moment seems riveted to the spot where he stands. As the sound builds in intensity he begins to tremble. Coffee sloshes out of the mug, splashes over his hand and wrist.

FLASH CUT: The treetops we've seen before. the ones from Thad's youth. There are SPARROWS everywhere.

Thad staggers blindly to the desk and plops down the things he is carrying. He gropes for his chair and collapses into it, THE SOUND still filling his head. He picks up a pen, draws a sheet of paper toward him, and begins to write. His head lolls back on his neck. His eyes stare sightlessly at the ceiling. The pen flies back and forth, up and down, seeming to do so of its own accord.

FLASH CUT: as the birds take wing in a dark cloud that blots out the sky.

Thad snaps out of it. Gradually, THE SOUND FADES and dies.

Sweating heavily, Thad looks down at the paper on his desk. He stares stupidly at what is scribbled there.

INT THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE MIRIAM COWLEY'S NEW YORK APARTMENT NIGHT

MIRIAM COWLEY steps off an elevator and walks down a long, dark corridor pulling keys from her purse. She arrives at the door to her apartment and slides her key into the lock. Instead of slipping into the slot, it pushes the door open instead. Instantly afraid, Miriam begins to step back from the door but it's already too late.

A HAND comes out of the darkness and clamps over her wrist. She opens her mouth to scream but the hand yanks her forward with immense strength. The side of her face crunches into the corner of the steel jamb. Two of her teeth break off at the gumline and her cheekbone snaps like a twig. She sags, semi-conscious.

The door swings wide. A MAN seizes Miriam by the hair and drags her inside. He returns to retrieve her purse which has dropped in the hall, then he steps back into the apartment and shuts the door. It all happens in less than five seconds. We never see the man's face.

INT MIRIAM COWLEY'S APARTMENT IN NEW YORK NIGHT

In a small foyer, MIRIAM, sprawled on the floor, moans as she starts

to come to. Above her, THE MAN, reaches into his pocket, brings out a straight-razor, and shakes it open.

MAN

Make a sound and I'll cut you, sis.

The voice is not unlike Thad's. A bit more guttural, and with a slight hint of a Southern drawl. It's the voice from Thad's dreams.

A powerful hand grabs Miriam by the hair again and pulls her into the living room. She moans in pain.

MAN (cont.)

Don't do that! I told you!

The living room is cozy. French Impressionist prints on the walls, and a framed poster for the Broadway musical Cats: NOW AND FOREVER. The man drags Miriam over to a couch and pitches her against it. She scrambles up onto the cushions and cringes as far into them as they will allow.

MIRIAM

Wha ooo you wan?

It's like listening to someone talk through a mouthful of food.

MAN

We're gonna make a phone call, sissy.

He picks up the telephone and passes her the handset. She takes it and looks up at the man. (We still haven't seen his face.)

MAN (cont.)

You're thinkin' you could brain me with that thing aren't you. That's not a happy thought. You know what happens to people who lose their happy thoughts, don't you? They fall out of the sky.

She stares at him, all eyes. Blood runs slowly down her chin.

MAN (cont.)

We're gonna call Thad Beaumont.

The man leans forward and dials a ten-digit number. Then he pushes the "announce" button on an answering machine that is attached to the phone. We hear a series of faint electronic tones, then one ring, then two.

MIRIAM

What....what do I say?

MAN

You'll think of the right thing.

Miriam puts the handset up to her mouth. After a moment we hear (through the speaker on the answering machine) a click....followed by Thad Beaumont's voice.

THAD (o.s.)

Hello.

With the speed of a striking snake, the man leans forward and draws the straight-razor down Miriam's left cheek, pulling open a flap of skin. Miriam shrieks.

THAD (o.s.)

Hello! Hello, who is this? Goddammit, is it you?

The man leans in closer and, at last, we see him. He resembles Thad but he's leaner and meaner. His hair is cut short. His face is broad, craggy. Not unattractive and not without intelligence, but it's the face of a dangerous man. The face of "bad". His blue eyes have the same fierce determination, the same predatory intensity that we've seen in Thad's eyes from time to time. We know who he is the moment we see him. He's GEORGE STARK.

STARK

Tell him who you are and what's happening here! Do it! Don't make me tell you twice!

THAD (o.s.)

Who's that? What's going on? Who is this?

STARK

Do what I say or I'll cut your fuckin' head off with this thing.

MIRIAM

Thad, there's a man here! There's a bad man here! Thad, THERE'S A BAD MAN....!

THAD

Who is this? Who....?

STARK

SAY YOUR NAME!

MIRIAM

MIRIAM! OH THAD DON'T LET HIM CUT ME AGAIN  
DON'T LET THE BAD MAN CUT ME AGAIN DON'T....

George Stark sweeps the straight-razor through the kinked telephone cord. He grabs Miriam by the hair again, bends her head back until she is staring at the ceiling, shrieking at the ceiling, and cuts her throat.

The room goes silent. Stark folds the straight-razor into its handle, mindless of the blood on it, and puts it away in his pocket. Then he reaches out with his left hand and closes Miriam's eyes. Her jugular is still pumping. Stark holds his forefinger in the jet of blood and uses it to begin printing something on the wall.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THAD, cordless phone in hand, is frantically dialing a number.

LIZ

What are you doing?

THAD

Calling her back. Come on, Miriam. Answer. Answer and tell me you're alright. Please, God....(Dah-dah-dah.... a busy signal.) Busy. Phone could be off the hook. Or maybe Stark pulled the cord.

LIZ

Stark?

THAD

Or maybe he cut it. Cut it with a razor.

LIZ

Thad. You said Stark.

THAD (cont.)

Jesus, Liz, that was one of the words I wrote today. I wrote the word razor. Today....this afternoon....I had another blackout. The sparrows again, first. I wrote a lot of crazy shit on a piece of paper. Her name was on the sheet, Liz. Miriam's name was part of what I wrote.

Terrified, LIZ stands with her arms tight across her chest. She starts to say something, but Thad is talking so fast she can't get a word in.

LIZ

Thad we have to....

THAD

She has a poster in her living room. A poster for Cats. I wrote that down, too. I wrote it because he was there, and so I was there. Part of me was. Part of me was seeing with his eyes. Miriam was screaming. Oh, God, she was....if you'd heard her, Liz, she was....

LIZ

Thad, we have to do something. Call the police. The New York police.

THAD,

No. Christ. How would I explain this.

LIZ

Alan. Call Alan Pangborn....

Thad quickly dials the digits for Directory Assistance.

LIZ

(Into the phone) Yes. Information for Castle Rock, please....do you have a home listing for an Alan Pangborn?

INT PANGBORN'S DEN IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

An old fashioned black telephone rings loudly on a cluttered desk in a comfortable den. An eleven year old boy pulls himself away from an old monster movie on the television and bounces over to answer. This is Alan's son, TODD.

TODD

Pangborns. (He listens) Sure. HEY, DAAAAAAD! PHONE!

Todd drops the handset onto the desk and returns to the movie. ALAN PANGBORN walks in with a beer in his hand.

ALAN

Turn that down a little, son.

Todd obediently lowers the volume, but we continue to hear the movie's sound track (roaring monster, sirens, gunfire) through the following conversation. It serves to make us all the more frantic.

ALAN (cont.)

(Into the phone) Yeah.

(We will intercut back and forth between Alan's den and Thad's living room during the conversation.)

THAD

It's Thad Beaumont, Sheriff. There's a lady in New York that needs help. Fast.

ALAN

Shoot. (He grabs a pencil and makes a note of the time.)

THAD

Miriam Cowley. My agent's ex-wife. She called here. I heard a man's voice. She said he was threatening to hurt her....to cut her. She begged me not to let him cut her again. She was screaming. I tried to call her back, but...

ALAN

What's the address?

THAD

(Reading from a Roll-o-dex) 109 West 84th.

ALAN

How long ago was this?

THAD

Two minutes ago. Three minutes ago. Now. It's happening right now. I didn't want to call the New York police. I figured I'd be on hold all night tryin' to explain.

ALAN

You did the right thing. I'll call 'em. I can cut through the shit. I'll get back to you.

Alan hangs up the phone and flips through an official looking police directory. He finds a phone number and dials it.

ALAN (cont.)

Gimme a break here, son, I got an emergency.

Todd clicks off the TV and goes tromping out of the room past his mother, ANNE, who walks in wiping her hands with a dish towel.

ANNE

Problem?

ALAN

Yep.

ANNE

Bad ?

ALAN

Well....we can hope. (Then, into the phone)  
Yeah, this is Alan Pangborn, I'm the Sheriff  
up here in Castle County, Maine. My LAWS ID  
number is one zero nine....four four....

As he talks, we DISSOLVE SLOWLY back to....

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

....THAD and LIZ, waiting in silence, each of them pacing in a circle. When the phone rings, Thad dives to answer it.

THAD

Yes, hello. (Pause) Oh, God.

Thad sinks slowly into a chair, looks up at Liz.

THAD (cont.)

Miriam's dead.

Liz drops into a chair on her side of the room.

THAD (cont.)

(Back into the phone) I think there are  
some other people who might be in danger.  
Rick Cowley. I'm sure he'll go after Rick.  
He's at 129 east 68th. And I think he might  
go after the guy who wrote that article, Mike  
Donaldson. He lives in New York, too, but  
I don't know where.

INT PANGBORN'S DEN IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

In his den, ALAN PANGBORN jots the names.

ALAN

What do you know that you're not telling me?

(We begin to intercut again between the two locations.)

THAD

I think I know who's doing these things.

ALAN

(Leaning his elbows onto the desk) Give him to me.

THAD

I don't want to tell you over the phone. Can you get over here tomorrow?

ALAN

I need whatever you know tonight.

THAD

Tomorrow. When we can look at each other face to face.

ALAN

Look. I've been tryin' to cut you every break I can with this thing. Now don't stretch my limit.

THAD

(Thoughtful) I can give you...a description. I'm not entirely sure it's right, but I think it's close.

Thad closes his eyes to better see a mental picture.

THAD (cont.)

He's about my size. Blue eyes the same as mine. His hair's cut short. He's my age but in better shape. He's strong, muscular. He lives in Oxford, Mississippi, got a little bit of a cracker accent. You hear it mostly when he's mad. He might be driving a black Toronado. One of the old ones with a lot of blasting powder under

THAD (cont.)

the hood. There's a sticker on the rear bumper. It says High-Toned Son of a Bitch.

Thad opens his eyes to see Liz staring at him, her face white as a sheet.

ALAN

You can tell me all of this but not who the guy is?

THAD

Knowing his name isn't going to help any one tonight because he's probably using another one. He's probably using the name of George Stark

Liz stands, walks over to a window, and looks out.

THAD (cont.)

Alan....how was Miriam killed?

Liz looks back at Thad, sees him tighten.

THAD (cont.)

Yes. Yes, we'll be here in the morning. Yes, thanks. Thank you.

Thad hangs up the phone and turns to face Liz.

THAD (cont.)

Miriam's throat was cut. With something sharp....like a razor.

Liz hears a noise outside and turns to see....

....a State Police cruiser pull up and park across the road. It sits there for a moment, dark and silent. Then a small flame winks in the front window as the driver lights a cigarette and settles in for a long night of waiting.

INT MIKE DONALDSON'S APARTMENT BUILDING IN NEW YORK NIGHT

Another New York apartment corridor. Elevator doors open and MIKE DONALDSON, stumblefooted from drinking, steps out. It takes him a moment to realize that the elevator car is providing the only source of light. As the doors glide shut behind him, that light fades

away, leaving him in utter darkness. He gropes for the call button, finds it, pushes it....too late. The car is leaving.

DONALDSON

Shit.

He digs in his pocket, pulls out a Bic lighter, and lights it. In the dim glow from the flame, he can see that the fluorescent fixtures overhead are all hanging open. The tubes have been removed.

DONALDSON (cont.)

Goddam city.

He looks down the long corridor. The glow from the Bic reaches fifteen feet. Beyond that....dead black. Wind moans in the elevator shaft with the deep-throated pitch of a bassoon. The Letterman Show can be heard faintly in the distance, coming from one of the apartments. Donaldson starts to walk, running his free hand along the wall.

He hears A NOISE. A metallic CLICK. He freezes. The dark beyond the flame-glow reveals nothing.

He continues to walk. He doesn't get far before the lighter sputters and dies. Donaldson flicks the flint wheel several times, producing sparks but no flame. Out of gas.

ANOTHER NOISE. This time it sounds like a footstep. Fear cuts through his drunkenness and Donaldson quickens his pace. His hand finds the door to what he knows to be a stairwell. He throws the door open.

Light spills into the corridor. It's dim, but it's enough to show that there's no immediate danger. The corridor stretches on for another thirty feet or so, then it turns a corner at the far end. Donaldson digs in his pocket again and comes up with a keyring. He pushes the stairway door open as wide as it will go....and he runs for it. The door swings shut slowly, an inch at a time, its hydraulic mechanism hissing.

Donaldson's apartment is the last one before the bend in the corridor. He gets there, panting. The stairway door is halfway shut now. The light is fading....fading....

Donaldson gropes for the lock. Just when it looks like he's going to make it....he drops his keys. He dives down to recover them.

KER-TCHUNK! The stairway door has shut. The light is gone.

Donaldson searches frantically in the dark. His hands hit the keyring and send it sliding across the floor....smack into GEORGE STARK'S boot. Donaldson springs to his feet like a jack-in-the-box.

STARK

Hello, Mike. Goodbye, Mike.

STARK slashes out with his razor. Miraculously, Donaldson manages to duck. The razor misses his throat but it hits his forehead and lays it open.

DONALDSON

HELP!

Another razor slash. Donaldson jerks away and this time the blade misses him clean. He stumbles backward through the darkness, in the direction of the elevator, with Stark boring in after him.

DONALDSON (cont.)

HELP! SOMEBODY! HELP!

Another slash. Donaldson's hand flies up in front of his bloody face. His fingers take the blade and are cut through to the bone. Stark flicks the straight-razor casually sideways, the way a barber might do, to clear the blade. A fine spray of red droplets splash the wall.

Down the hall, a door opens and A MAN in pajamas pokes his head out of a slash of light.

MAN

What's going on?

Stark whips around and glares at the man.

STARK

Murder. Do you want some?

The man vanishes. His door slams shut. Donaldson takes the opportunity to run, but he's slow with drink and Stark catches up to him easily. The razor slashes again, splitting Donaldson's scalp above the protective bulge of bone at the back of the neck. His severed pony-tail flies through the air and plops on the floor like a dead bird. Donaldson hits the wall, leaving bloody hand-prints, but he keeps on going, heading for the elevator.

STARK (cont.)

Oh, why don't you just stop it and  
BEHAVE!

This causes Donaldson to turn and look back. The action makes him stumble. He falls forward onto the floor. When he looks up, he sees Stark coming at him like a place-kicker. He screams one last time. The scream is cut off when Stark's foot connects with the red-drenched ridge of his nose. His head flies backward and smashes into the wall caving the plaster into a shallow bowl-shape. He remains there, stuck for a moment, then slumps over dead.

STARK (cont.)

Finally pulled your batteries, didn't I?

The elevator BINGS softly. Stark moves rapidly for one of two large potted plants that flank the elevator doors and steps behind it. Crisscrossing leaves print sawtoothed shadows on his face. He stares out from between them like a blue-eyed tiger. He hears the doors opening, hears muffled voices.

VOICE (o.s.)

What the hell....?

VOICE (o.s.)

Flashlight. You got your flashlight?

A beam of yellow light jackknives through the darkness. It finds the rumpled heap that was Mike Donaldson.

VOICE (o.s.)

Holy shit!

Stark sees TWO UNIFORMED COPS go rushing up the corridor. Silently, he walks out from behind the potted plant. He slips into the open elevator car just as the doors start to close, one of the cops turns and sees him.

COP

HEY!

George Stark raises one hand and solemnly twiddles his fingers. Bye-bye. The door shuts the rest of the way and he is gone.

INT RICK COWLEY'S APARTMENT IN NEW YORK MORNING

RICK COWLEY is awakened next morning by the telephone. He's sprawled on the bed dressed in yesterday's clothes and looking wrecked. He gropes for the receiver and talks into it hoarsely.

RICK

Hello.

STARK (o.s.)

This is the man who cut your woman's throat.

Rick comes suddenly wide awake. He sits up.

RICK

Who are you?

STARK (o.s.)

Ask Thad Beaumont who I am. He knows all about it. Tell him I said you were walkin' around dead. And tell him I'm not done making fool's stuffing yet.

There's a click and the line goes dead. Rick sits there for a moment, not knowing what to do next. Finally, he hangs up the phone and rushes out into the next room.

Racing through the living room, Rick nearly jumps out of his skin when he sees a dark figure silhouetted in the big window that overlooks Manhattan. It's only A WINDOW-CLEANER. He smiles at Rick and lifts a sign which he keeps dangling from his belt. HAVE A NICE DAY, it says.

Rick moves on, gets to the front door, and is about to open it when fear stops him. He pounds on the door with his fist.

RICK

You out there? Are you guys out there?

VOICE (o.s.)

Mr. Cowley? That you?

Rick opens the door slowly. A face appears in the opening. It's A YOUNG POLICE OFFICER. A SECOND OFFICER appears behind him.

RICK

He called me. The guy called me on the phone. He said he was the one who killed Miriam.

OFFICER

We better go down the station house. Detectives'll wanna hear about this. They'll prob'ly want to put a wire on your phone, case there's any more calls. They can do that while we're gone.

RICK

I gotta call Thad....

OFFICER #1

I don't think we should waste any time.  
Let's go, shall we.

Rick allows himself to be led away.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN LUDLOW MORNING

LIZ distractedly tries to feed THE BABIES. ALAN PANGBORN sits at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee. THAD is pacing, his face knotted tight. Alan has given them the bad news.

THAD

I knew he'd go after Donaldson. I knew it. What about Rick?

ALAN

Under police protection.

THAD

Why wasn't Donaldson under police protection?  
I gave you his name.

ALAN

They had to track him down through the magazine. They arrived after he was murdered.

Liz drops her baby spoon. She can't cope anymore. She stands up leaving the twins to make fingerprint of their breakfast.

ALAN (cont.)

So, tell me, Thad. Who do you think is doing this? Give me a name.

THAD

I already have. His name is George Stark.

ALAN

I don't think I understand you.

LIZ

My husband is saying that George Stark has somehow come to life.

Alan looks from Thad, to Liz, and back to Thad again.

THAD

It's true. I know it is. Here. (He makes a fist and knocks lightly on his chest.)

LIZ

Thad has some things to tell you. You need to listen to him very carefully, Alan, and you need to try and believe him. Because if you don't, I'm afraid this man....or whatever he is....will go on killing until he's worked his way to Thad and me....and to our babies.

They all fall silent. Liz breaks eye contact, moves over to Wendy's high chair, lifts her up and carries her out of the room.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW MORNING

LIZ sets WENDY gently down in the big playpen, gives her a teething-toy, and walks back toward the kitchen.

INT THE BEAUMONT KITCHEN IN LUDLOW MORNING

When LIZ returns to the kitchen, the men are gone. The back door is open. She looks out the window and sees them walking, side by side, in the back yard, THAD gesturing pleadingly as he talks, ALAN, head bowed, listening like a confessor.

LIZ scoops WILLIAM out of his high chair and carries him off.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW MORNING

LIZ sits WILLIAM in the playpen beside WENDY. She gently tosses the hair on each of their heads, stands, and begins to cry.

EXT THE BEAUMONT BACK YARD IN LUDLOW MORNING

It's later. THAD has told all. He and ALAN pull up near the back stoop and settle in against the railings there.

THAD

You don't believe it, do you? Not a single word of it.

ALAN

If you told me these people had been murdered by a ghost, I wouldn't believe you. But I could come closer to believing a ghost story than this. You're not just talking about a ghost, you're talking about a man who never was. Maybe you'd like to tell me exactly where this guy came from, Thad. Did you just sort of give birth to him one night? Did he pop out of a damn sparrow's egg? Exactly how did it go?

LIZ has stepped out through the open kitchen doorway and has heard the end of this. She hangs her head.

THAD

I don't know. I don't know when he became a....a separate person.

LIZ

When we tried to kill him.

Alan looks at Liz and realizes that she fully believes Thad's hypothesis.

ALAN

Look. I'm willing to consider all sorts of crazy possibilities. I might even consider that you could have some kind of.... psychic link with whoever is doing this. They say that happens to people who've had brain trauma. But when you tell me that this guy is George Stark....(He pulls away, stepping into the yard.) He might think he's George Stark, I'll give you that. But he's not. He can't be. He's a crazyman, Thad. A goddam homicidal lunatic crazyman, is what he is. And I'm gonna catch him.

INT RICK COWLEY'S APARTMENT BUILDING IN NEW YORK DAY

RICK COWLEY walks down the hall toward his apartment escorted by THE TWO POLICEMEN we saw earlier. As they approach the door, one of the policemen grabs Rick's arm keeping him from using his key.

OFFICER #1

Guys from communications are supposed to be here.

RICK  
Maybe they're inside.

OFFICER #1  
One of 'em, maybe. The other one should  
be out here. Standard procedure.

Rick pulls away and opens the door. The policemen push past him and look inside.

INT RICK COWLEY'S APARTMENT IN NEW YORK DAY

Nobody there. Nothing out of place. All seems normal.

RICK  
Maybe they never showed up.

OFFICER #2  
I'll try to get 'em on the radio.

Officer #2 moves away down the hall.

RICK  
I gotta get some sleep.

OFFICER #1  
We'll be here.

RICK  
Yeah. Okay. Maybe we'll send out for  
Chinese later.

The officer backs into the hall and Rick closes the door.  
Exhausted, he moves into....

....a bathroom. He clicks on the light. The TWO TECHNICIANS who were sent to cook the phones have been dead for an hour or so. One of them is lying in the bathtub, the other is sitting on the commode. There are notes tacked to their foreheads.

THE SPARROWS ARE FLYING AGAIN.

MORE FOOL'S STUFFING. TELL THAD.

Rick spins around and comes face to face with GEORGE STARK who, with one lightning stroke of his razor, opens Rick's jugular. Rick slams back against the wall. He tries to scream but produces only a faint gurgling sound. He looks at Stark, who stands there grinning.

STARK

I've decided to change agents. Sorry,  
Rick. It's a cutthroat business.

Rick slides down the wall. The last thing he sees is George Stark moving off into the living room.

Stark pushes the living room drapes aside and climbs out an open window onto the cleaning service's scaffold. He pulls on the ropes and slowly sinks out of sight.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

Two other technicians, WES and DAVE, have come to install phone trace equipment at the Beaumonts'. Dave is packing tools away, the job nearly finished. Wes is making adjustments on a lucite box which has been connected to the base unit of the living room phone.

THAD

Oh, God. Rick. Jesus. Rick is gone.  
I don't believe it. I can't....I can't  
believe it. So much for your fucking  
police protection!

The phone, a cordless, is being used by THAD, who, in pacing, kicks some of Dave's tools. Dave and Wes look at each other and roll their eyes.

THAD (cont.)

I don't care what you think! You wanna  
think about something? Think about what  
I told you. Think about George Stark.

LIZ looks out a window to where the technicians' van is parked at the curb. Behind it sits another cruiser with TWO STATE POLICEMEN leaning against the side talking.

THAD (cont.)

What does he want? He wants the same  
thing you or I would want if we were in  
his position. He wants not to be dead  
any more!

Wes and Dave look at each other again. Thad clicks off the phone, walks over to the table, and slams it down onto its base.

THAD (cont.)

Rick. Gone. Rick. Miriam. Who else?  
Jesus God, who else?

The technicians gather their things somberly.

WES

I, er....I think that's everything, Mrs.  
Beaumont. Mr. Beaumont.

Thad doesn't even look up. Liz notices that he's rubbing the scar  
on his forehead.

WES (cont.)

We'll call from the outside to make sure  
the system's working.

LIZ

Alright. Thank you. Thanks very much.

The men are just walking out the door when the phone rings.

DAVE

Hey, good deal. We won't have to make a  
test call. Pull your meter, if we need  
line clarification we can do it right here.

Wes plucks something with a pistol-grip out of the toolbox. Dave  
disappears through a door that leads down a flight of steps to the  
cellar. Wes looks at Liz....

.....who is staring, riveted, at Thad....

.....who is staring, riveted, at the telephone. His eyes are wide.  
His hands are trembling. The phone rings....rings....but Thad  
barely hears it. His head is filled with the SOUND OF BIRDS.

WES

Somebody gonna answer it? Mr. Beaumont?

Thad doesn't respond. He just stands there, staring.

WES (cont.)

Somethin' the matter?

LIZ

It's him.

WES

It's who?

LIZ

It's him! It's....him!

Finally, Thad lunges for the telephone, picks it up, and shouts.

THAD

What do you want, you son of a bitch?

INT THE BEAUMONT BASEMENT IN LUDLOW DAY

DAVE is just plugging in a tester when he hears GEORGE STARK'S VOICE on the speaker of a tape machine which is recording the call.

STARK (o.s.)

Cool down, Thad. No need to get your panties all in a bunch.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

(Throughout the conversation we will intercut between the living room and the basement.)

THAD

What do you want?

STARK (o.s.)

Why....just to tell you that it's over. I got the last one this noontime. Little girl who used to work for your publisher. The one who spilled it to Clawson. The cops will find her. Some of her's on the floor. I put the rest on the kitchen table.

WES

Holy hell! (He tests the circuitry.)

STARK (o.s.)

I think I'll head back down south, do me some fishing. This city life tires me out.

THAD

(To Wes) He's lying. (Into phone) You lying fuck!

STARK (o.s.)

Hey, Thad. That's not very nice. Did you think I was gonna hurt you? Hell, no! I was gettin' revenge for you, boy! I knew I was the one had to do it. I know you got a chicken liver.

THAD

He's lying. He knows you're listening.

Wes looks up befuddled. Liz watches, wide eyed and terrified.

STARK (o.s.)

I'm not gonna bother you any more, Thad.

THAD

I know you're gonna come after us, George.  
I know you're gonna come after me. And I  
think I know what you want. Well you just  
come ahead. I'll know when you're coming.  
I'll know because I'll hear the birds.

STARK (o.s.)

Birds?

THAD

I'll hear the birds and I'll be waiting  
for you. Waiting to fuckin' take you apart!

STARK (o.s.)

You're talkin' crazy, Thad. What the hell  
you mean, you'll hear the birds?

THAD

The sparrows, George. Don't you hear the  
sparrows?

STARK (o.s.)

Whatever you're talkin' about, Thad, it  
doesn't matter. Because this is over now.

There's a click, and Stark is gone. Thad turns to Liz who stares  
at him perplexed. Wes gets quickly to his feet and runs toward the  
front door. He meets Dave who comes tromping up out of the cellar.  
They do the high-fives like football players who have just scored a  
touchdown.

DAVE

Let's see if we got a recording in the van.

They rush out through the front door. Thad drops into a chair.

LIZ

Maybe he will....leave us alone.

THAD

No. That's what he wanted them to think. He wants them to think it's over so they'll let down their guard. He can't leave us alone. He can't leave me alone. He needs me. He needs me to write another novel. Another novel by George Stark. I think.... I think it might be the end of me. Just the way he....came into being....out of nowhere....I think I might just....stop being. Just....stop.

LIZ

Thad, you are scaring the shit out of me.

THAD

He doesn't hear the birds. He doesn't know about them.

LIZ

He wrote it on the wall....at Clawson's. He wrote 'the sparrows are flying'.

THAD

I wrote it, Liz. I was there. I was there for all of it....and I wrote those words. God. I'm....I'm responsible. In some.... crazy, hellish way....I'm doing all of this.

INT POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN LUDLOW DAY

A STATE TROOPER brings a FAX to ALAN PANGBORN who takes it into his office and shuts the door. Inside, THAD and LIZ sit nervously while Alan reads the message.

ALAN

Phone call was made from a pay station in Times Square. They're checking the recordings they got. Gonna run 'em through some gizmo down in Washington to see if the voice on the other end of the line might have been a tape-recording.

THAD

What? Made by me?

ALAN

Your telephone credit card number was used to pay for the call.

THAD

Jesus. After all this I'm still a suspect?

ALAN

They know they can't hang last night's work on you, you were here. They think maybe you're working with an accomplice.

THAD

(Jumping out of his chair.) That is the craziest fuckin' thing I ever heard!

ALAN

Wish I could say the same.

Stopped by this, Thad calms down some.

THAD

I....I'm sorry. I shouldn't be jumping on you, Alan. I know how much you've been helping me here. I just....can't believe they're still trying to pin this on me.

ALAN

You gave me a description. The witness at Donaldson's says the killer matches that description perfectly. You told me he was drivin' a black Toronado. The used car place where they found Homer's pick-up says it was a black Toronado that was stolen off their lot. That and the fingerprints. The fact that you named the victims before they were killed. Jesus Christ, Thad. What the hell do you expect people to think?

THAD

What do you think, Alan?

ALAN

I think there's some psycho out there who's got it in for you. Somebody clever enough to go diggin' around in your life to find things he can use to make you look guilty. It's either that or it's you, Thad. It could be that somehow you are behind all this. Don't think I've written that possibility off, because I haven't.

EXT A CONVENIENCE STORE IN LUDLOW DAY

Thad's Suburban drives through an intersection followed by a cruiser with TWO POLICEMEN aboard. The cars pull into the parking lot of a small convenience store. THAD leaves LIZ in the Suburban and walks into the store.

INT THE CONVENIENCE STORE IN LUDLOW DAY

Inside, THAD is greeted by ROSALIE, the teenage counter girl.

ROSALIE

How ya doin', Mr. Beaumont?

THAD

I been better, Rosalie. I have been better.

Thad snatches up a box of Pampers, some jars of baby food and an economy-size bottle of Tylenol. He starts toward the counter. When the telephone rings, he freezes. Rosalie answers the call.

ROSALIE

Hello.

Thad steps up to the counter and slowly sets down his armful of goods. Rosalie turns and holds the handset out to him.

ROSALIE (cont.)

It's for you, Mr. Beaumont.

He takes the phone and slowly puts it to his ear.

THAD

Hello, George.

STARK (o.s.)

Thad. How's it hangin'?

THAD

What do you want?

STARK (o.s.)

You know the answer to that. You figured it out, and you figured right. It's time to start a new book.

THAD

I don't think so. I'm finished with you.  
George Stark is dead.

Rosalie reacts with alarm. She looks through the window at the police car outside, decides she doesn't like any of this, and slips quietly into the back room.

STARK (o.s.)

I'm not dead, hoss. Not hardly.

THE CAMERA PUSHES IN on Thad.

STARK (o.s. cont.)

I'm just gettin' started. And you better do what I say or I'll be comin' for you. Only you won't be first. I'll take your kids before you. Then your wife. They'll die slow. I'll see to it. I know how. And when they're gone, I'll do you, Thad, and you'll die like no man on earth has ever died before. Start another book. Go home and sharpen y'pencils....and if you need inspiration....think about how your little babies would look with their faces full of glass.

There's a click and the line goes dead. Thad's expression slowly turns from fear to anger. Those predatory eyes bore fiercely off into space as he slowly hangs up the telephone.

EXT THE BEAUMONT HOUSE IN LUDLOW NIGHT

It's dark and quiet at the Beaumont house. A full moon shines down on the police cruiser that sits at the curb.

INT THE TWINS' ROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

THE TWINS are sleeping the sleep of babes. LIZ walks into their room and turns on a Mickey-and-Minnie lamp. She moves over to Wendy's crib, gently lifts her up, and carries her out of the room.

INT THE BEAUMONT BEDROOM IN LUDLOW NIGHT

LIZ carries WENDY into the master bedroom. She has brought the playpen up from downstairs and has placed it near her side of the

king-size bed. She lowers Wendy into the playpen, laying her in a nest of cuddly toys. THAD watches her distractedly. His mind is racing, searching for answers. He talks softly, using his words to form new thoughts.

THAD

He knew where to find me. He's with me.  
Part of him is with me, just like part  
of me is with him.

Liz leaves the bedroom and moves away down the hall. Thad walks over and stares at his sleeping daughter.

THAD (cont.)

(To himself) Two bodies. One mind.

Liz brings WILLIAM and lays him in the playpen beside his sister.

THAD (cont.)

He doesn't know about the birds. He doesn't  
see everything. Can he....get into me when-  
ever he wants to? Or can I keep him out?

Liz isn't really listening. She's focused on her own agenda. She leaves the room again.

THAD (cont.)

(To himself) Can I....get into him?

Liz returns. Thad looks up to see that she's carrying a claw-hammer and a heavy fireplace poker. She walks over and places the things under the bed, behind the dust ruffle.

LIZ

I think we should buy a gun. How long  
does it take? For the license?

THAD

Liz....I can't stand seeing what this is  
doing to you. I can't stand it knowing  
I've put you in danger.

LIZ

Thad, you are not responsible for this.  
You don't want this to be happening any  
more than I do.

THAD

Maybe you should....go away.

Liz turns and looks at him.

THAD (cont.)

Take the kids, go someplace and don't tell me where you're going. I don't want to know.

Liz considers this.

LIZ

Maybe we should all get out of here.

THAD

If I go with you he'll know where we are. He'll find us. Like he found me today. Right now he's five hundred miles away. Tomorrow....he could be anywhere. He could be here, Liz, and it'll be too late.

Liz walks over and puts her arms around Thad.

THAD (cont.)

I....I couldn't take it. If anything happened to you. To the kids. I couldn't take it....knowing that I....that I caused it somehow. Please. Please do this. Please just....just go. Go away from here.

INT THE PANGBORN HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

It's very late when ALAN PANGBORN arrives at his home in Castle Rock. There are no lights on. His wife and son are evidently asleep. Alan slips off his shoes and moves quietly through the dark.

He walks into the den, flops into his desk chair, and checks the answering machine that's attached to his telephone. It shows "0 MESSAGES".

In the darkness behind him, A GHOSTLY GRAY FIGURE steps out of the shadows. Alan reacts instantly. He jumps out of his seat, twirling and ducking at the same time, his hand shooting to his holster. The ghostly figure lets out a startled little breath. It's ANNIE, Alan's wife.

ALAN

Oh, God. Oh, Jesus, Annie, I'm sorry. I'm sorry darlin', I'm sorry.

He moves to her and folds her into his arms.

ALAN (cont.)

I didn't realize how jumpy I was gettin'.  
This....Beaumont business.

He holds her tightly until he has calmed down, then he pulls away, quickly unbuckles his gun belt, and tosses it onto the sofa. He flops into the cushions beside it.

ANNIE

What's he like? Beaumont.

ALAN

(Shrugging) How do you know? How do you ever know?

ANNIE

I liked his book.

ALAN

Pretty rough, from what I hear. I didn't think you read that kind of stuff.

ANNIE

I don't. His first book. That's the one I liked. The one he wrote under his real name. When I saw that article about his pen name, I went out and bought one of those other books. Couldn't even finish it. It was awful. Nasty. I never would have believed it was written by the same man.

ALAN

He doesn't believe it either.

She looks at him, puzzled by his remark. He holds out a hand to her and she comes to him. He gently opens her robe, then unties the sash of her nightgown and opens that, too, exposing her. She stands in front of him as he sits forward on the couch and rests his head against the warm skin beneath her breasts. She curls her fingers into his hair and holds him there.

ALAN (cont.)

Annie. I don't want you to be....alarmed by this. I'm not expecting anything bad to happen. But....I wanna take some precautions. I'm gonna ask to have a car watch the house for a few days.

EXT THE BEAUMONT HOUSE IN LUDLOW MORNING

LONG SHOT - P.O.V. FROM THE STREET. An automatic garage door opens revealing Thad's Suburban and a second family car, a Volvo. The Suburban pulls out with THAD at the wheel.

THE CAMERA DOLLIES onto a police cruiser in the foreground. A crusty State Trooper, named GARRISON, speaks into his radio mike.

GARRISON

I'm takin' him to work. Maybe you should send another unit out here to watch the house.

RADIO VOICE (o.s.)

That's a copy, Unit Five. We'll see what we can do.

The Suburban turns out onto the street. Garrison pulls out in his cruiser and follows closely behind.

INT THAD'S SUBURBAN IN LUDLOW MORNING

THAD drives through a residential neighborhood. He's showing signs of wear. There are dark circles under his eyes. He looks into the rear-view mirror.

Garrison's cruiser is staying close.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW MORNING

THE TWINS are squabbling over a Busy-Box in their playpen. William is shouting. Wendy is crying loudly. LIZ tries to interest them in other toys, but it does no good.

LIZ

Come on. Stop it, guys. Please....

PLEASE! STOP IT!

She can't cope. She drops the toys and goes off into the kitchen. She opens the bottle of Tylenol, draws water from the tap, and swallows four tablets. Her eyes go to the window.

Outside, another police cruiser pulls up to the curb.

Liz paces, fretting, wondering what to do. The babies continue to scream in the background.

EXT THE UNIVERSITY IN LUDLOW MORNING

THAD pulls into the parking lot at the University followed by GARRISON. Thad gets out of the Suburban, Garrison gets out of his cruiser.

THAD

I'll be a couple of hours. You want coffee or somethin', there's a cafeteria.

GARRISON

I'll just wait here.

Garrison lights a cigarette and leans against his car. Thad moves off toward the Arts building.

INT THAD'S OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY MORNING

At the desk in his office, THAD picks up one of George Stark's Berol Black Beauties. He finds a sheet of blank paper and sets it in front of himself on the desk. He puts the pencil to the paper, rolls his head back slightly on his neck, and closes his eyes.

THAD

Come on, George. Let me in. Lemme come visit for a while. See what the hell you're up to.

Nothing happens. For a long time. Nothing.

Thad opens his eyes and looks at the paper which is still blank. His body relaxes. He sighs. He's about to put the pencil away when he hears A NOISE at the window. He looks and sees....

....a sparrow sitting on the window ledge. As he watches, it's joined by another, and then another.

THAD

(Whispering) My God.

A fourth sparrow lands, jostling the other three for place. Then a fifth. A sixth. A seventh.

THAD (cont.)

They're real. The sparrows are real.

THE SOUND comes in a rush. The sound of thousands of birds, cheeping, flapping.

FLASH CUT: The treetops we've seen before....the telephone wires.... covered with sparrows.

In the office, Thad's head lolls back, this time involuntarily. A thin froth runs from the corner of his mouth. His eyes roll up under fluttering lids. The pencil touches the paper again and begins to write.

Thad speaks groggily.

THAD (cont.)

Why....? Why, George? Why do you want to write again? Why is it so important?

The pencil replies.

Without looking at the paper, Thad sees, hears, knows the answer.

THAD (cont.)

Why....why do you say that?

THAD (cont.)

Falling apart? What do you mean? Tell me. Tell me, George. What's happening to you?

Thad's arm flies up. His hand flicks the pencil around, gripping it like a dagger, and he brings it down....Stark brings it down....burying its point in the web of flesh between the thumb and first finger of his left hand. A bright red puddle fills the depression. Suddenly, the force which gripped him is gone. The pain hits hard, reviving him and driving away the bird sound. Thad clamps his teeth shut to keep from howling. He pulls the pencil out of his hand and hurls it across the room.

Outside the window, the sparrows, the real ones, take flight and disappear into the sky.

INT GEORGE STARK'S MOTEL ROOM MORNING

In a tawdry motel room, GEORGE STARK opens his eyes. The curtains are drawn and he's sitting in the dark at a lopsided table with an open notebook in front of him. A rivulet of blood is running across the lined paper, running across the same identical words that we saw Thad Beaumont write a moment ago. There's a ballpoint pen sticking out of the back of his right hand. (Stark uses his left.)

He draws the pen out smoothly and drops it into a wastebasket. He picks up a bottle of sour mash and walks into the bathroom.

Standing at the sink, he clamps the bottle to his side with his left arm, opens it with his right hand, and pours some of the liquid into the wound. Then he takes a long mouthful and swallows it down. He doesn't flinch at either the external or the internal application.

He pulls a chain, turning on the bathroom light, a bare bulb. He raises his hand to examine the damage. The pen came close to going all the way through. He can see the glow from the lightbulb, dim, red, through the hole in his flesh.

STARK

Smarts a bit, don't it, Thad? Hurts like  
a sonuvabitch. Hope you can take it, hoss.  
Take it like a man. Like a....man.

He drops his hand and looks at his face. He touches the arc of skin under his left eye, then runs his finger down his cheek.

STARK (cont.)

Losing cohesion.

That certainly is the truth. He looks like he's been exposed to radiation or to some corrosive chemical. His eyelids have grown droopy and taken on the texture of crocodile skin. Deep lines have

carved themselves in the flesh on his cheeks. Beneath his probing finger one of those lines gives way with sickening ease. A mixture of blood and yellow pus oozes out. He quickly turns and walks back into the other room....

....where he begins to gather his belongings and stuff them into a packsack.

INT RAWLIE DeLESSEPS' OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY MORNING

THAD wraps his wounded hand with gauze from a first-aid kit. RAWLIE is rummaging around in the clutter that is his office.

RAWLIE

Where are you going?

THAD

Bangor.

RAWLIE

What's in Bangor?

THAD

I don't know. Maybe nothing. That's where I had my surgery as a boy.

RAWLIE

Here. Take these. A disguise.

Rawlie hands Thad a pair of sunglasses and a Boston Red Sox baseball cap. Thad puts them on.

RAWLIE (cont.)

A changed man. Car keys. (Rawlie holds out his car keys. Thad takes them.) I hope you'll have the decency to stand good for any repairs if it comes back wounded.

THAD

How will you get home?

RAWLIE

Call a cab, I imagine.

THAD

Lemme give you some money.

RAWLIE

I'll get a receipt and present it to you  
at the proper moment.

THAD

Thanks, old friend.

RAWLIE

Thank you....for bringing....adventure.

Rawlie sees Thad to the door.

THAD

Just for chuckles....see if there's anything  
in your tomes there about sparrows.

Thad goes rushing off.

RAWLIE

Sparrows. There is something about sparrows.

Rawlie moves to a cluttered book shelf and begins to attack one of  
the dusty volumes there.

EXT THE UNIVERSITY AT LUDLOW MORNING

A beat up old Volkswagen beetle pulls around the corner of the Arts  
building with THAD (in disguise) at the wheel. It rolls around  
through the parking lot and pulls out onto the road.

GARRISON, standing beside his cruiser, never notices.

EXT THE TAWDRY MOTEL DAY

GEORGE STARK leaves his motel room and gets into a dead black  
Toronado, vintage 1968. There's a sticker on the rear bumper....  
HIGH-TONED SON OF A BITCH. Stark guns the engine, which growls like  
a hungry animal, and the Toronado rolls out of the parking lot.

It turns onto the road and goes jetting off past a road sign  
that reads:

BANGOR - 15 MILES

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT DOC PRITCHARD'S OFFICE/HOME IN BANGOR DAY

Rawlie's Volkswagen is parked in front of a large ten-bedroom house on a tree-lined street in Bangor. Above the mailbox is an unobtrusive sign: HUGH PRITCHARD, MD.

INT DOC PRITCHARD'S RECEPTION ROOM DAY

A large living-dining area has been converted into a reception room. THAD waits, nervously. THREE OTHER PATIENTS sit thumbing through magazines. Thad hears voices and looks up. Through an archway, he sees DOCTOR HUGH PRITCHARD, now a man of seventy, escorting ANOTHER OLD MAN to the front door.

PRITCHARD

You're doin' fine, Fuzzy. You'll live another fifty years.

THE RECEPTIONIST, a near-balding old woman who looks like she might fall asleep at any moment, turns to Thad.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Beaumont. You're next.

Thad stands and walks toward the Doc, who steps forward and greets him warmly.

PRITCHARD

Thaddeus Beaumont. If this don't beat all, seein' you after all these years. I've been readin' all about ya. You said you were gonna be a writer and damn if you didn't do it. What'd ya do to yerself, here?

He's noticed Thad's bandaged hand.

THAD

Oh....nothin'. That's....that's not why I'm here. I....I just wanted to talk to you. About the surgery you did.

PRITCHARD

You're not havin' symptoms again?

THAD

No headaches, but....I've....been hearing the birds.

INT PRITCHARD'S EXAMINING ROOM DAY

The same room where Thad was examined as a boy. Some of the equipment has been updated, but the furniture is thirty years old. The shades are drawn and THAD is sitting in the dark. His face is pale, his expression one of astonishment.

THAD

A....twin?

A bright light pierces Thad's eye. PRITCHARD leans in and peers through an ophthalmoscope.

PRITCHARD

They never told you?

THAD

No. They....said it was....a tumor.

PRITCHARD

(Switching to the other eye.) Well....in a way, that's all it was. Foreign matter that happened to wind up in your head.

Pritchard pulls away, clicks on a lamp, and sits at his desk.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

I don't see anything, Thad, but if you're hearin' things again we better shoot some pictures.

THAD

A twin. Jesus.

PRITCHARD

Not as uncommon as it sounds. A great many of us start out as twins. At least one in ten. Probably more. The stronger fetus absorbs the weaker and comes to birth as a single child. In your case, the fetus wasn't completely absorbed and it had to be removed surgically. Your mom and dad were pretty....rattled by it all. They insisted that the excised tissue be treated as human remains and signed over to them. They wanted to bury it.

THAD

Bury it....in....in Homeland Cemetery.  
In the family plot.

PRITCHARD

Dunno. They ever tell you about the sparrows?

THAD

Sparrows?

PRITCHARD

Damdest thing. We'd just finished your surgery when this....enormous flock of sparrows....thousands of 'em....came storming down on the hospital.

Thad's mouth drops open. His bandaged hand shoots up to the scar on his forehead.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

They never figured out what the hell it was. Some kind of....migration or somethin'. It was a helluva mess. Windows broke. Three or four people got hurt.

Thad is speechless. He just sits there rubbing his scar with his bandaged hand. A dark blood stain has seeped through the gauze. Pritchard notices.

PRITCHARD (cont.)

You're bleedin' pretty good, there. Lemme put a proper dressing on that. What is it, a cut?

THAD

Hmmm? Oh....Yeah....no....I, er....  
I poked myself....

Pritchard gets up and moves through a door into a back room which was once a pantry.

INT DOC PRITCHARD'S PANTRY DAY

It's now a storage room for old equipment and supplies. PRITCHARD goes to a sink and washes his hands with disinfectant soap.

PRITCHARD

(Loudly, so Thad can hear it in the other room.) It'll stick in my mind forever. You complainin' about bird sounds and us gettin' hit by those sparrows. It was like.... we took the sound out of our head and it.... came to life.

Pritchard turns away from the sink and finds himself standing inches away from GEORGE STARK.

STARK

(Whispering) Howdy, doc. Remember me?

Stark's razor flashes through the air.

INT PRITCHARD'S EXAMINING ROOM DAY

A faint THUMPING SOUND can be heard in the next room, but THAD pays it no mind. He's lost in his own thoughts. He stands up, moves to one of the windows, and lifts the shade. He stares out into the sunlight.

INT PRITCHARD'S PANTRY DAY

GEORGE STARK flicks his razor to clear blood. Red spray splashes onto the mirror over the sink. Stark stares at his face behind the red droplets. The decay is advancing rapidly. There are more open sores, many of them oozing. He looks around the room, grabs some bandage material and a roll of adhesive tape, and rushes out through a back door.

INT PRITCHARD'S EXAMINING ROOM DAY

THAD hears the LOUD SOUND OF TIRES SQUEALING....THE ROAR OF A POWERFUL ENGINE. Through the window, he sees....

....a dead black Toronado turn the corner and go howling off down the street.

Thad rushes into the pantry....

INT PRITCHARD'S PANTRY DAY

....where DOC PRITCHARD lies in a pool of blood.

THAD

Oh, God....Oh....Oh, dear God. No. Doc.

Thad kneels beside the body, feels for a pulse. There is none.

THAD (cont.)

Oh, you bastard. You...you....

He stands, breathing hard, his adrenaline pumping. He walks a tight circle, running his hands through his hair, rubbing his head, not knowing what to do. Then a terrifying thought hits him.

THAD (cont.)

Jesus....LIZ!

He runs out of the pantry....

INT PRITCHARD'S EXAMINING ROOM DAY

....back into the examining room. He grabs the telephone and dials.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

The phone rings. LIZ answers on the wireless handset. (Intercut between Thad and Liz.)

LIZ

Hello.

THAD

Liz! You gotta get out of there! Now! Right now!

LIZ

Thad, what....?

THAD

He's here. Stark is here. In Bangor. That's twenty minutes away, Liz. Get out of there! Now!

LIZ

Bangor. What are you doing in....?

THAD

LIZ, PLEASE! JUST LEAVE! GET OUT OF THERE! TAKE THE KIDS AND GO! GO AWAY AND STAY AWAY!

LIZ

Thad, how do you know....?

THAD

Liz, there is no time! He's killed a man here. He's killed Doc Pritchard. I saw him.

THAD (cont.)

I saw his car. I know he's gonna come after you next. You and the kids. Please, dear God, just get out of there!

LIZ

Alright, Thad. I'll....I'll go. We'll go.

THAD

Promise. Promise me.

LIZ

We'll go. I promise.

THAD

Now.

LIZ

Right now.

THAD

Don't pack anything. Just leave. I want you gone.

LIZ

How will I....get in touch with you?

THAD

Through the school. Rawlie. Don't tell him where you are. Just tell him you're safe. Don't tell anyone where you are. Anyone who might tell me. I don't want to know. I can't know.

LIZ

Don't worry. I'll be careful.

THAD

I love you, Liz. I love you more than anything.

CLICK! Thad is gone. Liz goes to place the handset onto its base unit and her eyes fall on....

....the lucite box with its blinking lights. The line tracer.

Liz realizes that the conversation has been monitored. She rushes over to the window and looks out at....

....the police cruiser that's parked at the curb. A YOUNG OFFICER in the driver's seat is talking on his radio. He looks up at the house.

Liz tenses.

The officer sets down his mike, opens the door, and gets out of the car. He starts trotting toward the house urgently.

INT PRITCHARD'S RECEPTION ROOM DAY

THAD comes bursting out into Pritchard's reception room. THE RECEPTIONIST looks up at him. So do THE THREE PATIENTS.

THAD

Er....you better....call an ambulance.  
There's been....the doctor is....  
Call an ambulance.

He goes running out the front door.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW DAY

LIZ is on the phone. THE YOUNG OFFICER, looking somewhat out of his league, stands at attention nearby.

LIZ

For God's sake, Alan. We're in danger  
here. My babies are in danger.

INT ALAN PANGBORN'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK DAY

ALAN PANGBORN speaks to Liz from his office at the Castle Rock Police Station. (Intercut between them.)

ALAN

You've got an officer there with you.  
I'll have an extra unit put on for tonight.  
Liz, I can't let you just go....running off.  
Even if I wanted to, I couldn't let you  
do it. I'd be derelicting my duty.

LIZ

But Stark could be....

ALAN

There is no George Stark, Elizabeth. He doesn't exist.

LIZ

Thad said he saw him.

ALAN

I don't give a damn what Thad said. At the moment, Thad is a fugitive from justice. He ducked out on his escort. Now he's talkin' about another murder in Bangor which, coincidentally, is where he happens to be. By rights your husband ought to be in the county jail, and I'm startin' to feel like a chump for not puttin' him there a long time ago. Now you're just gonna have to sit tight and ride this out. Nothing is going to happen to you. You're under police protection.

LIZ

Under protection....or under arrest.

ALAN

Call it what you like. I'm sorry, Liz. I've been way too soft on this thing. I've gotta start goin' by the book. Lemme talk to the officer there.

Liz passes the phone to the officer. She paces nervously, looking at the young man. Looking at....

....THE TWINS, crawling around in their playpen.

A million questions roll around, unanswered, in her mind. Could Thad be the murderer? She's experiencing some doubt.

OFFICER

Yessir.

ALAN

You just hold the fort there, son. I'll have two units out to replace you before nightfall. Keep your eyes open. Thad Beaumont shows up....pull him in on suspicion. Murder one.

INT RAWLIE DeLESSEPS' HOME AFTERNOON

RAWLIE DeLESSEPS' study is cluttered with artifacts from the four corners of the world. Floor-to-ceiling shelves are crammed with books. Great dusty volumes lie open on every countertop and table. Rawlie sits at his desk chewing on the stem of his big yellow pipe. THAD sits across from his friend having told him the whole story.

THAD

It's a struggle for survival. That's what it's been all along. From the time we were conceived.

RAWLIE

I don't believe this is your twin brother returning for a rematch. Stark is a.... conjuration. An entity created by the force of your will. We all have something of the beast inside us. We can either.... suppress it or encourage it. In your case, you encouraged it too much. In your subconscious you wanted it to live. You wanted it so badly that it actually came to be. I think the absorbed fetus was merely a vessel. A stolen body, if you like. It happened to be there, wholly by accident, and Stark used it. He took it for his own. The surgery enabled him to escape. To step out of your subconscious, where he was held prisoner, and become his own entity, separate from you. As Stark developed in your mind.... became more and more real....your thoughts gave him the strength to grow. You constructed him too carefully. Made him too....complete. Your characters have always been vividly written, Thad.

THAD

I wanted him to live. God forgive me, it's true. Subconsciously. I wanted him to live. Part of me has always....admired George Stark. Admired his simple, violent nature. A man who doesn't stumble over things, who never looks weak or silly. A man with no wife or children to consider, with no loves to bind him or slow him down. A man who has a sharp, straight answer to all of life's difficult questions.

RAWLIE

Yes....but he's a bastard.

THAD

Half of me is a bastard. My dark half. George Stark is my dark half, Rawlie. I've somehow brought him into being and now he's....trying to take over. There's only a place for one of us in this world, and he wants it. He wants to....take my place.

RAWLIE

Surely you don't want him to live anymore. You can't still admire him after all that he's done?

THAD

No.

RAWLIE

Well, if you don't want him here, he can't remain. It's a battle of wills, Thad, and you've got the advantage. You don't need Stark anymore but, at least for the moment, he needs you. Without you he can't exist. You're the one who has life. Real life. He's trying to take it away from you but if you're not willing to give it up....what's he going to do? Kill you? That would be suicide, wouldn't it?

THAD

Of course. Why didn't I see that. He can't hurt me. That's why he's going after the people around me.

RAWLIE

Exactly.

Rawlie has been filling his pipe from a dusty old humidor. Now he lights it with an old fashioned silver pipe-lighter, vintage WW-I.

THAD (cont.)

I haven't seen you light that thing in ten years.

RAWLIE

That was just about when I decided that nothing extraordinary was likely to enter my life. (He puffs, coughs.) Stale. But wonderful. (He puffs again.)

Thad can't help but smile.

THAD

We've really been talkin' some shit here, pal.

RAWLIE

Yes. People would think us quite mad.

THAD

Are we....mad?

Rawlie smiles enigmatically and shrugs his shoulders. He stands and moves over to one of the book shelves.

RAWLIE (cont.)

I found something in Barringer's here. Something about sparrows.

Rawlie picks up an open volume of Barringer's Folklore of America.

RAWLIE (cont.)

Whippoorwills, loons, and sparrows...(he eyes Thad over the top of his pipe)...are psychopomps.

THAD

What?

RAWLIE

From the Greek, meaning those who conduct. In this case, those who conduct human souls back and forth between the land of the living and the land of the dead.

Ominous silence while this registers. That silence is shattered when the phone rings loudly. Rawlie walks back over to his desk and picks up the receiver.

RAWLIE (cont.)

Hello.

He listens for a moment, then looks at Thad.

RAWLIE (cont.)

It's....for you.

Thad knows who it is on the line. He stands and steps over to the desk. He takes the receiver and puts it to his ear.

THAD

I'm not gonna write your book, George.  
Why not accept it. You're dead, and dead  
you will stay.

STARK (o.s.)

You're wrong, old hoss. You want to get  
started. You wanna get started by night-  
fall or you're gonna be a sorry son of a  
bitch. And you won't be the only one.  
Let's see if you can figure out where I'm  
callin' from, Thad.

CLICK! The line goes dead.

THAD

(It registers slowly.) No. NO!

Thad depresses the disconnect buttons, lets them up again and, in a  
panic, dials his home number. Stark answers on the first ring.

STARK (o.s.)

That was quick, hoss.

THAD

What have you done to them?

STARK (o.s.)

Not a thing....yet.

THAD

Let me talk to Liz.

STARK (o.s.)

No time. Gotta go, buddy-roo. Me and the  
family. We gotta ride. I think you know  
where we'll be headin'. Endsville, Thad.  
That place where all rail service terminates.  
Oh, in case you're wonderin'....I cut the  
trace on your phone, here. I figure this is  
private business. Just between you and me.  
I cut the State Trooper, too. The one that  
was outside your house here. I cut him up  
the middle and I watched him bleed.

CLICK! Then dead air.

THAD

The trace. Oh, Jesus, the phone trace.  
They heard my call. They stopped her from  
leaving. Rawlie, he's got Liz. He's got  
my children.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW AFTERNOON

GEORGE STARK looks a great deal like H.G. Wells's Invisible Man. A wide swath of bandage covers his forehead from eyebrows to hair-line. Another swath covers his chin and lower jaw. He's wearing sunglasses, a New York Yankees baseball cap, and a pair of black gloves. He grins as he reaches into the playpen, lifts WILLIAM away from WENDY, and cradles him in his right arm. (Neither child seems particularly upset.) LIZ rushes at him and tries to wrench the baby away.

LIZ

NO! DON'T YOU TOUCH HIM! GIVE HIM TO  
ME! GIVE HIM....!

They struggle briefly, Stark easily able to withstand her assault. She hammers at his grotesque face with her fists, knocking the sunglasses first askew and then off. The flesh below his left eye has sagged and fallen away like a dead mouth, exposing the whole bloodshot bulge of his eyeball. He laughs as he grabs Liz's hair and slams her back against the wall.

STARK

Better quit that, Beth. For your own good.  
It turns me on when you fight. I don't  
think you want me turned on. Or do you?

He brings his hand from behind her head and cups one of her breasts.

STARK (cont.)

Do you? Do you want it? Right now?

His tongue, black, red, and yellow, its surface blasted with strange cracks, pokes out of his snarling, smiling mouth and wiggles at Liz. She stops struggling at once.

STARK (cont.)

Now, before you do anything else foolish,  
I want you to think of your bambinos here.

LIZ

What are you....?

STARK

Hush your mouth, hon. I'll tell you when to talk.

With one of his gloved fingers he tickles William's cheek. Liz can't bear the sight but she fights to keep herself from getting violent again.

STARK (cont.)

There's a cop out there in the back of his bubblemobile, drawin' flies, because he had the bad luck to be on the tracks when my express came through. The way to help yourself and your kids is to stay dumb and stay helpful. Now you gather up whatever you need to keep the kiddies quiet and dry on the road. Do it, woman. Right now. I'm walkin' outa here in two minutes with or without y'all.

Liz pulls herself away and grabs up her pink diaper bag. She rushes into the kitchen and snatches baby bottles from the fridge. Stark retrieves his sunglasses and puts them back on.

STARK (cont.)

That's the way, Beth. Now you're doin' right. I don't wanna hafta hurt you. I don't wanna hurt these little ones, neither.

He lifts his free hand, opens it, closes it, opens it. In the playpen, Wendy lifts her hand, opens it, closes it, opens it. A Wendy-wave. In the crook of George Stark's arm, William's hand opens, closes, opens. A William-wave. Liz sees this and it stops her cold.

STARK (cont.)

In a funny sort of way, you know, I'm their daddy, too.

LIZ

Don't YOU SAY THAT!

She shrieks this and Stark looks at her hard.

STARK

Get control of yourself, woman. And get a move on. You got one minute left to get your shit together.

Liz goes back to packing. Baby food, spoons, Handi-Wipes.

STARK (cont.)

We got places to go and things to do. We're gonna write us a story. 'Bout your friend and mine, Alexis Machine. I got the title all picked out already. Steel Machine. That's what I'm gonna call it. Yessir. Machine is back. He's back and he's pissed!

EXT RAWLIE DeLESSEPS' HOUSE AFTERNOON

THAD and RAWLIE burst out the front door and rush to the Volkswagen that sits in the driveway.

RAWLIE

Be careful, Thaddeus. Remember, he knows you as well as you know him. Don't let him seduce you. Don't....

Rawlie's eyes have risen to the sky. Thad turns and sees....

....a flock of SPARROWS circling overhead. There's another flock on the horizon.

THAD

They've come to take one of us away, haven't they? (He turns back to Rawlie.) Which one?

RAWLIE

The loser, of course. I do hope it's not you, Thaddeus. I hate to think of George Stark taking over your lecture group.

Thad looks back up at the birds.

THAD

Why isn't he aware of them?

RAWLIE

I don't know. (Thad looks at him.) Let's take it as a good sign.

THAD

I thought you knew all about this shit.

RAWLIE

I don't know about any of it. Nobody does. Except the Almighty. And He seems to be on sabbatical. In the end, it's what you believe. I wish I could give you a talisman or a silver bullet or a stake to drive through the monster's heart, but I'm afraid it's not that simple.

THAD

You've given me all the weapons I need, Rawlie. Thank you.

Thad gets into the Beetle and starts the engine.

RAWLIE

Good luck. It'll be interesting to see who's sitting in your office next week.

THAD

I'll be there, pal.

RAWLIE

Wear a red carnation so I know it's you.

THAD

Very funny.

The Beetle turns a tight circle and drives off in a cloud. Rawlie puffs on his pipe and gazes with awe and admiration at the sky....

....where the sparrows swirl above him, then fly off to the west.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT THE BEAUMONT SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK LATE AFTERNOON

The black Toronado pulls up to the Beaumont summer house on Castle Lake. The image is a familiar one. We've seen it before. Only then it was a dream. This time it's really happening.

GEORGE STARK gets out, walks around the car, and opens the rear door on the passenger side. LIZ picks up THE TWINS, one in each arm, and tries to maneuver herself out the door. She finds that she can't do it while holding both babies. Stark reaches his hands out. Liz looks up at him with contempt.

STARK

Come on, give 'em here, mama.

She can't bring herself to do it.

STARK (cont.)

Don't be an asshole, give 'em to me.

Instead, Liz sets William down on the seat and climbs out carrying Wendy. She reaches back into the car, manages to scoop William up with her free hand, and with both babies in her arms again, she walks up onto the porch. Stark watches with amusement.

At the front door, Liz is stuck again. The diaper bag and her purse are still in the car. She hasn't got her keys.

Stark collects the bags and slams the car door. He brings the bags to the porch and, from the foot of the three steps that run up from the grass, holds them out to Liz.

Liz sets William down on the deck and takes the bags. She drops the diaper bag and, still carrying Wendy, she slings the purse's long strap onto her free right shoulder. With a mother's skill, she does a one-handed search in the purse and comes up with the house keys. Before turning to open the door, she does a quick scan of the horizon, hoping to see something, somebody.

STARK (cont.)

No one around, Beth. We got the whole place to ourselves.

He stands there smiling, the butt of a .45 sticking out of his jacket pocket. Liz turns, fumbles with the keys, and pushes one into the lock. She swings the front door open and turns to see...

...William crawling toward the edge of the porch. He's just about to topple over when two black-gloved hands save him. Stark picks the boy up and sets him in the crook of his arm. He walks up onto the deck and retrieves the dropped diaper bag.

Seeing Stark perform these ordinary domestic tasks, tasks which would normally be Thad's, a feeling of dread overwhelms Liz and she slumps against the door jamb.

STARK (cont.)

Inside, darlin'. Let's go.

Liz moves into the house and George Stark follows her.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK LATE AFTERNOON

Inside, LIZ and STARK drop their gear and deposit THE BABIES in a playpen which is a duplicate of the one in Ludlow. Seeing William liberated, Liz feels some relief. She busies herself immediately. She takes the diaper bag into the kitchen and starts to transfer bottles and baby food into the fridge.

STARK

So lemme tell you the rest of the story.  
Jack Rangely and Westerman decide to make  
a break for it. Ellington doesn't like the  
idea, but he's forced to go along.

He's telling the story of Steel Machine, obviously started in the car. Liz's eyes are drawn to a wooden block which holds a set of carving knives. Stark isn't watching, but he's nearby. He's just outside the open kitchen door. Liz considers her chances. Reaches for the knives. Hesitates.

STARK (cont.)

When they try to come out of the barn, Machine  
lights the gasoline they've poured into the  
trench around it in the night. Won't that  
be great?

He looks at her now. Too late for the knives.

STARK (cont.)

This book's gonna be the best. The best  
of all o' them.

LIZ

I've....I've got to go to the bathroom.

STARK

No problem, darlin'.

She walks across the living room with Stark right behind her. When she steps into a powder room and starts to shut the door, Stark blocks it with his foot.

STARK (cont.)

Uh uh. Door stays open. I won't watch.

He pulls slightly away from the door and turns to the side.

STARK (cont.)

Go ahead, darlin'. And I wanna hear the tinklies....so I know you're not in there doin' somethin' stupid.

Liz pulls down her skirt and panties and sits awkwardly. There's silence for a time, then her bladder lets go and we can hear the liquid sounds. Satisfied, Stark resumes his tale.

STARK (cont.)

So Machine sets the gasoline burnin'. That'll be great. There's a movie in it, too. These Assholes who make movies love a good fire.

Liz eyes the counter across from the commode. Sitting amidst a scattering of toiletries is a pair of long-bladed barber scissors. Liz finishes on the commode, flushes, stands and pulls up her panties.

STARK (cont.)

Westerman and Jack Rangely duck back inside, planning to use the car to drive right through the flames, but Ellington panics.

Liz grabs the scissors, shoves them down inside her panties, punches the point through the fabric right at the crotch, making a kind of holster, and pushes down. The finger loops keep the scissors from falling through. The blade end sticks out, dangling like a chrome penis. Liz quickly pulls up her skirt and walks out of the powder room, heading back toward the kitchen. With a sudden, violent move, Stark grabs her by the arm and pulls her in close to him.

STARK (cont.)

Pardon my gettin' personal, Beth. Time's a little short for politeness.

He reaches down inside the front of her skirt. Inside her panties. Repulsed by the feel of his hand on her flesh, Liz struggles to pull away, but Stark holds her in place, grinning ludely, his face only inches from hers.

STARK (cont.)

Too bad we don't have a free hour or two.

He probes around....and pulls out the scissors.

STARK (cont.)

You don't want these. They'd just get you in trouble. Guess I'm gonna hafta tie you up, darlin'. You just don't seem able to behave y'self.

EXT ROUTE 5 SUNSET

Two police cruisers go screaming along Route 5, heading east. They blow past Rawlie's beetle, which is heading west in the opposite lane.

INT THE BEETLE ON ROUTE 5 SUNSET

THAD tenses when he sees the police cars. He looks at the tachometer. The needle is pinned at 85. He eases up on the gas.

In the rear-view mirror, he sees that the police cars aren't turning around. They disappear over a small hill.

Thad hits the gas again.

EXT ROUTE 5 SUNSET

The beetle rolls on toward the setting sun. A road sign announces:

CASTLE ROCK - 25 MILES

INT THE BEAUMONT SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK SUNSET

LIZ is sitting in a straight-backed chair in the dining area. STARK has wrapped her ankles with the adhesive tape from Pritchard's and is now taping her wrists behind her.

STARK

Me and Thad, we're gonna do a little.... collaberatin', that's all. Just like we always done. When we're finished, if you haven't pissed me off too bad, I might just decide to let you go. Y'understand it all depends on the kind of mood I'm in. If I'm in a good mood, a....peaceful mood....who knows what kinda turn things might take? When all this is over, I might just be.... settlin'down up this way. And I sure would want you to think kindly of me. I like it here. I purely do. I could get....real comfortable here.

Stark grins lasciviously at Liz. It sends a visible shudder up her back and that makes him laugh out loud. He moves into the kitchen, goes to a utility cupboard (he knows his way around the house) and

quickly finds a twenty-five foot clothesline. He pulls off the cardboard sleeve and digs in a pocket for his straight-razor. He snaps the thing open. It's caked with dried blood. He cuts the clothesline into usable lengths.

STARK (cont.)

Thad owes me, you know. Maybe he knew how to write before I showed up, but I was the one who taught him how to write the stuff people would want to read. Ain't no good writin' a thing if nobody wants to read it. So that's why I say Thad owes me. I didn't want all this trouble. B'lieve it or not, I prefer to steer south of trouble. This writin' we gotta do....I tried to do it on my own. It was comin' good, too. But then I developed this....physical problem. I guess you noticed.

He reaches into his mouth and plucks a tooth. It comes out of the gum with rotten ease. Liz turns her head away as he plunks the thing into an ashtray.

STARK (cont.)

Don't worry. I'll be better soon.

He kneels and starts to tie her ankles with the clothesline right over top of the tape.

STARK (cont.)

Thad is gonna make me well. All he has to do is write this one more story with me and I'll be rockin'-and-rollin' again. 'Course he might be feelin' poorly when it's over. Workin' so close together and all, he might just go and catch whatever this is that I got. That'd be a shame. I surely don't wish the boy any harm, and I hope it works out different, but I got a feelin' one or the other of us is gonna have to fold his hand. And when it comes to that....better him than me.

EXT THE BEAUMONT HOUSE IN LUDLOW EVENING

Thad's house in Ludlow is crawling with POLICE. Emergency vehicles are parked in the driveway and on the lawn. MEDICS place the body of THE YOUNG STATE TROOPER on a stretcher and wheel it away while INVESTIGATORS pore over the dead man's cruiser.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN LUDLOW EVENING

The phone rings in the Beaumont living room and GARRISON, the cop who was outwitted at the University, picks up the receiver.

GARRISON

Beaumont residence.

INT ALAN PANGBORN'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK EVENING

In his office at Castle Rock, ALAN PANGBORN is surprised to hear the unfamiliar voice.

ALAN

Er....yeah, this is Alan Pangborn, Sheriff, Castle County. I was calling for Thad Beaumont.

(Again we intercut between the two locations.)

GARRISON

Steve Garrison, Maine State Police. I was just gonna call you.

ALAN

Trouble?

GARRISON

Got an officer dead here. I guess that's trouble. Son of a bitch cut him to pieces. We're pretty sure Beaumont did it. He's outa here. Apparently has his family with him, unless he cut them up, too. He killed that doctor over in Bangor. Got a positive ID from the receptionist. God damn lunatic. He actually signed the register as a patient. If he's headed for his place over there.... seems unlikely but the guy's crazy, you never know....it would be very nice if you were there to stop his fuckin' clock.

EXT THE BEAUMONT SUMMER HOUSE IN CASTLE ROCK EVENING

The sun has dropped below the horizon and it's quite dark when Rawlie DeLesseps' beetle shimmies down the drive and pulls in beside the black Toronado. THAD gets out and walks toward the house.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK EVENING

THAD opens the door quietly and steps into darkness. There are no lights on. It's very quiet. Deathly quiet. Thad takes a few more silent steps....peers into the kitchen....sees the stove.

It's like the dream. Exactly like the dream.

He turns a corner. There's a fire burning in the hearth, the flames casting the only light. And there sits LIZ....tied to the chair.... her head drooped over, her hair blocking her face.

Thad runs to her. Grabs her. She looks up, startled.

LIZ

Thad!

THAD

Oh, thank God. Are you alright? The kids. Where are the kids?

STARK (o.s.)

Right here, hoss.

Thad turns and sees STARK for the first time. He's got THE BABIES cradled, one in the crook of each arm. The 45 is in his left hand pointed directly at William. Thad stands and they face each other, each in sunglasses, each wearing a baseball cap (New York vs. Boston), each afraid, and each a little in awe at the sight of the other.

THAD

Hello, George.

STARK

Hello, Thad. How are you, old buddy?  
You look a little peaky.

THAD

You don't look so hot yourself.

Stark laughs and holds Wendy out for Thad to take. Thad hugs her to his chest. Stark keeps William, keeps the gun pointed at his belly.

THAD (cont.)

If I do what you want, will you leave them alone?

STARK

You have my word. The word of a Southern man, which is not given lightly.

Thad turns back to Liz. Holding Wendy, he kneels and puts his free arm lovingly around his wife.

THAD

Liz....I'm sorry, I'm so sorry for this.

Liz looks down and nods, making tears drizzle. Thad kisses the top of her head.

THAD (cont.)

I'm....I'm gonna go upstairs with him.

LIZ

Thad! No! You can't....

Thad puts a finger across her lips.

THAD

I have no choice. We....have no choice.

They look into each other's eyes, each realizing that it's true. They have no choice.

THAD (cont.)

He won't hurt me. He can't. But he can hurt you. And he will if you give him reason. Now, I don't want you to try anything, here. Don't be thinkin' about breakin' loose. Don't be thinkin' about the telepho....

He sees that Stark is at the phone. Still holding WILLIAM, he one-hands his razor and cuts the cord between the base unit and the wall. He looks up grinning.

STARK

Guess we're on the same wave-length, ain't that right, Thad?

Thad looks back at Liz.

THAD

I know what I'm doin', babe. You gotta trust that I know what I'm doin'.

LIZ

Thad, look at him! Can't you see what's happening to him? He doesn't just want help writing a book! He wants to steal your life! Don't you see that?

THAD

I know what he wants.

Thad looks at Stark with eyes that are daggers.

THAD (cont.)

What I don't know....what he doesn't know.... is whether this is really going to save him. (Stark smiles nervously.) He doesn't know. He's just....hoping.

STARK

Hope springs eternal, old hoss.

THAD

I don't think it will save him. I think he's finished. Know why? Because I don't want him around any more.

This frightens Stark but he doesn't show it with anything more than a momentary hesitation.

STARK

Why, Thad. After all the good times we've had together.

THAD

You're finished, George.

STARK

There's only one way to find out. Ain't that right, Thad? Only one way to find out who's finished and who's not. You ready?

THAD

Just waitin' on you.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

In the peaked room with no windows, sealed in by the revolving book shelves, THAD BEAUMONT and GEORGE STARK face-off from opposite sides of the desk. The lamp with the flexible goose-neck casts a circle

of white light on the blank paper which waits there. Stark holds WILLIAM in his right arm, Thad holds WENDY in his left. Both men remove their caps, and their sunglasses, and look at each other.

STARK

I reckon you'll want your typewriter, won't you, Thad?

THAD

You know better. These are what I use when I want to get back in touch with Alexis Machine.

Thad points at the Berol Black Beauties in the mason jar. Stark smiles. He's excited. So excited that he hasn't noticed the change in Thad. He hasn't noticed the strength, the new self assuredness, the predatory will to live that's reflected in those ferocious eyes.

STARK

You're kind of up for this, ain't you, hoss. You want it.

THAD

I always have.

STARK

Alexis Machine.

THAD

'Cut him while I stand here and watch!'

STARK

'I want to see the blood flow!'

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

Night has fallen and the living room windows are black. LIZ is struggling to bounce her chair over to the fireplace, to the sharp edge of the firescreen, which she might be able to use to cut herself loose.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

THAD sets WENDY on the floor beside WILLIAM. The two start to crawl and play happily. Thad sits at the desk. Stark sits across from him. Thad picks up one of the Black Beauties and holds it in his bandaged right hand.

THAD

I'm going to start with Machine inside the big birthday cake.

STARK

Yes. That's right.

Thad writes...."STEEL MACHINE'....by George Stark."

A kind of longing eagerness fills Stark's face. He pulls his left glove off revealing a bandage similar to Thad's. He picks up a pencil of his own and gnaws on it with rotten teeth.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

LIZ has reached the firescreen. She starts to rub the clothesline against the sharp edge. She twists and turns her wrists, fighting valiantly to free herself.

She becomes aware of A SOUND....like a wind beginning to blow.... a strange, whirring wind. She looks at the windows. The dark reveals nothing.

The sound persists, increasing slightly in volume, but remaining distant. Liz renews her efforts.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

THAD writes a sentence which complete's a paragraph. He looks up.

THAD

Give me a cigarette.

Stark raises his eyebrows. He reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out his .45, and sets it on the desk beside him. He reaches back into the pocket and comes up with a crumpled pack of Pall Malls and a Zippo lighter. He reaches them over to Thad.

Thad takes a cigarette and lights it. Keeping the Zippo, he passes the Pall Malls back to Stark who takes one for himself. Thad leans across the desk to light it....and to get a closer look at that revolver. (Should he grab for it?)

Stark looks up at him. (It's not a good time.) Thad sinks slowly back into his chair. He inhales smoke. It makes him lightheaded but he blinks it away. He takes another puff. Savors it.

STARK

I thought you quit.

THAD

I did. Except for times like this. Times when you and me are workin' together.

Thad drops the lighter on the desk and picks up his pencil again. He writes a little more, then looks up into Stark's eyes.

THAD (cont.)

Why don't you try, George. You gotta break-in.

First Stark smiles, then he looks suspicious, then he smiles again. He sets his pencil to the paper in front of him. He sits there, not moving, for a long while. Then he says....

STARK

I'm scared, hoss.

THAD

You know what it comes down to. The only way to do it....is to do it.

Slowly, Stark begins to write. One word....then two more....then a string of words all in a burst. Thad watches with some fascination. He fingers the scar on his forehead and finds an open sore there. His mouth stings. Another sore is breaking open at the edge of his lip. Fear bites Thad from within. This isn't working out the way he had hoped.

Stark's sores are disappearing. Before our eyes, one closes and vanishes, then another. He's healing.

Thad feels another small blister on his cheek. When he touches it, it opens and fluid seeps out.

George writes on, engrossed, totally involved with the words that are streaming, now, off the end of his pencil.

STARK

It's comin', Thad. It's comin' easy, and it's comin' good. I can do it. I can do it!

THAD

(Terrified, but holding himself together)  
Go for it, George. Do it. Knock the living hell out of it.

Thad eyes the .45. He looks at THE TWINS, tumbling around on the floor. He looks at the .45 again. (Should he risk it? He has to. Doesn't he have to ?)

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

LIZ has made some progress. The rope isn't cut very far through but, from all the struggling, it's gotten a little looser around her wrists. That whirring, moaning SOUND has gotten appreciably louder. Liz recognizes it now as flapping...the flapping of thousands of wings, rising on the night, getting closer. And with it comes that familiar screeching.

LIZ hears tapping at the window. Like the first drops of rainfall in a storm. Only she knows it isn't rain.

LIZ

Birds! It's the birds! The sparrows!

She continues to struggle with the ropes.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

THAD makes his move. He lunges across the desk and reaches for the revolver. STARK'S hand, quick as a cobra, shoots out and grabs him by the wrist.

STARK

You shouldn't fuck with me, hoss. Don't you know I can tell what you're thinkin'?

Thad jerks back, trying to wrench himself free, but Stark holds on with vice-like strength.

STARK (cont.)

Stop it, Thad. Stop it or I'll cut you!

Stark whips out the straight-razor with his free hand and flicks it open. Thad looks down at the thing, sees the blood that's caked on the blade, then looks up again, furious, into Stark's eyes.

THAD

You're not gonna cut me, George. You can't do shit to me, and you know it.

STARK

I could do some shit to the other folks around here. Yessir, I could do some real ugly shit to them. Siddown, Thad. Make it easy on yourself. Siddown and.... shut your eyes....and see if you can't just....drift on off.

THAD

You....you go TO HELL!

Thad leaps across the desk and pounds a solid right into Stark's jaw. Stark loses his balance, but only momentarily. Thad crawls over the desktop, kicking the paper and the pencils, sending them flying. The two go down together in a scrabbling heap. The babies watch in astonishment.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

LIZ hears the pounding from upstairs.

LIZ

Oh, Jesus. Jesus, THAD!

She twists and wrenches. Her chair falls over. She hits the floor hard, but keeps on fighting. The SOUND of the birds is getting louder and louder. Liz can see shapes at the window, black against black, fluttering, pecking, scratching.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

STARK pushes THAD off him and gets to his feet. He charges with the razor. Thad kicks him back with all the strength that's in him. He pulls himself up, grabs the cord of the goose-neck lamp, and fishes the thing to him. When Stark charges again, he bats him hard with the lamp's base. The light goes out and the room turns black. Thad bats again and again. The lamp hits Stark's hand. The razor flies. We hear it land, but we can't see where.

The babies start to cry now. They're crawling around in the pitch. Oh, God. Where did that razor end up?

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

LIZ breaks the back of her chair apart. She frees one hand but the other remains bound. She tries to roll over. Her feet kick the

firescreen. It tumbles over on top of her. Hot. Burning. She screams. Kicking the thing off, her foot dislodges one of the burning logs. It rolls out of the fireplace and onto the rug. Flames catch the edge of Liz' dress.

There are more sparrows at the window now. Lots more. A squirming wall of them that blocks out the moonlight. The force of their terrible mass can be heard pounding on the walls, on the front door.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

THAD and GEORGE STARK are locked together like Sumo wrestlers. Forcing Thad down onto the desktop, Stark reaches for the revolver. Gets it. In the dark, Thad's fingers find one of the Berol Black Beauties.

Stark raises the gun. Thad raises the pencil....and drives it deep into Stark's neck....once....twice....a third time, leaving it planted there. Blood pulses out. Stark screams and drops the revolver. Clutching his throat, he stumbles backward. He hits a wall, reels around, and falls to the floor on his back.

Thad rolls himself over and sits on top of the desk, breathing hard. He squints to see in the dark.

Stark lies motionless.

In the silence, Thad hears THE BIRDS. His hand shoots instinctively to the scar on his forehead. It's healed. He runs his fingers over his cheeks, his chin, under his eyes. He's whole again. THE BIRD SOUND gets louder.

THAD

They're coming for you, George. They're coming to take you back to the devil.

Thad hears the babies whimpering. He scrambles off the desk, flies across the room, and gropes around in the dark. He finds WILLIAM. He sits him up in a corner while he feels around for Wendy.

Behind his back, George Stark rises.

Just as Thad finds WENDY, powerful hands grab him from behind, lift him bodily and hurl him across the room.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

LIZ' dress has really started to burn. She rolls around trying to

snuff out the flames. She can't do it with her feet still tied to the chair. She screams.

More pounding at the door. It flies open suddenly. Birds come bursting in out of the night....and so does ALAN PANGBORN.

LIZ

ALAN! ALAN, HURRY! HURRY, ALAN!

Alan whips off his jacket. He rushes to Liz' side, stamps out the flames on her dress, and rolls the log back into the fireplace, tossing his flaming jacket in after it. He quickly goes to work untying Liz' ankles.

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

THAD spots the revolver on the floor. He dives for it. Stark kicks him away. The gun skitters under the desk. Thad lunges again. Stark kicks him in the head this time. He flies back, semi-conscious.

STARK

I didn't want it to be this way, hoss.

Stark drops to his knees. He looks under the desk.

STARK (cont.)

Had a different sort of thing in mind.  
Yes, I did.

Stark finds the .45. He gets to his feet and finally....he hears THE BIRDS. He looks down at Thad, puzzled. Thad, still groggy, sits himself up on the floor.

THAD

They're....they're here to write the ending. Is it gonna be your ending, George....or mine?

Stark is frightened....and this time it shows. Pushing his way up the wall, Thad slowly gets to his feet.

STARK

You're....not makin' any sense, hoss.  
You better start makin' some sense. Make sense and act sensible. You better....you better sit back down here and....and....

Stark bumps into a chair and almost trips. In trying to catch the chair, he bumps the desk and sends an ashtray toppling. In trying to catch the ashtray, he knocks some papers off the desk....the ones he was writing on. They flutter slowly to the floor.

THAD

Kinda clumsy there, George.

INT THE BEAUMONT LIVING ROOM IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

Sparrows fluttering around them, ALAN releases LIZ. She tries to pull away, heading for the stairs. Alan pulls her back.

LIZ

Let me go! My babies! LET ME GO!  
I HAVE TO GET MY BABIES!

INT THAD'S OFFICE IN CASTLE ROCK NIGHT

Stark hears the birds coming. He hears them screeching, flapping, pounding on the outside of the house.

STARK

I'm gonna....I'm gonna give you one last chance, Thad. Now you just....stop whatever it is you're doin' here.

THAD

I'm not doing anything, hoss. I'm just waitin' around to see how things turn out.

Stark looks at the wall which is lined with book shelves. There are holes appearing. The sparrows are breaking through. He can see beaks and small heads and ferocious, predatory eyes. He fires.... BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!....into the wood. It only serves to weaken it.

STARK

Stop it! Stop it, Thad!

THAD

Sorry, George. I can't. And neither can you.

Stark turns and aims the revolver, point blank, at Thad's forehead. Thad doesn't flinch. In stead, he curls the corners of his mouth up in a victorious little smirk and calmly says....

THAD (cont.)

Go ahead. Make my day.

Stark stares at him in disbelief. Slowly, it dawns on him that he's been beaten.

STARK

The ending, huh? Well, see how you like this ending, hoss.

He whirls, his face twisted in an insane grin, and aims the revolver at the babies.

THAD

NOOOOOO!!!

Thad grabs his old Remington 32 off the desk and brings it down on Stark's wrist just as the gun goes off....BLAM!

The bullet chunks into the floor inches from William's foot.

The book shelves give way with a groan. The wall cracks open wide revealing a big piece of night sky. Moonlight streams in, and with it....the sparrows, a river of them....a river that flows directly at George Stark.

STARK

NO! NO, I WON'T! I WON'T GO BACK!  
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME!

They settle on his shoulders, on his arms, on his head. They strike his chest, his face, his legs.

Thad crawls over to shield the babies with his body. Strangely, they've stopped crying. They're looking up into the stuffed, boiling air with identical expressions of wonder and delight. Thad tries to block their view of what's happening but they squirm this way and that, wanting to see. Their hands are raised, their fingers outstretched, as if to check for rain.

Blood bursts from Stark's face in a hundred places. One of his blue eyes winks out. His neck is being torn apart.

The whirring of the birds becomes a hurricane. Stark makes one last galvanic effort to get away, but it's hopeless. The birds are eating him alive. His eyes are gone. His forehead and most of his hair has been struck away. Ribs poke out of his skin in white lumps. His screams stop as his throat disintegrates.

And the sparrows, clustered under his armpits, begin to lift him. His feet rise from the bloody carpet.

ALAN and LIZ arrive, pushing through the revolving book shelves. Liz rushes over to Thad and the babies.

Alan just stares at the thing which had been George Stark, a thing which is now only vaguely human as it rises into the air on a cushion of sparrows.

Thad is weeping. So is Liz. Her hands fly over the babies looking for wounds. The babies are still delightedly watching the spectacle in the air above them.

Stark's body floats through the hole in the wall with sparrows flying around it, tearing out the last of its hair.

Alan steps closer and looks out into the night.

The sky is black with birds, but in one place it is ebony, as if a hole has been torn in the fabric of reality. A black hole, bearing the shape of a struggling man. The birds lift it higher, higher, higher. It reaches the tops of the trees and pauses there briefly in front of the moon. Then it begins to move again....beyond the trees....into the dark sky....and there it is lost to view.

Thad and Liz cling to each other desperately.

The babies are caught in their embrace. THE CAMERA PUSHES IN SLOWLY on their flushed little faces. They are wide-eyed, staring with amazement at the hole in the wall....at the sky into which George Stark was taken.

They each raise a chubby pink hand and open it, close it, open it.

FADE OUT TO BLACK.

CREDITS