

THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE

by

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FADE IN:

The delicate feet of a TEN-YEAR-OLD BLACK GIRL walking through a woodsy area; trees, earth, twigs, fallen leaves and sunlight piercing through the branches above. CAMERA TILTS UP to reveal the sweet child, clearly in love with her bucolic surroundings, as she carries her school books home from school. We hear an occasional "tweet-tweet" from a distant bird. Besides that, there is absolute stillness in the air -- a calming silence that comes from living in the country...or from living inside one's head. The stillness is interrupted by a VOICE OVER.

VOICE OVER

(deep, troubled voice)

"Midway through this mortal life I woke
to find myself in a gloomy wood
Where the right road was wholly lost and
gone"

(THEN, serious ANNOUNCER
voice)

If you wake up with an addiction you
can't control and feel lost and cut off
from your family and friends...If you
think there's no way to turn, turn to
us...call CON-TROL 266-8765, that's C-O-
N-T-R-O-L. Don't take another step into
the woods alone.

SOUNDS OF A TV CHANNEL BEING SWITCHED;

JINGLE TRIO

"MLLE. MODISTE...BECAUSE YOU'RE A
WOMAN..."

"MLLE. MODISTE...BECAUSE HE'S A MAN..."

AS CREDITS BEGIN:

A MONTAGE OF VOICE OVERS switching from one to the next, as if someone, somewhere was switching channels; an ironic blend of cheery commercial ads, ecological disasters, useless politicians with meaningless slogans, droning economists, war, famine, salvation through consumption, facts, figures and fashion statements.

CAMERA RISES THROUGH AND ABOVE THE TREES TO A WIDE ANGLE, revealing the Girl standing poised between the end of Central Park and of what exists directly across from the park.

A FOUR-LANE STREET WITH A MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM -- angry, frustrated drivers shouting, honking, getting out of their

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cars to fight; exhaust fumes clouding up an already filthy sky; CAMERA CONTINUES RISING UP to reveal what exists on the other side of the traffic jam -- a WAR ZONE GHETTO. The Little Girl begins her trek across the street, through the traffic jam and into the ghetto as TV COMMERCIAL BABBLE CONTINUES IN V.O. She is completely unphased by her surroundings. She makes her way through dealers, vandalized cars, fires in trash cans, arguments in Spanish overlapping arguments in English. The Girl glides through all of this without injury or reaction; an expert in finding her way through the battlefield.

She stops at the stoop of a dilapidated building. Her attention is caught by something on the cracked and filthy pavement. Bending down, she plucks a pretty little FLOWER from a bit of green weed that has, somehow, managed to grow between the concrete. She looks at it lovingly and carefully slips it in between the pages of one of her books, turns and enters her shabby tenement building.

END OF CREDITS

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

She enters a slum apartment. Furniture that is worn and tattered. Walls with cracks and stains. No color -- everything is faded and dark. The only bright colors come from the flower she holds. She crosses into the kitchen, pulls a plate from the fridge and pops it into the microwave.

HER FATHER sits in a T-shirt and shorts, watching television. We realize the broadcasting montage we've been hearing was, in fact, coming from his television. Unemployed and bitter, he flips channels obsessively from his folding chair. HE RAGES IMPOTENTLY AT EACH PROGRAM AND COMMERCIAL revealing false advertising, correcting statistics, offering solutions and accusing leaders of duplicity.

ECONOMIST ON TV

...Nonsense. In fact, we are experiencing a surge of productivity and consumerism. The recession is over. If people are poor, it is because they are poor in spirit or lack the imagination and initiative to change their lives.

TV INTERVIEWER

What about the homeless and the unemployed?

(CONTINUED)

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ECONOMIST ON TV
Simply people with poor imaginations.
I'd be homeless too if I didn't think up
ways to pay my mortgage.

Father flips the channel.

TV COMMERCIAL
"Do you have a problem with internal
bleeding?..." (continues)

HER MOTHER emerges from the back room in a Nurse's Uniform.
She spots her daughter standing in front of the microwave
waiting for her dinner to warm.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Honey, don't stand in front of that thing
-- it gives you cancer. Don't stay up
late, O.K.

She kisses her daughter then moves to exit for work. She
calls into the living room.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I'M GOING!

The Father continues his TV watching, uninterested in the
goings-on around him. The Mother shakes her head and leaves.
The Little Girl takes a warm plate of food from the
microwave, then walks past her father. She pauses, puts her
hand on his shoulder to comfort him, then continues into her
bedroom. This is a daily routine.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SILENCE; Finally, the white noise of commercial broadcasting
has been muted.

IN TIGHT ANGLE, CAMERA PANS from a plate containing the
remains of dinner on the girl's nighttable to an opened book
entitled "THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE, VOL. 13 THE CASE OF LITTLE
GIRL LOST". The book lies in the Girl's hand. The room is
dark except for moonlight through her one window. (We cannot
make out the interior of the Girl's room except for the bed
and the nighttable. The walls are in shadow.) As she
snuggles into her pillow, the Book falls to the floor.
Suddenly, something strange begins to happen.

The Girl appears to be snuggling deeper into the sheets until
we realize she is, in fact, SINKING. Slowly at first, then
faster. And deeper. And deeper. The bedclothes slide

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silky down with her, slithering down and down. Soon, she is lost from sight as this bottomless softness sucks her in. The bed begins quivering with energy. Slowly, it rises. The blankets swirl about and, like the wings of a patchwork manta ray, begin flapping with great slow and graceful movements. The window slides silently open. And the bed is gone.

EXT. MOONLIT GHETTO SKY - NIGHT

Outside the tenement block, a flying bed -- trailing a great silken sack from its belly -- soars majestically across the moonlit sky.

CAMERA PANS DOWN FROM GHETTO SKY TO A GHETTO BAR.

INT. BAR - GHETTO AREA - NIGHT

The White Noise of commercial broadcasting once again lingers in the background, coming from a TV over the bar as:

TV SPOKESPERSON (O.S.)

"Recent studies reveal that between 1950 and the year 2000, the Earth's population will be nearly tripled. There are more people alive today than have died in the entire history of the human race -- you can make a difference! -- A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT FROM GAYS & LESBIANS FOR A BETTER WORLD."

CAMERA ANGLES ON A FADED FRAMED PHOTO HANGING BEHIND THE BAR. It is a photo of SGT. JOE FOSTER circa 1967. A smiling, proud, young police officer with idealistic dreams of heroism. An OFF-SCREEN VOICE of a MIDDLE-AGED MAN is in the middle of telling a story over the visuals.

VOICE (O.S.)

...It was day two of the siege. We had police cars! Squat teams! Spotlights! You never saw anything like it -- just like in the movies. This maniac had the entire city running scared...

CAMERA PANS FROM PHOTO TO FRAMED NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS; "ROOKIE COP SAVES FAMILY HELD HOSTAGE BY DRUG MADMAN"...A SECOND CLIPPING SHOWS YOUNG SGT. JOE FOSTER RECEIVING A PLAQUE OF COMMENDATION FROM THE MAYOR...

VOICE (O.S.)

-- Making demands out of the window -- "I want a police escort. I want a helicopter. I want a ticket to Columbia"...All this shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PAN DOWN THE BAR AND AROUND TO THE BOOTHS, passing by one or two occupied with dispirited deadbeats...

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...THEN -- he takes his eighteen-month-old baby sister and holds her out the window like he's gonna drop her if we don't give him what he wants...Now remember, he's six stories up...Well, I saw red...I'll never forget it. My face actually burned hot -- like it was on fire. Suddenly, my life meant nothing to me.

CAMERA ARRIVES on THE MAN BEHIND THE VOICE -- LT. JOE FOSTER, now pushing fifty uphill. He pauses in the story to take a shot of whiskey. His face is ruddy, but not from passion -- from frustration and drink. One finds it hard to believe he is the same man from the photo.

JOE

I had to save that kid...So, I charged into the building, knocked down a barricade, ran six stories in twenty seconds -- couldn't believe how fast I moved...I get to the apartment --

He is telling his story to a YOUNG, NAIVE, HEAVILY MADE-UP, MID-WESTERN WAIF, who sits opposite him in the booth. She listens with great enthusiasm.

JOE (CONT'D)

--bust open the door, take a bullet in the shoulder...

YOUNG WAIF

Ah! You got shot? Did it hurt?

JOE

Nah, please...When the adrenaline is pumping like that, you don't feel a thing! I got a scar right here --

Joe starts to open his shirt when:

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, Joe -- come on!

Joe looks up to the interrupting voice: A MIDDLE-AGED PROSTITUTE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIDDLE-AGED PROSTITUTE

The kid's gotta make a living. She just got here from Oshkosh -- Are you paying for the time or not?

Joe sips another shot and considers it, as the Young Waif, who we now understand to be a YOUNG PROSTITUTE smiles, and coos in a clumsily sexual way:

YOUNG PROSTITUTE

You can be my hero.

This slaps Joe in the face. He suddenly feel ashamed that his heroism is being used as a come on as a PHONE RINGS O.S.

BARTENDER

Joe -- phone call...

The Young Prostitute asks, very business-like:

YOUNG PROSTITUTE

Should I wait?

OLDER PROSTITUTE

(shakes her head, "no")

Come on.

They exit. Camera finds Joe on phone to HIS WIFE:

SUSAN (V.O.)

Joe? Are you coming home?

JOE

Yeah, I...had some work to do, then I just stopped by for a drink.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Your shift ended two hours ago, goddamn it. We agreed to talk tonight.

JOE

Well, there was more to do! You think crime stops at six o'clock!?

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

You promised. I mean, could you hold off making the world safe for civilization until we sort things out.

(that stings Joe)

I need you to pick up a few things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOE
I have to go shopping now!

SUSAN (V.O.)
HEY! I worked all day, too! There's nothing in the house! You want to take us out to dinner?

JOE
No.

SUSAN (V.O.)
Then I need a few things. You have a pen?

Joe checks for a second, then gives up and lies.

JOE
Yeah.

SUSAN (V.O.)
I need coffee, detergent, face soap, body soap, dishwashing soap...(continues)

Joe listens as he looks up to the TV. On the screen, he sees a MONTAGE OF HEAVENLY IMAGES with a V.O. NARRATION:

TV (V.O.)
"...And he rode upon the cherubim and did fly: He came flying upon the wings of the wind..."

Joe stares at the screen as his wife continues:

SUSAN (V.O.)
I need a box of linguine, a box of linguine fini, a box of spaghetti, a box of cappellini and two boxes of tortellini...(continues)

TV (V.O.)
(simultaneously)
"At the brightness of his presence his clouds removed: Hailstones and coals of fire."

C.U. on JOE as we hear the final words on the TV V.O.:

TV (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"With the help of God, I shall leap over the wall."
(then)
MY PRAYER, a heavenly new fragrance by Elizabeth Ardsley.

CUT TO:

INT. GHETTO SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Joe pushes a cart. He is a little unsteady from drink. Once again, COMMERCIAL WHITE NOISE BLARES from the loudspeakers, advertising special buys with jingles and statistics. A TIRED SUPERMARKET EMPLOYEE passes Joe.

JOE

Coffee?

EMPLOYEE

(monotone)

Aisle three.

As Joe proceeds to aisle three, ANOTHER SHOPPER barrels past him, knocking carts and disappearing down an aisle. Joe gets pissed. He enters aisle one and encounters an infinite selection of coffees. He grabs the first can he sees, then proceeds down the aisle only to find another brand that claims to be FRESHER TASTING. He replaces the first can with the second and continues, only to find a third can, NEW IMPROVED FRESHER TASTE. He replaces the second with the third until he spots a fourth which reads, NEW IMPROVED SUPREME BLEND. He starts to get angry. He looks down the aisle which suddenly appears to be endless. He sees hundreds of cans of coffee with labels like ULTIMATE SUPREME, HEAVENLY BLEND, SECRET AWARD WINNING BEANS...It is surreal.

Getting dizzy, he turns and looks across the aisle to the detergents and once again sees a never-ending aisle of products; GET CLOTHES BRIGHTER, GET CLOTHES CLEANER AND BRIGHTER, GET CLOTHES LOOKING NEW AND BRIGHTER WITH COLORS MORE VIVID...MORE BRIGHTER, MORE CLEANER...THE CLEANEST CLOTHES YOU'VE EVER WORN...LIKE GETTING A WHOLE NEW WARDROBE...DESTROYS FILTH...ALCHEMY IN A DRUM.

Joe stands stunned and confused until something crashes into his cart and he is jolted out of his daze.

OLD WOMAN

You shopping or sight-seeing!

Joe realizes his cart has banged into her cart. He maneuvers around her. Looking up at the aisle, he realizes that the hundreds of detergent products and the endless aisle are gone. He looks to the coffee section -- it too, has returned to normal. He blinks. He has been hallucinating. A wash of heat overcomes him as he rubs his head. He feels dizzy again.

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CONTINUED:

JOE

Damn.

INT. CHECK-OUT COUNTER - NIGHT

A tired CHECK OUT CLERK runs Joe's items over the computer light which doesn't work very well. He keeps running the same loaf of bread back and forth over the light and nothing registers.

JOE

Why don't you just enter it yourself?

The clerk eyes him and continues to rub the bread back and forth, squeezing it each time so that the loaf starts crumbling.

CAMERA ANGLES BEHIND JOE, FACING THE CHECK OUT COUNTER.

Suddenly, A GUN is thrust into Joe's back. We do not see who it is. The Clerk, looking unnerved by the Thief, bangs open the register and hands the money past Joe to the Thief. The Thief takes JOE'S WALLET out of his pocket and RUNS OFF. Joe instructs the Clerk.

JOE

GET DOWN.

Joe crouches down and pulls out his gun. He sees the top of the front door begin to open and he shouts:

JOE (CONT'D)

STOP! POLICE.

He shoots at the top of the door, missing it and hitting the plate glass window, shattering it to pieces. The Thief runs beneath the counters, out of sight. Joe can follow him only by the ITEMS THE THIEF KNOCKS DOWN as he tries to escape Joe. The Store Manager yells from his cubicle:

MANAGER

WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?!

JOE

STAY DOWN!

A DISPLAY OF CANNED GOODS crashes to the floor as the Thief runs by, just out of sight. Joe pursues, clumsily tripping over fallen canned goods or falling into a puddle of spilled soda.

He certainly isn't the man he once was.

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Throughout the chase, we never get a full view of the Thief. An image just runs out of sight, destroying another grocery display. Joe tracks the Thief, shooting above the area where he thinks he spots him. Throughout the chase, overhead, we hear a constant outpouring of inane jingles and special buys.

Other shoppers hit the floor, except for the OLD WOMAN, who simply lowers her hearing aid and keeps shopping. In the course of the chase, the supermarket is utterly destroyed. Bullets reduce the storefront's glass to rubble. A CROWD BEGINS TO GATHER OUTSIDE.

Finally, Joe makes a leap over the vegetable stand and lands on top of the Thief. His body covers the Thief from the camera, as he grabs hold of his arms. But Joe realizes the Thief is very tiny and rolls over to see the Thief is only a FRIGHTENED BOY OF TWELVE.

Joe grapples for the Boy's gun. It accidentally goes off, but instead of a shot -- A "BANG YOU'RE DEAD" FLAG pops out. The gun is a toy. A CROWD has gathered - some even giggle.

Joe, shocked and humiliated, notices a VIAL OF MULTI-COLORED POWDER that fell out of the Boy's pocket.

JOE

What is this shit?

BOY

(sarcastic)

They call it Candy.

JOE

Cute -- looks like rainbow angel dust.

BOY

(with an attitude)

Nah, better -- stuff really makes ya fly!
You should try it -- might calm you down.

Angered, Joe pockets the vial and pulls the kid up and hauls him outside, telling the store manager.

JOE

Call the Twentieth Precinct. Tell 'em to send a squad car.

INT. DIMITRI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CAPT. DIMITRI, a gruff, no-nonsense son of a bitch behind his desk. Joe sits in front of him. There is a television behind

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dimitri's desk broadcasting THE ELEVEN O'CLOCK NEWS in the B.G. throughout the scene.

DIMITRI

Now, explain this to me...because I'm tired and old and I get confused easily...You cause almost twenty thousand dollars worth of damage to catch a twelve-year-old boy who stole your wallet with a toy gun? Is...is that about right?

JOE

Well, I don't know if it was twenty...

DIMITRI

Yes...yes it was...almost twenty thousand dollars...I have the bills already because of my fax machine. I love my fax machine.

JOE

I didn't know it was a toy gun.

DIMITRI

Well, you got a twenty thousand dollar education, didn't you? Now you're an expert. We can send you on lecture tours about the difference between a REAL GUN and A PLASTIC GUN! Now, I'm not a learned man, but pretty soon, they're gonna start putting cops away and letting the crooks run things BECAUSE IT'S CHEAPER!

JOE

With all due respect, I can't believe my ears. I was doing my job Ivan. That's what I do! Now you're telling me a crime is considered unprofitable to solve! A hundred years ago, a person could be hanged for less! THIS is how it begins, Ivan.

Joe is on the edge of a breaking point. Ivan asks cautiously:

DIMITRI

How what begins?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE

(breathlessly)

The end...the end of everything. You think the dinosaurs just woke up one day extinct -- no, some of them saw it coming. I can see it, Ivan. It's all out of control. No matter what we do, it's never enough. We have no effect. Little by little, ever so slightly -- things won't matter anymore. Pretty soon, robbery will be O.K. as long as you steal less than what it costs to arrest you. And murder will be fine as long as it's someone nobody likes! It's insanity! No one's paying attention! What are we becoming?

DIMITRI

Civilized! Beautiful things in life grow from slime, Joe. They start off disgusting and they turn into something wonderful...We just happen to have the luck to be born in the slimy, disgusting part, and I suggest you just not think about it so much. Now, my problem is that I gotta get the commissioner off my back, who incidentally never liked you. Now, this is what I'm going to do! I'm telling him you were under a lot of pressure from home -- there are personal problems. And I want you to visit the I.A. shrink tomorrow so he can write me up a report to submit. Make sure you tell him all that stuff about the dinosaurs...that'll help.

Joe is about to speak, but Dimitri cuts him off.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

And one more thing -- I'm taking you off narcotics for a while.

JOE

WHAT?

DIMITRI

Joe! Please! All I want to do is keep everybody happy. That's really all I want...to make everyone happy. I want to see happy faces in my city.

(Joe tries to speak)

It's P.R., Joe...Like everything else. You ask me what we do...THAT'S what we

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

do. Keep everything in order and in its proper place so the mayor has a happy face and the governor has a happy face and all the happy hillbillies from Asswipe, Tennessee can feel safe enough to come here, spend money and go see CATS!...Happy people, Joe. We're in the happy people business...do me the favor...

(hands him a report)

There's a little girl disappeared from her apartment building in Harlem -- since you're so good with kids...

JOE

You can't do this.

DIMITRI

Hey, this is a favor. I should suspend you - but how would that look? Suspending out "local hero"?

HIS PHONE RINGS AND HIS FAX MACHINE STARTS -- reactions to the tape, no doubt. As Joe eases himself out of the office.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

He walks to his desk and sits...On his desk, THE PLAQUE OF COMMENDATION given to him by the mayor. He stares at it when THE PHONE RINGS. He picks it up. It is SUSAN, his wife.

SUSAN (V.O.)

(irritated)

So, what happened to you?

Joe suddenly remembers and buries his head.

JOE

I arrested some kid trying to rob the supermarket.

SUSAN

You were off duty!

JOE

So what? What do you think I am, a goddamn banker? THIS IS MY JOB. What has everyone gone insane! You think I can just work these streets for ten hours and then leave everything at the office? It never ends.

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CONTINUED:

SUSAN (V.O.)

I know! That's why I've had it, Joe.
It's not fair. I can't live like this!
... I've made up my mind - I want to go home.

JOE

Susan, this is not a good day to talk about-

SUSAN

It's never a good day. And the only time we do talk is on the phone. I might as well be back in Kansas. Are you coming or not?

JOE

Can't this wait until I get home?

SUSAN

You're not even home when you DECIDE to come home. You're here, you're not here, you're confused, you're pissed off, you don't care, the job drives you crazy --

JOE

Just what do you want me to do, huh?

SUSAN (V.O.)

Give up. It never ends, then end it!
Quit. You're so miserable, then quit!
There are other things in life.

JOE

Like what?

SUSAN (V.O.)

(upset, almost crying)
Well, Joe...if you don't know, then what the hell am I doing waiting at home for you?

Joe realizes she's right. He softens.

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

I want a divorce, Joe.

(pause, fighting tears)

I...I just can't...

She hangs up. Joe sits with the receiver in his hand staring at the goings-on at the front of the station.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Several mean, evil-looking guys with tattooed muscles are being hauled out of a holding cell. Among them, is the LITTLE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY Joe just arrested in the supermarket.

Joe suddenly feels strangely. He watches as this little boy, dwarfed by these scary-looking criminals, is pushed and shoved, his hands cuffed in front of him. The Boy's expression is no longer one of fear, but rather, complete acceptance. He sits on a bench alongside hookers and tattooed muscle men. The Boy eyes a tray of half-eaten donuts across from him. Police officers walk back and forth not noticing him.

A tattooed muscular criminal sitting beside the Boy notices him staring at the donuts. He asks the boy a question. The boy nods. He suggests the boy get a donut. The boy shakes his head. The criminal gets up and crosses to the tray and, with handcuffed hands, picks up a donut and napkin. He returns to the boy, handing him the donut, then, carefully, daintily -- expands the napkin and lays it on the boy's lap. The boy eats voraciously, getting powder all over his mouth. He suddenly looks like any other twelve-year-old boy. And the muscular criminal suddenly looks more like a compassionate father than a criminal.

The moment acts as a turning point. Joe feels ashamed for sacrificing this young boy to a system that will only make him a better criminal. Maybe the crowd was right? He feels confused. Does the boy deserve this? He opens the vial of Candy to justify his actions and shake off this momentary feeling of compassion for a criminal. He takes a taste.

JOE

It's candy.

Joe feels like a fool. The moment is interrupted by a YOUNG, WIDE-EYED, UNIFORMED ROOKIE who appears at his desk.

ROOKIE

Excuse me. My name is Bob Wright. I just wanted to introduce myself and ...this is gonna sound stupid or something but I'm a big fan of yours. When they told me my first assignment was the twentieth precinct, I couldn't believe it. I mean, you're like a hero of mine. I followed the Barry case through every piece of evidence, every day in the papers and, I mean, you're the best...Guys like you keep the rest of us sane at night...ha, ha...And I mean, you were what -- twenty or something, is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROOKIE (CONT'D)

almost twenty five and like, I couldn't see myself doing what you did...You're the best and I'm proud to be here with you and I just wanted to tell you that.

Joe just stares at the kid. His face is like stone. The rookie grows uncomfortable as Joe rises and speaks intensely.

JOE

Get away from me.

The Rookie is shocked. Joe sees the folder of the missing girl and grabs it as he rises to get away from this admiring fan.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOST LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Joe and the Rookie Bob Wright get out of a patrol car and approach the building, taking in their surroundings.

A crowd has gathered around a REPORTER and cameraman.

REPORTER

...Family members are being questioned as to their possible involvement in the girl's disappearance...(continues O.S.)

As Joe and the Rookie make their way past and into the building, the Rookie comments;

ROOKIE

It's a shame what these niggers did to this city. Harlem was a nice place. Like in that movie "Cotton Club"...That was a great movie.

Joe is replused by Rookie Bob Wright.

JOE

Shut-up!

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT - DAY

The mother is crying. Several uniformed cops inspect the area. MRS. CRILL from the Child Protection Agency and her assistant JOSEPH URIAH, are taking a statement from the mother.

O.S. the father can be heard railing at the television, which can be heard in the B.G. over the scene.

(CONTINUED)

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MRS. CRILL
Your husband is unemployed?

MOTHER
He lost his job last July.

Uriah writes this down on a legal pad. He writes every response.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
But I've been lucky...I've been able to get a second job working night shifts at the hospital.

MRS. CRILL
And when did you last see the child?

MOTHER
Right here. I gave her a kiss.

MRS. CRILL
Hmmm...I know this is uncomfortable, but I have to ask -- do you and your husband enjoy normal sexual relations?

MOTHER
What kind of question is that?

MRS. CRILL
Is your husband impotent -- frustrated sexually? Has he ever told you of any fantasies having to do with having sex with your daughter?

MOTHER
Get out of my house!

Joe enters and immediately surveys the area. Crill spots him.

MRS. CRILL
Excuse me a moment, dear.
(she approaches Joe)
Lt. Foster. Hi. I'm Lucinda Crill.
This is my assistant, Joseph Uriah.
We're with the Child Protection Agency.
Do you have anything to tell us yet?

JOE
I just got here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

18.

MRS. CRILL

Well, I think you'll not be surprised at what you find. It's all too common.

Joe is looking around, walking away from her as she continues.

MRS. CRILL (CONT'D)

...Frustrated father. Overworked mother. Tensions build. Tempers flare...and a child is destroyed. We're not here to get in your way, I assure you...(CONTINUES...)

As Crill's voice of concern adds to the white noise, Joe eyes the Father, sitting on his folding chair facing the television watching a News Broadcast being filmed right outside his building. It is a report on his own daughter's disappearance. A picture of his daughter is screened with a V.O.:

REPORTER (V.O.)

Experts say since child abuse is always a concern in these cases, and officials refuse to deny the possibility that homicide has not been...(continues O.S.)

Staring at the the TV report, he feels victimized and exposed by the one thing he had control over.

Rookie Bob Wright appears beside Joe.

ROOKIE

Right this way, sir...

JOE

(trying to escape Crill)

Excuse me...

MRS. CRILL

...I must say, my nose tells me there indeed was a trauma in this house.

In a burst of rage, the Father stands and FLINGS THE FOLDING CHAIR AT THE SET. The Mother screams. The Father attacks the television as the police try to subdue him, knocking the set onto the ground. However, the broadcast continues. The Officer escorting Joe joins in to help. Crill watches the Father's violent outburst with great interest. In the struggle, the Father flings a beer bottle out of the window. We see it land on the Reporter on the TV screen and stun him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Joe watches the pandemonium and escapes into the Girl's room.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe closes the door behind him. He is grateful for the silence. His first look at the room surprises him (and us).

THE LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM IS A COLLAGE OF COLOR AND FANTASY. The walls are covered with cut-outs of animals, forests, mythical and fairytale figures and locales. Storybooks line the dressers and floors. Bursts of color seem to come out of every space.

Joe feels strangely affected by this room -- its colors, its images. As if he had entered some sort of womb. The flower the Little Girl picked is still on her bureau. The bed looks untouched. Everything is in its place.

Joe takes a step and hears a SQUEAK...he looks down and finds a TOY TURTLE. He looks around at the rest of the scattered toys...a coloring book, crayons, a sparkling rubber ball, a stuffed lion, a mechanical wind-up toy structured like a set of stairs moves, carrying each seal to the top, then dropping it down a slide. Joe smiles. He finds another wind-up toy - A LITTLE BEAR. He winds it up and places it on the nighttable. The bear bangs two cymbals and then flips over in a somersault back onto its feet. Joe lets out a laugh.

He picks up the bear and continues exploring. On the top of the bureau, he notices a row of paperback books: DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE VOL. 1: THE CASE OF THE SPIRITED HOUSE GUEST. DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE VOL. 2: THE CASE OF THE WISTFUL WINE MERCHANT. Joe smiles.

JOE

Jesus...I remember these.

He takes one of the paperbacks and flips through it. On the cover is the caption: THE ADVENTURES OF THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE -- THE WORLD'S GREATEST LIVING HERO, OUR ONLY HOPE!!

ANGLE ON THE BOOK which is primarily words, but every dozen or so pages, there is a PENCIL DRAWING with a CAPTION, depicting some particular scene. The first one Joe flips to is the Detective in a passionate embrace with a busty femme fatale as he holds a smoking gun pointed at the body of a dead man in a suit and fedora, who lies at their feet. The caption reads:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

20.

DETECTIVE

"You got dangerous lips, baby. I don't
know who is in more trouble -- him...
(referring to dead man)
...or me."

JOE

I remember these.

SUDDENLY, JOE HEARS MUSIC -- an odd music; lilting and
melodic, but with a carnival feeling. It sounds like it's
coming from a distant time. Joe feels oddly elated, but also
a little unnerved. He moves to the window. He takes out a
handkerchief and opens the window to protect fingertips.
Sticking his head out:

POV

Nothing on one side of the street that could be the source.
He turns and sees an ICE CREAM TRUCK with a line of children
waiting to buy ice-cream. The music comes from the truck.

As Joe closes the window -- in the REFLECTION OF THE GLASS,
HE SEES A SMALL BOY STANDING BEHIND HIM IN THE ROOM --
wearing a Sherlock Holmes deerstalker hat, inspecting
something by the bed with a magnifying glass.

JOE

What the...?

Joe spins around, but sees nothing there. At the same
moment, the bedroom door opens and an Officer appears:

ROOKIE

Sir, we just got a call from downtown.
Fingerprint guys are on their way, but
they're tied up in traffic. So, it'll be
a while. You want me to get you some
coffee?

Joe shakes his head No. The Rookie exits. Joe wipes his
forehead with the handkerchief. The experience has left him
a little dizzy. He opens the window to get some air.

When he turns around, he notices a BOOK on the spot where the
Boy stood. He picks it up.

THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE VOL. 13: THE CASE OF LITTLE GIRL
LOST. He flips the pages to a drawing which shows THE
DETECTIVE STANDING IN AN ALLEY, HOLDING A WOMAN IN HIS ARMS -
- The woman has been shot, and the Detective holds her like a
dying lover. The caption reads:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DETECTIVE

"I love you."

He lies down on the bed with the book and begins to read.

LATER

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is dark in the room. Joe has dozed off and is lying on the bed fast asleep. The CAMERA is tight on him as he awakens with a start. He checks his watch. Shit! He swings off the edge of the bed, and...

FALLS INTO SPACE! THERE IS NO FLOOR! Grappling madly, he manages to get a hold on the end of the trailing bedspread which is flapping in the wind. THE BED is no longer in the bedroom but is FLYING high above the city, through the night sky with Joe dangling below.

JOE

Holy shit!

Struggling for a better grip and buffeted by the wind, Joe slowly begins to inch his way back up the bedspread. His strength deserts him just as he reaches the edge of the bed and he starts to slip when, suddenly, a small hand reaches over him and helps pull him up. IT'S THE BOY with the Deerstalker Hat and the Magnifying Glass that HE SAW REFLECTED IN THE BEDROOM WINDOW!

BOY

Hi...Isn't this great!

JOE

What? What's...

Joe looks over the edge of the bed and sees the world far below them dropping farther and farther away -- faster than the speed of light -- street, city, country, planet...He grabs hold of the bed. He turns green with fear and nausea.

BOY

Don't look over the edge or you'll chuck.

The bed is flying through deep space. Around it are great PLANET-LIKE SPHERES. Joe grabs the Boy in fear.

JOE

What the hell's going on here? What is this? Who are yo-...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before he can finish, the planet-like spheres revolve, revealing themselves to be gigantic eyeballs -- all staring at Joe. Joe pulls his gun. The Boy is impressed.

BOY

Whoa! Is that a real gun? You should put it away -- you won't really need it -
- I could hold it for you...I know a lot about guns, so it would be O.K...It'd be perfectly safe. Is that O.K.? Can I hold it for you!?

From O.S., A THROAT IS CLEARED and a BEAUTIFULLY HARMONIZED VERSION OF "ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT" BEGINS.

MAN ONE

"ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT, GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM."

Joe jumps. He spins around to find FOUR SINGING, BOTERO-FAT, MIDDLE-AGED BOY SCOUTS FLOATING IN THE AIR AROUND THE BED.

MAN TWO

"ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT GENTLY DOWN THE..."

MAN THREE

"ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT GENTLY DOWN THE..."

MAN FOUR

"ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT GENTLY DOWN THE..."

JOE

What's happening to me?
(holds gun on Boy)
WHAT'S HAPPENING!?

Two of the Flying Harmonies fly off ahead as the song continues. Grabbing something in the star filled space, they begin to tug. A brilliant light forms between them. The dark vastness of space is split by a blinding light as the bed begins to catch up with them and it becomes clear what is happening -- THEY ARE PARTING THE STARRY SKY AS IF IT WERE A GREAT CURTAIN. -- REVEALING A GLORIOUS SUNSET behind it.

The bed sails past the starry curtain into the beautiful sky and a FANTASTIC STORYBOOK LANDSCAPE. It is as if a Grant Wood painting had come to life: perfectly drawn hills dotted with farm houses, geometrically plowed fields, undulating streams all form an idealized version of the countryside. The colors are brighter than real life, the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

shapes more pure and simple. The singing Harmonies guide the bed as it swoops over a perfect Toy Town Village. Jolly villagers wave and gaily join in the song as they dance about.

Joe watches in awe as the bed continues past a spectacular FAIRYTALE CASTLE perched high on an impossible mountain towards an even more extraordinary sight:

FLOATING in the sky, its roots tapping into the billowing clouds for nourishment, is a GIGANTIC AND BEAUTIFUL TREE. The bed rushes through the clouds, up through the giant, gnarled and twisting roots. The bed comes dangerously close to smashing against the roots, and Joe gets nervous -- he aims his gun at the tree.

Sweeping around the trunk, the bed heads for an elaborated BIRD HOUSE that is attached to the trunk, high amongst the leafy branches. As they fly closer, the bird house is seen to be designed like a miniature castle...turrets, crenellations, spires. The surface seems to be made of beautiful stones. On either side of the entrance, towards which the bed is now heading and which will easily accommodate its size and two passengers, stand two gaily striped guard houses sheltering TWO LARGE STONE BEARS WITH CYMBALS.

The Bears suddenly come to life, BANGING THEIR CYMBALS as the bed approaches. Is it a welcome or a warning? Joe, surprised, fires his gun at them.

BOY

NOOOOOOOO!

Suddenly, THE BED LURCHES VIOLENTLY, bucking like a bronco -- THROWING THE DETECTIVE AND THE BOY off into the air. They plummet down past the tree and towards the clouds.

After the initial shock, the Boy gets excited.

BOY

WE'RE FLYING!

JOE

WE'RE FALLING!

Joe tries to grab onto a root but is suddenly blocked by a FLYING HARMONY.

FIRST HARMONY

Just sing along and all will be well!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The others appear and SING:

FLYING HARMONIES
ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT, GENTLY DOWN THE
STREAM..

The Boy, looking past Joe's shoulder, suddenly looks
distracted. THE FLYING HARMONIES appear beside them --
floating and SINGING:

FLYING HARMONIES
MERRILY, MERRILY, MERRILY, MERRILY, LIFE
IS A BUT A DREAM....

They split into two pairs, each pair taking either side of
the Boy and Joe. Any time one speaks, HE DIPS SLIGHTLY,
while the others continue singing.

THIRD HARMONY
We're dipping.

FOURTH HARMONY
These are not the most difficult lyrics.

SECOND HARMONY
Take the bass line. Even a hum will do.

FIRST HARMONY
It would be such a help.

The Boy joins in...

BOY
LA-LA-LA-LA-LAA...LA-LA-LA-LAAA

FIRST HARMONY
There you go!

The Boy stops falling and begins to float...

BOY
C'MON, SING...THIS IS GREAT...

Everyone but Joe is singing. Joe keeps trying to grab onto
the tree as he falls, but the roots are gooey and slippery,
and the Harmonies are grabbing at his arms to hold him. A
THIRD HARMONY SUGGESTS:

THIRD HARMONY
Perhaps a different song would suit you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FOURTH HARMONY

Yes! How about --

(sings)

"You're the top...You're the Tower of Pisa."

SECOND HARMONY

(smiles)

That's not a camp song and we can't sing it in the round.

FIRST HARMONY

We could use just the lyrics and substitute a camp song. Listen.

(sung to the tune of CAMPTOWN

RACES)

YOU'RE THE TOP, YOU'RE THE TOWER OF PISA...DO DAR...DO DAR...

FIRST AND FOURTH HARMONY

YOU'RE THE TOP YOU'RE THE MONA LISA...OH DA DO DAR DAY...

FLYING HARMONIES

GOING TO RUN ALL NIGHT...GOING TO RUN ALL DAY...

JOE

WOULD YOU GET OUTTA HEEEEERRRE...

Breaking away, JOE REACHES FOR A BRANCH, GRABS HOLD, THEN SLIPS, PLUNGING THROUGH THE CLOUDS falling away from camera towards the distant ground. JOE SCREAMS...

CUT TO:

TIGHT C.U.:

Joe waking up with a gasp. Daylight streams into his eyes. He shakes his head.

JOE

Shit. What a nightmare.

O.S. WE HEAR:

VOICE ONE

He's coming round, I think.

VOICE TWO

Oh, I'm so glad!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

25.

VOICE THREE

It's no surprise, with your expert first aid.

VOICE TWO

A scout is only as good as his helpers.

VOICE FOUR

What a lovely compliment.

INT. TENT - DAY

Joe bolts up to find himself in a RED CROSS TENT, surrounded by the Flying Harmonies and the Boy, his body bound tightly in bandages and splints.

JOE

What the...

SECOND HARMONY

No, now, lie down. You've had a nasty fall.

THIRD HARMONY

Nothing too fatal.

FIRST HARMONY

(laughs)

Yes, I'm afraid you'll live.

They all laugh superficially. Joe tries to get out of bed but the bandages prevent his movement.

SECOND HARMONY

You really should lie down.

JOE

Get your hands off me!

SECOND HARMONY

Oh, I'm so sorry.

(claps, to others)

Everyone! He doesn't want to be touched.

FLYING HARMONIES

Fine. Absolutely. We won't think of it.

They all simultaneously TAKE A STEP BACK from him, forming themselves around the stretcher as Joe tries to unbind himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIRST HARMONY

On three, boys -- ONE -- TWO -- THREE...

They lift the stretcher, much to Joe's surprise, and start exiting the tent.

JOE

Put me down!

Flailing at his bandages, Joe manages to jump off the stretcher, grabs one of the Harmonies by the collar, and shakes him violently:

Joe

Now enough of this shit. I want some answers! AND I WANT THEM NOW!

BOY

LET HIM GO!

But Joe doesn't have to let the Harmony go because his brutality has a definite effect in this land --

THE HARMONY GOES LIMP, or more accurately -- GELATINOUS. Like a uniform full of Jello, the Harmony oozes through his clothing onto the ground. Joe and the Boy are stunned. All eyes are frozen on Joe, who drops the Harmony.

BOY

Look what you did!

Suddenly, THE ENTIRE TENT ALONG WITH THE HARMONIES BEGINS TO FOLD ITSELF UP - one section after another folds over as Joe and the Boy move closer together and wind up huddled in the center.

Flip, flop, flap -- the tent and its inhabitants folds itself smaller and smaller until it's a tiny package on wheels which zips off through the giant trees of A DARK AND FOREBODING FOREST -- in the midst of which Joe and the Boy now find themselves.

EXT. DARK AND FOREBODING FOREST - NIGHT

Joe and the Boy stand alone as eerie night sounds fill the air. It seems as if LIVE SHADOWS surround them, faintly lit by the moon -- in between every tree and rock...The shadows seem to be whispering to each other as they exchange positions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

All right...I'm clearly dreaming.
This...is clearly...a dream...

The Boy punches him in the thigh.

JOE

OW!

BOY

Why did you do that? What a rotten thing
to do!

JOE

Stop it! This is my dream and I order
you to stop it -- in fact, I dream you
aren't here anymore, O.K.!

He closes his eyes and opens them only to find the Boy
staring at him curiously.

BOY

What are you, some kind of nut job?

He hears a NOISE, spins around and SHOOTs UP AT THE TREES,
causing a branch to fall at his feet.

BOY

Will you stop shooting things! We have
to find a way out of here!

But Joe is interested in finding his sanity.

JOE

No...no. All I have to do is lay down
and...and fall asleep and then I'll wake
up and I'll be home in my bed with an
empty bottle of scotch on my stomach and
my face inside a pizza box...and
everything'll be fine.

Joe starts to lay down on the ground. Boy starts to walk
away.

BOY

You can go to sleep if you want, but
somebody's in trouble and I got a job to
do! See ya 'round!

JOE

Job?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOY
(proudly)
Yeah! Missing Persons!

Joe looks up as the Boy stops to remove a PHOTO OF THE TEN-YEAR-OLD BLACK GIRL from his pocket. Joe grabs it away.

JOE
Where did you get this?

BOY
Hey, give it back!

JOE
This is police property.

BOY
You're a cop?! Well, then get up!
(yanks on his arm)
Let's go! We'll find her and rescue her
together -- I don't mind sharing the
headlines! Come on!

JOE
(resisting)
This is such an annoying dream.

BOY
It's not a dream..
(stops yanking)
Look, if it were a dream, would this
hurt...

He slaps Joe's face

JOE
OW.

BOY
Or this.

He pokes Joe's eyes.

JOE
OW, STOP IT!

BOY
Or this...

He bangs Joe's head with both hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOE
WILL YOU GET AWAY FROM ME!?

Joe curls himself into a fetal position to sleep.

BOY
We need a road.

The Boy pulls out a MAGNIFYING GLASS and looks around. Joe talks to himself.

JOE
I'll wake up, take a shower - normal day.

BOY
LOOK!

Through the magnifying glass we see:

A GOLDEN ROAD UNROLLING ITSELF LIKE A CARPET, HEADING TOWARDS THEM. Joe doesn't bother to look.

JOE
Maybe I should see the shrink.

BOY
You probably should get out of the way.

JOE
What would I say? I dream about middle-aged boy scouts who turn into jello? They'd lock me up - or transfer me to Los Angeles.

BOY
Suit yourself.

The Boy steps out of the way as;

THE ROAD ROLLS OVER JOE, covering him as it settles down to become a proper road. Joe, lying beneath a lump of road, breaks through with his head and arms, very aggravated.

BOY
Is it because you're a grown-up, or were you just always a stupid person?

Joe is angry now. He gets up and grabs the Boy, causing the magnifying glass to go flying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BOY

HEY! My magnifying glass!

JOE

I'VE BEEN DRUGGED!! HAVEN'T I!!

BOY

STOP IT -- YOU'RE HURTING ME! HELP!
SOMEBODY! HELP!!!

The Boy kicks him and gets loose. He starts to run. Joe runs after him and grabs him, falling to the ground. As they struggle with each other --

KNIGHT (O.S.)

UNHAND HIM, YOU COWARD!

A HORSE GALLOPS INTO FRAME, rearing its legs up. Joe and the Boy stop fighting and look up to see:

A WHITE KNIGHT on the horse waving a sword at Joe as the Boy takes cover...Joe can't believe his eyes.

JOE

Shit...

Joe scrambles for his gun. Just as Joe finds it, the Knight charges on his horse, knocks the gun out of his hand again. With the point of the sword aimed at Joe's throat, the Knight backs him up against a tree.

BOY

Wait! NO!...I mean, thanks, but...He's
O.K....he didn't hurt me. He's just a
chump.

The Knight pauses, considering this term "chump." He takes his horse a step back and lowers his sword. He lifts his helmet to reveal a stunningly handsome, heroic face.

KNIGHT

I will honor your wishes. I will not
kill him.

He dismounts, REVEALING FOR THE FIRST TIME:

A DAMSEL sitting behind him on the horse. The Knight's broad frame had obstructed her. Joe thinks she is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. Sitting in a flowing gown with long blond hair and the fairest face in the land. The only things out of place are the shackles attached to her ankles and the long chains that hang from them and drag behind the horse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BOY

Are you a real knight?

KNIGHT

Real? Of course I'm real. I'm not only real, I'm absolutely remarkable. Notice the forceful nose...

(he poses)

...the dynamic forehead...the potent jaw line...You can't fake this kind of bone structure. Only a true and noble...

Joe fires his gun into the air to regain some sense of control, takes a stance and, aiming his gun at the Knight, whips out his badge.

JOE

All right! NYPD...Please step away from the horse.

KNIGHT

Excuse me?

At that moment a very large, many-feathered, dead, flying 'thing' falls from the sky directly onto Joe's head. Joe flails madly as gunk and feathers stick all over him.

BOY

I warned you.

JOE

(trying to maintain some sense of dignity)

Please step away from the horse.

The Knight looks to the Boy, who rolls his eyes and points to his head, as if to indicate that Joe is crazy. The Knight understands, smile condescendingly and complies.

KNIGHT

Ah, yes my poor enchanted friend.
Whatever you wish.

Joe crosses to the Damsel.

JOE

You all right, Ma'am?

The Damsel nods, thoroughly confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

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JOE
(to the Knight)
All right turn around; hands up against
the tree, feet apart.

Annoyed, the Knight looks to the Boy, who shrugs. The Knight
manages as best he can with a suit of armor.

KNIGHT
If you're in need of a potion to break
the spell, we can make haste to an
apothecary I know of...a small dose of
owl's pus might curb the brain fever...

Joe frisks the suit of armor...making a lot of noise.
Finding nothing he steps back and takes out a pad and pencil.

JOE
(to the boy)
Get over here.

He gives the Boy the pad to hold so he can write while
keeping his gun trained on the Knight.

JOE
I'd like to ask you a few questions.
Your name, please...

KNIGHT
I am known as Sir Knight.

JOE
Sir?...Sir Knight? What is that...
(writing)
S...I...R...Sir...S...I...R?

KNIGHT
(overlapping)
S...I...yes...perhaps an R. I don't
spell.

JOE
And what do you do?

KNIGHT
I rescue people in distress or who are
being held captive by some heinous
evil...
(referring to DAMSEL)
This young innocent was chained to a
dragon's foot and forced to witness the
most unspeakable acts of depravation and
violence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

DAMSEL
(smiles at Joe)

Hi.

Joe pauses in writing to smile back as the Knight continues.

KNIGHT
Were it not for my enormous and unbounded
courage, as well as my youthful agility
and skill with a...are you getting all
this down...

(reaches for Joe's pencil,
intrigued)
What is this contraption?

JOE
Don't...don't touch...please step
back...take one step back, please.

BEAT. Joe confronts the Knight.

JOE (CONT'D)
Where am I? What is this place?

The question has a touch of desperation in it. The Knight
answers with surprise, and some care.

KNIGHT
Well, if you don't know, I'm sure I can't
say.

Joe is slightly unnerved by this response. The Boy suggests:

BOY
Ask him about the lost girl.

KNIGHT
Girl? Lost?

BOY
Yeah, she's disappeared. And we're here
to rescue her!

KNIGHT
Rescue!...Well, what are we waiting for?!

He picks up his sword and flies back onto his horse...HEROIC
MUSIC starts playing in the B.G.

KNIGHT
I usually stop after a dozen, but I feel.
I don't know, plucky today...Hop on and
we will find this troubled damsel of
yours...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

He lifts the Boy onto his lap.

JOE

Wait a minute, where are you going?

KNIGHT

Why, at this very moment she might be in the hands of some dastardly evil force whose ultimate purpose may be too unthinkable to consider. And since dame fate brought me to this rendezvous in time to hear this tale, it is clear that I, and only I, am the one destined to save her...

BOY

Wow. Which way do we go?

KNIGHT

The only way...

He points down the road to a series of SIGNS THAT HAVE APPEARED; LOST LITTLE GIRLS -- THIS WAY / START HERE / THE BEGINNING / TO THE RESCUE / HEY, OVER HERE! / STOP READING -- START WALKING / THIS ROAD LEADS TO THAT GIRL YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...HEROES ONLY...

JOE

Oh, you've got to be kidding.

The HEROIC MUSIC winds down to a halt. The Knight is insulted and irritated.

JOE

Listen, I don't know what this is all about, but -- I mean, you don't go following signs like that. You'd have to be an idiot. It's too easy. It's probably some kind of trap.

KNIGHT

I know nothing of your traps, but perhaps your cowardice might be more to the point.

JOE

Yeah, yeah, yeah -- listen, just turn the nag around and follow me. I'll get us outta here.

Joe grabs the bridle of the horse. The Knight hits him with the flat of the sword and Joe stops, facing its point.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

KNIGHT

You will not touch my horse. If it were up to me, arrogance and rudeness would be punishable by death and I would be within my right to sever your head from your fleshy tub, but since it is not, I will leave the decision to my lady fair.

Joe looks to the Damsel who eyes him for a beat then shakes her head. The Knight withdraws his sword.

KNIGHT

Very well! COME ON...LET US BE OFF AND AWAAAYYY!

The HEROIC MUSIC starts up again. The Knight, the Boy and the Damsel ride off to the rescue, leaving Joe alone on the road, taking the music with them. Only the DAMSEL LOOKS BACK at Joe with concern.

Alone, Joe picks up his gun. Looking around lost and confused:

JOE

I need a drink.

DING! HE HEARS SLEAZY TANGO MUSIC SUDDENLY. He looks in the opposite direction through a dense patch of woods and spots a neon sign: BAR. Joe hesitates first, then figures "what the hell" and stalks off towards it. Immediately, SIGNS which read: WRONG WAY!...YOU'RE ASKING FOR TROUBLE! POP UP IN HIS WAY, banging his head and blocking his way. But Joe shoves them aside without reading them, or pulls them out of the ground and throws them away.

EXT. BAR - THE INFERNO

A huge, cavernous dance hall. The sounds of Tom Waits' TEMPTATION fill the room. The dance floor is packed with couples of the fattest, grossest people you can imagine -- ALL DANCING THE TANGO. In their mouths, instead of long stemmed roses, are drumsticks, celery sticks, sausages, etc...As the couples dip, they grab with their teeth any other food reachable on the tables. This display of gluttony and torrid bloating is a surprise to Joe, but -- in some way -- a relief from what's happened up to now. At least here he knows what to do...he heads for the bar and orders.

JOE

Whiskey and soda, please...

Waiting for the drink, Joe looks over to the dance floor and watches a fat couple tango and dip, then not be able to get

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

37.

up. When Joe turns back to his drink, WE SEE IN THE B.G. that THE FLOOR beneath the couple who can't get up from their dip OPENS UP AND SWALLOWS THEM, WITH A BLAST OF FLAME. Joe downs his drink, seeing none of this. The opening is then closed and covered up with more dancers. Joe calmly asks the bartender:

JOE

Is there a phone in this place?

BARTENDER

Not here...The boss's office.

JOE

Is there a chance I can use it?

(flashes his badge)

Police business.

Seeing the badge, the Bartender immediately presses a button beneath the bar.

BARTENDER

I'll find out. Refill?

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. MR. BIGG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

C.U. of A RED LIGHT BULB FLASHES. The light bulb sticks out the side of a desk. A SCALY, GREEN, THREE-FINGERED APPENDAGE gently strokes the bulb as we hear AN INHUMAN, SLURPY GROWL of pleasure.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Joe downs another drink as TWO GOONS wearing tuxedos approach. They speak in deep goon voices with stern, tough expressions.

GOON ONE

Can we be of assistance to you?

JOE

I was just asking if I could use the phone.

He shows them his badge. Both Goons look at the badge, then at each other, then back at Joe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOON ONE

Follow us.

Joe gets off his stool and follows them cautiously through the club. Joe's head is buzzing and whirling as he looks at the dancers; behind the darkly lascivious sounds of TEMPTATION, the rotund dancers perform with erotic abandon...

Suddenly, Joe has to stop. HE IS QUITE DIZZY. Everything looks as if it were being viewed through a fisheye lens...He begins to sweat as he leans on a nearby barfly.

JOE

I've got to sit down for a second.

The Goons stand by patiently, giving a nod to the Bartender for a job well done (the additional shots were Mickey Finns). Joe is completely confused. Suddenly, A FAT DANCER SWEEPS HIM AWAY FROM THE BAR and begins to TANGO WITH JOE. Joe follows helplessly until the music reaches a crescendo and HE COLLAPSES on the dance floor -- BLACKOUT.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. BIGG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe opens his eyes slowly to see:

THE FACE OF MR. BIGG peering down at him.

BIGG

Oh, good, you're coming around. How do you feel?

(Joe can't reply)

Here, drink some water.

Bigg helps Joe sip some fresh water. Joe is grateful.

JOE

Where am I?

BIGG

In my office. We didn't know who you were, so -- I hope you don't mind -- we went through your pockets...

He shows Joe his own badge.

BIGG (CONT'D)

I called your precinct and spoke to a Captain Dimitri...they're sending someone for you now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
(relieved)
Really?

He sits up, holding his head

BIGG
Easy now...You had a hard fall.

Joe looks around to find himself in a plush, tastefully decorated office with a beautiful cherrywood desk. MR. BIGG is a charming, dapper gent wearing a tuxedo and looking every bit the sophisticated restaurant owner.

JOE
What happened?

BIGG
Well, you came in looking not very well and asked to use the phone and then collapsed in the dining room.

JOE
Dining room?

At that moment, FLYNN and SHADOW (the two Goons) enter. As they open the door, JOE CAN SEE THAT WHAT IS BEYOND THE OFFICE IS IN FACT --

A FANCY, CONSERVATIVE RESTAURANT...filled with upper-class diners and waiters. Classical music plays in the B.G. The Goons are smiling and helpful. Flynn is carrying a phone and places it on Bigg's desk and plugs it in.

JOE (CONT'D)
(dazed)
Where are all the fat people?

FLYNN
(smiling)
We found a phone for you.

BIGG
Yes. In case you needed to call any family...Thank you, Mr. Flynn...
(to Joe)
How are you feeling, now?

JOE
Better. I'm really sorry...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BIGG

Oh no, no, no...it's quite all right. No one was inconvenienced. I was only concerned you might have hurt yourself.

JOE

No.

BIGG

...Or had been involved in some important police business...

JOE

I'm not sure.

BIGG

Well, you just relax until your ride comes. I had a plate made up for you, in case you were hungry...

But Joe wants to figure things out.

JOE

Now...wait a minute...Wasn't that a bar with...with a lot of fat people tangoing?

Bigg, Shadow and Flynn look at him strangely...

JOE (CONT'D)

And...isn't this place in the middle of the forest somewhere?

BIGG

Well, I've heard it called a jungle, but never a forest.

He motions to Shadow to RAISE THE VENETIAN BLINDS on a large rectangular window to reveal:

A NEW YORK CITY EXTERIOR -- with neon lights, lighted skyscrapers and traffic. Joe wants to cry for joy at this sight.

JOE

Oh, God...I'm in New York.

(rises)

I can go home.

BIGG

(concerned)

I really think you should sit down until your friends arrive....I promised I would keep you here...I certainly don't want the police to be angry with me

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Joe agrees and, rubbing his head, sits in a chair in front of Bigg's desk. Bigg sits behind the desk. Shadow lowers the venetian blinds.

JOE

Thank you so much...uh...Mr...

BIGG

Bigg...Julian Bigg...and you are...

JOE

Joe Foster...Could I get a cup of coffee?
My head...

BIGG

Of course.

He motions to Flynn to get it. Bigg sits behind his desk and begins an interested conversation.

JOE

It's been a wild day.

BIGG

I can see. What department of the police
do you work for, if you don't mind my
asking?

JOE

Narcotics.

BIGG

Ah...well...yes...of course. Perhaps
that explains something.

JOE

What do you mean?

BIGG

Well...perhaps...this...this incident is
in some way connected with your work.

Joe considers this, trying to figure it all out rationally.

JOE

Candy? Maybe it wasn't. Maybe that's
what this is about. Maybe I ~~was~~ drugged.

BIGG

Really? That's just so...intense.
I am so...just so in awe of you people.
What you put yourself through to protect
us all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Flynn enters and hands him some coffee with a smile.

JOE

Ha, well...most people think we don't do a very good job of it. But, thanks...

(to Flynn)

Thank you...

BIGG

They're wrong. There is such...evil...in the world. I really believe that -- I believe evil is an actual thing...I don't ever remember there being such rampant, immoral behavior as there is now. It's frightening.

JOE

People are shit.

BIGG

Ah, but what makes them so? What makes them cheat the restaurant bill or indulge themselves until they wipe away any imprint of what might be termed, a meaningful life? Hmmm? I think it is because Evil an all-powerful force of such immense strength and well...glamour, is the best word I can find...and by the sheer potency of its virile animal attractiveness, people are drawn in.. They can't help bu be impressed when faced with the inviolable powers of Darkness and so they submit, bow down, weakened and, yes, humbled, by the

JOE

No! No, no, no.....

(Bigg frowns)

There's nothing big or grand or glammers about it. Evil isn't some big, dumbass Demon who tricks us and manipulates us with his superior intelligence..HA!.. Evil's in us- in the little things that build up; in the compromises, the looking the other way, the own survival at all costs -- we can't help ourselves. People want a good world, but they don't want to give up anything for it. They like forests but not as much as toilet paper. And not just any toilet paper - they want the softest, the prettiest, the most absorbent, the kind that makes husbands kiss their wives and children be better

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOE (CONT'D)

students...And so we create corporations to give us those things. To give us meaning and tell us what's we need to make our lives more fragrant, more odor free, more minty...We all want mint flavored lives...

Bigg clearly doesn't like this theory, but is intrigued.

BIGG

Hmmmm, that's a fascinating notion...But, really, don't you think that there MIGHT be a dynamic, sensual Evil being who can tempt and seduce, lure...

JOE

No. No way. Believe me, I wish there was, some egotistical, horned Devil to take down...

(he snorts like a demon and laughs)

We're a Democracy pal! We all get to vote. We're all shareholders in it. There's no one person to blame. And it's all too far gone for any One person to have an effect One way or the other. I don't even know why I bother anymore.

(takes a bite from the plate)

Mmm, good...Is this lamb?

Bigg is annoyed. One might think he was personally insulted. Flynn and Shadow can clearly sense this and begin to back up towards the wall when THE RED PHONE ON THE DESK RINGS.

BIGG

Excuse me...

(he picks up)

Oui?...Oui? Ah...

(darker)

Quoi?...What?

(he hangs up. To Joe:)

Excuse me a moment, will you?

He crosses past Joe to the far wall and OPENS A SPEAKEASY PEEPHOLE about the size of a large rectangular breadbasket. Joe can't help but be curious, as his eyes follow Bigg. Camera angles behind Bigg as he looks through the peephole. WE HEAR "TEMPTATION" again for a brief second. This disturbs Joe. It abruptly stops when Bigg closes the peephole.

Bigg indicates for Flynn and Shadow to follow. ALL THREE EXIT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

44.

Alone, Joe slowly rises. He picks up the phone that Flynn brought in and hears a dial tone. This feels reassuring. He is about to dial when he is drawn to the PEEPHOLE. He hangs up the phone and crosses to the peephole. He can't help himself from looking. He pulls open the peephole to see:

THE NIGHTCLUB OF FAT TANGOERS HAS RETURNED...

JOE IS SHOCKED.

On the dance floor, a FAT TANGOER is half in - half out of the hole in the floor. He screams as he tries to climb out, refusing to be sucked down -- even as flames shoot around him.

Joe can't believe his eyes.

Bigg stands over the Fat Tangoer, Shadow and Flynn beside him. Bigg nods and the Goons begin to KICK THE FAT TANGOER DOWN INTO THE HOLE -- stepping on his grasping fingers and shoving his head deeper and deeper until the Tangoer goes weak and loses his grip, falling into the hole. The hole closes.

Joe closes the peephole. He is petrified. He rushes to the window and raises the venetian blinds to reveal THE DARK, DENSE FOREST once more. Joe reaches for his gun, but it is gone. He rushes towards the door and opens it, only to be blocked by Flynn and Shadow. Bigg re-enters. Joe stares at him in horror. Beat, as Bigg returns the stare, then he begins speaking as he slowly crosses the room to Joe and his desk.

BIGG

Of all the roadside, penny-ante dens of torture, you had to walk into mine. Lucky me. Here I was thinking I was on top of the world - doing just fine - striking terror into the hearts of weak souls with elaborate plots of demonic inspiration. What a fool I've been. I'm just small time, aren't I Joe? Wasting my efforts and talents stealing souls - when all the while they're so easily sold. I'm so depressed.

FLYNN

Aw..

BIGG

And yet....you've given me an odd twinge of hope. You intrigue me, Joe Foster. I like a man who can intrigue me. I'm just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

BIGG (CONT'D)
a country bumpkin with big dreams...And
you know what I dream of Joe?
(softly sinister)
Things you've already seen....Let me ask
you, Joe Foster...Does this Democracy
racket necessarily preclude the necessity
of a leader?

JOE
This...this isn't New York, is it?

BIGG
Why do you say that?

JOE
People don't fall through the floor into
fire in New York...

Bigg walks to his desk and opens a drawer.

BIGG
Don't they -- in their own way?

JOE
Who are you?

Bigg picks JOE'S GUN out from his drawer, holding it from the
butt as if it were a dead rat. He tosses the gun to Shadow,
who is overjoyed by the gift. Flynn is jealous.

JOE
What are you -- the Devil?

BIGG
Ooooo...how blandly Christian. No, I'm
Evil my friend...Just...plain old...Evil.
I am that which leads people into
darkness. The impulse behind the
thought...I choose at will and turn
idealistic politicians into dictators,
and nuns into sadistic elementary school
teachers...

(irritated)
Of course, according to your theory, nuns
need no help from me. According to you,
there are no innocents to be defiled and
corrupted. I like the way you think. I
can use a man like you. Sit down. Tell me
more about yourself. Why are you here?

Flynn and Shadow take a menacing stance on either side of
him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JOE

I don't know. Last thing I remember is,
I was investigating the disappearance of
a ten year-old girl from her apartment-
...

BIGG

A ten year-old girl?

JOE

Disappeared from her bedroom. She's
probably dead. If not, locked up in some
basement by some maniac with a Heidi
fixation.

BIGG

And you say she is here?

JOE

Anything's possible, I guess.

BIGG

And she's in trouble...a helpless ten
year-old child is in mortal danger AND I
KNOW ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ABOUT IT! A
LITTLE GIRL HAS BEEN ABDUCTED AND I DID
NOT PARTICIPATE! THANK YOU SO VERY, VERY
MUCH!

The Goons take cover. Joe, not knowing better, stands frozen
on the spot as BIGG'S RAGE CAUSES HIM TO RAPIDLY TRANSFORM
INTO A VARIETY OF UNBELIEVABLE DEMONIC SHAPES AS HE HOWLS
WITH ANGER...from a fiery dragon to a bubbling mass of
steaming slime to a three-headed baboon to a creature with a
three-fingered appendage (referring to the earlier scene) to
a whirlwind of soot to a bouncing, banging cacophony of pots
and pans to an embarrassing stain on Joe's trousers to a
shapeless but winged burning form with an infinity of roaring
mouths...Then he turns back into Bigg. The room is a
shambles. The Goons stand and applaud with cheers. Joe is
white from shock. Bigg puts his arm around Joe's shoulder
and escorts him to a marked X on the floor.

BIGG (CONT'D)

(charming, almost gushing)

I'm so very, very grateful for you
information, and you should have every
confidence before you die that I'll get
to the bottom of this.

Joe notices Bigg's green tri-fingered appendage on his
shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

BIGG (CONT'D)

Joe, thank you. Now... shall we get on with your elimination?

JOE

Elimination? Wait a minute - I thought you said you could use me.

BIGG

Your death will be most useful to me. I have great plans for you Joe Foster...Yes...something violent and heroic, I think...

Noticing Joe noticing the three-fingered appendage:

BIGG (CONT'D)

...Oh, sorry...

With a flick, it turns back to a normal hand and he continues:

BIGG (CONT'D)

...Yes, a death that will inspire other like spirits to fulfill their destinies as martyrs and doomed heroes, whose efforts ignite the noble spark in us all, but, who in the end, amount to nothing and have absolutely no effect. I must commend you, Joe Foster -- you have an exquisite sense of the futile, for which I, personally, am so deeply grateful. Boys!

Shadow PULLS A LEVER near the door, expecting the floor to open up and engulf Joe. But nothing happens. He and Flynn exchange a look of concern.

Then without warning, the floor opens, PLUNGING JOE, FLYNN, AND SHADOW INTO HELL...Bigg rolls his eyes impatiently, adjusts his bowtie and exits into the bar playing Tom Wait's TEMPTATION.

INT. HELL - NIGHT

Joe is in a terrible flame and smoke-filled cavern. Through the pall can be seen hordes of infernal demons operating horrific machinery upon which terrible tortures are being meted out to the fallen fat people. They are being stretched, boiled, turned on spits, made into strips of bacon, melted down and stir-fried in giant woks. The demons are happy in their work. Joe can't move -- lashed to a terrifying machine with lots of slicing, ripping, piercing

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

metal blades. Occasionally, a bloated couple from the dance floor above plunges into big, bubbling vats nearby. SUPERMARKET/MALL MUSIC plays overhead. Flynn and Shadow have shed their civvies and are now revealed as the DEMONS they really are. This is what they enjoy. Flynn starts the machine while Shadow plays with Joe's gun -- pointing at himself and shooting parts of his body off in delight. Blades shriek as they spin toward Joe. The noise is deafening. Flames surround the machine, nipping at his feet and hair. Joe kicks and struggles for his life but to no avail. The blades whisk closer to his face and body. Closer... Closer... As Joe is faced with horrifying death, the terror drains from his face as quiet calm comes over him.

JOE
Maybe I am dying.

Suddenly, through the smoke, THE KNIGHT CHARGES IN with the LITTLE BOY hot on his tail. The Knight engages the Demons in a brilliant display of swordsmanship. Flynn orders Shadow:

FLYNN
SHOOT HIM!

But Shadow has the gun pointed the wrong way and shoots off his gun arm. The gun skitters away, along with Shadow's hand. As the blades continue towards Joe, the Boy races to release him from his bonds. As the Knight holds back the demonic hordes, the Boy frees Joe. Joe grabs for his gun and struggles with Shadow's hand to let it go. The Boy helps by hitting the hand, causing it to release the gun. Joe then heads off in the direction whence the Boy came; but the Boy stops him.

BOY
NO -- THAT'S THE WAY IN. THE WAY OUT'S
OVER HERE!

Joe runs after the Boy who leads him through the smoke to a facade of a GIANT MOUTH (like the entrance to a carnival ride) -- a garishly painted mouth of Hell a la Heironymous Bosch.

BOY
JUMP!

The Boy pulls Joe into the entrance. They fall through the mouth and down a TWISTING, SPIRALING SLIDE which rockets onward. On the way, pop-up figures of devils and skeletons appear -- shocking Joe and amusing the Boy. At the end of the slide is a solid stone wall. Joe tries to brake, but the slide is too slippery. He closes his eyes. But at the last second, the solid wall swings open and the two shoot out into

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

the bright sunshine, having exited through what now appears to be the front doors of a church.

EXT. SUNLIT EXTERIOR OF A CHURCH

Surprise! They are back in the jolly MOVIE MUSICAL FANTASY VILLAGE. The Boy sounds the alarm by ringing the church bell. Heads turn. The people on the street run for cover as demons fly out of the church as if shot from cannons, in hot pursuit. They grab townswomen and shake them vigorously.

At the same time, from the opposite end of town, charges a jolly, bumptious, outrageously costumed ARMY straight out of the Ruritania world.

Pikemen, musketeers, cannoneers, flag-bearers...the lot. A military band provides stirring martial music. The Knight bursts through the church...

A BATTLE BETWEEN THE ARMY FROM HELL AND THE JOLLY FANTASY ARMY WHO BURST INTO SONG and continue singing throughout the battle. The violent conflict is heightened by spectacular feats of bravery, sensational deaths, demonic howls and zippy lyrics.

Joe pulls out his gun and takes the Boy to find cover. But the Boy wants to join the battle.

BOY

HEY, LET GO! COME ON! We can't get hurt
-- we're the good guys.

He breaks away, PICKS UP A STICK and, using it like a SWORD, runs into the center of the battle, laughing and cheering. Joe runs after him in panic. The Boy successfully takes on demon after demon, as if it were all a game. Joe tries to shoot his way through, but only causes more trouble and gets more terrified. His bullets go right through the demons, splitting them - creating two demons out of one.

BOY

WILL YOU STOP! DON'T YA SEE? YOUR WAY
MAKES THINGS WORSE!...
(picks up a STICK)
HERE, USE A SWORD...COME ON

Joe, not trusting his "sword", punches an attacking demon in his fanged mouth -- but Joe's arm is swallowed up all the way to his shoulder until the Demon's face is nose to nose with Joe. Joe screams -- but is saved by the Boy who gaily chops the Demon in half and pulls off the head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the end, the FANTASY ARMY is victorious, but the pile of carnage is fearsome. As the townspeople (now poking their heads out of doors and windows) and the survivors cheer their victory, the Knight and the Boy bathe in their gratitude and glory.

Joe is stunned that so many bloody deaths occurred in order to rescue him.

JOE

My God...

A GENERAL from the Fantasy Army shouts the order:

GENERAL

Let's get back to our loved ones, men!
FORM RANKS!

With that, THE TROOPS LINE UP -- NOT JUST THE SURVIVORS, BUT THE PRESUMED DEAD AS WELL. In fact...NO ONE HAS DIED AT ALL. To a jolly march, the Fantasy Army parades off in one direction as the "dead Demons" slink back into the church -- grumbling about having been cheated. They are bad losers.

DEMON

That was a marvelous knife wound you took, Ronald..

THIRD DEMON

One of the best I've seen!

DEMON (RONALD)

It didn't hit any major arteries, though. We were robbed, I tell ya! These battles are all fixed nowadays...

THIRD DEMON

It's all politics -- like everything else.

The Boy appears before Joe, all pumped up from the battle.

BOY

(excited)

Wasn't that great! I slaughtered about ten guys and didn't get killed once!

The Knight appears on his horse. He extends his hand to the Boy and hoists him up on the horse behind him as the Boy asks:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOY (CONT'D)

How did I do?

KNIGHT

Never ask. It invites opinions.

(to Joe)

I think you've caused enough trouble for one day. You can walk.

He turns and offers the horse's butt and tail for Joe. He begins to walk away, as Joe grabs hold of the horse's tail and follows resignedly, asking meekly:

JOE

Where are we going?

KNIGHT

To my castle.

JOE

Oh, good.

CUT TO:

EXT. KNIGHT'S CASTLE - DAY

High on a hill stands the Knight's extraordinary medieval castle. The CAMERA MOVES IN to a barred window at the top of the tallest tower.

INT. KNIGHT'S CASTLE - TOWER - DAY

JOE IS THROWN INTO THE TOWER'S HIGHEST CELL by two of the Knight's servants, who chain him to a wall. The Knight and the Boy enter behind. There is one window -- through which one can see the GIANT FLOATING TREE in the distance, and a fireplace against the opposite wall.

JOE

Is this necessary?

KNIGHT

I would say so -- considering your mistakes have placed that lost child in an even more dire position, not to mention causing a minor bloodbath... You shall stay in here until the girl-child is safe behind these walls as well...I can hardly save the innocent while I'm busy rescuing the incompetent!

He exits with his two servants...The Boy stays behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY

Why did you go to that place? Can't you read signs?

JOE

Not one of my strong points.

BOY

Well, at least you'll be safe, here.

JOE

"Unhook these things, will ya...

BOY

I can't.

Joe tries a new tack -- pretending to play along.

JOE

Listen...I...I'm sorry. I know you know more about all this...and I'm sorry I didn't listen. O.K.? And...and I promise if you let me outta here, I'll let you take over the whole investigation...all right?

BOY

I can't. It's against the rules.

JOE

Look, kid, there are no rules. You do what you have to do.

BOY

There's got to be rules or else there's no game.

JOE

I'M CHAINED TO A WALL! This ain't a game. Listen, get yourself to a phone -- there's a number in my wallet...

BOY

I can't!

JOE

Why?

BOY

'Cause that's the rule! What are you, dim?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Giving up on him, Joe struggles to pull himself free.

BOY (CONT'D)

You're going to hurt yourself if you keep fighting it.

JOE

LOOK! If you're not going to help, then GET OUT! The last think I need is some wiseass kid.

BOY

(angry)

Why do you have to be such a jerk?!

JOE

Hey, why don't you just go follow Sir Tin Can and get out of my face!

BOY

At least he knows what he's doing! At least he rescues people!

JOE

Ha -- you believe all that garbage!? Rescues! Who? Beautiful half-naked women from dilapidated castles in the middle of Hansel and Gretel land! WHO COULDN'T!?

BOY

(getting upset)

It's not garbage -- YOU'RE GARBAGE!

They are interrupted by the entrance of the Damsel, still in her diaphanous gown, carrying a tray of food for Joe. Joe and the Boy cut short their argument like two kids discovered fighting by the mother.

DAMSEL

I thought you might like to eat.

BOY

Yeah -- see if you can do something without destroying an entire village!

JOE

GET OUTTA HERE!

The Boy exits. The Damsel sets her tray down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAMSEL
A curious boy.

JOE
BRAT!

DAMSEL
You should try and eat something. You
need your strength.

JOE
For what? Looks like I'm spending the
night.

The Damsel is glad to hear this.

DAMSEL
Do you need me to get you anything? A
blanket? Some ale?

JOE
You could unchain me.

DAMSEL
No. That I couldn't do. The Master
wouldn't like it.

JOE
Master? You call him Master?

Damsel nods. Joe says to himself:

JOE (CONT'D)
What a set-up this guy has.

DAMSEL
(not understanding that)
No one may unchain a prisoner of the
castle. It's a...

DAMSEL/JOE
Rule...

JOE
Yeah, I heard...

Damsel offers him a plate.

JOE
I'm not really hungry.

Damsel looks disappointed as she returns the plate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOE

He...doesn't hurt you, does he?

DAMSEL

Oh, no...he never touches me. No one ever does. Even when he pulled me out of that dungeon he had those big, heavy steel gloves on. I think I'm bruised from those gloves -- Can you see?

She lifts up her dress to expose a beautifully sculpted rib cage and buttocks...Joe is slightly embarrassed and more than a little excited.

JOE

Uh...no...no, you look fine. Why were you in a dungeon?

DAMSEL

I was abducted. All the virgins are. But then we get rescued and brought here.

The Damsel is disappointed.

JOE

This happens often?

DAMSEL

Well...a virgin doesn't have many options. Abduction and rescue, abduction and rescue. And in between, he's out liberating the world from tyranny every day. We hardly ever see each other, and when we do, he spends the whole time telling me how he'd lay his life down to protect me...Protect me for what, I'd like to know. There has to be more to this life I think...more than just saving the world and being saved, protecting and being protected. There has to be more. Don't you think so?

Joe feels like he's heard these words before (from his wife).

DAMSEL (CONT'D)

Sometimes, I think it would be nice to stay abducted for a while. But don't tell anybody I said that.

JOE

Why do you think it would be nice?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DAMSEL

You know what happens to virgins? We grow old. No more frightful a vision than some fat, middle-aged virgin sitting around all day with an occasional lamb sacrifice to break up monotony. Is that what I have to look forward to!? I'm young and I'm pretty and I'm smart, too. But all I ever get to do is sit behind some Knight on a horse. And when I'm too old and too fat to be abducted, they'll start on someone new and then the only chance I have of getting out of this godforsaken place is to be sent to a convent.

(starts to cry)

But I can't be a nun. I have bad thoughts...bad thoughts about men.

Joe is intrigued.

JOE

What thoughts?

DAMSEL

Oh...I couldn't tell you. You're a man. What kind of virgin would I be telling a man my personal thoughts?

JOE

But...you don't seem very happy...being a virgin.

DAMSEL

I'm not. Are you happy being a man?

JOE

Not usually. Most of the time I'm... I'm pretty ashamed of it.

DAMSEL

(sympathetic)

Really? I've never met a man who felt shame. I always thought that was my charge.

(almost pleading)

Can't I get you a plate of something? Isn't there something you need me to do?

JOE

(smiles)

All right...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

The Damsel returns the plate of food. Joe indicates his chains.

DAMSEL
I'll feed you, if you like.

Joe nods. Things are looking up. He can't believe how beautiful she is. CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY INTO A TIGHT C.U. OF THE TWO AS THE SCENE CONTINUES.

JOE
Thank you. It smells wonderful.

DAMSEL
I didn't cook it. Although I could cook, I think. They won't let me. Something about purity and the danger of defilement by manipulating indecent food products. Why are you here?

JOE
I don't know.

DAMSEL
That's odd, isn't -- I mean, not knowing something as simple as that?

JOE
(realizing the truth of this)
I suppose it is.

DAMSEL
Are you lost?

Joe is getting lost in her beauty.

JOE
(vulnerable)
Yes...I think I am lost.
(staring at her face)
So lost, I'd forgotten that there could be such...beauty.

The Damsel is stirred by his words. She tries to keep calm.

DAMSEL
What a lovely thing to say. Can you remember what village you're from?

JOE
New York.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

DAMSEL

New York...Is there an Old York?

JOE

No, it's always been New.

She wipes some sauce off his lip. Then:

DAMSEL

You're a very...peculiar kind of man. I like it.

JOE

I...I wish I could help you.

DAMSEL

Everyone does when they meet me.

JOE

No. I mean...I wish I could help you to...do what you want...to be free... on your own.

DAMSEL

You know...if you wanted...you could easily abduct me and take me to New York...I mean, we're all alone and I am defenseless in your presence. That is, if you could figure out a way to get your hands out of those old, rusty chains that get little chinks in the side if you bend them enough.

Joe stops eating -- he is thoroughly enamored of her now.

DAMSEL

You have such sad eyes. I've never known a man with such sad eyes...

JOE

I don't know.

DAMSEL

Is there someone you love?

JOE

I don't know.

DAMSEL

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JOE
I've been busy.

DAMSEL
I have the most curious feeling. As if I want to expose everything about me and have you do the same so there would be nothing hidden between us...so we would know each other and remember...and in memory, this moment would never end.

Joe loses himself. He kisses her gently. She responds with a quiet cry of pleasure. He kisses her again. She begins to lose herself.

DAMSEL
No. You mustn't. I can't...

Suddenly, JOE RAISES HIS HANDS INTO FRAME -- they are free of the chains -- and holds her by the shoulders and kisses her a bit harder...We can sense the Damsel surrender, then stiffen..

DAMSEL
No. Please...The rules...

Finally, Joe PLANTS A LONG LUSTFUL KISS on her lips...Until the Damsel breaks away. She is frightened. She sees the look in Joe's eye and backs away. But Joe lunges for her and SHE SCREAMS...Joe realizes he went too far...

JOE
Oh...God...I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Suddenly, THE KNIGHT AND THE BOY BURST INTO THE ROOM. THE BOY IS HORRIFIED BY JOE'S LUST. THE KNIGHT GRABS JOE, flinging him across the room.

KNIGHT
VILLAIN!

In the confusion, the fire in the fireplace is scattered. FLAMES BEGIN TO SHOOT UP THE WALLS as the Knight beats up Joe -- flinging him from one wall to the next. Joe doesn't fight back -- accepting the punishment for violating the innocence of the girl. The Boy runs to help the Damsel, who is weeping on the floor.

Suddenly, from the towering flames engulfing the room, BIGG AND HIS GOONS APPEAR BEHIND THE KNIGHT, THE BOY AND THE DAMSEL -- JOE WARNS:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JOE
No!...WAIT!!!

BIGG
Good work Joe. I knew you wouldn't let me
down!
(takes a deep breath)
We're headin' for the Big Time.

The Knight is too obsessed with Joe to notice or listen to his warning. He picks up Joe and HURLS HIM THROUGH THE DOOR! The last thing Joe sees is BIGG AND HIS GOONS DRAGGING THE DAMSEL AND THE BOY BACK INTO THE FLAMES...Joe tries to dive back into the room to save the Boy...

SUPERIMPOSED OVER THIS ACTION IS A NIGHTMARE MONTAGE OF IMAGES; FLAMES, MUSIC, WIND-UP TOYS, A CHORUS LINE OF TAPPING DANCING FEET, VIOLENT BATTLE....A LA BUSBY BERKLEY MUSICAL.

JOE
NOOOOOOOOO!!

CUT TO:

INT. FAO SCHWARZ - NIGHT

Joe scrambles to his feet and is about to rush back into the dungeon, when he realizes:

HE IS NOT IN A REAL CASTLE, BUT A DISPLAY OF A GIANT CUT-OUT CASTLE in the middle of FAO SCHWARZ....the display is wrecked. Joe is tangled up in toys winding down on their batteries. He looks like shit. He looks out the giant windows and sees passers-by staring at him in amazement. They watch as TWO SECURITY GUARDS arrive and grab Joe...

SECURITY GUARD ONE
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
(to second Security Guard)
Call the police.

JOE
I am the police.

CUT TO:

INT. DIMITRI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Reporters stand outside his glass enclosed office, as DIMITRI reams out Joe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIMITRI

TWO DAYS! TWO DAYS YOU DISAPPEAR and then you suddenly show up in the middle of a TOY STORE, DRUNK?

JOE

I wasn't drunk.

DIMITRI

Your wife's been calling every hour.

JOE

(hopefully)

My wife?

Dimitri, fed up with the reporters, LOWERS THE VENETIAN BLINDS ON THE GLASS, creating some privacy.

DIMITRI

Why didn't you show up for the psychiatric check?

JOE

I...

(tries to explain)

I was at the apartment...The little girl's apartment and I was in the bedroom. I had a lead that...

Dimitri waits for an answer but Joe realizes he can't explain.

JOE (CONT'D)

...I don't need a psychiatric check, Ivan.

MRS. CRILL AND JOSEPH URIAH enter his office.

MRS. CRILL

Is this the best man you could find for this assignment? Is this man qualified to locate a lost and frightened, innocent child!? This case is turning into a media joke!

URIAH

We've already gotten calls from A CURRENT AFFAIR and INSIDE EDITION.

MRS. CRILL

And you know who winds up on those shows? SCREW UPS! JOKES! Well, I will not allow my department to be tainted with

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MRS. CRILL (CONT'D)
loserishness! I demand another detective
to be assigned.

DIMITRI
Hey, cool your muff, Lucinda, O.K..

Crill is shocked.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
I just got a fax on my desk from the
mayor's office and he feels the same and
I'VE decided I'm taking him off the case.
(to Joe)
Joe, you're suspended until further
notice...I'm sorry.

But Joe expected this. He rises and moves to exit. He stops
by the door and notices the VENETIAN BLIND CORD. Remembering
the scene in Bigg's office, he wonders if he pulled the cord,
whether a different scene would appear outside. He pulls the
cord to find a REPORTER PRESSED AGAINST THE GLASS staring at
him.

HE LOWERS THE BLIND WITH A QUICK DROP THEN RAISES IT AGAIN,
ONLY TO FIND THE SAME REPORTER STARING AT HIM. It didn't
work. Crill, Uriah and Dimitri watch in silence. Dimitri is
worried.

DIMITRI
Joe...I'll need your gun and your badge.

Joe crosses back to the desk and empties out his pockets; he
throws his badge on the desk, unbuckles his belt and holster
and lays his gun down. He checks for anything else and feels
another object in his coat -- he pulls out a SECOND GUN. He
raises the gun to Mrs. Crill. Uriah throws his body in front
of her. Joe pulls the trigger and a "BANG YOU'RE DEAD" FLAG
pops out. Joe decides to keep this item. He shoves it back
in his pocket and exits.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT.

Jack walks aimlessly through New York crowds.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe enters his apartment building. He checks his mail box.
It is overflowing with JUNK MAIL, catalogues, advertisements.
He grabs it and heads upstairs.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe unlocks the door and enters to find the apartment has been cleared out -- most of the furniture and all of his family's belongings. THREE BOXES of HIS PERSONAL BELONGINGS have been packed and sit in the middle of the floor. He crosses into the kitchen and finds AN ENVELOPE with his name on it stuck on the fridge. He takes the envelope just as THE PHONE RINGS. He opens it to find A PLANE TICKET and a POSTCARD that reads GREETINGS FROM KANSAS. On the back, a note; "There's no place like home"...Ha, ha...Call me - Susan." As he reads, he hears the ANSWERING MACHINE picks up the call;

SUSAN'S VOICE
"Leave a message at the beep".

BEEP. Joe hears Susan's voice...

SUSAN (V.O.)
Joe. It's Susan...If you're there, I guess you can figure it out. Ivan called and tells me you're OK...sort of...There's an envelope for you on the refrigerator...I guess that

Joe crosses to the phone and listens as he dumps the catalogues and advertisements on a table..He can see there are 13 calls on the machine.

SUSAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
says it all...Everyone here's asking for you. They can't wait to see you. I don't now what to tell them. I'd forgotten how much space there is out here. I feel like I can breath for the first time...Things seem clearer to me here..I still love y-
..Joe, are you there?...Joe?

Joe reaches for the phone to answer her, when he notices one advertisement in particular; A SMILING MAN is gesturing toward A CAR. BESIDE THE CAR IS A GIRL LEANING SEDUCTIVELY ON THE HOOD. Under her is a quote: I'D FORGOTTEN THERE COULD BE SUCH BEAUTY...IN AMERICAN CAR DESIGN. Joe recognizes the tender words he spoke to the Damsel in the car ad.

SUSAN (V.O.)
Ok...Um...well, I hope you get this message. Please call as soon as you can...or better, just - surprise me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beep! She hangs up. Joe is staring at the brochures. He looks deeply hurt. Not only from what he reads, but from what he just heard.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Camera pans bed, as we hear a TV in the B.G. Joe is discovered drunk and asleep - his face in a pizza box, a half of bottle of scotch lying comfortably on a pillow like a lover after sex. He moves in his sleep and starts to slide off the bed. Half way off, he regains consciousness;

JOE
AAHHAAAAAAAAA!

He falls off the bed. He quickly pops up and grabs the bed as if there were no floor beneath him. He looks around to see where is he and finds himself in his bedroom. He touches the floor, the bed, the pizza to make sure it's real. Satisfied, he drops his head on the bed.

He looks up and sees his reflection in a mirror on an opened closet door. Half man/ half pizza. An urban Centaur.

JOE
AAaahhh!

He realizes it's him. He's disgusted. On the TV he hears, Ronald Coleman delivering the final lines on the film "A TALE OF TWO CITIES"...

RONALD COLEMAN
"It's a far, far better thing I do than I
have ever done. It's a far better rest I
go to than I have ever known." (MUSIC
SWELLS)

JOE
Jerk!

Joe rises, crosses to the phone and dials:

JOE
Can I have the number for American
Airlines - flight information?

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME LOCATION

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wider angle. Joe has cleaned himself up - shaven, groomed, looking quite handsome - and is in the process of packing a suitcase with a great carefree spirit as an uptempo SONG plays on an old style RECORD PLAYER.

Joe bounces around, flinging clothing and personal items in a suitcase in rhythm to the music...almost. He's made his decision and it has set him free.

He picks up a BOX and simply turns it over, dumping it's contents into the suitcase. A pile of memorabilia spills onto the floor.

Joe picks up a FADED PHOTO. It is a picture of his parents standing on a street in a small town that resembles the FANTASYLAND VILLAGE. But Joe doesn't make the connection. He focuses on his father, circa 1938, wearing a Midwestern Police uniform. Joe then spots A SECOND PHOTO inside a small frame. Taken years later, it is a picture of Joe's parents standing with JOE, AT EIGHT YEARS OLD. They are standing in front of their house. BOTH JOE AND HIS FATHER ARE WEARING BOY SCOUT UNIFORMS, just like the HARMONIES...He stares at the photo and can't believe his eyes;

THE EIGHT YEAR OLD JOE IN THE PHOTO IS THE SAME BOY FROM THE FANTASY LAND. JOE had met himself as a child and did not recognize him.

Joe sinks to the floor holding the photo.

EXT. GHETTO APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Joe flies out of a cab and runs into the building.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THE LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER opens the door and is surprised to find Joe there.

JOE
Hi...Lt. Joe Foster. I...I'm
investigating your daughter's
disappearance.

The Father eyes him skeptically.

FATHER
Not anymore, you ain't. They called from
the police station. You're not supposed
to be here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Not officially, no...but ...may I please come in?

FATHER

What for?

Joe tries to think of a clever answer, but can't. He is completely vulnerable, almost on the verge of breaking down. He tells the bare truth with a pleading, desperation:

JOE

Look, I have no reason. I...can't think of a story or a lie or a way to make you understand. The truth is...

(opens up to him
uncharacteristically)

...there's something I have to find.
Something I lost...I...I need to do my
job here...I only want to do my job.

(the Father listens,
empathetic)

I need your help...I need you...to let me in.

One desperate man asks another desperate man for help. And with no great thought, help is given; a subtle tilt of the head, the Father motions for Joe to enter. Joe is grateful.

JOE

May I...see your daughter's room?

FATHER

(nods)

You want a beer or...water?

JOE

No. Thank you.

Joe heads for the room.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe enters and closes the door. Everything is in it's proper place in this cut-out Eden. He finds the "DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE" VOL. 13 he was reading and lies down on the bed. He begins to read, hoping he can will himself back to Fantasy Land. Realizing the window is closed, he jumps up, opens it, then lies back down. He reads a word or two, then looks around to see if it is having any effect. Nothing is happening. Frustrated, he holds his head as if to stop himself from screaming or crying. he sits up and looks at the walls which are covered with pictures and cut-outs...He spots one image in particular:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IT IS A PICTURE OF THE FLOATING TREE FROM THE FANTASY LAND -- THE TREE JOE WAS HEADING FOR WHEN HE WAS FIRST SWEEPED AWAY BY THE BED.

JOE

I was right there..That's it...

Suddenly, as if on cue -- the ICE-CREAM TRUCK MUSIC begins O.S. Joe finds himself drifting into the picture -- he senses himself being carried away back into the Fantasy Land. he moves closer and closer, almost in slow motion, towards the picture, until:

HE BANGS HIS HEAD AGAINST THE WALL, at the same time the ice-cream truck CRASHES in the street O.S. It didn't work. He checks himself, the bed, the window -- looking outside, he sees the ice-cream truck butted up against a sleek Camaro. THREE GANG MEMBERS exit the Camaro and start looting the ice-cream truck.

Joe is frustrated and angered by his failure to get back into the Fantasy Land. He turns to exit, POCKETING THE "DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE" BOOK.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe storms through the living room to the front door, not acknowledging the Father. He is stopped by the Father asking:

FATHER

Do you think you'll find her?

JOE

(irritated)

What!?

FATHER

If you find her, will you bring her home?

The Father - lost and weakened - obviously loves his daughter very much.

JOE

I don't know. I shouldn't have come.

Angry at his own impotence, Joe exits, not even bothering to close the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. A FOUR-LANE CITY STREET - NIGHT

Joe gets into a cab, in the middle of a traffic jam.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Joe sits in the back seat searching "The Defective Detective" for clues as the cab bounces over pot holes. The CAB JOLTS TO A HALT. THEY ARE IN A TRAFFIC JAM. Joe, frustrated by the book and his confusion, tosses it on the seat. He drops his head back and closes his eyes, exhausted.

C.U. on Joe, leaning his head against the seat. The TRAFFIC NOISES BLEND INTO GENERAL STATIC. But Joe keeps his eyes closed, as if trying to find a silence inside his head.

The STATIC BECOMES A RADIO BROADCAST, which opens Joe's eyes. Frustrated to still be in his world, he leans over to complain to the driver...

JOE

Whatdyathink, pal, are we ever gonna get movin'?

The driver doesn't seem to hear.

Joe leans forward to repeat himself and sees that it is not a radio but a TV in the front seat. Joe notices that the driver has a can of beer in his hand, a newspaper next to him and is flicking a remote control. As he switches channels, we get a glimpse of the chaotic state of the world. Joe watches in stunned wonder.

JOE

Excuse me!

The driver jumps, spilling his beer...

DRIVER

What the hell...!

(surprised to see Joe)

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?

Just then, the back door opens and the Driver's Wife sticks her head in to say:

WIFE

Dinner's ready, dear...

(seeing Joe)

Oh...I didn't know we had company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

69.

DRIVER
I didn't either.

JOE
(confused)
I'm sorry...I...thought you were on duty.

As he is saying this, he's also taking in his surroundings for the first time.

The open back door leads directly into the next car in the traffic jam -- they are connected. Joe can see a kitchen in the next car. The front door opens and a kid sticks his head in, crying:

KID
Betty hit me again!

That door also leads to another car where a piano stands next to a bunk bed.

DRIVER
I don't know what you're selling, mister,
but we're not interested. Now get the
hell outta my house!

Joe sheepishly gets out of the cab. Looking around he sees:

The MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM EXTENDS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE...And it's no longer just a traffic jam -- IT'S ALSO A HOUSING ESTATE. People have knocked 3 or 4 cars together to make homes. Laundry hangs on lines between cars. Kids play in small gaps that are left. People hang out of sun roofs chatting to each other. Small businesses are run from the larger vehicles. Encyclopedia salesmen stand at open car doors delivering pitches to tired housewives.

JOE REALIZES HE'S BACK IN THE FANTASY LAND, but a completely altered version of it. What was the silly village where he was first welcomed has now been engulfed by a metropolis gone mad; i.e. we can see the church where the battle took place now defiled with neon advertisements and surrounded by skyscrapers. Not only does the permanent traffic jam wind its way to infinity, but skyscrapers block out the sky in an overwhelming jumble. BIGG'S NAME IS EVERYWHERE; Bigg Supermarket, Bigg Time & Life, Bigg Savings and Loan. Giant ads are displayed, featuring THE DAMSEL. One in particular, has her seductively caressing a CANISTER OF AIR FRESHENER AGAINST A PICTURE PERFECT VERSION OF FANTASY LAND - complete with Knight's castle in the distance.

The streets are fill with people pushing shopping carts, filling the sidewalks from end to end. Overhead Loudspeakers

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

make non-stop sales pitches...As the Voice directs them, the shoppers turn the carts in unison, like shoals of fish turning with the current and head for the nearest bargain like shopping zombies.

Joe tries dodging the shoppers, overwhelmed by the nightmarishness of the place. It looks as if he is about to be crushed by them, when Joe A HAND grabs him in the nick of time. Turning to his rescuer, he is surprised to see that it is ONE OF THE HARMONIES -- looking the worse for wear -- who, on recognizing Joe, lets go and, with a look of fear, runs away.

JOE

NO... WAIT...

Joe tries to stop him but, failing to do so, is distracted by another sad sight.

THE KNIGHT is standing on a corner, his emaciated horse tied up next to him, RANTING at the passing crowd like a madman. On the end of his broken lance is a HAND PAINTED SIGN; WILL RESCUE FOR FOOD. ALSO SLAY DRAGONS AND COMBAT EVIL. No one pays any attention to him as he warns them about Demons having taken over the world. Joe approaches him.

JOE

Where's the boy?

The Knight sees Joe and his rage becomes focused. He grabs Joe by the collar and with his last ounce of strength, throws him up against the building.

KNIGHT

FIEND! DEFILER! TRAITOR!... BEHOLD, YOU WHO WOULD WALK BY UNAWARES AND LOOK UPON THE FACE OF EVIL LEST YE FORGET. HERE STANDS THE BLACKGUARD WHOSE LUST AND WHOSE POISONOUS HEART HAS BROUGHT DARKNESS T-..

JOE

Will you shut-up!

The Knight gets a pain in his chest and weakens his grip, slowly sinking to the pavement. Joe sinks with him, holding the Knight in his arms.

JOE

Are you all right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

71.

KNIGHT
(can't breathe)
They will not listen. They will not see.

JOE
Can you tell me where the boy is?

KNIGHT
Boy?

JOE
Where did they take him?

The tired Knight shakes his head at Joe pitifully.

KNIGHT
Fool. Can you not once look upon the signs?

He motions for Joe to look around him. Joe does and sees:

Joe finds one building, across the street from the Knight, that says BIGG WORLD HEADQUARTERS...The building reaches up to the skies and beyond. At the very top, is a PENTHOUSE OFFICE. A sign with an ARROW is pointing up to the penthouse -- painted on the side of the building, with the corporate logo - "IT'S A BIGG WORLD AFTER ALL."

INT. BIGG WORLD HEADQUARTERS/ELEVATOR - DAY

As the elevator stops on various floors, Joe is surrounded by high-powered business types, all wearing exactly the same suit with the Bigg Logo on the lapel. The heads of the Businessmen are bobbing up and down behind him. It is not until the elevator stops that we see they are actual on Stairmasters...

Throughout the scene, and for most of the Bigg Headquarters sequence, "IT'S A BIGG WORLD" theme song plays constantly. Children's voices are heard. Bigg World Enterprises is the corporation with a heart that sells innocence at top prices, Fascism for the child within and world domination.

INT. BIGG'S PENTHOUSE FLOOR - DAY

Reaching Bigg's penthouse floor, Joe steps out of the elevator and, to his surprise, is met by FLYNN and SHADOW, who are now wearing beautiful Armani suits and looking like they stepped out of an episode of 'Thirtysomething'. They are clearly not happy or at ease in their new personas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLYNN

Come with me, please.

JOE

I want to see Bigg.

FLYNN

(testy)

I know! Don't you think I know!?

Joe follows them down the long corridors. They walk briskly.

JOE

I want to know where the boy is.

FLYNN

Look -- talk to Bigg, all right! I've got three meetings scheduled after this, and then I've got a client's dinner which I am SO not in the mood for. I'm this far away from quitting. I don't need this. I have two assistants that are just dying to get my job, I can't trust anyone, I can't get fired or else I lose my profit sharing and now Shadow tells me he wants to move out of the city and get a country weekend place which means I'll have the extra pressure of two mortgages and fighting Sunday traffic every weekend.

(to Shadow)

What is so bad about living in the city?

SHADOW

(like a frustrated housewife)

You call this living?

Joe is shocked that Shadow said something. At this point, they have arrived in front of Bigg's Boardroom. Flynn knocks;

BIGG

COME IN!

He opens the door for Joe.

INT. BIGG'S BOARDROOM - DAY

Joe enters the boardroom, which contains a long conference table around which sit a dozen executives -- all with their backs to us as they listen to Bigg at the head, reading a financial statement.

CONTINUED:

He, too, looks like the smooth corporate gangster -- slicked-back hair and Italian suit and a gym bag filled with racquetball equipment. He sees Joe and beams.

BIGG

Well, it it isn't our old friend, Lt. Joe Foster.

At that moment, all the executives turn around to face Joe and we can see that THEY ARE ALL IDENTICAL, THE EXACT SAME PERSON -- A DOZEN MR. BIGGS.

DOZEN BIGGS

HI JOE!

Joe jumps.

JOE

What happened to you?

BIGG

(big smile)

I divested! Please, take a seat.

Flynn and Shadow shove Joe into a seat by the door.

BIGG (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you're here. I've wanted so much to personally thank you.

DOZEN BIGGS

Thank you Joe!

Joe is always a little jarred when the crowd of Biggs speak.

JOE

For what?

BIGG

Oh, you're too modest. You opened my eyes --

AS BIGG CONTINUES TO SPEAK, THE FOLLOWING SPEECH IS SPOKEN BY VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL BIGGS OR COUPLETS OF BIGGS AROUND THE TABLE. EVEN THOUGH WHAT WE HEAR IS ONE SINGLE CONTINUOUS VOICE. THEY SHARE SENTENCES, SOMETIMES SPEAKING ALONE, SOMETIMES IN UNISON OR IN DIFFERENT GROUPINGS TO EMPHASIZE CERTAIN WORDS OR PHRASES.

(CONTINUED)

BIGG ONE
I was being far too selfish.

BIGG TWO
Egocentric! Everything was ME.

BIGG THREE
ME.

BIGG FOUR
ME.

BIGG EIGHT
I mean, when one considers the expansion

BIGG NINE
the growth

BIGGS TEN AND ELEVEN
THE SHEER SIZE

BIGG TWELVE
Of what we have been able to accomplish
since sharing the responsibility.

BIGG ONE
Letting the people in on it

BIGG TWO
and sacrificing out selfish needs to the

BIGGS TWO, THREE AND FOUR
GREATER CORPORATE GOOD....

BIG EIGHT
By spreading the burden, the business -
seems to explode...

BIGG NINE
Community -- THAT'S the phrase that pays.

Joe tries to keep up with all the Biggs sharing sentences...

BIGGS TWELVE AND ONE
IT'S THE DEMOCRACY YOU'VE DREAMED OF!

BIG THREE
The people are included every step of the
way.

CONTINUED: (3)

BIGG FOUR
Overload them with

BIGG FIVE
involvement

BIGG SIX
information

BIGG SEVEN
knowledge...

BIGGS SEVEN AND EIGHT
PRODUCTS!

BIG TEN
You see, the more we make, the more there
is to be had, the more dissatisfied they
are.

BIG EIGHT
BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE IT!

BIGG TWELVE
But, with easy to pay credit terms, they
can have the world on a string.

BIGGS TWELVE AND TEN
A shoestring!

THEY LAUGH.

BIGG ELEVEN
Short term thinking brings great rewards!

BIGG EIGHT
You were right. People are shit!

BIGG NINE
But, like anything else, Joe, they need
proper organization to capitalize on it.

BIGG FOUR
When I think of the effort

BIGG SIX
the strain

BIGG SEVEN
of manipulating men through clever and
exhausting methods of temptation

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

76.

BIGG EIGHT
when all the while, people will gladly
shoulder the burden given the chance...

BIGG ELEVEN
I don't have to BE evil anymore.

ALL BIGGS
OOOOoooo.
(They all laugh)

BIGG TWELVE
I simply have to create the need.

ALL BIGGS
SO THANK YOU...THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN.

Joe is exhausted from listening and throws his head back and forth to keep up with who was speaking. But he is fully aware that he was responsible for Evil expanding in this way. he is horrified.

BIGG
Now what can I do for you?

Joe is about to answer, when suddenly, we hear a GREAT CRACKING NOISE. The head Bigg smiles and says:

BIGG (CONT'D)
Oh, gentlemen -- I thinks it's time.
Joe! Come stand by me!

Everyone eagerly jumps out of their seats and rushes to the giant, circular window that wraps around the room, and that up to now has been covered by drapes. Bigg pushes a button and the drapes electronically rise to reveal:

A LINE CUTTING ACROSS THE SKY. AND THEN ANOTHER AND ANOTHER. THE SOUND IS TERRIFYING. THE SKY IS BEING DIVIDED UP INTO A GIANT GRID. SUDDENLY, INDIVIDUAL SQUARES ARE PULLED UPWARD BY SOME UNSEEN MECHANISM, LEAVING A BLACK EMPTY HOLE WHERE BLUE SKY ONCE WAS. Joe can't believe his eyes. The Biggs applaud.

BIGG
Joe, Do you realize the amount of sunlight we use in excess of what we need, while others in the world are in darkness?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BIGG TWO

Our demographics show that at any one time almost fifty percent of the world in darkness.

BIGG

And you know what that means?

BIGGS THREE AND FOUR

THE DEMAND IS HIGH!

BIGG

So, rather than waste our natural resources, we sell them our surplus which provides them, in turn with a twenty-four hour work day. It increases their productivity which helps us to fulfill our trade agreements and as well as our environmental blablabla.

DOZEN BIGGS

Blablablabla.

They all laugh.

BIGG

And it solves this Nature problem in one swift stroke. Puts her right in her place -- working for the common man...Just think about the freedom man will experience once he's liberated from the tyrannical domination of elemental forces.

BIGG TWO

No more digging your car out of the snow when you're late for work.

BIG THREE

No more volcanic ash in you driveway!

BIGG

And isn't that what man has yearned for since the dawn of civilization? Triumph over chaos. So we can sleep better knowing that, unlike the dinosaurs, we have a tomorrow to wake up to. The common man, Joe. That's who we work for!

(looking to the doorway)

Ah, Delores!

Joe turns around to find that THE DAMSEL has just entered the room. She too, of course, is changed -- no longer is she the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

pure, sweet innocent. Instead, she reeks of the raw sexuality that we saw in the posters on the street.

She oozes past the many Biggs, ruffling their corporate smoothness. Most of them just manage to hang on to their composure and then, slipping her arm into Joe's, she guides him out of the room as Bigg instructs -- CAMERA PULLS AWAY from Bigg and Biggs until it is out the door.

BIGG

Delores will show you to your office.
Get a feel for the place, Joe. We want
you to know you're a valuable asset to
this firm. We're not...

(a complimentary joke)

...letting you go, Joe -- not letting you
be tempted away to some competitor --
even if we had a competitor...Welcome,
Joe Foster.

DOZEN BIGGS

WELCOME TO THE BIGG TIME!

All the Biggs burst into song ("IT'S A BIGG WORLD") as Joe and the Damsel exit.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Joe is dazed. Delores the Damsel is tired and impatient.

DELORES

Follow me.

JOE

Wait...look, you've got to help me.

DELORES

I know. Follow me...

JOE

I've got to find the Boy.

DELORES

Yeah, yeah...we'll take care of it. Just
follow me.

Businessmen unload off an elevator and fill the halls. She leads Joe through the maze of business persons down the corridor as a PLEASANT OVERHEAD VOICE speaks on the intercom:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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OVERHEAD VOICE

Reminder; there have been unfortunate outbreaks of uncontrollable greenery - unsupervised plants and flowers, left overnight, WILL be confiscated and destroyed. Also, this week only, YOU can help save the starving peoples of the world. With every Giant Economy Sized case of Beluga Caviar you buy, the BIGG foundation will donate one penny to Famine Relief. EAT WELL FOR A FAIRER WORLD.

Delores stops by a door.

DELORES

This is it.

She opens the door and ushers Joe in:

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S OFFICE (JOE'S APARTMENT) - DAY

It is a complete replica of JOE'S APARTMENT after his wife left him and cleared everything out. It is exactly as Joe left it; boxes thrown about, pictures scattered. The record player is still on, skipping over the record.

DELORES

We wanted you to feel at home here.

She closes the door and heads for the bar.

DELORES (CONT'D)

I re-stocked the bar, though. You want a drink?

Joe doesn't answer. He walks around in disbelief.

DELORES (CONT'D)

Well, I'm having one.

She makes them both a scotch. She hands one to Joe and clicks the glasses, then downs the drink like a truck driver.

DELORES (CONT'D)

AHHHHH!

(then w/o feeling)

You wanna dance?

Joe downs his drink as well, trying to pull himself together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

80.

JOE

No. No, what I want is to find the boy...

DELORES

What boy?

JOE

The Boy! The Boy who was with me! The Boy who rides with the Knight... remember?

DELORES

(casually)

Oh, yeah, the brat. He's gone.

She turns to the bar to make another drink. Joe advances on her and pulls her roughly to him.

JOE

Gone? What do you mean gone?

DELORES

Kids don't last long here. Forget him...he's dead.

JOE

(stunned)

Dead?

DELORES

Yeah, he's dead.

Joe is devastated. Delores takes the glass from his hand before he drops it.

DELORES (CONT'D)

Let me make you another one.

She makes them both a drink as Joe sinks to the floor. Delores joins him. Joe takes the drink.

DELORES (CONT'D)

Here...

JOE

What happened?

DELORES

I don't know the details. Something about a little girl. The kid wouldn't talk, so...Bigg had him..."discontinued", that's the phrase he uses. Some joke, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE
Sonofabitch.

Joe rises and rushes to the door to exit but IT IS LOCKED.
He bangs on it.

JOE
LET ME OUTTA HERE, YOU!

DELORES
There's no getting out, Joe. Not until
quitting time. This is your office.
This is where you do your job.

JOE
What job?

Delores rises and walks over to him seductively. When they
are face to face, she whispers:

DELORES
To finish what you started.

She gives him the most passionate kiss in screen history.
Joe momentarily pulls himself away.

JOE
This is a nightmare.

DELORES
(undressing)
You rescued me, Joe. You brought me into
the real world. Don't be afraid...You
can be my hero.

She kisses him, but Joe pulls away, confused and insecure.

JOE
How can he be dead? I thought nobody
dies here.

She kisses him again. Joe is melting (shades of the scene in
the Defective Detective book Joe was reading come to mind).
Joe begins to surrender to his femme fatale's powers. His
sexual desires are a perfect escape from the trauma of all
that's happened. Joe succumbs.

JOE (CONT'D)
Come here!

He picks her up and carries her to a bed in the other room.
They begin to make love, tearing at each other's clothes. As
Delores rips off Joe's jacket, THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE BOOK

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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falls open on the floor beside the bed. Joe buries his face in her neck, biting and kissing as Delores moans.

DELORES

Ooooh...Oh, Joe..Oh, yeah...yeah,
honey...

Delores turns over as Joe unzips her tight dress -- when suddenly HIS EYE IS DRAWN TO:

THE OPENED PAGE OF THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE BOOK...on it is one of those pencil drawings -- depicting the Detective in the midst of passionate lovemaking with a woman who is dressed exactly like Delores.

DELORES

What's wrong, Joe?

Joe picks up the book and reads the last paragraph on the page opposite of the drawing. It reads:

BOOK

"The Detective takes a step back, saying,
'This is a nightmare'."

DELORES

Joe, what is it?

Joe flips the page and continues to read OUT LOUD:

JOE

"You rescued me. You brought me into the
real world. Don't be afraid. You can be
my hero..."

He scans down the page to the last line which reads:

BOOK

"As he reads further on into the book,
she anxiously lifts her head from the
pillow and asks, 'Joe, what is it?'"

Joe looks beyond that -- THE PAGES ARE BLANK.

DELORES

Joe?

Joe looks at the pages and the words -- HE READS ON. SHE ASKS, "JOE?" -- APPEARS SUDDENLY. THE BOOK IS WRITING ITSELF AS EVENTS HAPPEN. Joe throws the book on the floor and gets up.

CONTINUED: (4)

DELORES (CONT'D)

Joe, please...tell me.

Joe tries to figure it out -- then, suddenly, realizes something. Joe grabs Delores with a rush of energy and purpose.

JOE

I want you to take me to the Boy.

DELORES

I can't. I told you. He's dead.

JOE

No. No, he's not! Nobody dies here!
Take me to him!

DELORES

He's dead!

JOE

YOU'RE LYING! YOU'RE LYING! BECAUSE I
SAY YOU'RE LYING!

He looks at the book and there on the page he reads:

BOOK

You're lying! Because I say you're lying!

He grabs his jacket and pulls out the TOY GUN and aims it at her.

JOE

And I say this is a real gun and I say
it'll blow your head off if you don't
take me to him now!

He checks the book again, reading his own lines printed.

DELORES

Get off of me!

Joe releases his grip. Delores begins to zip herself up.

DELORES (CONT'D)

I don't know what's gotten into you! I'm
on your side!

JOE

Then help me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DELORES

I can't! Don't you see -- I'll lose everything.

JOE

Lose what?

DELORES

Look, it may not seem like much to you, but I'm finally at a place where I have some control, instead of being some kind of prize. I've waited a long time to be in this position.

JOE

(in disbelief)

YOU'RE A HOOKER!

DELORES

I'M USEFUL! I have a purpose. I HAVE SKILLS! I have benefits! Oh, Joe...why can't you just be here with me? We can be happy together. Let the world do what it wants...we can make our own private place. Can't we help things more by finding some happiness? -- by loving each other. Isn't that a good thing?

(kisses him)

Besides, who are you kidding? you're only one person -- what can you do?

Echoes of his earlier cynicism jolt Joe into clarity.

JOE

What I can do is my job. A little girl disappeared and I'm supposed to find her. That's it. Maybe things are too far gone...maybe I can't save the world -- maybe I'm not supposed to. Maybe our only hope is to just do what we're given to do and do it well. And somehow, in some small way, it has an effect.

MUSIC SWELLS.

CAMERA BEGINS TO DOLLY BACK. The shot gets wider and wider...CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL THE ENTIRE SCENE IS BEING WATCHED IN THE BOARDROOM ON A GIANT VIDEO SCREEN BY THE BIGGS. And they don't like what they hear...

(CONTINUED)

BIGG TWO
Sounds like trouble.

BIGG TEN
(teary-eyed)
God, that's so beautiful.

BIGG
(troubled)
Shut-up! Did he say something about hope?

BIGG TWO
(re-reads from a report)
Yes, he said "maybe our only hope is to
do what we're given to do and do it
well."

BIGG THREE
That man depresses me.

BIGG FOUR
Hope springs eternal Chaos.
(warning)
We've been down this road before, boys.

BIGG FIVE
Nah, Delores can handle it.

BIGG THREE
Let's play it safe on this one. Flynn!
Shadow! Go check it out.

As Flynn and Shadow exit, Bigg flicks off the video screen
and gets back to business...

BIGG
Now, on page thirty-seven of these
financial statements...

BACK IN JOE'S APARTMENT (OFFICE)

JOE
I need you to show me where the Boy is.
Please...I can't do this without him.

Delores is strangely moved by his plea. Joe senses her
softening.

JOE (CONT'D)
He's not dead, is he?

Delores shakes her head. Joe starts to "write the scenario"
as best he can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

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JOE (CONT'D)

He's...he's here somewhere, isn't he?

Delores nods. Joe tries to go further but can't.

JOE (CONT'D)

He's in...he's at...uh...damn!

Joe looks in the book but it only has recorded his own lines. The book is waiting for him.

JOE (CONT'D)

I can't think of where. Help me.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JOE'S APARTMENT

Flynn and Shadow make their way down the corridor past office workers to the door. They knock. No reply. Foregoing their executive demeanor, they look at each other, grab onto the door and RIP IT OFF (along with sections of the surrounding wall), only to find that DELORES AND JOE ARE GONE. Uncertain, they enter draw their guns and enter. From outside, around a corner, Joe and Delores watch warily then turn and rush away.

INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR

Running past oblivious office workers, Delores leads Joe down a corridor towards a floor-to-ceiling wall of filing cabinets.

DELORES

He's on file down there.

Impatient to get to the boy, Joe rushes into the lead. But the end of the corridor doesn't actually reach the wall of cabinets. It finishes abruptly at the outer wall of the building. Managing to skid to a halt at the very last moment, Joe is confronted by an awesome sight. What appeared to be the end wall of the corridor is, in fact, the exterior wall of the neighboring skyscraper... Over twenty yards away. It is entirely composed of millions of oversized filing cabinet drawers. So too is the facade of Bigg's office building... All except for the open end of the corridor where Joe teeters on the brink of the wind-swept abyss.

EXT. FILING-CABINET SKYSCRAPERS - DAY

Dotting the sheer cliff-like walls are window-cleaner gantries - rising up and down on their cables, carrying filing clerks who are busily filing people into the drawers. High overhead the sky continues to be divided and removed - the cracking and sliding noises provide a deafening background roar. Joe stands frozen.

DELORES

What's wrong?

Joe just shakes his head -- he can hardly speak, he's so scared. Suddenly a head pops up in front him. It is a filing clerk - rising on his window washer platform.

CLERK

Can I help you?

Delores steps onto the platform beckoning Joe to join her. Joe shakes his head -- he's not moving. Delores gives him a look of irritation. Joe looks at the Clerk for some reassurance that he's capable of running this thing. The Clerk gives a big, happy "let's give it a go" look. Joe cautiously steps onto the platform without looking down. With construction noise in the B.G., the clerk yells:

CLERK

YOU NEW HERE?

(Joe nods)

ME, TOO. WELCOME ABOARD. YOU GET USED TO THE NOISE, THEY TELL ME. DO YOU HAVE A, UH...

(reading from manual)

THAT FORM THING...UH, REQUISITION...

(proudly finds it)

YEAH! RY4 REQUISITION FORM.

Delores looks a little worried. JOE RIPS OUT A PAGE FROM THE BOOK and hands it to the Clerk, hoping it will work. The Clerk looks at the page which reads: CLERK ACCEPTS REQUISITION FORM.

CLERK

PERFECT. THANK YOU!

Joe is starting to learn how to play the game. As soon as they start moving, Joe's worst fears are realized. The Clerk is completely inept at his job...the platform lurches and drops erratically...JOE SCREAMS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK (CONT'D)

I love order - everything in its proper place...Oooops...sorry... excuse me...my fault.

The platform lunges down the skyscraper. Joe is terrified, but holds himself together.

EXT. GIANT FILING DRAWER - CONTINUOUS

Arriving at their destination, the Clerk pulls open one of the oversized file drawers. It is empty. Delores nods encouragement and Joe climbs off the platform, and into the open coffin-like drawer. The drawer is slid closed. Pitch blackness.

INT. GIANT FILING DRAWER - CONTINUOUS

As his eyes become accustomed to the darkness, Joe begins to make out a dim face in the distance. IT IS THE BOY. He is lying in a fetal position facing a TV, his eyes glazed, in thrall to an unremittingly HI-TECH, VIOLENT TV program (a la TERMINATOR).

The Boy stares like a catatonic. Joe crawls over to the Boy. He tries the gentle approach first.

JOE

Hey. Hi. It's me.

The Boy remains unresponsive. Joe struggles to be cheery and enthusiastic.

JOE (CONT'D)

I've come to break you outta here. I know where the girl is. We don't have much time.

BOY

Go away.

He pushes him so that he doesn't block the TV. Joe looks to the TV and searches for the On/Off button. But there is none.

JOE

Didn't you hear me? I know where the girl is! I got the Knight waiting downstairs for a getaway. Come on, shut this thing off - let's get going before those goons show up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finding no switch, Joe aggressively picks the Boy up.

JOE
Will ya get up!!

BOY
LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! IT'S
NOT OVER...I WANT TO SEE THE END!

He kicks and pulls and bites.

JOE
I'M TRYING TO SAVE YOU, YA LITTLE BRAT!

He snaps his hand away and sucks the bite the Boy gave him. The Boy returns to his program. Joe grabs the Boy's arm and BITES HIM BACK. There is a beat where Boy and Man face each other down, then -- Joe lunges for the Boy who tries to kick himself away. The two scramble over each other's bodies. Joe manages to grab hold of the Boy's foot and starts dragging him, but the Boy kicks Joe in the face and punches him in the head until Joe lets go. The Boy returns to watching TV.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Flynn and Shadow have reported Joe missing. Bigg is furious.

BIGG
WHAT! FIND THEM! I WANT THEM STOPPED!
DO YOU HEAR ME!! NOW!

Flynn and Shadow rush to exit when they are stopped by:

BIGG THREE
Excuse me, but...
(laughs genially)
I hate to sound like a pencil pusher, but
there'll be hell to pay if we don't go
through the proper channels.

BIGG
WHAT!

BIGG FIVE
I have to go with him on this.

BIGG
(to Shadow and Flynn)
MOVE IT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Flynn and Shadow hesitate.

BIGG THREE

After all, eliminations are your department, aren't they?

BIGG SIX

I wasn't going to say anything!

BIGG

WILL YOU ALL SHUT UP!

BIGG FOUR

I say we review the material, put our heads together and come up with a real knock-out of an idea...

BIGG THREE

ALL IN FAVOR.

Everyone but Bigg raises their hands. Bigg is thwarted by his own bureaucracy.

CUT TO:

HI-TECH STORMTROOPERS CHARGING TOWARDS US, laser guns blazing. Camera pulls back to reveal:

INT. FILING DRAWER - DAY

Stormtroopers are on the TV the Boy is watching. But the TV is moving away from us. Joe is behind the set, luring the Boy to the entrance by pulling the television towards it. The Boy is so fixated that he follows the screen wherever it goes. When they reach the end, Joe bangs on the wall for the Clerk to open it from the outside.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

The Clerk opens the drawer and Joe hauls the protesting Boy over and out...The Clerk, in an attempt to help, adjusts the platform, which, unfortunately, causes Joe to lose his balance and almost fall -- but worst of all -- forces him to look down. He freezes. He can't move.

DELORES

Give him to me! Close your eyes!

With his eyes closed, he slowly hands the Boy to Delores who quickly scolds him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELORES (CONT'D)
STOP THIS NONSENSE RIGHT NOW!

The Boy immediately acquiesces. Joe is amazed he obeyed -- he wants to kill him.

DELORES (CONT'D)
Come on, Joe...give me your hand.

With her help, Joe reaches out and begins inching his way out of the filing cabinet and safely onto the platform.

CUT TO:

INT. BIGG'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

As the BIGGS discuss options, BIGG ONE, angry and frustrated, is looking out the window. Suddenly he perks up. He has seen Delores, the Boy, and Joe as he struggles to climb on to the platform.

BIGG ONE
Get over here!! Quick!

As the BIGGS rush to the window, Delores looks up and sees them congregate.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - DAY

DELORES
(dragging Joe onto platform)
TAKE US DOWN -- QUICK...

JOE
NO...NOT QUICK...NOT --

The Clerk pulls out all stops and THE PLATFORM PLUMMETS -- as Joe screams all the way...

CUT TO:

INT. BIGG'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

The Biggs watch, relieved, as the platform plummets.

BIG SEVEN
(laughs)
That fall ought to take the purpose out of him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG EIGHT

That was close! I hesitate to think what would have happened if he actually had finished his "job."

BIGG TEN

I can't imagine life without all this.

Refers to the city panorama.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATFORM - SAME TIME

The plummeting continues. Joe is gripping the floor of the platform. The Boy is beginning to enjoy the ride. The Clerk is looking through a manual for instructions. The ground is getting dangerously close when the confused Clerk arbitrarily pushes a button and the platform screeches to a halt inches above the pavement. C.U. of Joe -- his face stunned yet relieved.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE BIGGS

Are stunned and furious. Bigg addresses his team somberly.

BIGG

Gentlemen - we are at war!

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Not only have they survived the plunge, but they have conveniently landed only a few yards from the bedraggled Knight and his horse. Joe leaps up and helps Delores and the Boy off. The Clerk guides cheerfully.

CLERK

Watch your step.

Joe stops and glares at him. The Boy stands before the horse.

BOY

This is your getaway plan?! Jeez -- where's the Rocket Harley or the Turbo Nuclear Land Cruiser?

The Knight stares at him in disgust. Delores inspects the Knight. Something about him is familiar to her, but she can't remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELORES

Have we met?

The Knight looks at her and shakes his head. O.S., Joe can hear SIRENS. He rushes to the Knight.

JOE

Quick, let's get going!

BOY

I am not getting on this smelly horse!

Joe tries to pick him up. The Boy starts kicking and ranting -- he bites Joe's arm. Joe lets go and tries the Damsel's approach:

JOE

STOP IT. STOP THIS NONSENSE RIGHT NOW!

BOY

Blow it out your ass!

JOE

(to Delores)

Will YOU talk to him!

KNIGHT

(referring to horse)

It's no use...He can't ride anymore.

JOE

Oh sure he can. You both can.
Just...get up and let's get going.

KNIGHT

I'm too tired.

Shots ring out. Joe looks up to see STORMTROOPERS DESCENDING on the window washing platforms. Joe tries to inspire the Knight to action:

JOE

No, listen...you're the only one who can
do this. You're...you're Sir
Knight...you're the main guy here.
(he tries to sing him into it)
"YOU'RE SIR KNIGHT...THE GREAT
KNIGHT...THE -- "

Joe can see the LIGHTS OF THE SIRENS AS THEY GET CLOSER. Everyone dives for cover as THE STORMTROOPERS BULLETS STRIKE NEARER. Joe pleads.

SHIT! Come on -- you can do this!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE (CONT'D)

You're the best! Remember? Half a dozen rescues a day, maybe a battle and a celebration afterwards...

The Knight is unresponsive until Delores realizes:

DELORES

I remember now...

(She kneels before him)

You were the most brave, the most gallant man I'd ever known...But you never let me thank you properly.

She gives him a gentle kiss on the lips. The Knight is overcome by her. So much so that he slowly leans back and KEELS OVER out of camera angle.

JOE

GREAT! You killed him. Thank you.

But the Knight POPS BACK UP INTO FRAME full of vim and vigor, looking much more like his old self.

KNIGHT

Let's get going shall we...I fear I hear armed forces approaching.

Joe and the Boy are surprised by the change.

BOY

Is he kidding?

The Knight sweeps the Boy up with one arm and plops him on the horse.

BOY (CONT'D)

LET ME GO...LET ME...

He goes to bite the Knight and almost breaks his teeth on the metal sleeve.

BOY (CONT'D)

OW!

DELORES

(to Joe)

You better hurry.

JOE

Which way out of the city?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DELORES

Just follow the signs.
(she kisses him)
You are a good man, Joe.

Joe hesitates wanting to say something, but Delores urges:

DELORES

Go.

Joe mounts the horse and the Knight swings his steed around and heads down the street.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Armed police arrive on the scene, blocking the horse's path.

The Knight steers them onto the pavement and gallops past masses of shoppers who pay little attention to them. But soon, they are blocked by more armed police -- there is no way out but to gallop up onto the roofs of the cars stuck in the permanent traffic jam and off down what was once a road. The police can't keep up with them as they race along the car tops.

Unfortunately, the traffic jam comes to an abrupt end. The road has never been finished. They are teetering on the edge of an uncompleted overpass. The ground is hundreds of feet below them. Only it's not ground -- it's an open sewer of the most modern, toxic effluents. The police are catching up.

In front of them, across the gap, are more skyscrapers. On the side of one is a LARGE BILLBOARD with Delores advertising a bathroom air freshener, offering all the benefits of the clean, clear smells of the countryside. Interestingly, the beautiful background is almost the same as the view from the Knight's castle.

One difference is that the FLOATING TREE is nowhere to be seen. From the skylight of one of the cars, a man angrily pokes out his head screaming:

MAN

GET OFF OF MY HOUSE!

The Knight pulls out his sword and takes a swing at the guy when GUNSHOTS from the police send them leaping to another car roof. Closer to the billboard now, Joe gets a whiff of something in the air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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JOE

Do you smell something -- like trees
and...and...and grass...?

BOY

I'm telling you, it's this horse!

He looks at the billboard and notices something odd -- the
sky in the picture is gridded like the sky above the city.

JOE

How can that be? Bigg only started that
today.

(he realizes)

We've got to jump into the billboard.
It's the way out.

BOY

ARE YOU NUTS?

KNIGHT

Excellent suggestion!

The Knight backs up the horse to get a running jump and, holding tight, THEY LEAP ACROSS THE GAP AND THROUGH THE BILLBOARD...They land with a thump on the high ground seen in the billboard, for in fact, the plane of the billboard contains only the photograph of Delores and the air freshener and the type. The rest, the actual background, is real and they are in it! And there, in the distance, is the GIANT FLOATING TREE, which had not been visible, being blocked by the can of air freshener. Looking back, they can see the back of the great wall of absolutely flat skyscrapers. No thickness at all. The only thing breaking the wall is the cut-out space through which they have just jumped and through which they can see back into the city. Their relief is short-lived. They quickly realize that they will be visible to the police unless they get behind the wall.

JOE

Quick, we have to get behind that wall.

But the horse refuses to move. After all the excitement, the horse has decided to take a shit.

EXT. UNFINISHED OVERPASS - CONTINUOUS

The police arrive on the opposite side of the overpass. We can see the billboard from over their shoulders -- OUR TRIO IS SAFELY OUT OF SIGHT. The police are confounded, believing our trio must have escaped by jumping down the sixty foot gap. Everyone is standing on top of cars in the traffic jam, searching for the fugitives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

97.

POLICEMAN

It's a long drop. You think they survived?

POLICEMAN TWO

Better check it out.

Shadow and Flynn arrive, standing on the nearby cars.

FLYNN

DO SOMETHING! GO AFTER THEM!

He sends the police in all directions. Shadow stares out across the overpass to the green hillside in the middle of the billboard and something catches his eye. There, on the beautiful, green hillside of the billboard, is a pile of horse shit. And leading from it to the edge of the billboard, hoofprints in the grass. Shadow knows this isn't right, but not being a clever man, can't figure it out. Flynn resignedly suggests:

FLYNN

We better report back to Bigg

He exits O.S. Shadow follows.

EXT. BEHIND THE BILLBOARD - SAME TIME

Joe formulates a plan.

JOE

(to Knight)

You go and gather your men -- and meet us at the tree. Get as many as you can. And make sure those fat Boy Scouts are there.

BOY

Look -- let me go back and I swear I won't say anything.

JOE

What's wrong with you? You're the one who was always saying "Let's go rescue the girl, let's go rescue the girl!"

BOY

Look -- I'm not into playing "rescue" today with a pair of middle-aged juvenile delinquents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KNIGHT

The boy speaks strangely. Perhaps he is under a spell. We should wash him in horse urine.

BOY

That's it! I'm gone...

The Boy gets up, but Joe pulls him down, covering his mouth. Joe then peeks over the sign and looks across the gap...

POV: The police are dispersing.

JOE

Now! GO!

They make their move -- the Knight jumping on his horse and riding off left, Joe grabbing the Boy and pulling him downhill in the direction of THE TREE. No one sees them.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWSPAPER FOREST - DAY

Joe drags the reluctant Boy down a hillside littered with sawed-off stumps of trees. Lying on the ground - unseen by either of them is the Boy's lost magnifying glass. They pass by, heading towards a fence enclosing a FOREST MADE OUT OF NEWSPAPER TREES. A sign on the fence explains:

SIGN

BIGG INC. OFFICIAL LANDMARK RESERVE.
RECYCLABLE TREES. PROTECT THE
COUNTRYSIDE -- PLEASE DON'T LITTER.

Joe leads the Boy into the forest. He is visibly uncomfortable being alone with the Boy, now that he knows who he is.

BOY

Can I ask you something? Why do I have to come along here? I'm missing like three programs. I'm going to feel completely lost for the rest of the season.

JOE

I thought you'd want to come.
(awkwardly, fishing)
Don't you want to be a hero?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY

No.

Joe stops. The answer slapped him unexpectedly.

JOE

What do you mean, no? Yes you do!
That's all you ever thought about.

BOY

Says who?

JOE

Don't you want to...make the world safe?
Don't you want to help people?

BOY

NO. I WANT TO WATCH TELEVISION!

(remembers reverently)

I love TV...it's the greatest thing ever
created. The people on it -- they're
always so funny and smart and no matter
what happens, it always happened for the
best...THAT'S what makes ME feel safe!
Especially reruns. Nothing bad can
happen when you're watching a rerun --
'cause it already happened. All you have
to do is watch.

Joe is disturbed by the Boy's addiction. But even more
disturbing is the sight before him, as they reach the end of
the forest.

They stand facing the SHORE OF A MIRROR SEA. It is exactly
as its name implies. Not a ripple. Nothing ruffles it's
reflective surface. In the distance, on the far opposite
shore, above a range of hills floats THE TREE. In the mid-
distance, in the middle of the sea are SEVERAL BEAUTIFUL
ARCADIAN ISLANDS. Joe is awestruck.

JOE

God...how beautiful.

The Boy is not impressed. He rolls his eyes impatiently.

BOY

So, how do we get across, genius?

JOE

Well...maybe we can skate across

He steps onto what he believes to be a surface as solid as
ice, but instead -- DISAPPEARS UP TO HIS WAIST. A ripple
spreads out from where he flounders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Boy cracks a smile, trying not to laugh and enjoy himself. As Joe splashes angrily around in the very heavy liquid, more and more ripples spread out. Rather than diminishing as they retreat, they seem to build in size. A great ominous rumbling begins until the now wave-size ripples hit a small island with a beautiful temple standing on it. The vibrations of the contact DESTROY THE ISLAND ENTIRELY. Then the wave continues on, taking out a couple more idyllic-beyond-belief potential holiday retreats. This impresses the Boy.

 BOY

Whoa!

Joe, at the epicenter of the destructive ripples, is unharmed, but the further from him the wave spread, the more damage is caused. He carefully climbs out of the liquid, back onto the shore. But he slips and falls, causing the Boy to reach out and help him. As Joe rises up, the Boy sees that Joe is covered with MIRROR LIQUID. The Boy is surprised and tickled to see a distorted reflection of himself rising from the sea.

BOY

You look like me.

A moment of curious realization is shared, unspoken, unexplained. Joe is about to tell the Boy who he is, when the Boy starts to giggle because his reflection distorts even more as it oozes off of Joe.

JOE

We can't get across without causing major damage. Any ideas?

(the Boy is disinterested)

We need something delicate...light.

Joe looks around. A newspaper tree catches his eye. He moves to it and feels the "bark". He tears off a piece of paper easily. He gets an idea.

JOE

Help me tear off this paper.

BOY

(whiny)

What for?

JOE

We'll make a paper boat. That'll be light enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOY

A paper boat? Why don't we just go back to the city and buy one?

JOE

No, they're fun to make, remember?

BOY

No -- I don't know how to make one. I don't even know what a paper boat is!

JOE

What do you mean you don't remember. Uncle Bob showed me how to make one that summer when we were...

The Boy looks at him strangely. Joe realizes he can't continue. Instead, he rips a page off the tree and begins to make a small model. The Boy plops down on the ground, acting annoyed. But, in spite of himself, he becomes intrigued with how Joe skillfully manipulates the paper, folding it in twos until it looks like a hat, then opening the bottom and folding in the corners, then opening it again and drawing the corners apart -- the Boy stares, transfixed. Joe is enjoying himself. When he is done, he hands the Boy a perfect paper boat. The Boy is impressed.

JOE

That's a paper boat!

The Boy likes it.

Joe is all smiles -- he hasn't made one of those in years. He begins tearing off paper. At first the Boy looks like he isn't going to join in -- then, he carefully places the paper boat down on a safe spot and assists Joe.

CUT TO:

INT. BIGG HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Shadow and Flynn sit like two truants caught smoking in the bathroom. All the Biggs stand with their backs to them, looking out the window as they speak:

BIGG

You lost them.

FLYNN

They couldn't have gone far.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BIGG

Gentlemen, this man is a threat! If that kind of attitude were to run wild, it would rock the very foundation of our entire world. Everything we've worked so hard to build for the common man, the simple consumer.

BIGG FOUR

Damn shame! DAMN shame!

BIGG FIVE

Now I'm angry!

BIGG

In the interests of this corporation, its shareholders, and the civilized world, let us pool our resources, gentlemen! All in favor of dissolving the divestment, say AYE.

BIGGS

AYE!

In a split-second, THE BIGGS COALESCE INTO ONE BIGG AND THEN TRANSFORM WITH A ROAR INTO A GREAT SWIRLING, FLAPPING, TWISTING WHIRLWIND CLOUD OF BLACK PUTRESCENCE AND FLIES OUT THE WINDOW.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MIRROR SEA - DAY

The Boy is finishing folding up a corner of THE GIANT PAPER BOAT. Joe, inside the boat, leans over to see.

BOY

How did I do?

JOE

You're not supposed to ask that.

BOY

Why?

JOE

It's a rule.

Joe lifts the Boy into the boat. Using a long, rolled-up newspaper as a pole, and with the gentlest of pushes, Joe nudges the boat out to sea. It works. The sea rises in the wake of the boat and with a graceful swirl forms a single wave, with the boat riding forward on its crest. THEY SAIL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

105.

Joe has an uncharacteristically proud and satisfied look on his face. The Boy sits with his mini-paper boat clutched in his hands, facing out to sea and taking in the beauty around him.

Joe watches the Boy, as if searching for signs of himself. A pang of sadness rises in him -- of youth gone and possibilities behind him. The Boy senses Joe is looking at him and turns.

BOY

What?

JOE

(surprised)

Nothing.

But the Boy is now curious about Joe.

BOY

So what kind of cop are you?

JOE

Detective, first class.

BOY

Ever got shot?

JOE

Once.

BOY

(really proud)

My Dad got shot. He's a state Marshall. Once, he single-handedly caught three bank robbers after getting shot in the arm...Want to hear what happened?

Joe is touched by the Boy's devotion. He remembers it as his own. Joe nods. The Boy excitedly tells the story.

BOY

These three crooks were holding up the First National Bank in broad daylight. One of them was waiting outside in a parked car while the other two go in, knock out the guards, blindfold the bank president and hold a gun to his throat. What they didn't know was my Dad was across the street buying me shoes. He was off duty. He hears the alarm and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE BATTLE BEGINS...The Knight's army and Bigg's army charge toward each other, as Joe and the Boy scramble to get out of the way, taking refuge at the base of one of the giant winches. AN EXPLOSION sends bodies flying nearby. The Boy wants to join, but Joe grabs him.

BOY

Come on -- I want to fight, too!

JOE

No...come here...

They move behind the winch as the Apocalyptic battle rages on.

JOE

Hold my hands and start singing!

BOY

Singing! What kind of cop are you?
Don't you have a gun?

JOE

Forget the gun! Trust me! We've got to sing. Uh..

(SINGS)

"MY EYES HAVE SEEN THE COMING OF THE..."
SING!

The Boy reluctantly joins in:

BOY / JOE

"THE LORD...HE HAS TRAMPLED DOWN THE
VINTAGE..."

But they don't float.

JOE

It's not working. Think of another song.

Machinery crashes down. Bodies fly through the air. Things explode. Flames engulf the towers. It's Armageddon; dark, violent and destructive. The KNIGHT and the BIGG DRAGON are engaged in a one-to-one duel.

KNIGHT

THIS IS MY FAVORITE PART!

Meanwhile, at the winch, Joe and the Boy are singing:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOE / BOY
"ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT...GENTLY DOWN
THE..."

Desperate, Joe starts jumping off the ground as if that will help but nothing happens.

JOE
DAMN!

BOY
Come on, this is stupid!

JOE
No -- one more time. It's fun. Smile...
(desperate)
You've got to be HAPPY when you do it!
(SINGS)
"OH WOULD YOU LIKE TO SWING ON A STAR..."

BOY
I don't know that song.

JOE
Then just hum...Take the bass line.

BOY
The what?

Joe realizes the secret.

JOE
The bass line! Harmony! We've got to
harmonize.

BOY
I don't know how.

JOE
Just sing your part...

The boy sings normally. Then Joe jumps in with HARMONIC COUNTERPOINT. SLOWLY, TO THEIR ASTONISHMENT, THEY BEGIN TO SLOWLY ASCEND AS THEY SING "SWINGING ON A STAR". Shocked, the Boy stops singing and they both fall.

BOY
Whoa.

JOE
COME ON -- AGAIN!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

They start singing

CUT TO:

THE BIGG DRAGON and THE KNIGHT in deadly combat. Bigg lets roar A MIGHTY BLAST OF FLAME which sends the Knight tumbling..sword flying out of his hand.

As he moves in for the kill, Bigg is distracted by the sound of singing. He looks up to see JOE AND THE BOY RISING ABOVE THE SMOKE OF THE BATTLE SCENE.

BIGG (DRAGON)

DAMN!

INTERCUT - TIGHT SHOT OF JOE AND THE BOY SINGING GLORIOUSLY AS THEY SOAR.

JOE AND BOY

"...CARRY MOONBEAMS HOME IN JAR. AND BE BETTER OFF THAN YOU ARE..."

ON THE BATTLEFIELD, the Dragon unfolds his wings, preparing to fly after them -- but it requires a tremendous effort of huffing and puffing and flame-thrusting. THE KNIGHT takes this opportunity to retrieve his sword, jump to his feet and strike it deep into the Dragon's breast. With a roar of flames from his mouth, the Dragon crashes to the ground. The Knight staggers over with his sword and SEVERES ONE OF THE DRAGON'S HEADS. The head rolls off but suddenly, speaks:

BIGG (DRAGON HEAD)

HAHAHA -- THANKS -- THAT SIMPLIFIES THINGS! REVERSE THRUST!

FLAMES SHOOT OUT BACKWARDS FROM THE SEVERED NECK AND THE HEAD ROCKETS UPWARDS.

Joe and the Boy are gaily singing away, oblivious to the approaching danger. Slowly, they float upwards toward the glorious castellated BIRD HOUSE high in the tree. But...suddenly - below them, the cloud of the battle parts, SPEWING FORTH THE HIDEOUS DRAGON HEAD. The Boy looks down and SCREAMS, causing him and Joe to start falling.

JOE

SING! SING!

But the Boy is paralyzed with fear. The Dragon Head's jaws open wide in anticipation as they plummet toward them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JOE

SING!

Somehow, the Boy SINGS, just in time. Their fall is halted, and they manage to dodge as the Head rockets past. Singing faster and faster, they fly toward the bird house as the Dragon Head does a looping turn. The Head is almost upon them. With their last bit of effort, they reach the bird house, collapsing out of breath. They can't manage to move. The Dragon Head dives in for the kill, when suddenly:

THE TWO BEARS guarding the door COME TO LIFE, BANGING THEIR CYMBALS TOGETHER ON THE WING-LIKE EARS OF THE DRAGON HEAD, stopping it dead in flight. Bigg roars in pain. A cheer comes from the army below. Joe and the Boy look down to see the Knight and his army are victorious! Everyone is a hero.

BOY

How did I do?

Joe sweeps the kid up into his arms, exhilarated

JOE

Come on!

Joe and the Boy enter the bird house.

At that moment, THE DRAGON HEAD TRANSFORMS BACK INTO THE BLACK CLOUD and ESCAPES THE BEAR'S CYMBALS.

CUT TO:

INT. BIRD HOUSE - DAY

Joe and the Boy step into the bird house and find the most idyllic, Eden-like forest ever seen. In here, there is no darkness, as the sunlight filters down through the leaves, dappling the ferns that cover the ground. Birds sing. Everything is real -- not flat or cut-out or cartoon-like, but gloriously three-dimensional and alive.

Both Joe and the Boy are awestruck. The Boy is so excited, he cannot contain himself -- he breaks away from Joe and runs into the forest, laughing and yelling!

BOY

WEEEEEEEE!...WE MADE IT! WE MADE IT!

JOE

Wait!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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BOY (O.S.)
COME ON!

The Boy can be heard laughing and running through the forest.
But Joe cannot see him. He calls out:

JOE
(protective)
Don't get lost!

Joe then looks for the girl. He walks straight down the path ahead of him: All kinds of animals cross his path. Whether domestic or wild, they all act tame and loving.

Joe sees THE LITTLE GIRL kneeling in a grove, playing with a bear cub. Joe walks respectfully towards her. The Girl doesn't have to look up to know Joe has arrived.

GIRL
(referring to the the cub)
You want to pet him?

Joe nods and extends his hand. The cub rolls on its back and plays with Joe's fingers as if they were a mobile. Joe smiles. The Little Girl takes this opportunity to climb up the tree.

JOE
Are you all right?
(she nods)
Who brought you here?

GIRL
I did.

JOE
No one...took you?
(she shakes her head)
What is this place?

GIRL
I made it...Isn't it pretty?
(Joe nods)
You can stay if you want to.

JOE
Don't you miss your family?
(she nods)
Don't you want to be with them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GIRL
(she nods again)
Can't they come here?

Joe shakes his head.

JOE
Your mommy's been very worried and...your
daddy loves you very much.

GIRL
I know.

JOE
Do you remember this?

He pulls out the DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE BOOK and opens to a page with an illustration. He hands it to the Girl. It is a pencil drawing of a Little Girl in a tree, sitting above the Detective. She reads the caption beneath it:

GIRL
"Little Girl lost asked the Detective.
'Did I help you with your case'?"

The Girl looks to Joe and he answers:

JOE
Yes, you did. It's all wrapped up. Case
closed. Time to go home.

The Girl smiles, but there is disappointment in her expression.

GIRL
Can I come back if I want?

JOE
(thinks, then)
I don't know...maybe...
(then, smiles)
...I did.

The Girl likes this answer and feels better. Joe stands and extends his arms to her. Just as she enters his arms, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

...As Joe carries the Little Girl down from a tree in the Central Park Zoo. Joe carries her lovingly out of the zoo..

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL
It got dark.

JOE
Yes it did.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Photographers and reporters and cameramen cram into the offices to get a recording of the Girl's reunion with her parents...a Reporter speaks to the camera:

REPORTER
Lt. Joe Foster, a one-time local household name for his heroic rescue of the Barry family during that horrific two-day drama back in 1967, may once again achieve favorite son status to the folks here in the Tri-state area...After days of searching with both personal and professional setbacks, including an official suspension from the case, Joe Foster has done it once again...

She fades off as the camera pans over to Dimitri's glass enclosed office where Joe and Dimitri watch the Girl reunite with her parents.

INT. DIMITRI'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

The Father is dressed in an old sports jacket and tie. The Mother showers kisses on the Girl, who looks genuinely glad to be with them. The Father puts his bear-like arms around both mother and child. The happy family, reunited.

Dimitri is smiling proudly. He hands Joe his badge and gun.

DIMITRI
Glad to have you back.

At that moment, MRS. CRILL, and JOSEPH URIAH from the Child Protection Agency, enter the office with documents.

MRS. CRILL
Well -- a happy ending after all. Isn't that nice? Captain Dimitri, I have the release forms for the child. I think the sooner we get her away from all these reporters, the better. I think a police escort to the center might be appropriate, if possible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe, the Mother and the Father are immediately alarmed.

MOTHER
Center? What Center?

MRS. CRILL
Well, we can't allow the child to return to the same environment that precipitated the disappearance. Not until a proper investigation has been conducted.

FATHER
(getting angry)
Investigation of what?

The Mother touches his arm as a warning. He holds himself back. Crill clearly doesn't like the father.

MRS. CRILL
Your fitness as parents. She'll be taken care of at the center until a suitable foster home can be found and our evaluation is completed.

Joe looks at Dimitri with an accusing stare. Dimitri turns away.

GIRL
NO...NO MOMMY, PLEASE... DON'T LET THEM TAKE ME...

MRS. CRILL
...After all, we're only thinking of the child.

Uriah takes the Girl. The Father makes a move but Dimitri alerts two policemen standing by who each grab an arm, rendering the father impotent...The mother starts screaming...

MOTHER
YOU CAN'T TAKE HER...PLEASE ...YOU CAN'T TAKE HER...DON'T...

GIRL
(to Joe)
TAKE ME BACK...YOU PROMISED. YOU SAID I COULD GO BACK ANYTIME!

Joe witnesses the scene as if outside of himself, unable to move. Uriah hands the child to a large Officer who carries her through and above the sea of reporters...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Joe watches, through the glass of the office, the little girl being absorbed into the system -- disappearing into a sea of adults and strangers. He feels useless and used. With his back to Crill, Crill takes this moment to congratulate him.

BIGG (V.O.)

Well, I had my doubts, but I must say
congratulations on a job well done...

JOE HEARS BIGG'S VOICE and turns to see:

BIGG, DRESSED UP AS MRS. CRILL, smiling behind too much
lipstick and an ugly hat.

BIGG/CRILL

Yes...a job well well well done.

JOE

YOU!

JOE LUNGES FOR BIGG/CRILL and wraps his hands around her throat. He begins strangling her on the desk as Dimitri and the officers try to restrain him...

Outside the office, reporters signal their cameramen to turn their lens onto Joe.

INT. BAR - GHETTO AREA - NIGHT

Angle on Joe strangling Crill in Dimitri's office. Camera pulls back to reveal we are watching this on a TV screen above the same bar where we first met Joe. We continue to pull back to reveal JOE, at the bar, DEAD DRUNK. He sees the broadcast and wants to leave. He downs his drink and rises to exit.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Joe drowns his troubles in a store-bought bottle. He leans against an alley wall and drinks the last swallow -- dropping the bottle. He walks aimlessly into the alley, having to stop for a moment and steady himself against a dumpster. He takes a step away from the dumpster and falls on his face.

C.U. ON THE FALLEN JOE, as A BOY'S HEAD appears to help him.

BOY (O.S.)

Need a lift?

Joe looks up and focuses his vision upon THE BOY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Shit...

BOY
Get up! We have to rescue the girl.

JOE
Oh, shit..no more!

He starts to crawl away.

BOY
No -- come on, it'll be great! Look, I brought everybody.

Joe looks at the far end of the alley to see:

THE ENTIRE GANG OF FANTASY CHARACTERS: The Knight, the Harmonies, the army, etc...their colorful appearance is a shock when set against the dingy gray and grimy black alley and street.

JOE
No...not again.

Joe turns away and starts walking out the other end. The Boy runs after him.

BOY
Come on, we don't have much time.

JOE
WILL YOU GET OUTTA HERE AND LEAVE ME ALONE!

He shoves the Boy aside.

BOY
What did I do?

JOE
JUST GET OUT OF HERE!

BOY
What about the girl?

JOE
What about her!? She's probably better off! Her Father doesn't even have a job!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOY

Well -- then we can bring her back to the tree!

JOE

WILL YOU SHUT UP! There is no tree!
There is no army! THERE IS NO YOU!

BOY

You're nuts! We're going to go save her whether you do or not!

He turns to join his fantasy friends when Joe grabs him.

JOE

Listen, you little jerk -- don't you get it yet? There is no Knight! THERE IS NO YOU! YOU'RE ME!

BOY

Let go of me!

Joe takes his wallet and shows him a picture of his parents.

JOE

LOOK -- THESE ARE MY PARENTS! LOOK AT THEM -- THEY'RE YOUR PARENTS
RIGHT?!...RIGHT!

The Boy recognizes his parents. Confused and frightened, he slaps away the wallet to the ground. The Boy tries to run but Joe grabs him hard.

JOE

What's your name?

BOY

LET GO OF ME!

JOE

Joe...Joseph Marion Foster, right! you hate your middle name, don't you? You never tell anyone about it.

BOY

SHUT-UP!

JOE

LOOK AT ME! This is it! THIS is what you turn into. This is what every dream, every hope, every effort ends up being.
ME!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOY
NO! LET ME GO!

JOE
It's no use. You can't win! No matter
what you do, you wind up being me! DON'T
YOU SEE! THERE'S NO USE!

The Boy breaks away. For a moment, the two are frozen, unable to move or turn away from each other. The Boy shocked, on the verge of tears. Then, without a word, he spins around and runs out of the alley, disappearing around the corner. The fantasy characters have disappeared as well.

JOE
YOU CAN'T RUN! NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO --
YOU'LL END UP HERE!

Joe falls to his knees in the alley and holds his head in his hands as he starts to cry.

A gentle breeze begins to move the litter about the alley. It moves all around Joe as he curls up into a ball. The breeze grows stronger, actually lifting litter and newspapers up off the ground -- swirling with a magical synchronicity. Joe lifts his head to see the newspapers and litter "dancing" in the wind, remaining within the alley instead of being blown out into the street. Joe is entranced by the sight.

JOE
Beautiful.

More newspapers join the dance, until there are so many that they take on a specific form -- and out of this form, appears DELORES THE DAMSEL, looking like neither the virgin Damsel nor the whore Delores. There is a natural beauty about her now that radiates strength and dignity and a compassionate heart.

WOMAN
Want to dance?

Joe can't believe his eyes. He can't speak but he nods, yes. he stands and takes her in his arms. THE SAME HAUNTING MELODY first heard in the little Girl's bedroom begins to play. They dance slow and close and in silence, until:

WOMAN
So...what now?

Camera moves in close to them, gradually.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOE

Nothing.

WOMAN

You said you just wanted to do your job.

JOE

I did. I did my job. But it always
winds up the same. I can't change
anything.

WOMAN

You found her.

JOE

A lot of good it's going to do her.

WOMAN

Maybe because the job's not finished.
Maybe you didn't do your job, Joe.

JOE

(considering this)

I was supposed to find her and bring her
home.

WOMAN

Is she home?

Joe realizes she is not. He shakes his head. The Woman
smiles.

WOMAN

Then you're not finished.

They dance as Joe absorbs this. He buries his face in her
neck. She kisses his head gently and strokes his hair as
they dance.

WIDE ANGLE

JOE DANCES ALONE...clutching drunkenly at bits of paper and
litter as they swirl around him creating a surreal tableau.

One bit of litter blows toward the camera. CAMERA TILTS down
to reveal:

JOE'S WALLET. It is open to the photo of his parents. The
wind blows and the photo holder turns to reveal the photo of
young Joe, police cadet. The wind blows again and the photo
holder turns to reveal A WEDDING PHOTO -- Young Joe, thirty
years ago, standing beside his BRIDE SUSAN; both are beaming.
And we see that SUSAN IS THE DAMSEL, DELORES and THE WOMAN...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CUT BACK TO:

JOE -- as he slowly takes in his surroundings stops dancing .
A moments hesitation, then he decides what he must do.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Mother sits on the couch, in a tattered bathrobe. The Father is removing an uneaten tray of food off a snack table before her. He brings it into the kitchen and cleans up. The two have switched roles - the Mother is incapacitated, The Father is cleaned up, in control, caring.

There is a KNOCK on the door. The Mother looks expectantly. The Father crosses to the door, opening it to reveal;

JOE, standing alone, self-consciously, looking a mess.

The Mother rises slowly, almost defensively. The Father looks at him cautiously, concerned.

Joe pulls out THE PLANE TICKET and HIS CREDIT CARD. He hands them to the Father, who is confused.

FATHER

I don't understand.

EXT. CHILD PROTECTION AGENCY - NIGHT

A tired Clerk at the front desk. Door opens. Clerk looks up to see Joe standing there. Joe flashes his badge and the Clerk recognizes him. The Clerk is alarmed.

CLERK

Captain Dimitri left specific orders you were not allowed here.

JOE

I want to see her!

CLERK

(nervous)

That's impossible. Maybe I should call Mrs. Crill and ask...

JOE PULLS OUT HIS GUN and points it at the Clerk.

JOE

Do you know "SWINGING ON A STAR"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The Boy is starting to doubt. Joe can see him breaking down as he tries to convince himself;

BOY

It's all part of the plan. As soon as their guard is down, I give the signal and our own men are gonna spring a surprise attack on 'em...it's beautiful..
(eyes fill with tears)

So stop crying. Tell her Joe! Bad guys never win. You know that, don't ya!?
(almost pleading)
Don't ya?

As the Boy is saying this, Joe turns back to look at the ambush. But this time he sees only the police armed with rifles, a worried Dimitri, a vindictive Crill, a verminous Uriah. Gone are the fantasy characters. Joe sees only the harsh, devastating reality. Joe realizes the problem; it is his pessimism, the weight of his knowledge and experience that fuels this "real" world and gives it strength. He realizes HE IS THE PROBLEM. A calm understanding sweeps over him.

JOE

(clear-headed, decisive)
I have a plan. But it all depends on you two.

The Boy is thrilled, eager and ready for action.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Outside the alley entrance, Dimitri hears:

JOE (O.S.)

IVAN! I WANT TO TALK!

Dimitri signals his men to not fire as he enters the alley.

INT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Dimitri walks inside, to find JOE and THE GIRL. There is no Boy.

DIMITRI

Joe -- what are you trying to prove.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

There's nothing to prove, Ivan. I'm just doing my job.

JOE PULLS OUT A GUN AND AIMS IT AT IVAN'S HEAD. He wraps his arm around Dimitri's neck and uses his body as a shield.

DIMITRI

Oh, kid -- let me help you.

Joe turns to the Boy and the Girl...

JOE

When I give the signal, you run -- understand!

The Boy nods.

DIMITRI

Who the hell are you taking to?

BOY

I can handle it -- don't worry. We'll meet back at the tree, right?

Joe nods, then looks to the Girl -- the two exchange a look in which both understand what must happen. The Girl nods. Dimitri is confused.

DIMITRI

Joe, you're going to get yourself killed -- and over what!?

JOE

Come on, Ivan...This won't take long.

He walks out of the alley with Dimitri in front of him. The kids walk behind.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Joe exits, holding onto Dimitri, with his gun pointed at Dimitri's head. The kids hide behind him...Dimitri orders.

DIMITRI

DON'T SHOOT! He's got the kid with him.

There is a momentary stand-off. No one knows what to do next. Suddenly, JOE YELLS:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOY

You know something? I think I wouldn't
mind growing up to be him.

As they turn to leave the Boy notices something on the
ground. He picks it up and shoves it in his back pocket. It
is the DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE BOOK.

THE END