



SENTINEL OF THE SPACEWAYS!



THE SILVER SURFER

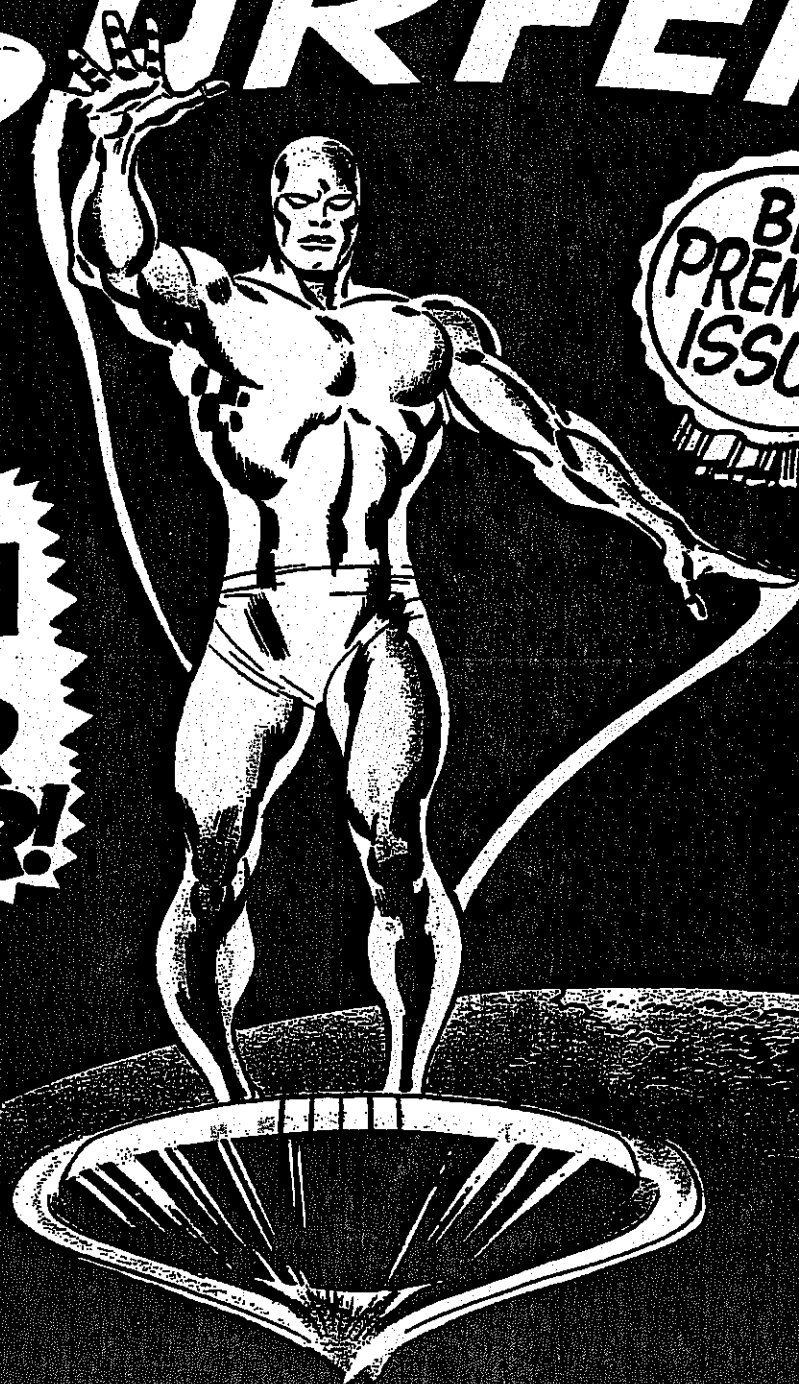
**MARVEL
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**BIG
PREMIERE
ISSUE**

**THE
ORIGIN
OF THE
SILVER
SURFER!**



AN ALL-NEW BOOK-LENGTH MARVEL EPIC!

CONFIDENTIAL
NEWMAN

THE SILVER SURFER

Screenplay by

Richard Jefferies

Based upon characters created by
Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

Previous revisions by

John Turman
John Rice & Rudy Gaines
John M. Bergmann
Bernd Eichinger
Mike Finch

Current revisions by

Andrew Kevin Walker

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX
10201 W. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90035

INTERIM DRAFT
MAY 12, 2000

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ROBERT NEWMAN

The Silver Surfer

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20th Century Fox
05 / 12 / 2000

SS0051

IN AN ALIEN GALAXY OF COLORED STARS...

There looms a massive **WORLD-SHIP**, a Jack Kirby-eske interconnection of **INDUSTRIAL COMPONENTS** extending for tens of miles; a mind-bending spacecraft in an M.C. Esher vein...

In **ORBIT** over a vivid purple planet, **ZENN-LA**.

INT. WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER

In this room as vast as 30 cathedrals, with **CONTROLS** and **CONSOLES** on all sides, a **MAN** stands dwarfed by his surroundings. He is **NORRIN RADD**, bald-headed, young and handsome, in an other-worldly **SPACESUIT**.

He stares sadly out massive **WINDOWS**...
To his fair planet Zenn-La, encircled in tentacles of clouds.

He stares for a long moment... a tear forming in his eye.
Finally he turns, looking up, impassioned.

NORRIN RADD

Take me instead.

Towering before Norrin Radd, a **COLOSSAL FIGURE** is SHROUDED in SHADOW, standing 20 stories tall -- the demigod **GALACTUS**, with glowing **VIOLET EYES** and the **VOICE** of a **DEITY**...

GALACTUS

So be it.

As Norrin Radd falls to one knee...

He lifts his head, and we ZOOM IN -- ENTERING **NORRIN RADD'S EYE** -- into his pupil, where from **PITCH BLACK**...

Comes an **EXPLOSION** of **LIGHT**! We're on a **COSMIC ACID-TRIP**, riding a **PSYCHEDELIC KALEIDOSCOPE** to the molecular level... Day-Glo **STRANDS** of **DNA** intertwine, forming a **BALL** of **SILVER LIQUID**, like an undulating **SPHERE** of **MERCURY**, ELONGATING... taking a vaguely **HUMANOID SHAPE**...

DISSOLVE TO:

CONTROL CHAMBER -- MOMENTS LATER

The giant, violet-metal-armored **HANDS** of **GALACTUS** are cupped, crackling **ENERGY** escaping his fingers. Galactus' hands release a **MAN** of **MOLTEN METAL** to the chamber floor...

The **TRANSFORMED** Norrin Radd remains bowed over, felled by agony and **CRYING OUT**, his entire body **GLOWING RED-HOT** and **SMOLDERING**! The Surfer aborning!

IN ORBIT OVER ZENN-LA

From the World-Ship: a **STREAK** of **SILVER** shoots out...

CONTINUED

The SILVER OBJECT quickly SLASHES across the universe...
SPIRALING away so that the eye can barely follow.

FADE TO BLACK

INSERT TITLE: one million years later

From DARKNESS, we hear Norrin Radd's resonant VOICE, but cold-metallic and weary. It is now the SURFER'S VOICE.

SURFER'S VOICE (V.O.)
How long has been my journey...?

OUTER SPACE -- DESTROYED WORLD

A tableau of madness: a entire PLANET has been reduced to jagged shards, blackened and dead, in a pallorous haze.

SURFER'S VOICE (V.O.)
How many worlds have died? Thousands
upon thousands. And I... I am as if
the very Shadow of Death.

DISSOLVE TO:

SOARING POINT OF VIEW (SURFER'S P.O.V.) -- SPACE

WE TRAVEL, in UTTER SILENCE, surrounded by the infinite,
through this blackness pierced by countless STARS...

SURFER'S VOICE (V.O.)
How many more lives will be lost?

A SPHERE looms larger as we near it...
A huge PLANET of brilliant orange, red and yellow, marked by
a crimson maelstrom seething like a circular wound...

SURFER'S VOICE (V.O.)
How much longer is an eternity?

We TURN, back to our JOURNEY...
The STARScape SPINS and BLURS as we VAULT onward -- crossing
millions of miles effortlessly...another PLANET ahead...

A barren RED PLANET, mottled by dead volcanos...
Then, away WE SOAR without a backwards glance...

SURFER'S VOICE (V.O.)
How may a ceaseless life find its end?

Across this boundless night, HASTENING to a third PLANET...
A blue-green PLANET; a planet enmeshed in clouds...

...planet EARTH.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- ABOVE EARTH

WE TRAVEL out from undulating CLOUDS, SOARING with breathtaking MOUNTAINSCAPES below, WIND ROARING...

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- WOODLANDS

...MOVING low, over the TREETOPS of ENDLESS FORESTS...

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- DESERT

...ACROSS an expanse of heat-warped SAND DUNES...

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- OCEAN

...ABOVE the surface of a dusk-lit OCEAN.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANCIENT LANDSCAPE -- DAY

With a CRY, a PRIMITIVE MAN in a loincloth (Homo Erectus) rises from a rocky outcropping and THROWS a wooden SPEAR...

A forging HERD of WARTHOGS scatters, but one warthog is felled, writhing and SQUEALING!

EXT. ANCIENT FLATLAND (TIME CUT) -- DAY

Homo Erectus drags the dead warthog. The sun burns down.

From HIGH ABOVE...

We are again the **SURFER'S POINT OF VIEW**...

FLOATING DOWN... till desolate flatland reveals the FIGURE of Homo Erectus. CLOSING, in a SLOW CIRCLE, we observe him.

On the ground...

Homo Erectus stops, noticing... a SHADOW cast on the ground from above -- a smooth-edged, OBLONG SHADOW, almost cigar-shaped, nine feet in length, growing closer.

Homo Erectus looks up, giving a CRY, wielding his spear.

From P.O.V. above...

We LOOK DOWN as Homo Erectus backpedals and RANTS in fear. He THROWS his spear with all his might, but we CIRCLE AWAY.

On the ground...

The spear clatters harmlessly to the dirt.

Homo Erectus stares up, jabbering, as a distant BLUR of SILVER streaks across blue sky, GLINTING, then... gone.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT

A FIRE burns with Homo Erectus' family gathered; a WOMAN in furs, TWO naked CHILDREN. They eat cooked meat. Near the cave's mouth, Homo Erectus holds TWIGS into a smaller FIRE.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- SPACE -- INTERCUT

WE STARE DOWN at that gleaming orb, Earth. Contemplating its beauty. Then... accelerating TOWARDS EARTH...

CAVE -- INTERCUT

By firelight, Homo Erectus uses charcoal twigs to DRAW on the CAVE WALL. He lifts a STONE covered in pasty WHITE POWDER, using his finger to apply the powder to his drawing.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- INTERCUT

Our P.O.V. HURTLES downwards, the Earth filling our vision...

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT

Majestic, snow-capped MOUNTAINS. Silent night. Silent, until a FLASH of SILVER PLUMMETS from the clouds...

The SILVER OBJECT imbeds into a mountaintop, giving off a resounding, ECHOING THUNDERCLAP!

CAVE -- INTERCUT

Homo Erectus paints. The DISTANT SOUND of the THUNDERCLAP is HEARD. He moves to the cave mouth where he looks up into the starlit sky, till the RUMBLE FADES.

Homo Erectus moves back into his cave, comes to examine his drawing. By flickering firelight, we now see WHAT HE DREW...



CUT TO:

THE NETHERWORLD -- ETERNAL NIGHT

This be Hell. LAMENTATIONS fill the air over a SEA of FLAME. A WATERFALL pours from a sheer CLIFFSIDE, but even from this distance we see the strange, tumbling flow is not water, but naked FALLEN MORTALS by the hundreds.

Above this horrible "mortalfall," there stands a vertiginous BLACK CASTLE silhouetted against blood red clouds.

INT. BLACK CASTLE, HALL -- NIGHT

Heavy RED BOOTS trod a twisting hallway PAVED by SKULLS...

MEPHISTO'S VOICE

Oh, how glorious is this night made?!
When now at long, long last...

FOLLOW the hurried gait of MEPHISTO, a horrid, red-skinned HIGH DEMON in garb befitting a true Prince of Evil. His hair hangs long and black, his CLOAK flows in his wake.

MEPHISTO

An immortal falls to within my grasp!

INT. MEPHISTO'S CASTLE, THRONE ROOM -- NIGHT

Huge DOORS CREAK OPEN untouched as Mephisto enters. Barely seen CREATURES scuttle across the foggy floor.

MEPHISTO

He thrusts himself to the core of the human realm, attempting to shatter the chains of ever-lasting life.

(CROSSING, stirred)

He cannot know how strongly are his bonds forged. He lives still. He slumbers at the Earth's womb!

With a ROAR -- a vortical PILLAR of FIRE rises from a wide, shallow WELL at the room's center; a HIDEOUS VOICE HEARD...

THE MASTER (V.O.)

MEPHISTO!

MEPHISTO

(KNEELING, head bowed)

It is I... your most humble servant.

THE MASTER (V.O.)

There has been a singular arrival upon the mortal plane!

MEPHISTO

Yes, Master, only just now was I --

CONTINUED

THE MASTER (V.O.)
He is vulnerable like no other
immortal before him... weakened by a
lingering morality...

MEPHISTO
His frail heart will be his undoing.

THE MASTER (V.O.)
Do not falter, Mephisto. There may
never come another chance as this.

MEPHISTO
All in tribute to you.

The fire IMPLODES! Mephisto rises, brushing off, irritated.

MEPHISTO
Grovel, grovel, grovel. How tiresome.

He walks to look down into the well's rippling BLACK WATER.

MEPHISTO
To take the soul of an immortal...
how I have dreamt of this since
before the beginning of time.

REFLECTED in the WELL: Mephisto's EYES GLOW bright CRIMSON.

MEPHISTO
It is now only a matter of patience.

FADE TO BLACK

INSERT TITLE: 200,000 years later

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE. BASE CAMP -- NIGHT

An icy hillside. Outside TWO TENTS, scientific INSTRUMENTS
pinwheel, exposed to the elements they record. The GROUND
TREMORS. A MAN in winter gear looks out from the first
tent. A WOMAN in GOGGLES climbs from her tent. The DEEP
RUMBLE returns! The woman moves forward, peering off to...

Where one MOUNTAIN looms dominant. Suddenly, an EXPLOSIVE
FORCE destroys that mountaintop from within -- a SILVER
OBJECT shooting out, like some earth-born shooting star...

REFLECTED in the woman's GOGGLES...

Till it disappears in the clouds with a SONIC BOOM!
The Surfer is arisen!

CUT TO:

SURFER'S POINT OF VIEW -- EARTH -- NIGHT

Again WE SOAR, LOOK DOWNING upon her, but she has changed... Earth's continents now are dotted with RIBBONS and CLUSTERS of LIGHTS. Glittering CITIES. Civilization.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- ISLAND CITY -- DAY

WE CROSS an OCEAN... NEARING a giant STATUE surrounded by water; a FEMALE in green, draped garb and crown, with a scepter held aloft. FURTHER ON, an ISLAND CITY sprawls... hundreds of STRUCTURES, ROADWAYS, BRIDGES and busy WATERWAYS

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- CITYSCAPE -- DAY

...TRAVELING, LOOKING DOWN into the canyons formed by buildings, above roadways clogged with VEHICLES. We are assailed by the ceaseless CACOPHONY of this mad world.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- ABOVE THE CITY

And what a truly ALIEN PERSPECTIVE; traveling high above this bizarre place, LOOKING STRAIGHT DOWN...

...at WALKWAYS TEEMING madly with the city's infesting SPECIES; HUNDREDS of MALES and FEMALES scurrying everywhere.

...at grim clouds billowing from three tall STONE CYLINDERS.

...at vast FIELDS of REFUSE, where lumbering VEHICLES upend to dump more roiling piles of moldering debris.

...at the fallen figure of a writing MALE, where the trudging flow of the species has only widened to avoid him!

...at a MALE and FEMALE walking hand in hand, till they stop and entwine, pressing their faces together??

...at TWO VEHICLES smashed together, where TWO MALES are locked in combat, with a crowd of the species gathering!

...welcome to New York City.

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC TENEMENT COURTYARD -- NIGHT

SOUNDS of VOICES, MUSIC and TV blend to a din in this meager space between old buildings. CLOTHING and SHEETS hang from CLOTHES LINES tied between fire escapes.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT -- NIGHT

An OLD WOMAN watches TV. A GALE FORCE causes WINDOW BLINDS behind her to CLATTER wildly. The woman turns to look.

EXT. TENEMENT COURTYARD -- NIGHT

The old woman peers out her WINDOW. She lets the blinds close, then yanks them open for a bewildered double take...

IN THE COURTYARD, all the CLOTHES LINES sway EMPTY; every scrap of laundry very suddenly MISSING.

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC PUBLIC LIBRARY (ESTABLISH) -- NIGHT

The library. The city is quiet, relatively.

INT. LIBRARY, HALL -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT

A NIGHT WATCHMAN strolls the dark hallways.

ELSEWHERE IN THE LIBRARY -- INTERCUT

CLOSE-UP: PAGES of "THE OXFORD ILLUSTRATED DICTIONARY" are fanned, giving GLIMPSES of WORDS and IMAGES.

GLOVED HANDS grip "GRAY'S ANATOMY," fanning the pages quickly, revealing illustrations of HUMAN ANATOMY.

PAGES of a "WORLD ATLAS" turn, BLURRING. Another book, "HISTORY OF THE WORLD," is speed-read impossibly, then tossed...falling to the floor with a THUD.

LIBRARY, STAIRWELL -- INTERCUT

Night Watchman halts. Heard something? He changes direction, heading downstairs, shining his FLASHLIGHT.

ELSEWHERE -- INTERCUT

"HISTORY OF ART," fanned, thrown aside...

"ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY," cover to cover...

"THE YALE SHAKESPEARE," pages breezing...

HALLWAY -- INTERCUT

Night Watchman hurries. Another THUD. He starts running.

ELSEWHERE -- INTERCUT

More pages fanning, titles glimpsed...

"JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH"...

"THE SUN ALSO RISES"...

"THE MOON AND SIXPENCE"...

Another book, but a brief pause to examine the title:
"MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS."

HALLWAY -- INTERCUT

Night Watchman runs to DOUBLE DOORS, SHOVES through...

READING ROOM -- NIGHT

Night Watchman RECOILS as a powerful GUST shoves him back! GLASS is HEARD BREAKING.

Across the READING ROOM, WHOMEVER was here is already GONE in a swirl of fluttering PAPERS and MAPS -- having exited impossibly through a SHATTERED SKYLIGHT high above as...

Shards of GLASS CRASH onto tables below.

Night Watchman edges forward, aims his FLASHLIGHT at... An overturned chair... a table with DOZENS of BOOKS stacked, and... SEVERAL HUNDRED BOOKS thrown in a heap on the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE -- ESTABLISH -- MORNING

Stately, Art Deco apartments overlook Central Park at dawn.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT, LIVING/DINING ROOM -- MORNING

A PHONE is HEARD RINGING. Classical LP RECORDS in worn sleeves rest beside a RECORD PLAYER from which we HEAR the lyric strains of WAGNER'S "PARSIFAL" Prelude. A telephone ANSWERING MACHINE lets out a BEEP...

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

(from ANSWERING MACHINE)

Hey, it's Julie. Listen, thanks for going out last night...

This is a spacious CONDO decorated in an almost gothic, old world style. A small TV, MUTED, shows silenced talking heads on "CNN World Report."

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

(cont. from MACHINE)

...Sorry he turned out to be such a jerk. I know it's impossible meeting anyone... just don't give up, okay? See you at the office.

The MACHINE BEEPS. There's a lone PLATE (barely touched breakfast) at one end of the long, formal DINING TABLE, along with The New York Times. It's a lonely life lived here. FRENCH DOORS are open to the balcony...

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY

HELEN HUDSON stands at the railing, eyes closed.

CONTINUED

She's beautiful, mid-30's, in GLASSES and a conservative grey suit. She keeps her eyes closed, addressing empty air.

HELEN

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,
I thank you for this opportunity...

(stops, dissatisfied)

Honorable ladies and gentlemen, I am greatly appreciative this morning of this opportunity... of this opportunity to show you that I can barely form a coherent sentence.

She pauses with a worried sigh, finally opens her eyes.

HELEN

Distinguished members of the General Assembly, my name is Helen Hudson...

INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL -- DAY

HELEN'S SPEECH CONTINUES, amplified, over the U.N. EMBLEM...

HELEN (O.S.)

...As Executive Liaison for the U.N. in this matter, I thank you for your attention...

And we find a nervous Helen at the U.N. LECTERN, dwarfed by the emblem behind her, SPEAKING into a MICROPHONE.

HELEN

The government of Latveria, an iron-fisted dictatorship in every sense, poses a threat to their neighbors and to the world alike, however...

In the vast assembly room, INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES are at their places; grim men and women in headphones.

HELEN

I submit...I, um, respectfully submit that sanctions must target the Latverian leadership, not its people.

EXT. U.N. PLAZA -- DAY

FLAGS of MANY NATIONS fly. TOURISTS wander and OFFICIALS walk and talk hurriedly, but then...all conversations cease. People gawk. Everyone clears a path to avoid...

A SHROUDED MAN walking purposefully across the plaza.

Shrouded Man (the Surfer) is covered head to toe; in tattered shoes and outsized OVERCOAT, wearing GLOVES, SKI MASK, dark SUNGLASSES and HAT. Under his arm, he carries something WRAPPED in SHEETS, looks like... a SURFBOARD?

INT. U.N. SECURITY CENTER — DAY

On a SECURITY MONITOR: the Shrouded Surfer strides towards the U.N. BUILDING while all others give a wide berth.

A military SECURITY OFFICER laughs at something a fellow officer said, bringing COFFEE to his lips just as he looks back at the MONITOR. He does a SPIT TAKE, spewing coffee.

INT. U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL — DAY

Helen continues, looking to the assembly... Several DELEGATES are engaged in whispered conversations.

HELEN

I urge you to support the proposal of military sanctions, but hand-in-hand with humanitarian aid. Because these citizens deserve compassion...

One REPRESENTATIVE doodles on a paper, looks at his watch. Behind him, TWO DELEGATES exit to the aisle.

Helen collects herself, nervousness turning to frustration.

HELEN

No, no... that's not quite right...

(pause, determined)

This situation demands compassion.

Sorry to bother you, but innocent people suffer everyday, in a country where suffering is their only birthright. How can we do nothing...?

An ALARM is HEARD. Helen reacts. Distant GUNSHOTS are HEARD. MEMBERS of the assembly look to each other.

DOORS are THROWN OPEN as Shrouded Surfer enters. BULLETS STRIKE behind and REND his CLOTHING, but he walks on, MOTIONING...the DOORS SLAM SHUT, heavy locks HEARD LOCKING.

In the commotion, some REPRESENTATIVES take cover, others flee. Many run towards OPPOSITE DOORS.

Shrouded Surfer WAVES an open hand...

Across the hall, other DOORS SLAM, blocking escape.

Helen backs away as Shrouded Surfer strides onto the stage. Shrouded Surfer faces the panicked assembly, still with his bound surfboard under one arm. His VOICE BOOMS...

SHROUDED SURFER

Hear me! Heed my words, while there is still time....!

Delegates face him in scattered, fearful groupings.

CONTINUED

SHROUDED SURFER
I bring forewarning to this planet.
Carry the message to all humankind...

A POUNDING begins outside VARIOUS DOORS...
SECURITY MEN trying to get in! Delegates back off.

SHROUDED SURFER
Before your world has twice revolved,
you shall bear witness to the coming
of Galactus. It means the death of
all you know.

POUNDED DOORS are BUCKLING....!

SHROUDED SURFER
Until his arrival, make your peace
with whatever you call God... for the
end is nigh upon you!

Helen backs further, knocks a CHAIR to the floor.
Shrouded Surfer turns to Helen, and something in his
demeanor changes as he stares at her... as he walks to her...

SHROUDED SURFER
Shalla...?

Helen stands frozen in fear as Shrouded Surfer reaches up to
gently remove her glasses. He's transfixed by her beauty.

SHROUDED SURFER
Shalla Bal? How can it be you...?

Helen swallows, staring back at Shrouded Surfer.

An EXPLOSION blows DOORS behind them WIDE OPEN!
Shrouded Surfer spins to look as... MILITARY MEN clog the
smoking doorway, leveling their weapons.

Helen sees the Military Men, takes a step forward...

HELEN
Wait!!

Military Men OPEN FIRE...
BULLETS RIP Shrouded Surfer's clothing, CLANKING underneath,
ricochetting! Behind him, Helen's SHOT, crying out...

Shrouded Surfer sees Helen crumple.

SHROUDED SURFER
NO!!

He raises one hand -- THROWING ENERGY, like HEAT WARP...

MILITARY MEN are BLASTED en masse...!
TUMBLING back into the hallway!

CONTINUED

As Shrouded Surfer comes to kneel beside Helen, a faint BLUE "SHIELD" of PROTECTIVE ENERGY surrounds them both.

He places his surfboard down, gently cradles Helen in his arms. Helen blinks, breathing ragged... blacking out...

FADE TO BLACK

MEPHISTO'S VOICE (V.O.)

And so it begins. He is arisen...

INT. MEPHISTO'S THRONE ROOM -- ETERNAL NIGHT

Mephisto sits slumped in his impressive, rock-hewn THRONE, his slender, jagged fingers entwined in front of him.

MEPHISTO

A brooding figure steeped in pain.
He treads the verdant Earth.

Mephisto climbs from his throne. In ethereal MISTS rising from the dark WELL: an IMAGE of the EARTH spins slowly.

MEPHISTO

Yon breeding ground of fallen souls.
Where man remains as always consumed
by hatred, and so my ranks of the
damned are filled to overflowing
(circles, regarding Earth)
A fitting theater of conflict... and
all the while the fate of humanity is
hung in the balance.

(smiles)

What more could one ask?

Mephisto raises his arms outstretched, ENVELOPING himself in a BILLOW of SMOKE, and he is... out of there!

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN -- CLOSE ON HELEN HUDSON'S FACE

Helen lies asleep, stirring slowly awake. RAIN is HEARD.
She sits up, finds herself on the darkened STAGE of the...

EXT. NAUMBERG BANDSHELL (CENTRAL PARK) -- NIGHT

Under the sweeping PROSCENIUM ARCH of the dark BANDSHELL, Helen sees Shrouded Surfer at the edge of the stage, his back to her, holding his gloved hands out to touch the rain.

Helen looks down, realization striking -- she's seated on the sheet-wrapped SURFBOARD hovering impossibly a few feet off the ground. She leaps up, moving away.

Shrouded Surfer turns. Again, that mellifluous voice...

CONTINUED

SHROUDED SURFER
You have awakened.

Helen looks to him, afraid, trying to comprehend.
She looks out above the tree line of Central Park, where the city's BUILDINGS glimmer through rain.

HELEN
What...what is this? What happened?

SHROUDED SURFER
You should rest. You were mortally wounded.

Helen remembers... reaches down to her white blouse, finding it bloodied. She fingers bullet holes in the fabric.

HELEN
Oh... God...

Shrouded Surfer holds out THREE mangled BULLETS.

SHROUDED SURFER
I was able to mend the damage. I brought you to this shelter so you many heal.

HELEN
This is... this is too much...

SHROUDED SURFER
Please, have no fear.

Helen holds herself, despairing, shivering in the cold.

HELEN
Have no fear...? Wasn't it you telling everyone the sky is falling?

SHROUDED SURFER
Are you cold? Will these help warm you...?

With a gesture from Shrouded Surfer, STAGE LIGHTS illuminate above, filling the bandshell with SHAFTS of LIGHT.

ACROSS THE PARK

THUNDER RUMBLES. In the rain, Mephisto moves from a dark grove of trees, looking to the lighted bandshell.

Mephisto closes his eyes -- TRANSFORMS...
METAMORPHOSING... shrinking to take the form of a RAVEN.

ON THE BANDSHELL STAGE

HELEN

Who are you... or should I ask, what are you?

SHROUDED SURFER

I come from a place so distant it is beyond your imagination.

HELEN

I was afraid you'd say something like that.

SHROUDED SURFER

Beneath this guise is proof, but to look upon me can inspire only dread.

HELEN

I don't understand.

Shrouded Surfer walks to face Helen at mid-stage. He removes one GLOVE, holds up his hand... a HAND formed of sleek, unblemished SILVER.

Helen watches, amazed, as Shrouded Surfer opens his elegant fingers, his every move imbued with a kind of liquid grace.

Helen is awed by HER REFLECTION distorted in his palm. Shrouded Surfer lowers his hand, palm up. Helen reaches to touch his hand... surprised at its solidity.

HELEN

It's... warm...

Strangely unafraid now, Helen clasps his hand in hers, tenderly, lost in a sort of reverence. She looks up to search his face, but his features are still shrouded.

The spell is broken as Shrouded Surfer takes his hand away, replacing the glove. He turns, center-stage, looking to the rainy night, facing ROWS of EMPTY SEATS.

SHROUDED SURFER

Once upon a time, I was a man named Norrin Radd. My world was a small, populous planet called Zenn-La.

In the rain, the RAVEN sits perched on a FRONT ROW seatback.

SHROUDED SURFER

As perfect a world as any; so much more ancient a civilization than yours...

ZENN-LA CITYSCAPE -- FLASHBACK

A CITY of sleek, gleaming SKYSCRAPERS. Cosmic Camelot.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)

All had been accomplished, all
warfare long forgotten, weapons
banished, disease eradicated...

ZENN-LA CITY, GARDEN SANCTUARY -- FLASHBACK

The PEOPLE, all handsome and beautiful, wander ALIEN
GARDENS. Garb is a futuristic mix of Roman and Renaissance.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)

Zenn-La was a near Utopia, where any
toil was for the greater good.

Here we find NORRIN RADD, kneeling to pluck an exotic alien
FLOWER. He closes his eyes as he brings it to his nose.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)

In this place of beauty, there was
one vision above all others...

BANDSHELL STAGE

Shrouded Surfer crosses stage right, looks to Helen upstage.

SHROUDED SURFER

A woman... an extraordinary woman.
My one and only true love.
Strangely, she bore more than passing
resemblance to you.

HELEN

At the United Nations, you called me
by her name?

SHROUDED SURFER

(nodding)

Shalla Bal. I realize now you cannot
be her, yet you are the very vision...

CLOSE on HELEN'S FACE, as...

INT. NORRIN RADD'S HOME -- DUSK -- FLASHBACK

...HELEN'S FACE becomes the FACE of SHALLA BAL. It is as if
they are the same. Shalla Bal stands near sweeping WINDOWS
overlooking Zenn-La city. She watches as...

Norrin Radd crosses this ultra-modern living space (think
time-warped Sixties-mod), to arrive at Shalla's side.
Norrin presents her with the alien FLOWER.

CONTINUED

NORRIN RADD
For you, my beloved.

SHALLA BAL
(taking flower, smiling)
For me? Why...when for if I have you
in my heart, what more could I want?

NORRIN RADD
How dear you are to me, Shalla.
How may I ever deserve you?

He reaches to touch Shalla's face.
Against the shimmering Zenn-La SUNSET, they kiss.

BANDSHELL STAGE

Shrouded Surfer stands remembering. THUNDER is HEARD.

SHROUDED SURFER
Then came the darkest day. A massive
intergalactic vessel arrived, casting
a pall of dread. If its occupants
meant aggression, we were
defenseless. If we opened the vaults
of our knowledge for the use of
violence, would that be one step
towards our own ruin?

The raven flies onto the stage, pecking the floor nearby.

SHROUDED SURFER
A spacecraft was readied. Duty-bound
volunteers' names were placed in a
lot. And here did destiny call...
for the name drawn was none other
than Norrin Radd.

SPACECRAFT INTERIOR -- FLASHBACK

Norrin Radd, in helmeted SPACE SUIT, braces himself in the
COCKPIT at the JOLTING moment of TAKE-OFF...!

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
I would journey to face the invaders,
to attempt to know their intention.

ZENN-LA SKYLINE -- FLASHBACK

Over the sparkling CITY, the needle-sharp SPACESHIP SOARS!

ORBITING ZENN-LA -- FLASHBACK

Above Zenn-La, Norrin Radd's spaceship floats TOWARDS...
The staggering, sinister WORLD-SHIP of Galactus.

CONTINUED

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
I was swallowed up... like your Jonah
into the whale's mouth.

A DOORWAY OPENS to draw in Norrin Radd's small vessel.

BANDSHELL STAGE

Helen looks down as the raven hops towards her.
The black bird seems to be regarding her.

SHROUDED SURFER
Onboard that vessel built for giants,
I learnt how infinitesimal could one
man be... as the sole occupant made
his presence known.

HELEN
What did you call him...? Galactus?

SHROUDED SURFER
Far beyond mortal, not quite a God,
is Galactus. Utterly without
emotion. Forever he has sustained
his existence by sapping certain
physiotrophic energies from the
planets themselves.

Helen begins to pace, startling the raven away.

SHROUDED SURFER
He would brook no debate. He had
traveled too far, his hunger too
great. I offered a pact. Had he a
herald, to hurtle across the cosmos
in search of suitable planets, could
not Zenn-La be spared? And could not
Galactus, in all his might, make such
an emissary of me?

As Shrouded Surfer holds out his hand, his shrouded
surfboard GLIDES... comes to be held under his arm.

SHROUDED SURFER
I am what he wrought that day. The
Power Cosmic courses like blood
through my veins. However...

WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER -- FLASHBACK

As before: Norrin Radd stands before massive WINDOWS which
overlook his homeworld. A tear runs down his cheek.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
To save the life of Shalla Bal...
meant never to lay eyes on her again.

BANDSHELL STAGE

SHROUDED SURFER
So has been my lot in life...
as Sentinel of the Spaceways.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- LIFELESS PLANET -- FLASHBACK

TRAVELING QUICKLY above a rocky, desolate ORANGE LANDSCAPE.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
If a planet could feed Galactus that
had not yet seen burgeoning life, I
called my master to sate himself.

ALIEN WORLD -- FLASHBACK

Huge ALIEN DINOSAURS feed on the vegetation of this misty
swamp-world. One REPTILIAN BEAST lifts its head, BELLOWING.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
If life existed, in whatever state...
I journeyed on so it would be spared.

IN THE SKY: a familiar STREAK of SILVER crosses, upwards.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- DEEP SPACE -- FLASHBACK

TRAVEL QUICKLY through a quadrant dense with vibrant, alien
PLANETS, where a METEOR STORM sweeps the heavens!

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
I witnessed the birth of planets and
death agony of stars.

SURFER'S P.O.V. -- DISTANT NEBULA -- FLASHBACK

SKIRTING the beauteous edge of a SUPER NOVA REMNANT, a
stunningly incandescent RED NEBULA of gas clouds and dust.

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)
I traveled untold light years.
Saw galaxies the color of dreams.

BANDSHELL STAGE

Shrouded Surfer looks to the sky, where RAIN has STOPPED...
Dissipating CLOUDS reveal a tableau of STARS.

SHROUDED SURFER
All the while, though I had outlived
her by many lifetimes... I could
never forget Shalla Bal.

The raven chooses a perch in the rigging above.

CONTINUED

SHROUDED SURFER

I felt my humanity slipping away, for
 how can an immortal comprehend
 mortality? And I confess, as
 Galactus' needs grew greater, worlds
 with the spark of life were
 extinguished, so others further
 advanced should survive. But, how to
 make such choices?! It is work for
 Gods, not I!

(turns to Helen)

Upon discovering this glittering
 sphere... so weary of solitude and
 servitude was I...

MOUNTAIN RANGE — FLASHBACK

As seen before: a FLASH of SILVER SHOOTs down from the
 heavens -- SMASHES into a snow-capped MOUNTAINTOP!

SHROUDED SURFER (V.O.)

I plunged to the Earth's molten core,
 in hope of finally ending my life.

BANDSHELL STAGE

SHROUDED SURFER

I failed... falling to a quiescent
 entombment of 200,000 years, awakened
 only as my former master grows near.

(pause)

Nothing will survive.

HELEN

The end.

SHROUDED SURFER

Indeed.

Helen paces slowly, trying to absorb.

HELEN

How can I believe this any of this?

SHROUDED SURFER

I realize my story defies
 comprehension. It is as if a fabled
 memory even to me...

HELEN

That's all he does... shows up with
 a great, big knife and fork and eats
 planets?! Why?

CONTINUED

SHROUDED SURFER

Not even he knows his place in the riddle of existence. Whatever his purpose, he must survive to fulfill it.

HELEN

If this is inevitable, I'm better off thinking I've gone insane, which right now I'd find easier to accept!

STAGE LIGHTS above BUZZ loudly and FLICKER.

HELEN

I mean, I admit... I grant you, I've seen some crazy things today...!

Helen looks up at FLICKERING LIGHTS. A ROAR is HEARD. Shrouded Surfer picks up his wrapped surfboard, moving to the front of the stage as WIND WHIPS down.

FROM ABOVE...

A 7-foot tall, METALLIC ROBOT drops vertically, riding blue-flamed BOOSTER ROCKETS in his feet...!

This is GOTTERDAMMERUNG; a hulking, grey robo-knight, imperviously armored, his helmet-like head featureless except for a closed VISOR with narrow vertical slits. His BOOSTERS halt him mid-air above.

Helen watches, wide-eyed.

HELEN

That better be a friend of yours!

Shrouded Surfer leaps down off the windswept stage.

SHROUDED SURFER

(up at Gotterdammerung)
Who are you?!

As if in reply, Gotterdammerung's VISOR rises slowly, CREAKING open... revealing only darkness inside his helmet-head, and then -- a WIDE BLAST of RED ENERGY shoots out...

POUNDING Shrouded Surfer with great CONCUSSIVE FORCE!!

Helen is THROWN to the stage floor!

Gotterdammerung's VISOR flips SHUT.

Helen recovers, on hands and knees, turning to see... Where Shrouded Surfer once stood -- now is only a wide, GAPING HOLE in the concrete with smoke rising from it!

HELEN

...no...

CONTINUED

Gotterdammerung cuts his boosters, landing with a BOOM!
He lumbers forward... to the edge of the blast crater,
leaning to look in. A moment, then...

An incredible BLAST of WHITE HOT ENERGY shoots FROM THE
HOLE -- SLAMMING Gotterdammerung...!!

THROWING Gotterdammerung HEAD OVER HEELS to the sky...!
He SPINS AWAY, growing smaller as his arching trajectory
carries over the trees and out of sight.

Helen rises unsteadily.

From the smoldering hole...

A SHINING FIGURE, standing erect, RISING slowly...

The SILVER SURFER at last revealed in his full glory -- a
silver-plated Adonis, pulling away tattered remnants of his
destroyed garb. He stands on his gleaming, SILVER SURFBOARD.

Helen, as one might expect, is taken aback.
The Surfer leans forward almost imperceptibly, COASTING
towards Helen as she backs away. The Surfer circles...
FLOATS close to the floor... holds out a hand.

SILVER SURFER

We must leave.

HELEN

Um... I don't think so.

SILVER SURFER

The behemoth was momentarily
dispatched, not defeated.

Helen just stares, struggling to comprehend his silver
features and flawless silver eyes. Here stands Helen at the
crossroads of her life! Here and now, she must decide!
The Surfer waits, his hand still offered.

SILVER SURFER

I would not let you come to harm.

Helen gathers courage... finally reaches to take the
Surfer's hand. She STEPS UP onto the Surfer's BOARD...

SILVER SURFER

Stand behind... put your arms around.

Taken aback by this forced intimacy, Helen awkwardly holds
the Surfer from behind, gets a grip...

HELEN

Wait a minute, okay...?!

She rests her head against his back, shuts her eyes tight.

CONTINUED

HELEN

Here's an idea; let's go really slow.

The surfboard sets in motion, carrying them from the handshell... RISING gracefully at moderate speed. And so, the Surfer spirits Helen away.

The stage is left empty. The raven flutters down. In a BURST of SMOKE -- Mephisto has returned to form.

MEPHISTO

Now... things grow interesting.

CUT TO:

INT. MEPHISTO'S CASTLE, THRONE ROOM -- NIGHT

With a ROAR, a CURTAIN of SMOKE RISES on the 2ND ACT -- where we find Mephisto seated on his Netherworld throne.

MEPHISTO

Such repellent earnestness and purity of heart! Cleansed by millennia of selfless sacrifice!

(STANDING, thrilled)

Silver Surfer! Immortal martyr! By the Nine Rivers, merely to stand in his presence fills me with unendurable loathing!

A half-man/half-animal SERVANT BEAST enters, his sore-ridden body laden with CHAINS, bearing a sizable, GOLDEN CHALLIS.

MEPHISTO

I must be exacting in my guile...

Servant Beast hobbles over to meekly offer the challis.

MEPHISTO

Guiding him gently, ever so... leading him unwittingly to his ultimate supplication!

Mephisto angrily BACKHANDS the challis, splattering its red elixir as the hapless Servant Beast fearfully retreats.

Mephisto turns, back to his soliloquy with fists clenched.

MEPHISTO

I must possess the greatest prize... that shining beacon of immaculacy... I must have the Silver Surfer's soul!

CUT TO:

EXT. OVER N.Y.C. -- NIGHT

GLIDING ABOVE the city, FOLLOW: the Surfer and Helen... The Surfer stands tall, rooted to the surfboard, staring forward. As before, Helen's fearfully clinging to the Surfer from behind, eyes closed.

SILVER SURFER

We will soon reach your residence.

HELEN

I'll take your word for it. What was that back there, anyway? Who pissed off the big, angry robot?

SILVER SURFER

I have never encountered that machine. He can only be Galactus' new herald; a construct well suited to unquestioning obedience.

Helen opens one eye, daring to look.

HELEN

Hoo-boy...we're really up here, aren't we?!

She cautiously cranes her neck to look...

At the tops of **BUILDINGS** passing, and to the streetlamp-lit byways far below where a few **TAXICABS** troll.

Helen retreats to press her face against the Surfer's back.

HELEN

This surfboard of yours doesn't run out of batteries, does it?

SILVER SURFER

No.

HELEN

Galactus didn't give you much of a sense of humor, did he?

SILVER SURFER

None to speak of.

The **LIGHTS** of **NEW JERSEY** can be seen far across the Hudson.

HELEN

Stop for a minute, can you? Can we?

SILVER SURFER

Is something wrong?

HELEN

No, I just... I want to look.

CONTINUED

The board halts. With WIND BLOWING across them, the Surfer stares ahead while Helen surveys the breathtaking view...

Glittering SKYSCRAPERS near and far, from Empire State Building to World Trade Center, with the LIGHTS of the Boroughs beyond; that richly ornamented NYC SKYLINE.

HELEN

(quietly)

It was beautiful in its own way.

(pause)

While it lasted.

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Helen and the Surfer enter through the CURTAINS of the FRENCH DOORS. The Surfer carries his board.

SILVER SURFER

You are safely returned.

HELEN

Okay. Let's definitely not do that again sometime. I'll...be right back.

Helen crosses with determination, down a HALLWAY...

HELEN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Helen turns on a light. She looks across the room, crestfallen when she sees her BED is EMPTY.

PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

At the mantle, the Surfer comes to study a WEDDING PHOTO... Of young HELEN in her wedding dress, beside her HUSBAND.

The Surfer turns, looking around. Helen returns, saddened.

HELEN

I'm not dreaming, am I?

The Surfer shakes his head. Helen sits, in disbelief.

HELEN

Doomed by an angry robot. It's fairly ridiculous.

SILVER SURFER

These events were destined long before you were ever born.

The Surfer moves through the room, studying PAINTINGS and LAMPS, touching PLANTS... all strange to him.

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER
The "angry robot," as you call him,
must have found Earth many years ago.
Galactus has been journeying since.

HELEN
Pardon me?

SILVER SURFER
A demigod lives a different timeline.
Your year is to Galactus a mere
minute. One hundred Earth years, for
him as if an hour.

The Surfer studies the RECORD PLAYER, curious, turns it on.

HELEN
(slumps in chair)
In ancient Greece, they didn't
believe Gods created the universe,
they believed the universe created
Gods. Maybe they were right.
(pause)
But you know, let's make a concerted
effort not to blow my mind any more
tonight?

The Surfer drops the record player's needle.
It SKIPS, then CLASSICAL MUSIC PLAYS quietly.

HELEN
Hey, careful, those scratch easy...
(catching herself)
What am I saying...?!

SILVER SURFER
That the herald has returned means
Galactus sensed my resurrection. The
herald will continue to seek me out
in effort to destroy me.

HELEN
(stands, worried)
Well, in that case... don't feel like
you have to hang around here.

SILVER SURFER
Yes. I wonder though... may I know
your name?

HELEN
Helen. Helen Hudson.

SILVER SURFER
I am sorry, Helen. I hope you may
use these final hours to bid goodbye
to loved ones.

CONTINUED

HELEN
I wish there was someone.

SILVER SURFER
(regards her)
You are alone?

HELEN
You want to know... my parents died
when I was still a kid, so I don't
have them.

SILVER SURFER
What of your mate? In the picture?

HELEN
He's... gone.

SILVER SURFER
Gone?

Helen hesitates. Now it's her turn to pace sadly.

HELEN
We married young. Very young. But,
my husband...

(pause)
He died of cancer. Five years ago
now. So, all this... my life... it's
an inheritance I wouldn't wish on
anyone.

(frustration)
But, what does it matter, right?
What does anything matter anymore?

MEPHISTO'S VOICE (O.S.)
Pardon the intrusion...!

Helen and the Surfer spin to see...
At the French doors, a DARK FIGURE with GLOWING RED EYES
enters through BLOWING CURTAINS -- Mephisto, supreme evil,
regarding them through the pupillary slits of his yellow eyes.

MEPHISTO
In light of pending momentous events,
I believe I may be of some assistance.

The Surfer's wary. Helen is just plain thunder-stuck.

HELEN
You've got to be kidding.

SILVER SURFER
Who are you?

CONTINUED

MEPHISTO

I am Mephisto, Prince of the Dark
Depths... Brother of Evil...

(bowing politely)

It is my pleasure to make your
acquaintance.

HELEN

(dazed resignation)

Okay... now the Devil's standing in
my living room. What a perfect
ending to a perfect day.

MEPHISTO

You have no need to be frightened,
Helen.

HELEN

Oh, and he knows my name. Terrific.

Helen sits weakly, holding her head in her hands.
Mephisto strolls to the adjoining dining room.

MEPHISTO

It is not my intention to alarm you.
Quite the contrary. Perhaps if I
spoke more plainly...?

HELEN

Honestly, it's more the whole Satan
get-up freaking me out, and that fire
and brimstone cologne.

MEPHISTO

Perhaps this, then...?

Mephisto LIFTS his ARMS -- TRANSFORMING...
He becomes MORTAL; a smiling HANDSOME HUMAN in a perfectly
tailored suit and red power tie. A rakish fop.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

(of his suit)

Like it? It's Armani.

SILVER SURFER

What do you want, foul villain?

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Villain? We've hardly gotten a
chance to know each other.

SILVER SURFER

I feel the radiance of your evil.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

How embarrassing for me.

CONTINUED

HELEN

Okay, enough! Halloween is over!
Everybody out...just get out and
leave me alone...

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I know you've had one heck of a day,
Helen, but you'll want to hear this.

Mortal Mephisto pulls up a chair, sits, crossing his legs.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

(fast-talking smooth)

First of all, I'm not the Devil. How
should I put this? Think of Satan as
the President of the Company.
Damnation Incorporated. I'm a lowly
Vice-President... of acquisitions.

(to the Surfer)

Pardon me, do you ever sit?

The Surfer does not answer, standing statue-like, watching.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Anyway, I happened to overhear what
you and the hood ornament were
talking about earlier. What a tale
of woe! I mean, Galactus, the end of
the world, etcetera. That's why I'm
here. I can stop Galactus, and I'm
the only one who can. Well, the Big
Man upstairs could, but he's always
been more the sit-on-the-sidelines-
and-see-how-it-turns-out type. Me?
I want to save every living...

(quotations with fingers)

..."soul" on Earth.

(stands, walks around)

Thing is, because of certain
complicated rules and regulations,
I'm not allowed to dispatch Galactus
unless I'm invited to participate by
a mortal. That's where you come in,
Helen. Because with anything this
earth-shattering, pardon the
expression, I can't step in unless
someone opens the door.

(looking at Helen's LP's)

Who has records albums anymore?!

HELEN

Why would you help?

Mortal Mephisto starts flipping through ALBUMS.

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO

This world and all mankind are my domain. Earth is my toy with which to tinker, and I get very protective when some young pretender tries to play in my sandbox. I'm looking after my own interests. Selfishly, I admit; but all I want is the preservation of the status quo.

Mortal Mephisto finds one OPERA ALBUM, Gounod's "FAUST."

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Great album. Ends badly, though.
(shoves record back)
So... what do you say?

SILVER SURFER

Were we to accept your offer, how should we know you have power to rival Galactus?

HELEN

Now, hold on! If there's one thing you do not do, it's bargain with him.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Oh, I've got the power, Mr. Clean. If it's references you want, crack open a little book I like to call "The Bible." It'll give you an inkling. As for you, Miss Hudson, I understand... you don't trust me. I wouldn't trust me either.

(looks at his WATCH)
But I've already stated my reasons for this. I can't stand around here all night. I've got cauldrons to stir, damned souls to torture...

Mortal Mephisto crosses, turns back to face them.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

When you require my services, and you will, say my name. Mephisto. Rhymes with... well, it doesn't rhyme with anything.

He SNAPS his fingers -- in a CLOUD of SMOKE, Mephisto has left the building. A long, silent beat.

SILVER SURFER

Strange events.

HELEN

Tell me about it.

ROBERT NEWMAN

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY -- MOMENTS LATER -- DAWN

The sun is just rising. Helen walks out onto the balcony, in a state of weary shell-shock. The Surfer follows. He drops his surfboard and steps on as it RISES... FLOATING beyond the railing.

SILVER SURFER

I leave you.

HELEN

Hold on. That's it? That's all? You are going to help us, aren't you?

SILVER SURFER

I thought you understood... none can stand against Galactus.

HELEN

What are you talking about? Back in the park there, the Tin Man hit you with all he's got, and you still knocked him into next week.

SILVER SURFER

I shall await Galactus...only so I may likewise be swept into the maelstrom of Earth's destruction.

HELEN

(angry frustration)
Well...you cleared that up, didn't you? I never did thank you for saving my life. Problem is, it just means I'll be around to see Armageddon, doesn't it?

SILVER SURFER

I could not merely... watch you die.

HELEN

But, you can turn your back to every living thing on Earth?

The Surfer seems wounded by her anger.

HELEN

Think about it. He sent his herald to kill you. Why would he, unless he's afraid of you? The way I see it, we've got zero chance without you.

SILVER SURFER

With or without is the same.

CONTINUED

HELEN

Then, fight! Why not? Or, are you
that weak...you'll give up so easily?
You'll just lay down and die!?

The Surfer's features are sorrowfully drawn.

SILVER SURFER

Have you heard nothing I said? How
I yearn for that very solace; for
that simple blessing you take for
granted...

(quiet longing)
To lay down and die.

His sadness cuts deeply into the heart of Helen's anger.

SILVER SURFER

You seek salvation where none exists.
I can offer nothing other than
further regret.

As the Surfer's board slowly CARRIES him AWAY...

SILVER SURFER

Goodbye.

Helen watches sadly as the Surfer SOARS off to the distance.

Helen leans against the wide, stone railing, lets out a
deep, miserable sigh. She looks to the brightening skyline.

HELEN

Why me? Of all the people in the
world... why me?

EXT. CHRYSLER BUILDING -- DAWN -- INTERCUT

The Surfer CIRCLES the CHRYSLER BUILDING'S Art-Deco spire.

SILVER SURFER

Why her? Why this woman, of all the
billions of humans here...?

PENTHOUSE BALCONY -- INTERCUT

Helen pulls herself up to sit on the railing.

HELEN

It would be so much easier if I
didn't know. I'd wake up, make
coffee... go to work. Blissfully
ignorant...

CHRYSLER BUILDING

The Surfer comes alongside one of the huge, bird-like GARGOYLE HEADS jutting from the building, steps onto it.

SILVER SURFER

Already I see Shalla Bal in every sorrowful memory. Is that not enough?

He looks to the SUNRISE. His surfboard GUIDES up to be held

SILVER SURFER

Is fate so cruel that I must see her in the face of another woman...?

PENTHOUSE BALCONY

HELEN

What is it about him? When I touched his hand... when I had my arms around him. How can I explain...?

CHRYSLER BUILDING

SILVER SURFER

She is so fair, made of such goodness and mercy. And yet, she is doomed... lost to me, as if to further my torment. Fate is cruel indeed!

PENTHOUSE BALCONY

HELEN

Was it really what I thought... that in my heart, I could feel his loneliness?

(pause, softly)
Or was it mine?

Helen gets down, going INSIDE through the curtains.

CHRYSLER BUILDING

SILVER SURFER

But, what have I spoken? I, loathsome creature. Organic machine. I could never mean anything to her...

CLOSE ON the Surfer, as...

SILVER SURFER

It is only the hollow wish of an immortal who dreamt he was a man.

MEPHISTO'S THRONE ROOM -- INTERCUT

...the Surfer's IMAGE RIPPLES, and we PULL BACK to REVEAL...

CONTINUED

Mephisto (demon-form) stands over his WELL, watching the mournful Surfer through the mystic BLACK WATERS.

MEPHISTO

Even now, the heart strings sound,
with barely a pluck. Making my task
so much the easier.

Mephisto runs his hand through the WATER... the IMAGE fades.

CHRYSLER BUILDING

The Surfer lifts his head, casting off his melancholy.
THROWING his board, he LEAPS across an incredible distance..

He lands on his board, FISH-TAILING, SURFING effortlessly...
then SOARING up to the heavens! He is so freaking cool.

CUT TO:

SPACE -- MARS ORBIT

MARS. Red Planet. 4th from the sun. Its atmosphere is thin,
its surface marred by craters. Enjoy it while you can.

A WARP begins in the very FABRIC of SPACE -- LIGHT shooting
from nowhere as a WORM HOLE yawns OPEN, edges QUAVERING as..

The WORLD-SHIP of Galactus makes its ARRIVAL...!
The WORM HOLE trembles behind the craft, PULLING CLOSED as
abruptly as it opened -- leaving Galactus' World-Ship, in
all its sinister enormity, hovering in orbit over Mars.

CUT TO:

HELEN'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

Helen enters. She goes straight to the REFRIGERATOR, opens
it. It's cluttered. She shoves items aside, finally finds
a BOTTLE of CHAMPAGNE. It still bears a withered GIFT BOW.

HELEN'S LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Helen puts a large GLASS on the coffee table, filling it
with champagne. Lifting the glass in mock toast, she drinks

She pulls off her suit jacket, throws it, sits on the COUCH,
picks up her CORDLESS PHONE. She opens her ROLODEX, looking
for someone to call. She spins the dial, flips more
cards... finally THROWS the Rolodex across the room.

She picks up her REMOTE CONTROL, pointing it...
ON TELEVISION: a grinning WEATHER MAN reports.

Helen again points the remote, clicking...
VARIOUS CHANNELS: ...CARTOONS... HOME SHOPPING NETWORK... an
old MOVIE... an INFO-MMERCIAL... another INFO-MMERCIAL...

CONTINUED

HELEN
Whoever said "a whimper, not a bang,"
they sure got that right.

ON TV, a REPORTER stands in front of the U.N. BUILDING.

REPORTER (V.O.)
(from TV)
...sketchy reports that a man
described as some sort of vagrant
tried to get past U.N. Security. He
was apparently saying something about
the "end of the world," if you can
believe it. That's all we've got
right now. Back to you in the
studio, Chuck and Kimberly...

ON TV: anchors CHUCK and KIMBERLY shuffle pages, bemused.

CHUCK (V.O.)
Thanks, Wyatt. Well, as they say,
"only in New York."

KIMBERLY (V.O.)
There certainly are a lot of loons
out there.

CHUCK (V.O.)
(chuckling)
Yes, and speaking of loons, here's
Scott with the A.M. Sports Report...

HELEN
Imbeciles!

Helen stands, turning the TV OFF and picking up the phone.
She dials... waiting, pacing anxiously...

RECORDED VOICE (V.O.)
(from PHONE)
You have reached the United Nations.
If you know the extension...
(Helen enters 4 digits)
You've reached the Voice Mail of the
U.S. Senior Representative to the
United Nations. Leave a brief message.

BEEP! Helen stops pacing, daunted.

HELEN
(into phone)
George, it's Helen Hudson. Listen...
um, a brief message, sure. It's
complicated. It's very complicated,
really. Where to begin? Oh God,
there was this, uh...well... I...I...

CONTINUED

Exasperated, she tosses the phone over her shoulder. She picks up her suit jacket, pulling it on as she heads to leave. A BANGING on the FRONT DOOR stops her. She warily continues... moving to peer thru the door's PEEPHOLE...

HELEN'S P.O.V. — THROUGH PEEPHOLE

A fish-eyed view: of a stern, square-jawed MILITARY LIEUTENANT waiting with EIGHT UNIFORMED SOLDIERS behind.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

HELEN

Uh... I'm not interested...! I've already been shot today, thank you!

LIEUTENANT'S VOICE (O.S.)

(through door)

Step away from the door, ma'am!

BOOM! -- the door is POUNDED OPEN! A SOLIDER with a BATTERING RAM steps aside as the LIEUTENANT enters.

LIEUTENANT

Miss Hudson, I'm Lieutenant Durk. You're going to have to come with us. There's a helicopter waiting.

HELEN

I don't suppose I have a choice?

LIEUTENANT

Affirmative. Meaning, no, you do not.

CUT TO:

SPACE — MARS ORBIT

From the World-Ship, a giant, nightmare-machine PROBE DESCENDS towards Mars: the ELEMENTAL CONVERTER, with a forward-facing network of GEARS covered in thousands of DRILL TEETH, and a rear configuration of ENERGY EXHAUSTS.

ON MARS

As the Elemental Converter nears the surface, it's rotation begins. DRILL GEARS spin in unison, hypnotically...

It TEARS into the planet's crust, throwing debris, venting a plume of dust! Jets of gas HISS from the Converter's violently shuttering body, which is alive with mechanical activity inside an exoskeleton of interlaced piping.

The Elemental Converter DIGS unrelentingly downwards... disappearing into the abyss it's creating.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PENTAGON -- DAY

Morning haze hangs over the nation's capital.
A HELICOPTER buzzes by, headed for the PENTAGON.

INT. PENTAGON, HIGH-SECURITY HALLWAY -- DAY

Helen, now in casual clothes and leather jacket, is lead by Lt. Durk. At a STEEL DOOR flanked by GUARDS, Durk punches numbers into a KEYPAD. The DOOR RISES...

INT. PENTAGON, BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

Durk and Helen enter. MILITARY OFFICIALS, SCIENTISTS and POLITICAL TYPES stand at a vast CONFERENCE TABLE. Everyone quiets. All eyes go to Helen as Durk leads her to a chair.

GENERAL BUSCEMA takes charge, an impressive, grey-haired Army man wearing more ribbons than you can shake a stick at.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

If you would, ladies and gentlemen...

Everyone sits, except General Buscema and Helen. Buscema picks up an ORANGE from the table, peeling it as he speaks.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Name's General Buscema, Miss Hudson. We'll forgo other introductions. Suffice to say these are the best and brightest of your government's military, scientific and political advisors. You do know why you're here, don't you?

HELEN

I have an feeling.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Last anyone saw of you, you were carried away by a man riding what has best been described as a flying ironing board.

Helen considers, troubled. Buscema eats an orange segment.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Should we ask, or do you want to tell?

HELEN

I'll be glad to tell you everything. I'm grateful to. Problem is, I don't think you'll believe me.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

We're all ears.

CONTINUED

HELEN
(sits down, nervous)
Alright, I'll need a big pot of black
coffee and some Valium.

Buscema nods, chewing. An AIDE rises.

HELEN
Actually, maybe you better bring
enough Valium for everyone.

The aide falters, then leaves out the keycode door.
Helen looks to the advisors gathered, who wait attentively.

HELEN
It's a long story. You see, there
was a man once, named Norrin Radd.
And Norrin Radd, well... he wasn't
exactly from around here...

CUT TO:

SPACE -- MARS ORBIT

Something terrible is happening to Mars. Unnatural STORM
CLOUDS whirl, pierced by VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS.

ON MARS

BOLTS of BLOOD RED LIGHTNING slash at the tremulous horizon.
At the CIRCULAR ABYSS forged by the Elemental Converter, a
GLOW BRIGHTENS... till suddenly a raging SHAFT of pure,
ELEMENTAL ENERGY issues forth...

ABOVE MARS

The ENERGY SHAFT rises in an unerring pillar to where it is
HARVESTED by a PORTAL in the underbelly of the World-Ship.

Although the WORLD-SHIP and the ENERGY SHAFT are tiny
against the sheer size of the planet, their effect is
inordinately staggering. For as energy is leached from
Mars, the planet's hue darkens from RED to BLACK.

MOLTEN FISSURES criss-cross the blackening crust...
Mars is dying a horrible death, SHATTERING from within!

EXT. WORLD-SHIP

The underbelly PORTAL continues sucking pure ENERGY...

INT. WORLD-SHIP, ENERGY DUCTS

Complex CONDUITS (zig-zagging pipe-ways) glow brightly as
they transport ENERGY all directions at once.

INT. WORLD-SHIP, FEEDING CHAMBER

At the center of this CIRCULAR CHAMBER, a massive SARCOPHAGUS waits, suspended mid-air. The ONLY SOUND is the rhythmic, sonorous THROB of GALACTUS' HEARTBEAT.

Round HATCHWAYS clank open in the curved walls, everywhere. They release BOLTS of ENERGY to the center -- STRIKING the SARCOPHAGUS from all sides, dancing across it's surface!

Amidst this blinding spectacle, we get another glimpse of GALACTUS, but only a glimpse -- FLASHES of a SUPERHEATED SKELETON glow incandescently through the sarcophagus walls.

CUT TO:

OVER COLORADO -- DAY

The Surfer stands astride his board, hands clasped behind his back, SOARING over the breathtaking ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

SILVER SURFER

In all the galaxies... in all the endless reaches of space... I have found no planet more blessed than this. A virtual paradise.

The Surfer bends to QUICKEN PACE, journeying away...

OVER BRAZIL -- DAY

On a mountain overlooking RIO DE JANEIRO, we find the Surfer CIRCLING the giant STATUE of CHRIST THE REDEEMER.

SILVER SURFER

It is as if the human race is divinely favored. Yet, everywhere is evidence of their unbridled insanity.

OVER EARTH -- FROM SPACE

LOOKING DOWN to Earth: where a STREAK of SILVER cuts across the sky, as the Surfer travels from DAY into NIGHT...

OVER CENTRAL ASIA -- NIGHT

Across a moonlit NIGHT, FOLLOW the Surfer... SURFING fast and low along THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

SILVER SURFER

The landscape is littered with their battlements, for Mankind is truly divided against itself...

OVER EASTERN EUROPE -- NIGHT

The Surfer FLOATS low through blackened air...

CONTINUED

Over the ruins of an **EASTERN EUROPEAN VILLAGE**, where war-ravaged **HOMES** burn and destroyed **WEAPONRY** smolders.

SILVER SURFER

They spill blood over boundaries
drawn across continents. They war
over race, religion and ideology...

OVER ROME -- NIGHT

The Surfer crosses above the ruins of the Roman **COLISEUM**.

SILVER SURFER

Have they not learned that here, as
in every corner of the universe,
civilizations enjoy their brief
moment of glory, only to sink into
dust once more?

OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN -- DAY

The Surfer, feet together, arms outstretched, **SURFS** the
below **CLOUD FORMATIONS** far above the Northwest U.S. coast.

SILVER SURFER

In their madness, they befoul the air
and water their very lives depend
upon, all the while building weapons
enough to destroy the Earth.

(looking down)

Before they even realize what they
are losing, it may already be gone.

The high-pitched **WHINE** of an **AIRCRAFT ENGINE** is **HEARD**.
The Surfer looks to his left...

An American **F-14 FIGHTER JET** rises close, keeping pace.

The Surfer turns to his right...

A **SECOND F-14** rises to flank him. The **PILOT** looks to him.

The Surfer crouches to **SPEED AWAY**...

The **F-14's** follow, side-by-side, **AFTERBURNERS** flaring...

One jet **FIRES TWO** heat-seeking **MISSILES**!

The missiles **SCREAM** ahead.

The **F-14's** veer off.

The missiles are closing fast, one after the other...

The Surfer glances back, then **STRIDES** the length of his
board, **JUMPING**...

As the Surfer **BACKFLIPS** upwards and his board dives down --
the first **MISSILE** shoots **BETWEEN**, missing!

That **MISSILE** travels erratically, having lost acquisition...
SELF-DESTRUCTING in a fiery **BLAST**!

CONTINUED

But, the SECOND MISSILE STRIKES its mark -- EXPLODING -- sends the Surfer SPRAWLING in the shockwave!!

The Surfer holds his arms out, catches the wind...
He agilely streamlines, wrapping his arms around his body, falling in a controlled SPIN...

He unfurls agilely, KNIFING down...

LANDING perfectly on his board! Back in action and angry.

SILVER SURFER
Again I am beset, because I am
unknown! Again they leap to violence!

The Surfer looks up...
Sees the F-14's returning.

OVER THE OCEAN

TURNING at breakneck speed, the jets CHASE...
Trying to match the Silver Surfer's maneuvers...

The Surfer does a BARREL ROLL... spinning down...
The jets DIVE, guns FIRING...

TRACER BULLETS whiz past the Surfer and RICOCHET off him!

Mere yards from impacting the water, the Surfer PULLS UP...
SKIMMING the waves, a VAPOR TRAIL rising in his wake!

The jets LEVEL OFF, ROARING after, close behind...
The Surfer TURNS an impossible UPSIDE-DOWN LOOP -- above and behind the jets, SHOOTING down INTO THE WATER...
The Surfer disappears beneath the waves!

F-14's can't do that.

HIGHER

The F-14's rise, turning in tandem.
BEHIND, in the distance, the Surfer resurfaces in a great GEYSER of WATER, HURTLING skyward.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

The Surfer bursts through the cottony CLOUD LAYER...
TURNS a LOOP... slowing to halt, miserable.

SILVER SURFER
Further proof mankind is ruled by
fear. Loathe to say it... perhaps
they deserve their fate.

And the Surfer MOVES ON... fading into the clouds.
We remain a long moment, until a familiar SOUND is HEARD...
the SOUND of BOOSTER ROCKETS... LOUDER, until...

CONTINUED

Gotterdammerung rises through the clouds, HOVERING.

MEPHISTO'S VOICE (V.O.)
Tis' a pity, my menacing friend,
always one feeble step behind....!

Gotterdammerung seems confused, turning, trying to figure where that VOICE came from, when...

INT. MEPHISTO'S CASTLE, THRONE ROOM -- NIGHT

In a dissipation of ACRID SMOKE, Gotterdammerung finds himself standing in Mephisto's lair, disoriented.
Mephisto (demon-form) stands with arms crossed.

MEPHISTO
Welcome to my domain. I offer
guidance in your quest for the Silver
Surfer. Do you accept?

Gotterdammerung raises his OPEN HAND -- THROWING jagged
BOLTS of BLUE ENERGY from his palm...

Mephisto gestures with a mere flick of his wrist, DIVERTING
the ENERGY BOLTS harmlessly to either side.

MEPHISTO
While I admire your unbridled rage,
I am not your foe.

Gotterdammerung CHARGES...
Mephisto does not move as Gotterdammerung RUMBLES full speed
ahead. Mephisto's BODY FADES to transparent as...

Gotterdammerung PASSES THROUGH, stumbling headlong...
SMASHING into a wall! Gotterdammerung falls.

MEPHISTO
Enough amusement. I see your
primitive mind needs more than words.

At his WELL, Mephisto CONJURES an IMAGE... of the SURFER.

MEPHISTO
Observe... the one you seek... the
one you are commanded to annihilate.

Gotterdammerung rises, lumbering over.
In the black waters: the SURFER is seen in flight.

MEPHISTO
Why shadow him to the corners of the
Earth... when I may bring him to you?

Mephisto smiles his grotesque, fanged smile.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTAGON BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

Helen runs her fingers through her hair, weary, still seated

HELEN

That's all I know. He meant what he said, about making peace with God. And, before the Earth revolves twice, that's today. Time's running out.

Helen looks to the advisors, who stare in disbelief.
General Buscema sits back with a grimace, tapping a pencil.

HELEN

I know... I know it sounds insane.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Galactus?

HELEN

Yes.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Gonna suck the life out of Earth?

HELEN

Yes.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

And a... Silver Surfer?

HELEN

Didn't I say you wouldn't believe me? I'm not even getting into the whole other Prince-of-Darkness thing that's been happening, okay! You need to warn people. You have to tell them what's coming...

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Miss Hudson...

HELEN

Look, according to him, there's nothing we can do, so we sure as hell better start... doing something! Go on Red Alert, warm up the nukes, whatever. You're a military big-wig, right? Get the President on the horn!

GENERAL BUSCEMA

Calm down.

The security DOOR HISSES OPEN as a shaken SCIENTIST rushes in, pale, sweating, clutching a FILE FOLDER.

CONTINUED

SHAKEN SCIENTIST

General Buscema... we... we've got a situation!

Buscema goes to huddle with the scientist, who whispers urgently. Helen is left facing the unfriendly advisors. It's awkward. A few smile and nod, humoring a lunatic.

HELEN

Well, what are all you scientists sitting around here for? Go make yourselves useful!

The freaked-out scientist exits. Security door SLAMS. General Buscema returns to the table, now troubled himself.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

These just came off the nose of an F-14 over the Pacific Coast...

He tosses the FILE FOLDER -- PHOTOGRAPHS slide out, fanning across the table: blurry, grainy PHOTOS of THE SILVER SURFER. Advisors grab them up, studying them incredulously.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

(to Air Force Commander)

I want every-blessed-thing we've got airborne in 30. Find this alien, now!

HELEN

No, you've got it wrong. He's one of the good guys.

GENERAL BUSCEMA

(ignoring Helen)

Listen up, people! There's more! NASA has recorded a catastrophic event on the planet Mars. An unidentified object was confirmed leaving Mars' orbit...

(grim pause)

The planet has been destroyed.

The room fills with COMMOTION of VOICES as everyone reacts. Helen stands, shouting above them all.

HELEN

Okay...I hate to say I told you so! That was the appetizer and we're next! Galactus is coming here!

A loud BUZZING is HEARD. Everyone looks up, quieting as the FLUORESCENT LIGHTS FLICKER. Helen backs away, realizing...

HELEN

Oh, no...

CONTINUED

AN ALARM starts BLARING. LIGHTS GO OUT. EMERGENCY LIGHTS kick in, bathing everything in a RED GLOW.

GENERAL BUSCEMA
Security breach!

Across the room, the CEILING CAVES IN as...
Gotterdammerung CRASHES THROUGH twisting METAL and WIRING,
landing amidst a SHOWER of CONCRETE DEBRIS!

Gotterdammerung turns, looking to Helen.
Advisors panic, shoving, some diving under the table.
Buscema and military advisors pull sidearms, SHOOTING!

Helen backs into a corner, cringing at the GUNFIRE.
She runs... reaching the SECURITY DOOR, confronted by the
KEYPAD. No way out. She pounds on the door.

In the HAIL of BULLETS, Gotterdammerung moves forward --
THROWING men aside... BACKHANDING General Buscema across the
room -- making a beeline straight toward Helen.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTER ISLAND -- DAY

The Surfer's surfboard is propped against one in a ROW of
ancient STONE IDOLS that mark the rather barren landscape of
Easter Island. The Surfer stands surveying the shoreline.

MORTAL MEPHISTO (O.S.)
Why so glum, chum?

The Surfer turns. Mortal Mephisto, in the exact same suit
and red tie, leans against another IDOL.

SILVER SURFER
Why are you here?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Stretching my legs. I enjoy a nice,
leisurely stroll on a remote volcanic
island now and again. Funny running
into you.

The Surfer goes to take his surfboard under his arm.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
This place used to be interesting
back in the day. There were Peruvian
slave raids... epidemics of disease.
Hilarious. Bit of a yawn now.
Ummm... there was something I wanted
to tell you. Oh, yes, that woman you
were with... what's her name... Helen?

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER
What of her?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
If it's of any interest, she's been taken captive by that annoying robot.

SILVER SURFER
Taken captive...? Where?!

MORTAL MEPHISTO
It's a big hole in the ground. You can see it from space, which is probably why Tin-Britches took a liking to it. You do realize this is a trap, don't you...?

SILVER SURFER
Where has he taken her, Mephisto?!

MORTAL MEPHISTO
With typical pretension, they call it the "Grand" Canyon. Whoop-dee-do!
(pointing)
Head up to New Mexico, make a sharp left, you can't miss it...

The Surfer runs, LEAPING onto his surfboard...
Mortal Mephisto watches him go, pleased.

CUT TO:

INT. MEPHISTO'S THRONE ROOM -- NIGHT

THUNDER RUMBLES. Mortal Mephisto enters, loosening his tie.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
So, the Knight in Shining Flesh rides off to defend the fair Maiden.
Ladies... get out your handkerchiefs!

Mortal Mephisto crosses. Hideous Servant Beast waits, again meekly offering a GOLD CHALLIS. Without even much animosity, Mortal Mephisto SWATS the challis away.

The doused Servant Beast hobbles to leave, humiliated.

SERVANT BEAST
(muttering to himself)
I've got to get another job.

Mortal Mephisto sits on his throne.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Slay the Black Knight, Silver Surfer.
Save the damsel in distress...

CONTINUED

Mid-sentence, Mortal Mephisto RETURNS to DEMON-FORM, and so returns Mephisto's DARKER VOICE...

MEPHISTO

See yourself reflected as a hero in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAND CANYON, NORTH RIM -- DAY

On rock-strewn ground, Gotterdammerung stands watching the sky. Behind, Helen's disheveled and afraid and angry.

HELEN

What are we doing here? What do you want from me?! Hey, garbage can, I'm talking to you...!

Helen throws a ROCK -- it CLUNKS against Gotterdammerung's head, but he ignores. Helen finally sits in frustration, and we PULL BACK to REVEAL... they're on top of the very HIGH PLATEAU of a towering MESA...

SURROUNDED for miles by the beauty of THE GRAND CANYON; an awe-inspiring view, despite Mephisto's withering opinion.

ACROSS THE GRAND CANYON

Over spectacular cliffs and rock formations... The Silver Surfer SOARS from the heavens!

ON THE MESA

A FLASH of REFLECTED SUNLIGHT glints distantly. Gotterdammerung turns. He walks to where Helen's seated.

HELEN

What do you--?!

Gotterdammerung YANKS Helen up by her jacket, off her feet, carrying her as she STRUGGLES in vain.

HELEN

Let go! Put me down! Let go of me!

Helen's horrified as she realizes Gotterdammerung's intent. Gotterdammerung HOLDS her OVER the PLATEAU'S EDGE...

HELEN

Whoa! Don't let go! Whatever you do, don't put me down...!

HIGH ABOVE

FOLLOW: the Surfer's flight, NEARING the distant MESA... Close enough to see Gotterdammerung dangling Helen.

CONTINUED

Helen! SILVER SURFER

ON THE MESA

Gotterdammerung DROPS her...
Helen falls, arms and legs flailing...

ABOVE

The Surfer heaves forward, STREAMLINING into descent...

BELOW

Helen plummets, SCREAMING...
The CLIFF SIDE WHOOSHING PAST...
GROUND RUSHING to meet her...

The Surfer VAULTS AHEAD, bent nearly horizontal along his board, thrusting out his arms...

As Helen nears the canyon floor, a QUICKSILVER BLUR SWEEPS DOWN -- plucking her from her fall!

ABOVE

The Surfer RISES on his board, carrying Helen in his arms.
Helen's stunned, breathless, in shock.

HELEN
...oh God... oh God...

SILVER SURFER
You are safe now. I will not let him harm you.

HELEN
Yeah, that'd be good... good plan!

BEHIND, atop the plateau, Gotterdammerung BLASTS OFF!

CUT TO:

GRAND CANYON -- SOUTH RIM

At a LOOK-OUT POINT, a bored TOUR GUIDE addresses a group of TOURISTS. A run-down "CANYON CARAVAN" BUS is parked near.

TOUR GUIDE
(by rote, pointing)
...if you look to the east, you'll see what we call Little Colorado River Gorge. Stunning, isn't it?

Several TOURISTS take pictures.

CONTINUED

TOUR GUIDE

And, if you look to the west...

A RUMBLE rises. Tour Guide looks...

From a distance: here comes the Surfer, holding Helen, ZOOMING through the TWISTING CANYON below...

FOLLOWED by Gotterdammerung, boosters BLAZING, in pursuit.

Tour Guide's pointing arm drops along with his jaw.

Tourists watch, too stunned to take pictures, except a TALL GUY who lifts his 35mm AUTO-WIND -- WHIR-CLICK-WHIR-CLICK...

IN THE CANYON, the Surfer and Gotterdammerung DISAPPEAR around a bend. The RUMBLE fades.

TOUR GUIDE

Oooo.....kay.

TALL GUY

I... I got pictures. I got pictures of the Space Aliens!

Tall Man looks at his camera, thrilled by his good fortune... then frowns, reaching to remove the LENS COVER.

TOUR GUIDE

(HERDING THEM to bus)

Why don't we... let's... all get back on the bus... Let's get on the bus and leave the Space Aliens to their business. Come on, people... before they come back! Move, idiots, move!

CUT TO:

SOUTH RIM -- CLIFF EDGE

The Surfer SWEEPS up, fishtailing to...

HALT over a vast, deserted CLIFF, putting Helen down.

SILVER SURFER

Take cover!

HELEN

Do me a favor...

(off Surfer's look)

Knock his block off!

The Surfer turns back, FLYING back to battle.

OVER THE SOUTH RIM

Gotterdammerung RAGES after...

From the opposite direction, RIDES the Surfer...

They're on a COLLISION COURSE... velocity increasing...

CONTINUED

They SMASH head-on in an ECHOING CLASH! Gotterdammerung's the irresistible force, TACKLING the Surfer off his board...

As the surfboard juts skyward, riderless...
Gotterdammerung CARRIES the Surfer DOWN...

IN A CANYON VALLEY

They CAREEN off the CANYON WALL...
FALLING in an AVALANCHE of SHATTERED ROCK...!

HITTING the ground...
TUMBLING apart...

The Surfer SPLASHES into RIVER SHALLOWS. He rolls, hurting.
He tries to stand, unsteadily, holding his head.

IN THE SKY

The Surfer's board DROPS, end over end.

BELOW

Gotterdammerung rises, gesturing -- FIRING a RED BLAST...
STRIKING the Surfer from behind, sending him sprawling!

The Surfer is stunned, getting to his hands and knees.

As Gotterdammerung RUMBLES towards the Surfer...

The Surfer's board CLATTERS to the ground nearby.

Gotterdammerung halts. He walks over to lift the sleek, silver surfboard. Getting a good grip on it, he strains to break it in half... STRUGGLING to break the unbreakable!

The Surfer recovers, GESTURING...

Gotterdammerung is LIFTED BODILY as the board SHOOTS UP...
DRAGGING Gotterdammerung along for the ride...

Gotterdammerung's stubby robot-legs kick as the board SPEEDS at the canyon wall...

SLAMMING Gotterdammerung, rebounding...

POUNDING him off the opposite wall!
Gotterdammerung's KNOCKED LOOSE, falling...
As the board veers away.

Gotterdammerung's BOOSTERS flare, righting him in the air.

The Surfer lifts a hand -- RELEASES a COSMIC BLAST...

BASHING Gotterdammerung backwards! However...

Gotterdammerung's BOOSTERS compensate, carrying him higher.

The surfboard SWEEPS around low...

CONTINUED

As the Surfer runs... LEAPS...
LANDING astride his board, taking FLIGHT...

Gotterdammerung raises both hands -- UNLEASHING a sustained double-blast of RED and BLUE BOLTS...

The LIGHTNING-LIKE ENERGY grips the Surfer -- HALTING him suddenly as his board SHOOTs out from under him...

The board STABS into the canyon wall, IMBEDDED!

The Surfer HITS the ground. RED and BLUE BOLTS twist across his writhing body, doubling him over as he CRIES OUT...!

Gotterdammerung closes his fists, CEASING the assault.

The Surfer falls, out cold, his body SMOLDERING.

ON CLIFFS ABOVE

Helen scrambles down a hill. She moves towards the CLIFF'S EDGE, crawling to look down to the struggle...

BELOW

Gotterdammerung LANDS, the ground shaking!
He treads towards the fallen Surfer, FOOTFALLS THUDDING.

ABOVE, in the canyon wall, the imbedded board SHUTTERS ever so slightly, attempting to break free.

Gotterdammerung bends to place one massive hand around the Surfer's throat, SQUEEZING.

ON CLIFFS ABOVE

HELEN
No! Wake up! Get up!!

BELOW

Gotterdammerung LIFTS the Surfer's limp form, by the throat, GRIPPING so tight you can HEAR METAL FATIGUE.

ABOVE, the board RATTLES like a sabre in a stone sheath.

Gotterdammerung brings his free hand back, making a FIST... about to strike a terrible blow! Just then, the Surfer GASPS, thrusting out one hand -- fingers outstretched as...

ABOVE, the board PULLS free...
LANCING downwards...

The board SLICES between the Surfer and Gotterdammerung -- CLANK!!! -- CHOPPING OFF Gotterdammerung's arm!

CONTINUED

The Surfer falls back, gripping the SEVERED ARM while the arm's fingers still clutch his throat.

Gotterdammerung stumbles, his STUMP SPARKING.

The surfboard CIRCLES back...

TORPEDOES Gotterdammerung from behind -- SLICING CLEAN THROUGH at mid-torso!!

Gotterdammerung looks to the Surfer...

Gotterdammerung's BODY CRASHES backwards to the dirt, short-circuiting, while his torso-less LEGS BUCKLE forward.

The Surfer rises, dropping Gotterdammerung's arm.

ON CLIFFS ABOVE

Helen backs from the edge, relieved, exhausted.

HELEN

Can't take much more of this.

The Surfer RISES at the cliff's edge, astride his board.

SILVER SURFER

Are you injured?

HELEN

Just permanent psychological damage.
How about you?

SILVER SURFER

I am weary.

The Surfer steps down, leaving his board hovering behind.
Helen steps close to him.

HELEN

I thought we almost lost you there.

She leans to KISS the Surfer on the cheek.

As she moves away, the Surfer touches his cheek, effected.

HELEN

That's twice I owe you my life.

The Surfer turns away, so she will not see as he swallows back emotion. He tries to gather composure.

SILVER SURFER

As you said... what does it matter,
sparing your life only for a moment?

HELEN

Yeah, still... knowing we're all
going to die... didn't make it any
easier dying right then.

CONTINUED

Helen studies the Surfer, something occurring to her.

HELEN

You had your chance there, didn't you? You missed your opportunity.

SILVER SURFER

What do you mean?

HELEN

He had the "Power Cosmic," like you, right? You were down for the count. If you want to die so badly...

(looks to the Surfer)
Why did you fight back?

The Surfer considers, at a loss, deeply troubled.

SILVER SURFER

It was my mistake. I would not make the same mistake again.

HELEN

There's nothing wrong with wanting to live. It just means you're... human.

SILVER SURFER

I am not human. I am... nothing.

HELEN

(upset)

How can you say that?

The Surfer walks away, anger edging into his voice.

SILVER SURFER

I do not wish to speak of this. I do not wish to pretend I am like you.

Not far away, a female DEER wanders from a sparse thicket... foraging, closer to the Surfer than Helen.

The doe looks up, frozen as she first notices the Surfer. The Surfer stares back.

Slowly, the deer approaches... curiously drawn.

SILVER SURFER

Witness...

The Surfer holds out his hand. The deer sniffs him.

Helen watches amazed as...

The Surfer pets the graceful animal's neck, softly running his hand across the deer's back.

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER

This frail creature feels no instinct to run. I am no threat. I am a cold, curious object; a void where once stood a man of flesh and blood.

Helen is moved by the Surfer's lament.

HELEN

You're wrong.

The deer turns, notices Helen for the first time, ~~FLEEING~~.
The Surfer watches the deer bound away.

HELEN

She knew not to fear you, Norrin Radd. Because of who you are, not who you're not.

SILVER SURFER

(bitterly)

You should not wound me with that dead name. Now, if you will allow me to return you to --

The Surfer STOPS abruptly, reacting, looking to the sky...

HELEN

What?

It's like the Surfer hears SOMETHING we CANNOT HEAR.

HELEN

What is it...?

CUT TO:

EARTH ORBIT

HIGH "BELOW" the GLOBE, looking "up" at Earth from over the Southern Hemisphere; ANTARCTICA is a stark, ivory gem between the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The black curtain of SPACE RIPS OPEN -- a WORM HOLE gateway forming, and again as if in a violent, COSMIC ABORNING... Begins the ARRIVAL of that futuristic-industrial-refinery that is Galactus' World-Ship.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS -- DAY

Busy, loud, rush hour NYC. On the crowded sidewalk, an ELECTRONICS STORE'S WINDOW is filled with TELEVISIONS tuned to SOAP OPERAS and TALK SHOWS. The "EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM" GRAPHIC pops up on one screen... And then, on another... and another...

CONTINUED

Until the entire mosaic of images is overtaken, with nearly EVERY TV showing the E.B.S... PEDESTRIANS pass, oblivious... until one BUSINESS MAN notices, stopping to look.

A WOMAN sees the worried Business Man, stops beside him. One by one... as more PEDESTRIANS glance up from their daily grind... a CROWD begins to gather.

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Helen enters through FRENCH DOORS, rushing to TURN ON her own TELEVISION: a haggard, network ANCHOR feigns calm.

NETWORK ANCHOR (V.O.)
(from TV)
...detected in a stationary orbit
over Antarctica...

ON TV: a MAP of ANTARCTICA is shown, with a RED X.

NETWORK ANCHOR (V.O., cont.)
(over graphics)
...within one hundred miles of the
Southern Magnetic Pole. We're being
flooded with information here...

ON THE PENTHOUSE BALCONY

The Surfer looks down to streets many stories below... PEDESTRIANS run, crossing through JAMMED TRAFFIC. Cars aren't making any effort to go anywhere.

ON STREETS BELOW

MEN and WOMAN, from all walks of life, are huddled around open doors and windows of CARS and TAXIS. Along with the DRIVERS, they listen incredulously to CAR RADIOS...

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)
...leaked by a witness within the
United Nations. The quotation
continues, "Until his arrival, make
your peace with God..."

INT. HELEN'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Helen's still watching. FROM TV:

NETWORK ANCHOR (V.O.)
...from the White House. The
President will address the nation...

As Helen rapidly switches CHANNELS...

CONTINUED

ANOTHER ANCHOR (V.O.)
(from TV)
...National Guard to enforce...

...ON EVERY...

FEMALE ANCHOR (V.O.)
(from TV, reading copy)
".....of Galactus. It means the
death of all you know....," I... can't
believe I'm reading this...

...SINGLE...

LOCAL ANCHOR (V.O.)
...reports of several U.F.O.'s
sighted at the Grand Canyon...
(to off-screen)
Is this right? Has this been...?

...STATION, it's the same frantic, nerve-wracked reportage.

ANOTHER REPORTER (V.O.)
...nationwide curfew. Again... the
military reports an unidentified...

Helen turns TV OFF. She stands a moment, drained, then
looks to see the Surfer [holding his board] watching her.

HELEN
They know now.

The Surfer nods sadly.

HELEN
How long?

SILVER SURFER
Several hours... at the most.

Helen looks around, numbly shaking her head.

HELEN
How? Six billion people... they all
die. How can that be?

SILVER SURFER
You cannot hope to understand it.

Helen closes her eyes, despairing, considering...

HELEN
What if I stop it? What if I'm the
only one who can?
(troubled pause)
He said he only needs me to open the
door...

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER
And you said he cannot be trusted.

HELEN
What else is there? If you can't do anything, maybe I can. What choice do I have? Tell me!

SILVER SURFER
The decision is not mine to make.

Helen crosses, agonizing.

SILVER SURFER
However noble your intent, know the consequence may ripple across all existence. Evermore may the question plague your mind, "What have I wrought, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow again."
(pause)
Speaking from experience.

HELEN
Why should the world die? Why should you?! If I do this... isn't that fate, too?
(pause)
Maybe I'm weak, that I can't accept dying. If so... I'm sorry...

Helen finally faces the Surfer, steeling herself...

HELEN
Mephisto.

DING DONG! -- doorbell RINGS. The FRONT DOOR opens and Mortal Mephisto sticks his head in, cupping his ear.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Did I hear my name?!

Mortal Mephisto enters, grinning his handsome grin.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Helen, Helen, Helen...you've made the right decision. You're going to be very pleased with my handiwork.

HELEN
You can quit the salesman schtick. I haven't decided anything yet.

Mortal Mephisto's smile becomes decidedly less friendly.

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO

If I may lend a word of advice, you might mind your tone. I'm famous for my temper.

SILVER SURFER

We do not fear you, Mephisto.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

And, there you're only showing your ignorance. Look, Hero... let's be friends. Let's also be realistic. You need me.

HELEN

I want to know what's in it for you? There's got to be a catch.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

How many times must I explain? I give my solemn word, I do not want anything from you. You're doing me the favor, allowing me to protect my dirty, little crop of sinners. And where would I be without them...?

(impatience growing)

However, since your knees are still knocking, I'll go even further. I vow not to lift a finger without your permission, which is as close as you're going to get to an iron-clad, no-deposit-required, guarantee of satisfaction.

Mortal Mephisto crosses to pick up a dining room CHAIR.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

For now, all I require is a good look at the competition, so what do you say we get this show on the road...?!

He SNAPS his fingers...

EXT. MOJAVE FLATLANDS -- DAY

The Surfer and Helen react...

Finding themselves smack-dab in the middle of the sweltering desolation of the MOJAVE DESERT.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

We shouldn't be disturbed here.

Mephisto puts down the CHAIR he brought, sits.

HELEN

What is this?

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO

As the old adage goes, "Know thy enemy and you need not fear 100 battles," or something like that. We're about to know thy enemy.

(to Surfer)

Be a sport and call him down.

The Surfer looks skyward.

SILVER SURFER

He is already on his way.

HELEN

(afraid)

...oh... goodie. He's on his way.

CUT TO:

EARTH ORBIT

A CIRCULAR DOORWAY irises open in the World-Ship...
A giant, seamless METALLIC SPHERE is released.

The HUMMING, propulsion-less SPHERE travels quickly downwards, following Earth's curvature.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOJAVE FLATLANDS — DAY

The Surfer holds his board, stark still, watching the sky.

SILVER SURFER

Whatever happens, Helen, do not speak.

HELEN

No problem.

Behind, Helen frets, sweating. She's taken off her jacket and cinched its arms around her waist. Mortal Mephisto sits impassively buffing his nails with an EMERY BOARD.

SILVER SURFER

You cannot argue with a force of nature. Were you to address him, he might reason you should be silenced.

HELEN

(to Mortal Mephisto)

I'm not really needed, am I? So, why don't you snap me back to New York?

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Oh, you don't want to miss this.

CONTINUED

HELEN
Oh yes, actually, I do.

The Surfer drops his board and steps on, RISING.

SILVER SURFER
Galactus has arrived.

Helen and Mortal Mephisto look up...
Against the cloudless sky, the seamless SPHERE drops from
the distance... halting HIGH ABOVE...

ABOVE

As a HOLE forms at the bottom of the sphere...
A COLOSSAL FIGURE lowers himself slowly from within... feet
first -- standing in mid-air as he LEVITATES DOWNWARDS...

Behold GALACTUS, demigod, Devourer of Worlds! He is a
fearsome vision in the stark sunlight. A 20-story-tall
GIANT, adorned in elaborate, violet-hued ARMOR; like some
majestic God of War from the halls of Cosmic Valhalla!

As ever, GALACTUS' EYES GLOW like searing embers.

BELOW

HELEN
...my God...

MEPHISTO
(still buffing)
Hardly.

Galactus' feet meet the desert floor with a BOOOOOOOOOOM!!!
He stands monolithically, TOWERING over them.

The Surfer GLIDES up...
To face Galactus at eye level.

GALACTUS
Surfer... you dare stand before
Galactus with your solemn vow broken?

SILVER SURFER
Should I flee from this place, to
pretend I could escape you?

GALACTUS
Your betrayals are great and many.
By your hand, was my new herald
hastened to his end.

SILVER SURFER
As he would have hastened me to mine.

Helen's awed. Mortal Mephisto rolls his eyes.

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Ugh...it's like the Surfer in stereo.

GALACTUS
(still to Surfer)
Soon shall I decide your penance.

SILVER SURFER
I await your pronouncement.

GALACTUS
You never lacked for bravery, Norrin
Radd, or at least its pretense.

Mortal Mephisto stands, clearing his throat exaggeratedly.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Excuse me... hate to interrupt the
family reunion...! Down here!

The Surfer MOVES AWAY, circling slowly. Galactus does not
once look down, keeps staring straight ahead.

GALACTUS
What do you wish of my attention,
Prince of the Netherworld?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
(gesturing with emery board)
What I wish, is to know what makes
you think you can obliterate Earth
without so much as a "by your leave."

Mortal Mephisto shoots a smarmy WINK to a worried Helen.

GALACTUS
If petty creatures perish whilst I
consume the elemental forces of a
planet, so be it.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
You dismiss an entire race as "petty
creatures?"

GALACTUS
This is one planet. The universe is
100 billion galaxies. How can Earth
be regarded as any more than the
merest speck of dust?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
(shouting defiantly)
To which I say to you... I say...!

Mortal Mephisto falters, suddenly matter-of-fact...

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO
You know, you've got a point there.
That is a puzzler.

HELEN
(desperate whisper)
What are you doing?!!

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Give me a minute. Defending humanity
isn't exactly in the job description,
but I'm getting the hang of it.

(back up to Galactus)
Now look here, you... you Big-Bully!
The humans aren't all bad. Sure,
they're selfish and greedy... Yes,
they're a generally barbaric, blood-
thirsty lot. Setting that aside for
the moment...

HELEN
(up to Galactus)
Wait, please... don't listen to him!
He's wrong!

SILVER SURFER
Helen....!

The Surfer GLIDES down towards Helen, alarmed.

SILVER SURFER
Your voice has no place in this.

HELEN
Better mine than his.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
If she thinks she can do better, let
her try! Bravo!

Mortal Mephisto sniffs derisively, returning to his chair.

GALACTUS
Speak, mortal! My patience wains!

Helen's mortified...looking up at implacable Galactus.
Galactus stares forward, as Helen is beneath his notice.

HELEN
Do you... do you realize what you're
about to destroy? Do you have any
idea who we are?

GALACTUS
I am supreme unto myself. I have
knowledge of all I survey.

CONTINUED

HELEN

And...how is your life more important than the lives of every--?

GALACTUS

If you tread upon an anthill, do you weep? Even as you consume the flesh of other animals, do you mourn them?

Helen tries to regroup, determination growing.
Behind, Mortal Mephisto's bored, looking at his watch.

HELEN

It's not the same. If...if you say you know us, you must know we're more than male and female. We're brothers and sisters... mothers and fathers. We're more than just... anthropology.

GALACTUS

I sense a war-torn history awash in blood...

The Surfer slowly RISES, circling, to observe from on high.

GALACTUS

I see a populace overrunning the Earth, as if a disease destroying its host. I feel a people guided by the one principle at the core of every human mind -- fear.

HELEN

What about love? Kindness? Our aspirations...? We can't be judged only by the worst in us.

GALACTUS

This is not judgement.

HELEN

You must know what compassion is, and mercy...? You must know this is wrong!

GALACTUS

You, humankind, strive to define good and evil, right and wrong, to confer worth upon your lives. You grope for reason in the abyss, but there is no good, nor evil. There is only what was and what is. The only "right" is what will be.

HELEN

No. I don't accept that!

ABOVE, the Surfer looks down, startled by Helen's effrontery.

CONTINUED

GALACTUS
 Because you cannot comprehend it.
 Your audience is at an end...

HELEN
 No, no! If a hundred years is
 nothing for you, one more minute's
 less than nothing. I don't believe
 you're so unfeeling! I don't! You
 can't tell me you've never known a
 single emotion...!

The Surfer GLIDES lower, watching Helen... impressed.

HELEN
 These people... who you claim are so
 meaningless... they've got as much
 right their lives as you. Can't you
 see that, even as just a concept? As
 a truth? Because, if your life goes
 on forever and ours are finite,
 aren't our lives more precious?

The Surfer watches still, intent on Helen's every word,
 transfixed by her resolve.

HELEN
 And even with all the suffering we
 create and endure, with our failings,
 and I admit there are many -- we're
 still here, aren't we? Isn't that
 worth something? Against all
 odds...we've never given up!
 (pause)
 For that alone, we deserve to live.

Mortal Mephisto stifles a yawn.

The Surfer looks up expectantly, waiting hopefully for a
 reaction from Galactus.

A moment of silence...until, at long last, Galactus LOOKS
 DOWN at Helen. Has Helen actually gotten through to him??

Helen waits, breathlessly.

GALACTUS
 There is one immutable truth... that
 Galactus must survive.

Helen deflates, brokenhearted.

GALACTUS
 As for you, Surfer...
 (pointing)
 You will serve again, in place of the
 herald you destroyed.

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER
No. Not one more day!

Meanwhile, Mortal Mephisto looks up, narrowing his eyes...

A far off VAPOR TRAIL arches across the sky...
The trail of a distant MISSILE speeding this direction.

GALACTUS
(still to Surfer)
You have no recourse, save
annihilation.

SILVER SURFER
Then, as you say... so be it.

Mortal Mephisto stands, claspings his hands.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Wonderful! Special times! But, you
two can finish squabbling later,
can't you? Not that this hasn't been
wildly entertaining, Mr. Galactus,
but we simply must be on our way...!

A great ROAR is HEARD. Galactus looks impassively upwards.

As Mortal Mephisto SNAPS his fingers...
He, Helen and the Surfer VANISH -- leaving Galactus standing
alone in the vast desert.

The missile's VAPOR TRAIL BLOOMS above, and then...
In a WHITE-HOT FLASH -- a NUCLEAR EXPLOSION erupts...!

ENGULFING Galactus in a COLUMN of NUCLEAR FIRE...
The MUSHROOM CLOUD billowing in all its deadly spender...

The SHOCKWAVE rippling across the desert floor!

And then... from within the howling FIRESTORM...
Galactus RISES, stone-faced as always, LEVITATING skyward...
Out from the heart of the nuclear plume, unscathed.

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- EARLY EVENING

Mortal Mephisto steps in front of a MIRROR, preening.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Well, darlings... this might not be
as easy as I thought.

Helen and the Surfer stand across the room, watching. [The
Surfer's board is against the wall.] Helen's freaked.

CONTINUED

HELEN

What's that supposed to mean?!

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I didn't think you were going to try to piss him off. Are you that disrespectful to every deified colossus you meet??

HELEN

You're not serious?!

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Ooooooh, don't go getting your knickers in a knot! I'll figure something out. I'll get the job done.

HELEN

Fine, then do it. Snap your fingers or wiggle your nose, whatever it takes -- get rid of him.

Mortal Mephisto licks his pinkies and smooths his eyebrows.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

And I will... I will be glad to do exactly that thing for you.

(pause)

First there is the matter of my fee.

HELEN

Your... fee...?

MORTAL MEPHISTO

More a token of appreciation, really.

Helen's horrified... realization dawning.

HELEN

You... you gave your word... you said you didn't want anything!

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Alas, if you will remember, I said I didn't want anything from you, Helen. But, from you...

(POINTS to the Surfer)

That's another story.

SILVER SURFER

What could I have that you desire?

MORTAL MEPHISTO

The essence of your essence... that lily-white spirit residing within...

CONTINUED

HELEN
...no, please....

MORTAL MEPHISTO
What I desire, Silver Surfer, is your
eternal soul. Your immortal soul.

Mortal Mephisto whips out a folded CONTRACT from his pocket.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
I've got the paperwork right here.

HELEN
You can't do this! What about all
you said... about protecting your
sinners...?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
You know better than anyone you're
not alone in the universe. I offer
equal opportunity damnation,
regardless of species. Besides, if
Earth is gone, there'll be another
like it in a billion years or so.

The Surfer steps forward.

SILVER SURFER
You ask me to trade one abiding
servitude for another? Instead of
Galactus, I should pledge myself to
you for all eternity?

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Ironical, isn't it?

HELEN
No! Take me instead. I'll do it...

They look to Helen. She's distraught, struggling against a
flood of misery and anger.

HELEN
Take my soul.

SILVER SURFER
Helen... you do not realize...

HELEN
I do. I know what I'm saying. This
is my fault. I called him... even
after you warned me...

SILVER SURFER
You cannot sacrifice yourself.

CONTINUED

HELEN
(to Mortal Mephisto)
You want a soul? Take mine! I won't
let you have his!

MORTAL MEPHISTO
If only it were that simple... but of
course it's not! I've about had it
up to here with the both of you! One
last time -- in exchange for the
Surfer's soul, I will save the entire
human race, including the rather
insignificant life of one Helen
Hudson. That is my offer...
(holds up contract)
Non-negotiable. What is your answer?

Helen's eyes plead with the Surfer...

HELEN
No.

The Surfer turns to Mortal Mephisto. After a moment, the
Surfer reaches to take the CONTRACT in his lithe fingers.

Mortal Mephisto's nostrils flare in anticipation.

The Surfer looks down... RIPS the CONTRACT in half.

SILVER SURFER
You have your answer.

Helen closes her eyes, nearing tears of relief.

Mortal Mephisto struggles to remain temperate.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Fine. That's just... fine! You two
are on your own. Good luck and good
riddance!

He angrily WAVES his arms -- gone in a RIOT of SMOKE!

CUT TO:

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY -- MOMENTS LATER -- DUSK

Helen walks out, physically drained. The Surfer comes to
watch from just inside the blowing curtains.

HELEN
We're back where we started.

Helen forces a laugh that dies quickly. She turns to look
out over the skyline, mortified. Many SIRENS can be HEARD.

CONTINUED

HELEN
They're already beginning to panic.

OVER THE CITY: far PLUMES of SMOKE rise against the dusk.

HELEN
So much for civilization.

SILVER SURFER (O.S.)
We are not where we started. It is
not too late...

Helen looks to the Surfer as he passes through curtains.

SILVER SURFER
The words you spoke today struck a
chord. Eloquently you plead your
case... with such passion. What high
regard I held you in from the first,
Helen, but this day...

(pause)

To offer your soul in place of mine.
Who am I, that you would do such a
thing for me? Though I thought it
long dead, you have restored my
valor. And while I could never fight
Galactus for billions of lives, I can
fight him for one...
I will vanquish him for you.

Helen looks to the Surfer, touched, overwhelmed.

The Surfer takes a step back, as his SURFBOARD FLOATS out
from the condo... comes to be held.

SILVER SURFER
I wanted only to thank you, to bid
this goodbye. However, if I may...
I have one final request...
(pause, searching for words)
No. It is too much.

HELEN
What could be too much? Ask anything.

SILVER SURFER
It would mean all to me...
(long pause)
One kiss. One kiss from your lips,
so I may remember what I once was.

Tears well up in Helen's eyes.

SILVER SURFER
If it is an affront, I beg your
forgiveness. I...

CONTINUED

Helen steps forward, reaches up to gently touch the Surfer's metallic face. She leans to him, closing her eyes...

Helen presses her lips to his, softly, for a long moment.

Helen withdraws, opening her eyes, regards him tenderly.

The Surfer steps back, his voice atremble.

SILVER SURFER

Had I tears to shed, I would shed them now. Your kiss is more kindness than I can ever repay.

The Surfer steps onto his board, watches her as he RISES.

SILVER SURFER

Farewell, Helen.

The Surfer SAILS off...

To the darkening sky.

Helen looks down, sadness welling up, tears flowing down. She touches her fingertips to her lips.

Helen walks inside through French doors...

As CURTAINS CLOSE behind her; so they CLOSE on the 2ND ACT.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTARCTIC LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT

Clouds hang low over the arctic wasteland, concealing peaks of distant MOUNTAINS of ice. Over the ever-howling WIND, a rhythmic, MECHANICAL THROB is HEARD...

From the clouds, comes the dark juggernaut that is the ELEMENTAL CONVERTER; drill-heads turning like clockwork...

The Converter SMASHES into frozen ground, setting it's gnashing teeth with a high-pitched exhalation as STEAM SIZZLES off hot metal! A rain of CRYSTALLINE SHARDS spews forth as the Converter DIGS with unyielding efficiency.

CUT TO:

IN EARTH ORBIT

The Surfer ascends from Earth, NEARING...

Galactus' foreboding WORLD-SHIP, floating against the stars.

FOLLOW: as the Surfer SOARS...

ACROSS the mind-blowing complexity of the vessel's surface.

UNDER THE WORLD-SHIP

The Surfer angles around... HALTING...

CONTINUED

ABOVE: a huge, grilled EXHAUST VENT in the underbelly expels a ROARING tentacle of VIOLET FIRE.

After a moment, the FLAME DIES. The Surfer seizes this opportunity -- RIDING up to DISAPPEAR inside...

INT. WORLD-SHIP -- EXHAUST PIPEWAYS

As the Surfer SPEEDS upwards through this endless duct-way, a terrible ROAR grows LOUDER...

AHEAD: a WALL of vented FIRE plunges down the duct, closing fast -- threatening to engulf the Surfer...

The Surfer TURNS suddenly...
Escaping down an ADJOINING DUCT as FLAMES EXPLODE onwards!

CUT TO:

INT. WORLD-SHIP, FEEDING CHAMBER

As before, Galactus' gigantic SARCOPHAGUS HOVERS at the center of this circular chamber. Above, one of the round HATCHES is BLOWN to PIECES from within, as...

The Surfer arrives...
CIRCLING the sarcophagus.

SILVER SURFER
Awaken, Galactus! Your herald has
returned....!

The Surfer uses both hands to UNLEASH a powerful BLAST -- STRIKING the sarcophagus! The sarcophagus TREMBLES, turning on its invisible axis.

The Surfer BLASTS again...
POUNDING the sarcophagus dead center...!
Causing the sarcophagus to TUMBLE slowly downwards.

As the Surfer RISES clear...
The sarcophagus CRASHES to the curved floor! FLASHES of ENERGY EXPLODE! It's all SHORT-CIRCUITING on a massive scale -- BOLTS of ENERGY leaping from shattered hatchways!

The Surfer holds up his hands against the brilliance.
In the thunderous upheaval, Galactus' sarcophagus FALLS OPEN along its seam... REVEALING itself to be EMPTY.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE -- NIGHT

RAIN falls. Massive, otherworldly STORM CLOUDS undulate, blanketing the city. RED LIGHTNING lances across the gloom!

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

ON TV: in a torrential downpour, LOOTERS swarm a wrecked STOREFRONT... AMATEUR FOOTAGE shows a VOLCANIC ERUPTION amidst rainforest. The IMAGE FLICKERS with STATIC.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

(from TELEVISION)

...massive volcanic activity in Hawaii, Mexico, Columbia, Japan... the Antarctic Peninsula.

Helen stands numb, staring at the TV...

ON TV: the weary NEWS ANCHOR reports, rather shell-shocked.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

According to NASA, worldwide oceanic temperatures have risen by 20 degrees fahrenheit over the last hour...

(looking at papers)

Everywhere, thousands of people have flocked to local churches. In Rome...

The TV goes DEAD! LIGHTS GO OUT. Helen turns... fearfully facing the darkness. THUNDER BOOMS.

Helen crosses to curtained WINDOWS...

The storm pounded SKYLINE is dark. Total blackout.

Helen backs away. With a deep breath, she gets to her knees.

HELEN

(up to God)

Alright, listen... I'm sorry I haven't done this in a while. So, I'm a little rusty, you know. Try not to hold it against me.

Helen clasps her hands, bows her head... to PRAY.

CUT TO:

INT. WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER

As Galactus-sized DOORS SWING open...

The Silver Surfer RIDES his surfboard in, warily.

This is the cavernous CONTROL CHAMBER where stood Norrin Radd many ages ago, where the Surfer was born. The Surfer GLIDES past myriad CONTROL PANELS and INSTRUMENTS...

He comes to the MASSIVE WINDOWS overlooking Earth.

As we witnessed on Mars, Earth is now ENSHROUDED in the BLACK CLOUDS of endless STORMS.

The RUMBLE of MACHINERY causes the Surfer to turn...

At the floor's center, a circular HATCH OPENS...

Galactus RISES through this doorway... a grim colossus.

CONTINUED

GALACTUS
 I have no wish to harm you, Surfer.
 The damage you have done requires
 mere moments to repair.

Galactus crosses to one PANEL, FOOTSTEPS BOOMING.
 With his back to the Surfer, he studies INSTRUMENTS.

GALACTUS
 The Earth's energy will be stored
 until then.

SILVER SURFER
 You will not have Earth this day.

GALACTUS
 You challenge me... though you could
 be no more than a thorn in my side?

SILVER SURFER
 I do what I must.

GALACTUS
 I will abide no further resistance.
 Only your abject obedience will stay
 my hand.

SILVER SURFER
 Nothing will stay mine!

The Surfer HURTLES a BLAST... STRIKING Galactus from behind!

The Surfer RISES on his board, UNLEASHING ENERGY again...
 SLAMMING Galactus as he turns!

GALACTUS
 You dare strike Galactus!

Galactus extends a hand, THROWS a tremulous FORCE BEAM...!
 The Surfer SOARS upwards to avoid.

Galactus raises both hands -- FIRING COSMIC BOLTS...

High above, the Surfer SERPENTINES -- adeptly DODGING:
 BOOM!! BOOM! The Surfer FISHTAILS...

BOOM!! The Surfer turns a LOOP...

BOOM!! The Surfer SPINS away...
 CEILING CONDUITS are TORN ASUNDER in the onslaught!

In the SHOWER of SPARKS and DEBRIS, the Surfer SWEEPS down..
 He LEAPS, while his board HURTLES onward...

The Surfer SPINS flawlessly as he falls.

The surfboard STABS downwards...

CONTINUED

STRIKING Galactus like a knife to the chest -- PIERCING his ARMOR to impale him as he ROARS in pain!

The Surfer LANDS crouched on the metal floor, looks up as...

Galactus STUMBLES backwards...

FALLING, SMASHING against a control panel!

SILVER SURFER

Even a thorn may fell the mightiest creature!

The Surfer BLASTS...

Galactus lifts a HAND to CATCH the Surfer's STRIKE -- DEFLECTING it back...!

The Surfer's SLAMMED...

TUMBLING across the floor!

ENERGY leaps from Galactus' wound. His eyes GLOW BRIGHTLY as he pulls the surfboard from his breast. He grips the board in his hand, begins STRIDING forward...

The Surfer attempts to rise, stunned.

Galactus lifts one foot -- STOMPS down onto the Surfer!

The Surfer PUSHES against Galactus' foot, STRUGGLING... Trying to squirm free, but it's no use.

Galactus applies CRUSHING force. The Surfer writhes, CRYING OUT... searching desperately for an escape. He sees something... extends one arm... lets loose a COSMIC BLAST...

SHATTERING the WINDOWS overlooking Earth!

The Control Chamber's atmosphere instantly succumbs to the VACUUM of SPACE -- hurricane force WINDS HOWLING...

Galactus is LIFTED BODILY into the gale...

The Surfer is freed, also SWEEPED AWAY...

EXT. WORLD-SHIP -- EARTH ORBIT

In a cloud of FRAGMENTED GLASS, Galactus and the Surfer are SUCKED into space... FLOATING in the frigid vacuum...

Galactus' hand falls open, the surfboard released.

The Surfer tries to turn, weightless, REACHING OUT...

SILVER SURFER

To me, my board!

The board obeys, FLYING as commanded...

The Surfer GRABS hold, carried quickly away...

The Surfer rises, SURFING at incredible speed!

CONTINUED

Galactus holds out his hands, turning slowly... righting himself so that he's "STANDING" in mid-space.

FAR AWAY: the Surfer's a BLUR, arms thrust behind... TURNING a wide turn, SPEEDING back...

The Surfer STREAKS at Galactus, BLASTING... Galactus is protected behind a pale FORCE FIELD.

GALACTUS
Have you so soon forgotten? All that
you are is what I made you...

The Surfer SOARS off...
TURNING against the starscape...
HEADING back again...

The Surfer HURTLES past -- BLASTING...
The FORCE FIELD again shields Galactus.

GALACTUS
As easily I may unmake you!

Galactus SHOOTS ENERGY BEAMS from BOTH EYES...!

SMASHING the Surfer from behind; a CRIPPLING blow!

Galactus LEVITATES to his wayward herald...

GALACTUS
You, who traveled to the ends of
infinity. My creation...

He arrives to look upon the Surfer. The Surfer FLOATS,
limbs hanging limply, his board floating nearby.

GALACTUS
You will roam the galaxies no more!

With a sweeping GESTURE, Galactus CASTS AWAY the board...

BELOW

The surfboard FALLS to Earth... till it's gone from sight.

NEAR THE WORLD-SHIP

Galactus reaches out...
To CLASP the Surfer, enclosing him in both hands.

GALACTUS
If you side with Earth...
so shall you perish with Earth!

Galactus opens his hands...
RELEASING a blinding FLASH of SILVER!

EXT. ANTARCTIC OCEAN -- NIGHT

From STORM CLOUDS above...
A SHOOTING STAR of SILVER...
FALLS to the ocean.

CUT TO:**EXT. PARIS CITYSCAPE -- DAY**

Dark-as-night STORMS churn over Paris. The EIFFEL TOWER is silhouetted against ORANGE SKY where, unbelievably...

A newly formed VOLCANO ERUPTS, reining fire on the horizon.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITYSCAPE -- NIGHT

The worldwide STORM rages on. With a ROAR befitting the end of the world, an unprecedented TORNADO draws strength from the clouds, CLOSING FAST on DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES...

SLAMMING the close-knit LA SKYSCRAPERS, howling...
WREAKING HAVOC...GROWING even larger as it swallows tons of glass and metal debris into it's vortex!

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- NIGHT

A ROAR of VOICES O.S. is HEARD even above the STORM as we...
PAN DOWN: over the spires of ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL...
REVEALING an overwhelming THRONG of HUMANITY struggling towards the cathedral's doors. They overflow down the stairs and onto the sidewalk and street. No more room!

PULL BACK: to further REVEAL... FIFTH AVENUE and side STREETS are also CROWDED to capacity with desperate humans all helplessly seeking holy sanctuary.

CUT TO:**INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT**

The STORM BLOWS IN through the open French doors. Wavering, high-pitched STATIC is HEARD.

Across the condo, CANDLES BURN meagerly. A battery-powered RADIO is the source of the weird STATIC. Helen is seated on the floor, bereft, her head in her hands.

A WIND WHISTLES through... BLOWING OUT CANDLES.
Helen doesn't even notice, lost in her brooding.

Inside the French doors, from the POUNDING RAIN...
A RAVEN flutters down, landing... cocking its head.

CUT TO:

IN CLOSE-UP

The Surfer jerks AWAKE with a GASP, finds himself in...

MEPHISTO'S CASTLE, DUNGEON CAVERNS — ETERNAL NIGHT

The Surfer sits up, attempting to comprehend.
He's seated on a blood-stained ALTAR, in the midst of...

A literally cavernous DUNGEON, lit by PITS of FIRE.
Tortured MALE and FEMALE MORTALS and semi-mortal CREATURES
are CHAINED to vast STALAGMITES and STALACTITES. They test
their bondage with weary, sinewy limbs, in silent agony, for
their FACES are blank slates of featureless flesh.

The Surfer stands, horrified. Above, on a winding STAIRCASE
hewn into the curved walls, stands Mortal Mephisto.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Rise and "shine," sleepy-head...

The Surfer spins to look.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Lo and behold, you're not dead!

SILVER SURFER

What now, Evil One? Must I face you
at every turn?!

MORTAL MEPHISTO

(descending staircase)

There you were, lying at the bottom
of the ocean... you'd lost your
little surfboard. I couldn't let the
story end that way.

(looks at WATCH)

It's five minutes till Galactus
knocks the stuffing out of Earth,
leaving just enough time for haggling.

SILVER SURFER

You will not have my soul.

Mortal Mephisto reaches the bottom of the stairs.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I must. Because, you see, you're
going to be my greatest victory...

(walks around the Surfer)

Agelessly devoid of sin... so pure...
so willingly self-sacrificial.

SILVER SURFER

(wearily, angrily)

Return me hence, so I may embrace
death! Leave me to my final hour!

CONTINUED

MORTAL MEPHISTO

It's my own fault you're hesitant.
I made eternal damnation sound so...
uncomfortable. There's a tremendous
upside to it.

Mortal Mephisto backs towards THREE huge WOODEN DOORS.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Postpone your debt however long you'd
like; a hundred years... one
thousand. In that time, make a life
of your own choosing, wherever and
however you decide...

(MOTIONS grandiosely)

Name your wish and see it
fulfilled...!

DOOR ONE opens... REVEALING an enormous TREASURE; gleaming
GOLDEN SWORDS and ARMOR, GOBLETs filled with JEWELS, and
MOUNDS of GOLD COINS spilling out through the doorway.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Behold...treasure beyond calculation!
Wealth such as no mortal has ever
possessed!

SILVER SURFER

Glittering stones and bright metals?
You call these treasure?

MORTAL MEPHISTO

(shrugging)

Yeah... I didn't think you'd go for
that. It's a kind of standard thing
I like to offer. Anyway...

(GESTURING)

This is probably more up your alley...

DOOR TWO creaks open. From inside, THREE of Mephisto's
beastly DEMON-CRONIES carry a large, heavy, FLAT OBJECT,
held vertically, covered by a RED CURTAIN.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Take a good look, Alice...!

Mortal Mephisto YANKS OFF the CURTAIN...

UNVEILS a large MIRROR, in which everything is reflected
normally -- EXCEPT the Surfer is REFLECTED as NORRIN RADD.

The Surfer stares in amazement.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Dare to imagine it, Norrin Radd...
imagine yourself restored... a man,
of flesh and blood once more...

CONTINUED

The Surfer slowly steps closer to the MIRROR.

MORTAL MEPHISTO
If only you accept my offer.

REFLECTED: Mortal Mephisto stands at Norrin Radd's side. The Surfer runs his hands across his chest, transfixed, while Norrin Radd "mirrors" his every move.

The Surfer looks at his SILVER HANDS...comes to his senses..

SILVER SURFER
No...!

The Surfer thrusts out a palm -- HEAT WARP... SHATTERS the MIRROR! Demon-Cronies scurry as the MIRROR'S FRAME CRASHES to the floor!

SILVER SURFER
I want nothing from you, Mephisto!
Torment me no longer!

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Oh, but I saved the best for last;
what you've wanted from the first....!

DOOR THREE swings wide... a WHEELED CAGE is pushed forward by more LACKIE-CREATURES... from DARKNESS into LIGHT...

MORTAL MEPHISTO
My final offer...

INSIDE THE CAGE: Helen is imprisoned, gripping the bars.

SILVER SURFER
...Helen...

MORTAL MEPHISTO
Here she is! Your secret yearning...

Behind the Surfer, Mortal Mephisto smiles, TRANSFORMING -- returning to his repellent DEMON-FORM, in flowing cloak...

MEPHISTO (CONT.)
What longing you attempted to hide
even from yourself!

HELEN
(pleading, to Surfer)
Don't give in to him, whatever you
do... you hear me...?

SILVER SURFER
Release her!

CONTINUED

MEPHISTO
So that she may await her death on
Earth? Are you blind to the
irrevocable? Lest your soul be
pledged, her life is forfeit.

HELEN
Don't listen...!

MEPHISTO
Helen can be yours, Surfer! Say the
word, and I bind her to you...

The Surfer looks to Mephisto.

MEPHISTO
Command me, and she shall love you
with the whole her heart. Think of
it... your forsaken days will finally
see their end.

The Surfer hangs his head, balling his hands into fists.

SILVER SURFER
...no...

MEPHISTO
Do you imagine there is another way?
That she could otherwise care for you?

HELEN
Look at me, Norrin...! Listen to
me... I do care, I do...

Helen presses against the bar, tears filling her eyes.

HELEN
I already love you!

The Surfer looks up, barely believing... looks to Helen.
Mephisto's lizard-like eyes go wide with angry surprise.

HELEN
How could I not love you, after all
you've done...? Maybe I didn't even
know it till now, but you have to
believe me, please! When you left...
when I thought I'd never see you
again...

(wiping tears)
My heart broke...

MEPHISTO
Lies!

Helen's voice quakes with hurried emotion.

CONTINUED

HELEN

You think you're not a man...?
You're the most noble man I've ever
met. I see it in your eyes who you
are. I do love you, Norrin! I'd
rather die than let you give him what
he wants... than let you suffer...

The Surfer stands rooted to the moment, stricken...
Incredibly, a single SILVER TEAR forms in his eye!
Impossibly, Helen's love has restored his humanity!

HELEN

How could I feel that unless I loved
you...?

MEPHISTO

Silence!!

Mephisto POINTS a clawed finger...
Inside the cage, Helen tries to speak, but her VOICE is
SILENCED. She grips her throat.

MEPHISTO

The mortal says whatever she believes
can thwart my will! You know she
does not love you! You know that is
beyond impossibility!!

The Surfer reaches to wipe the TEARDROP from his cheek,
stares down at his open hand...

MEPHISTO

You are more monster than man! Alien
thing! You know inside your heart of
hearts, no one could ever love you.

The Surfer closes his fist on the teardrop, faces Mephisto.

SILVER SURFER

My soul is yours.

Helen pleads wordlessly, clutching the bars of the cage.

SILVER SURFER

However... I make my own demands.
One for each door you opened.

MEPHISTO

Anything! Anything at all.

SILVER SURFER

You halt Galactus, as promised.

MEPHISTO

Certainly.

CONTINUED

SILVER SURFER
(points towards Helen)
You free her, unharmed.

MEPHISTO
Without question.

SILVER SURFER
Lastly... you agree never to take
another mortal soul by bargain or
deceit. Mark those words, for you
must swear them.

MEPHISTO
(eyes narrowing)
You... you ask too much.

SILVER SURFER
I know what I ask -- that mankind
have its freewill. As now, you gain
the souls that fall to you, but none
shall be taken by guile. Swear it,
and have the one soul you burn for.
My purity... your greatest victory...

Mephisto turns away, steps a few paces to consider.

SILVER SURFER
Deny me, and you have nothing.

MEPHISTO
Yes... yes...!
(TURNS to the Surfer)
Agreed! The die is cast! Your soul
is mine!

The Surfer turns to look to Helen, longingly...
He raises a hand to bid a last farewell, as behind him
Mephisto raises BOTH HANDS to conjure...

In the cage, Helen reaches desperately through the bars
towards the Surfer, but then -- SHE'S GONE.

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY -- NIGHT

Helen pushes out through the French doors, into WIND and
POUNDING RAIN, looking helplessly up to the STORM.

She drops to her knees, heartbroken, crying softly.

CUT TO:

INT. WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER

Everywhere, CONTROL PANELS are alive with activity.
Galactus is seated in a THRONE/CONTROL CHAIR, facing dozens
of INFO-SCREENS.

CONTINUED

On the monitors: ALIEN SYMBOLS, WORDS, IMAGES and CALCULATIONS scroll innumeraably by.

Galactus' EMBEROUS EYES study the information.

Across the chamber, from thin air -- Mephisto and the Surfer MATERIALIZE. The Surfer steps forward.

SILVER SURFER

We have arrived barely in time.

Galactus rises, moving towards the WINDOWS... ~~not even~~ bothering to look down at the Surfer and Mephisto...

SILVER SURFER

I warn you, Galactus... turn back from this place! Stay your hand!

Galactus halts before the still shattered windows.

GALACTUS

You are too late. It has begun.

OVER EARTH

Through the gyrating BLACK CLOUDS over EARTH -- a PILLAR of ELEMENTAL ENERGY fires upwards...

BENEATH THE WORLD-SHIP

And as the ENERGY is drawn into the World-SHIP...

INT. WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER

The ship TREMBLES! Galactus observes the precious COLUMN of ENERGY through the WINDOWS. The force of the absorption sends a constant RUMBLE throughout the ship.

Behind Galactus, Mephisto is thrilled by the task at hand.

MEPHISTO

How shall I slay him? Shall I rend him limb from limb? Shall I blight him into dust and scatter the ashes across Creation? Or, do you wish to see him suffer...?

SILVER SURFER

He will suffer.

MEPHISTO

Quickly, choose his demise... let him know an agony heretofore unequalled!

SILVER SURFER

I have already made the choice.

CONTINUED

MEPHISTO

Then, give name to the affliction.
I beg you, speak the words....!

SILVER SURFER

One word...one word alone is all that
is required...

(pause)

Empathy.

The smile falls from Mephisto's lips.

SILVER SURFER

Grant him that single emotion.

MEPHISTO

Empathy?

SILVER SURFER

Do this, Mephisto...

MEPHISTO

What vengeance is empathy? What
pleasure can be so derived...?

SILVER SURFER

Do this and our pact is writ in stone.

Mephisto glowers in angry disappointment.

MEPHISTO

Very well. As you wish...

As Mephisto raises OPEN HANDS...

A SWIRL of WHITE VAPOR encircles him. The VAPOR RISES from
thin air, THICKENING as it snakes around Mephisto...

SILVER SURFER

Let Galactus at long last learn the
true meaning of humanity...

Mephisto holds his hands towards Galactus -- SENDING the
ETHEREAL VAPOR spinning forward in a screaming VORTEX...
STRIKING Galactus from behind!

Galactus CRIES OUT, his back arching as the VAPOR violently
ENTERS INTO HIM between his shoulder blades!

SILVER SURFER

Let him know all the Earthly lives
and loves and striving he would
incinerate!

Mephisto lowers his hands, the deed done.

Galactus pitches forward, horrified, shaken to his core...

CONTINUED

GALACTUS
...what have you done...?

He holds his head in his trembling hands...
FALLING to his KNEES, letting out an ECHOING LAMENTATION!

GALACTUS
What have you done to me?!

SILVER SURFER
I have filled your mind with the
ghosts of those who died in your
name... so you may mourn them!

Galactus lifts his face, his mouth twisted in agony, the
GLOW within his EYES DYING -- revealing EYES like those of
a mortal: black pupils staring from SILVER METALLIC irises.

Galactus clutches his hands to his chest, seems... afraid...

GALACTUS
What madness is this...! This spasm
within my breast...?

SILVER SURFER
Your impenetrable heart is pierced by
emotion. You are at once blessed and
cursed...

GALACTUS
So many dead... a billion times a
billion more...!

SILVER SURFER
And now, do you yield...?!

GALACTUS
Hearts and minds, hopes and dreams...
cast unto oblivion...

SILVER SURFER
Do you spare the Earth?!

GALACTUS
It is too much agony to bear!

Galactus lifts one hand, MOTIONING...
INFO-SCREENS go RED. Hundreds of CONTROLS and INSTRUMENTS
SHIFT, changing settings. Monitored ENERGY LEVELS DROP.

ABOVE EARTH

As suddenly as it appeared, the ENERGY PILLAR rising from
Earth FALTERS, then DIES... fading to nothingness.

INT. WORLD-SHIP, CONTROL CHAMBER

The RUMBLE CEASES. Galactus RISES to stand, his newly "MORTAL" EYES peering forward in a kind of focusless shock.

GALACTUS
They live. They live... and so my
dissolution is assured.

SILVER SURFER
Your energy reserves might sustain
you till you find a barren world.
You may still survive.

Slowly, Galactus STRIDES past the Surfer and Mephisto...
FOOTFALLS BOOMING... takes to his THRONE in solemn misery.

GALACTUS
My thoughts are burdened... my every
sense tortured. For this, Surfer,
you will meet your destiny's end.

SILVER SURFER
I know it.

The Surfer turns to face Mephisto.

SILVER SURFER
In a moment, Mephisto, my soul falls
to you. I ask a last wish. Should
my bravery fail me... alone, it would
be one less indignity. Can you grant
this, as a matter of honor?

Mephisto gives a nod... steps back...

MEPHISTO
I await thee.

MEPHISTO'S GONE. The Surfer walks to stand before Galactus.

SILVER SURFER
To you, Galactus, I say... how if I
were dealt a fate worse than death?

GALACTUS
What fate?

SILVER SURFER
How if I were made to know pain, to
bleed... to inhabit a vessel of frail
flesh? Suffering emotion. Knowing
love, only to risk its loss each
day... and how if those days were
numbered, while my very person
withered inexorably away? Can there
exist a harsher perdition?

CONTINUED

GALACTUS

This is not a fate you dread. I see it mapped inside your mind. Why would I grant what you hope?

SILVER SURFER

Because... with your newly made conscience, perhaps mercy and compassion are now more than only words.

Galactus sits silent for a long, frozen moment.

GALACTUS

You were utterly without equal. Made mortal... you will be common.

SILVER SURFER

Then, I beg you, let me be common.

The Surfer lowers his head... awaiting.

GALACTUS

So be it.

Holding out one HAND, Galactus ENGULFS the Surfer in BLINDING FLOOD of WHITE ENERGY...!

FADE TO WHITE:

Empty white... and SILENCE, until...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM — NIGHT

GASPING awake, NORRIN RADD sits up in a HOSPITAL BED. He's sweaty, disoriented, sporting a week's worth of stubble. Hair has just begun to grow on his once bald head.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(quietly)

It's alright, calm down... you're going to be okay...

A mid-aged FEMALE NURSE stands inside a privacy curtain, at Norrin's bedside, checking MONITORING EQUIPMENT.

NURSE

Must have been a nightmare.

NORRIN

What...?

NURSE

You must have been dreaming.

CONTINUED

Norrin looks at her, still not understanding.
He looks around this typical, cramped hospital room.

NORRIN

Where... am I?

NURSE

You're at Saint Luke's Hospital. Do you remember anything?

NORRIN

What place, though... what city?

NURSE

New York. You didn't know?

Norrin looks down at his hands; his mortal hands.
He touches his face, gripping the malleable flesh, in disbelief, a man again at long last.

NURSE

The police fished you in from the Hudson. It's a miracle you're alive. You've been unconscious for a week, although we can't find a thing wrong. Do you remember any of this...?

NORRIN

The vessel... the alien ship over Antarctica, what happened?

NURSE

Oh... it's gone. It just... it went away. No one knows why, but we were saved. God's will, I suppose.

(pause)

The doctor will want to see you soon. You still need to rest.

With a comforting smile, the Nurse EXITS.

Norrin throws off his sheets. He's in a HOSPITAL GOWN. He pulls off the wires attached to him, climbs out from the bed.

At a MIRROR on the wall, Norrin studies his reflection. He touches the mirror, touches his face, again overwhelmed.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Norrin peers in at the neighboring HOSPITAL BED. A MAN lies asleep. Norrin moves quietly to look around. At a built-in CHEST of DRAWERS, he pulls them open. They're empty.

He moves to open a small CLOSET, finds CLOTHING hanging. With a small frown, he whispers to the sleeping man...

NORRIN

I'm sorry.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY — NIGHT

Norrin sticks his head out from his hospital room.
He wears ILL-FITTING CLOTHING from the closet.

The hallway is empty and mostly quiet, except for the SOUNDS
of MONITORS. A MALE NURSE passes far down the hall.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE STREETS — NIGHT

FOLLOW: Norrin's feet, walking, in HOSPITAL SLIPPERS.

Still in baggy, purloined clothing, Norrin moves from
sidewalk to street, crossing. It's late. Few CARS.

On the opposite corner, Norrin stops, looking up...
At a tall, Art Deco APARTMENT BUILDING; Helen's building,
though we've hardly seen it from this angle.

MORTAL MEPHISTO (O.S.)

She's up there.

Norrin turns to face Mortal Mephisto. There they stand, two
relatively normal looking fellows under a STREETLAMP.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Everyday since you saved the world...
she's inconsolable. Wishing she
could see you one last time, even for
a moment. Makes you all sort weepy
inside, doesn't it?

NORRIN

(looking up)

No longer. Tonight is our reunion.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I think not, actually, since your
debt is already one week overdue. Or
did you foolishly believe you could
avoid me?

NORRIN

No, you upheld our bargain.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I did, at that.

NORRIN

I owe my soul to you. It belongs to
you without question...

MORTAL MEPHISTO

So glad to hear you say it.

CONTINUED

NORRIN

Except... I recall a certain promise made, sworn to, that you would never take another mortal soul by bargain...

(extending his arms)

And here stand I... a mortal. So, while the my soul certainly belongs to you... you are unfortunately prevented from ever collecting it.

(pause)

Ironic, isn't it?

Norrin smiles. Mortal Mephisto slowly smiles back.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Well... aren't you the clever one? You've beaten me.

(pause)

If only I were a good sport. But, I never have quite managed that... losing so infrequently.

Mortal Mephisto takes a few steps away.

MORTAL MEPHISTO

I leave you with body and soul intact. I will, however, take something else. I will take all memory of Helen...

NORRIN

No, not that...

MORTAL MEPHISTO

You'll remember everything, except you will not remember her.

NORRIN

Please, Mephisto, you cannot...!

MORTAL MEPHISTO

Sorry, just doing my job. Until we meet again...!

In one last CLOUD of SMOKE, Mortal Mephisto's finally GONE. Norrin Radd stands alone, turning, disoriented.

He looks around, seems confused. He faces one direction, uncertain. A long moment. He starts walking...

Away into the night... away from HELEN'S BUILDING.

CUT TO:

INSERT TITLE

one year later

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE, LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

The RECORD PLAYER'S arm swings over as an LP drops. We HEAR the beginning of ACT V of Gounod's opera "ROMEO AND JULIET." Across the condo, there's a lone PLATE (barely touched dinner) on the dining table. FRENCH DOORS are open.

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY — NIGHT

Helen stands, staring up to the cloudless NIGHT. The sky is filled with bright STARS. The DOORBELL is HEARD RINGING.

INT. HELEN'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Helen comes to open the door, letting in her friend, JULIE. Julie's dressed for a night out.

JULIE

Ready?

HELEN

In a minute. Help me pick something out.

HELEN'S BEDROOM

Helen goes into her WALK-IN CLOSET. Julie sits on the bed.

JULIE

We don't want to be late meeting them.

HELEN (O.S.)

(from inside closet)

Who cares if we are?

JULIE

It's no good showing up late for a blind date.

HELEN (O.S.)

I can't tell you how much I'm dreading this.

JULIE

I know it's not the easiest thing... but aren't you the one always saying, "live each day to the fullest," blah, blah, blah...

HELEN (O.S.)

Easier said than done.

JULIE

You'd be happier if you weren't so... picky.

CONTINUED

HELEN (O.S.)
There's sound advice. "Drop your standards, Helen, you'll have so much more fun that way."

JULIE
Don't drop them. Just lower them a little. Who are you holding out for... Mr. Right? Mr. Perfect?

Helen comes to stand in the CLOSET DOORWAY, holding DRESSES.

HELEN
Why not?

JULIE
Because he doesn't exist, that's why
Helen considers, sad.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKYSCRAPER CONSTRUCTION SITE (NYC) -- DAY

The STEEL FRAMEWORK of this half-constructed SKYSCRAPER stands tall at mid-city. Huge CRANES lift materials. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS move throughout the metal skeleton.

HIGHER UP, at the highest point of the girders...
A lone CONSTRUCTION WORKER, in overalls and hard hat, stands at the very edge of one I-BEAM...

It's Norrin Radd, standing with his feet together, arms outstretched... relishing the dizzying height.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(from below)
Hey... what are you doing...?!

Norrin turns to look down at the FELLOW WORKER.

FELLOW WORKER (CONT.)
Shift's heading to lunch. You coming?

Norrin moves away from the edge, completely at ease on the high steel, RUNNING along the narrow I-beam...

He drops to his knees, HANGS from the girder...

DROPPING to a WOODEN PLATFORM below, moving on, LEAPING... from one girder... to another... and another, without the slightest imbalance...

Fellow Worker watches, worried. Norrin arrives.

NORRIN
Let's go.

CONTINUED

FELLOW WORKER
Sure... let's go.

They start across the framework, heading towards a
CONSTRUCTION ELEVATOR. Fellow Worker is far more cautious.

FELLOW WORKER
Why you gotta go running around like
that, kid? Think you're gonna live
forever?

NORRIN
No.
(smiles)
Not forever.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAYDEN PLANETARIUM (ESTABLISH) -- DAY

RAINING. Along Central Park West, the PLANETARIUM adjoins
the American Museum of Natural History, highlighted by the
new addition of the stunning Rose Center for Earth and Space.

INT. PLANETARIUM, GALLERY -- DAY

In the otherworldly glow of the BLACK LIGHT GALLERY,
PARENTS lead CHILDREN past large, LUMINESCENT MURALS
depicting PLANETS and STARS and distant GALAXIES.
COUPLES stroll through, hand in hand.

Norrin Radd, in casual clothes, stares up at the images.
Distractedly, he steps back, BUMPING SOMEONE...
It's Helen, likewise distracted.

NORRIN
I'm sorry... excuse me.

HELEN
No, it's my fault. I wasn't watching
where I... was... going...

They look at each other, then look away, awkward.

NORRIN
Well... again, I'm sorry. I, uh...

HELEN
Yeah. No problem.

Norrin nods, smiles. They both return to facing the murals.
A GROUP of CHILDREN and PARENTS moves through, not staying
long, and once they're gone...

Helen and Norrin are alone again, not far apart.
A long, uncomfortable silence.

CONTINUED

NORRIN

Do you, um... do you come here often?

HELEN

That's original.

NORRIN

Pardon me? I don't...

HELEN

Nothing. Never mind. Yes, I do, actually. I come here too often.

(pause)

Being here reminds me of someone. A friend I don't see anymore.

NORRIN

Too bad... not seeing your friend. Well, anyway...

Norrin takes out a handful of COINS, looking them over.

HELEN

What about you?

NORRIN

Hm? Oh, I get here when I can. This place is like... dreaming without sleeping. Know what I mean? How many places can you say that about?

Norrin's somehow managed that without artifice, and Helen watches him with interest as he stands counting his change.

NORRIN

Listen, I don't mean to impose. I was about to head down to the Coffee Shop... I notice I might have just enough for two cups.

(pause)

What do you say?

HELEN

(considers, smiles)

That would be nice.

NORRIN

Good.

With that, Norrin and Helen walk away... They begin a CONVERSATION we CANNOT HEAR.

the end

ROLL CREDITS

and then...

EXT. EVEREST, BASE CAMP — (POST-CREDIT EPILOGUE) — DAY

It's a clear day near the Top of the World. At a make-shift ENCAMPMENT of TENTS, a male CLIMBER in winter gear melts snow in a PAN over a BUTANE HEATER.

A SECOND CLIMBER arrives from around the line of tents, hurriedly trudging through the snow. He bends over, hands on knees, gasping for breath in the thin air.

FIRST CLIMBER
What...? What is it?

SECOND CLIMBER
Come on.... come... with me...

Second Climber leads, heading back the way he came. First Climber grudgingly follows.

AROUND THE MOUNTAINSIDE

The two climbers rise over a low EMBANKMENT, both short of breath. First Climber peers forward...

Ahead, other MEMBERS of the CLIMBING PARTY, their GUIDES included, are crowded together with their backs to us.

SECOND CLIMBER
You got to see this.

FIRST CLIMBER
See what?

SECOND CLIMBER
Don't know what it is... you've just... got to take a look.

They make their way through the grouping of other climbers... Towards the center where all attention is focused.

First Climber furrows his brow as he approaches...

On a wide patch of BARE STONE jutting from the snow line, ONE GUIDE is crouched, also with his back to us. He's struggling... looks like he's trying to LIFT something...?

The guide gives up, stepping back... And as he moves away, we SEE what he was trying to lift...

Imbedded half-way into solid stone...
Sticking straight up towards Heaven...
The **SURFER'S SILVER SURFBOARD**, gleaming in the sunlight.

FADE TO BLACK