

THE STAND

by

Dave Kajganich

based on the novel by Stephen King

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FIRST DRAFT POLISH
(Single Film Version)

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"The world is indeed full of peril and in it there are many dark places. But still there is much that is fair. And though in all lands, love is now mingled with grief, it still grows, perhaps, the greater."

-- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

-- Abraham Lincoln

"The West is the best.
Get here, and we'll do the rest."

-- Jim Morrison, "The End"

(NOTE: I am in the process of building for the script a secret visual history of the United States from the arrival of Europeans at Plymouth to the killing of Osama Bin Laden. Over a hundred critical moments will be given markers inside the story.

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The idea is that, while some history buffs may realize right away that this trail of breadcrumbs is there, for most people, these markers will go by totally unnoticed until critics, bloggers, and historians begin decoding the film.

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As soon as it's finished, I will distribute a key that describes and explains each marker and its significance.)

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FADE IN:

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

A lone figure walks the vast sun-blasted flats of the Sonoran Desert. He carries no pack and wears no shade in the heat of the afternoon. There is no trail; he just walks out among the dust devils, in a denim jacket and rattlesnake boots. His hair hangs loose to his shoulders. And he is smiling -- always smiling -- his face at once handsome and horrible. This is RANDALL FLAGG (40s).

*
*
*

CUT TO:

IN HILLIER COUNTRY

He tops a scrub-covered slope and sees, in the distance, the long low skyline of Las Vegas. He stops to take it in, his eyes finding the Strip with its menagerie of false monuments wavering in the heat.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

Flagg comes down the Strip, moving through crowds of tourists. When someone brushes up against him, he closes his eyes and takes in the sensation of human contact.

*
*

He passes all the scaled-down, faux cityscapes -- New York, Paris, Rome -- and walks toward his destination with an unhurried, even royal pace: the black pyramid of the Luxor.

*

INT. LUXOR CASINO - CARD HALL - DAY

He comes through the slot machines into Luxor's grand Card Hall, where blackjack tables are lined in rows. The room is huge, high-ceilinged, its pillars painted gold. It is alive with people winning and losing fortunes.

Flagg walks through the room, a procession of one, looking from person to person until finally he sees: An empty blackjack table on a kind of dais in back of the room.

The dealer (30s) nods professionally as Flagg approaches. His name tag reads LLOYD. Flagg settles onto a seat.

FLAGG

I'm here, Lloyd. Took a while,
but here I am.

LLOYD

Good morning, sir.

Flagg pulls out of his pocket a hundred dollar bill and lays it on the table. It's old, but in mint condition. Lloyd looks it over. It has the Federal Reserve seal "K."

LLOYD

'63. You don't see these every
day. You sure you want to give me
this? Must be a collectable --

Flagg grins at the man, never breaking eye contact.

FLAGG

It's a new day, Lloyd. I'm
collecting other things.

*
*

So Lloyd counts out the chips, and slides them to Flagg, who simply slides them all back into betting position.

LLOYD

Very good, sir.

FLAGG

How long you been out here?

LLOYD

A year and change.

Lloyd deals and turns over his up card. Jack of Spades. Flagg doesn't look at his cards, but signals for a third.

FLAGG

Plan to die here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LLOYD

I plan to *retire* here, which I
hope comes first. You never know.

FLAGG

Oh, I do --

Lloyd looks at him, not sure he's understood him right.

LLOYD

Do we know each other?

FLAGG

Not in the sense you mean.

LLOYD

What other sense is there?

FLAGG

You're not a nice guy, Lloyd. You
have a past.

Lloyd looks around to see if anyone else is hearing this.

LLOYD

You know my old man or something?

(acidly)

I'm clean. I have a dealer's
license now. It's legit. I
started over.

Flagg grins again.

FLAGG

Me too. I've got opportunities
now I never dreamed of. Everyone
will. Everyone who lives.

He turns over his cards, one after another. All three
are blank. Lloyd looks at them, then at Flagg, whose
eyes buzz with bright energy.

LLOYD

What did you do with the cards I
gave you, sir?

FLAGG

I like this room.

Lloyd looks again and sees Flagg's cards now have a kind
of Rorschach image of an eye on each one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG

Something's coming, Lloyd.
Something's riding the wind.
Maybe you feel it.

*

Lloyd seems mesmerized by the cards. He can't look away.

FLAGG

Some of us are gettin' reborn.
Made pure. Put right. Believe me
now. I'm just starting to
understand it myself.

*

*

*

*

LLOYD

'It'?

*

*

FLAGG

I'm Randall Flagg, Lloyd.

LLOYD

Yes, Mr. Flagg. Yes, sir.

FLAGG

And I'm about to offer you a job.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARNETTE BAR MILL - ROLLING MILL - DAY

Workers are spilling out of the gates of an East Texas steel mill and heading to the parking lot, hard hats and lunch pails in their hands. A few guys running in late for the next shift are catcalled by the ones coming out.

STU REDMAN (40) emerges from the group, pulling on his jacket. He moves with the guys, but he's got the energy of a loner -- "old-time tough" as the saying goes.

VIC PALFREY (40s) catches up to him.

VIC PALFREY

Hey, Stu, you goin' to Hap's -- ?

STU

Why not. I'm off tomorrow.

VIC PALFREY

Same here. Cutting our hours
right to the end, huh? Assholes.
-- Working on your place?

Stu reaches his beat-up Ford truck, an empty gun rack and a sticker in the cab -- a Calvin pissing on the Mazda logo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

Gotta get the roof planked.
Weather's coming in.

VIC PALFREY

You been thinking much about
after? -- I heard Nucor in
Jewett's gonna have a few spots
opening up in the rebar plant.

Stu throws his stuff in the back.

STU

Heard that too. I think I'll give
the guys with kids a head start.

VIC PALFREY

Man, half those guys are gonna sit
back and suck off of Uncle Sam for
a while. You watch.

STU

That's not the half I'm talkin'
about. See you over there.

*

Vic waves him off. Stu climbs in and cranks up his
truck.

*

EXT. DOWNTOWN (ARNETTE, TX) - DAY

Stu drives through downtown Arnette.

It's a small town with a quarter of its population just
coming off the second shift. Stu switches on his RADIO,
and scans stations:

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

*'... a tropical destination to be
revealed on the Adzillatron'...
'gun given to the boy as a
birthday gift'... 'too big to
fail'... 'no no no'... 'yours from
Bank of America; You're welcome.'*

*

Finally the OPENING CHORDS of Cream's "White Room" sound.
He cranks it.

CREAM (V.O.)

*In the White Room, with black
curtains, near the station --*

*

*

*

Main Street is as busy as it gets with people running
errands before the stores close.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Most have Christmas decorations up, but they hang like bad news in the windows.

*

EXT. HAPSCOMB'S TEXACO (ARNETTE, TX) - DUSK

At a two-pump gas station half a mile outside Arnette, a big yellow Texaco sign is turned on. Stu pulls in.

*

*

INT. HAPSCOMB'S TEXACO (ARNETTE, TX) - DUSK

Inside, four men sit drinking around a metal desk that serves as the checkout counter for the place. BILL "HAP" HAPSCOMB (50), in greasy coveralls, presides.

BILL HAPSCOMB

They'll sell it again. Mills that big don't go under.

VIC PALFREY

All I'm saying is last time they were painting, cleaning up. None of that's going on now.

NORM BRUETT (40), the only one in a button-down shirt, finishes his Shiner and gets two more from the cold case. He tosses one to Vic, who is using a coin to scratch off instant lottery tickets.

Stu is only half-listening. The bigger part of his brain is enjoying the majestic evening coming on. He takes a swig of his beer, looking out at the darkening rangeland. The only thing out there is Route 93. In a moment, a pair of headlights appears on the horizon.

*

*

*

*

*

VIC PALFREY

Nobody's coming to East Texas to do business. Not until we get a mayor who understands something other than running for mayor.

*

BILL HAPSCOMB

You mean our honorable Mr. Hollis J. Two-Counts-of-Misuse-of-Funds? That idiot's a big turd in a little bowl if ever there was one.

Stu watches the car. When the headlights slide onto the shoulder then jerk back to the road, he sits up a bit.

VIC PALFREY

He's up again next year. Shit, Hap, you should run.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL HAPSCOM

Naw. None of your union guys'd
come out for me. They don't know
me. It's Stu should run.

NORM BRUETT

I'd rather be king than mayor.

STU

I'd rather be hunting whitetail,
actually.

They all chuckle, except Stu. The car is a dusty Chevy
wagon that's been driven hard. It reaches town and aims
itself at the Texaco.

STU

You better turn off the pumps,
Hap.

The car jumps the curb into the lot and doesn't stop.
They see the driver's head roll loosely and hit the
windshield, starring the glass.

NORM BRUETT

Holy Christ!

Just as it plows through the pumps, Stu reaches past Hap
and hits the cut off switches.

The pumps shatter through the front windows into the
little store. The car's undercarriage gets hung up on
the island in a burst of sparks and jerks to a stop. *

BILL HAPSCOM

Jesus, the fella must be shit-
the-bed drunk! *

STU

Look at the windows.

There's blood on the inside of the car. A lot of it.

EXT. HAPSCOM'S TEXACO (ARNETTE, TX) - DUSK

Stu hustles out to the wreck. The driver door squeals
open and CHARLES CAMPION (24) spills out, a bloody mess.

VIC PALFREY

Whoa!

STU

Call an ambulance.

Vic runs back into the station. Stu approaches the man.
He's got his eyes closed and his nose is leaking bloody
snot. He reaches out blindly. Stu takes his arm. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMPION

The clock went red. They're all
D-E-A-D down there.

STU

You're okay, buddy. We got you.

CAMPION

My girls --

Stu looks up into the station wagon, but he can't see.
He gestures for Norm and Hap to look.

STU

Take her easy. We're checking
now.

Norm opens the passenger door to look inside. He GAGS. *
A woman is crumpled in the passenger seat, a toddler in
her arms. They're dead, covered in snot and blood and
vomit. The woman's face is turned away, but the
toddler's eyes are popped open wide like a doll's.

STU

Check the back.

NORM BRUETT

Aw, Stu --

STU

Check the back. I don't know how
many he means.

CAMPION

Redman --

Stu turns to Campion in disbelief. Campion's eyes are *
open now, looking at Stu, pushed out like his brain is *
swelling. Beside them, the wagon's cooling ENGINE TICKS. *

CAMPION

It's you, isn't it? I made it.
She said you'd know what to do --

STU

Just take it easy. Lay back.

Norm opens the wagon's gate. Nothing. He closes it and *
sees: CA plates and a pass for Ft. Irwin Army Base. *

Hap comes over and crouches beside Stu, gaping at Campion
who starts raving, his speech beginning to slur.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMPION

*If the gates are closed, I'm gonna
crash through -- !*

BILL HAPSCOM

You feel the heat off him -- His
brains must be frying in his head!

CAMPION

Baby can be a 'seepin' in the car --

In the distance, they HEAR a SIREN coming.

CAMPION

Horsey-Ride?!

But Stu is watching Campion's eyes. They've started to
actually sweat blood. Then Campion starts seizing so
violently Stu can barely hold onto him.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE

The ambulance has arrived, as well as a squad car. As
EMTs load Campion into a gurney, a cop goes through his
wallet and finds his driver's license and Army ID.

EMT

'Charles Campion.' Ring any
bells?

Stu watches Campion being loaded into the back of the
ambulance. He shakes his head.

EXT. STU REDMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stu comes up a long twin-rut drive that ends at a small
cabin. He's in the process of fixing it up. Part of the
roof is covered with blue tarps, CRINKLING in the wind.

He shuts off his truck and sits in the cab, thinking all
of this through. Inside, his DOG -- a blue heeler --
begins to BARK. Stu gets out and goes toward his dark
door.

STU

Get down, boy. It's only me.

CUT TO:

EXT. FT. IRWIN ARMY BASE - APPROACH ROAD - NIGHT

A white SUV comes down an access road ending at the gates of Ft. Irwin. Six news vans are parked in front. Reporters see the SUV and jump out, cameras coming on.

*

INT. UNMARKED SUV - BACK - NIGHT

COL. STARKEY (50) rides in back, alone. As the base gates are being opened, REPORTERS swarm the SUV.

REPORTER #1	REPORTER #2
<i>Can you tell us why the</i>	<i>Sir, what is your name and</i>
<i>base was locked down today?</i>	<i>rank?!</i>

But in two seconds, the SUV is through. The gate closes behind it. Only then does Starkey pull out of the satchel beside him a full-face gas mask. He puts it on.

CUT TO:

ON VIDEO

Live security cameras show the rooms and corridors of a large underground lab complex. Everyone inside is dead. Nothing moves except a single centrifuge, which spins and spins with no one left to turn it off.

*

INT. FT. IRWIN ARMY BASE - SECURITY HUB - NIGHT

Starkey watches it spin. He's standing at a monitor in the base's security hub with LT. COL. CREIGHTON (40s).

COL. STARKEY
How many?

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
112 total. The accident happened at 02:37. Everyone's accounted for except Charles Champion. Private. He got out with his wife and kid before the base was sealed. We're praying we find them first.

COL. STARKEY
Praying?

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
Yes, sir. That we find them out of gas and dead in their car. With the windows rolled up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hands Col. Starkey a blow-up of Campion's military ID.

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
Elevator guard, Project Blue
detail. No clearance. There was
an alarm glitch. Nothing mag-
locked. We realized he slipped
through at 0900. He doesn't know
what he's got, just that it's
contagious.

COL. STARKEY
No chance they made it out clean?

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
He probably thought they did. But
communicability's 99.4%, with
latency under an hour --

*
*

There is ONE KNOCK and LT. COL. HAMMER (35) comes in.

LT. COL. HAMMER
Sirs. Private Campion's turned
up. DOA at a community hospital
ER in Leon County, Texas.

*
*

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
Texas?!

Starkey's look is one of epic regret as he quickly begins
to calculate the coming apocalypse.

LT. COL. HAMMER
He crashed his car in a town
called Arnette. All dead.

*

Lt. Col. Creighton wipes his face, furious. Lt. Col.
Hammer looks queasy. Only Col. Starkey remains composed.

COL. STARKEY
He didn't get to Texas on whatever
gas was in his car. It's out.
He's crossed people's paths.
We've got to assume at least one
of them was on his way to an
airport.

*
*
*
*
*

LT. COL. CREIGHTON
Jesus --

COL. STARKEY
(horribly, simply)
It's the holidays.

*

He shakes his head at the titanic bad luck of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COL. STARKEY
I'm calling it. We're in 'Shroud
Protocol' now, gentlemen. Repeat
it back.

LT. COL. HAMMER
'Shroud,' sir.

COL. STARKEY
That's a command under my
authority. You know what comes
next. You know. God bless you,
son.

Lt. Col. Hammer looks back at him tearing up. He
salutes.

CUT TO:

DREAM - EXT. THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS - FLATIRONS - DAY

A mountain peak rises up from garlands of Western Pine, a
rough pyramid of sandstone. It's an iconic Rocky
Mountain image. An old woman's voice says:

MOTHER ABIGAIL'S (V.O.)
Stuart.

CUT TO:

INT. STU REDMAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM/KITCHEN - DAWN
(REALITY)

Stu wakes from this dream to his PHONE RINGING. It
STOPS, then STARTS AGAIN.

He gets up and goes to the kitchen to get it. He's built
for sports, though he's not in shape, with a little beer
gut. But he's comfortable in his skin.

*
*

STU
Yeah --

He starts a gas burner for coffee, lighting the kitchen
match off a strip of sandpaper nailed to the wall there.

BILL HAPSCOM (V.O.)
*Stu, it's Hap. I'm up in
Braintree. At the hospital.*

If Stu wasn't quite awake before, he is now.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL HAPSCOM (V.O.)
I brought Vic and Lila in about an hour ago. Neither one could drive they were so sick. My wife's watching their kids.

(beat)
 -- That deal last night, maybe.

STU
 I'm feeling fine. What about Norm?

BILL HAPSCOM (V.O.)
 (lowering his voice)
I got it, Stu, whatever the hell it is. I'm sneezing. I got a headache so bad it feels like my head is blowing out.

*

STU
 Then you're where you should be. Tell them about last night, Hap. The doctors need to know, okay --

BILL HAPSCOM (V.O.)
I can't find Norm. He's not answering at home or down at the shop -- I mean, Christ on a pony, we were just trying to help that son of a bitch!

STU
Tell them. I'm on my way --

He hangs up and realizes something. He looks around.

STU
 Bud -- ?

*

He steps into the living room and sees: The dog is lying by the front door, dead, his snout foamy with blood.

*

*

INT. STU'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAWN

Stu is in the shower, the hot water turned up high. A faded Marines tattoo is visible on his shoulder. He scrubs every inch of skin -- under his nails, even his tongue.

*

*

EXT. BRUETT ELECTRONICS (ARNETTE, TX) - DAY

Stu drives through downtown Arnette and parks in front of Bruett Electronics. The radios and TVs are on inside, but the door's locked. Stu knocks, but no one comes. *

INT. BRUETT ELECTRONICS - BACK HALLWAY/OFFICE - DAY *

Stu finds the back alley door unlocked and steps inside. The NOISE of the display models up front, all set to DIFFERENT STATIONS, is an eerie jumble. He's about to call again when he sees blood on the floor in the office door.

He finds Norm facedown under his desk, coughing up blood and mucus. He turns his head to try to look up at Stu, like a hog in a slaughter pen. *

CUT TO:

EXT. STORM TUNNEL (LAS VEGAS) - DAY *

Flagg and Lloyd Henreid sit in beach chairs out in the open sun in one of the city's big concrete storm drains having a kind of picnic. The city goes on around them. *

They sit a few yards from where the channel disappears under the strip. A rat has wandered out, curious. Cars whiz over the tunnel, beyond which they can see the top third of the Luxor's pyramid. *

FLAGG *

How many shopping days 'til
Christmas, Lloyd? *

LLOYD *

Nine, I think. *

FLAGG *

We don't even have that many. You
can stock up today. Get you a
suite so you can wait it out and
watch the view. *

Lloyd sees a second rat has come out of the tunnel. It comes a little further out into the sun. Flagg tosses the rats some of the chicken he's eating. *

LLOYD *

Who are you? I mean, where did
you come from? *

Flagg thinks. When he answers, it is with amused candor. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG

A couple weeks back, I was walking
the night highway, the 51 across
the Idaho border. That's the
first thing I remember.

Lloyd looks at him.

FLAGG

Who I was before that is
immaterial, Lloyd. Though I think
I was a carpenter. I had two
splinters and varnish on my hands.

Flagg laughs as if this is funny. Lloyd squints.

LLOYD

What are you going to do now?

FLAGG

Walk. In the desert. I'll leave
in the morning. I need to start
broadcasting. I taught myself how
last night.

LLOYD

Broadcasting?

He watches Lloyd closely when he says:

FLAGG

You didn't think that dream about
you banging Catwoman in the back
of your old man's burning Chevelle
was just *psychology*, did ya,
Lloyd? It was a gift. Me to you.
My Number Two. My aide-de-camp.

Lloyd reddens, realizing all the implications of this.

Flagg laughs with joy at this confirmation. A few
tourists walking across the bridge above them look down.

FLAGG

It did work. Damn! I'm not
saying it wasn't hard. I fucking
gave myself a hell of a headache.
I'm gonna need some practice, but
I did it. I made it and I sent
it.

(beat)

Now I gotta see what else the fuck
I can do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LLOYD
Practice for what?

FLAGG
For *after*. We're gettin' ready.

Flagg makes a pyramid of his hands.

FLAGG
This is the church, Lloyd. Here
is the steeple.

He concentrates on it with everything he's got, getting better at this magic every hour. At the apex of his fingers, a small column of grey light shoots up, faintly visible in the harsh Nevada daylight.

FLAGG
Time to open the doors and call in
the people.

He smiles. Then the light goes out.

On the overpass above the storm tunnels, a trio of alarmed tourists has seen this. They begin taking pictures of Flagg. He waves to them, unconcerned; they'll be dead in a few weeks. He unbuttons his shirt down to his belt buckle and reclines even further back, ready for a nap now.

CUT TO:

INT. BRAINTREE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Stu is in a hospital gown now, sitting on an exam table when DR. DENNINGER (35) comes in.

Out in the corridor, Stu can see one of the LOCAL DOCTORS (60) being given an N95 respirator. The man looks scared. Then Denninger shuts the door, blocking out the image.

DR. DENNINGER
I'm Jon Denninger, Mr. Redman.
I'm with the CDC, not the
hospital.

STU
Federal?

Dr. Denninger nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I'd like to know what's going on
with my buddies.

DR. DENNINGER

I'm actually here to talk about
what's going on with you.

A beat. Dr. Denninger looks at him carefully.

DR. DENNINGER

At the moment, your participation
is voluntary. I'm here to try to --

STU

Participation in what?

DR. DENNINGER

Your blood work shows the same
bacteria that made your friends
ill, but you've got no symptoms,
even after ten times the
incubation period. We need to
know why that is.

Stu nods once, unsure if this is good news or just news.

STU

That mean you know *what* it is?

DR. DENNINGER

There are aspects of this I can't
discuss, but I can tell you we
need to move urgently.

*

STU

What do you need me to do?

DR. DENNINGER

We have a facility out on Long
Island, the best lab for this sort
of thing. We've got a jet holding
for you out at the airstrip.

(beat)

You have family in the area?

STU

Parents died fifteen years ago. A
house fire. No siblings.

*

*

DR. DENNINGER

Children?

Stu shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. DENNINGER

Were you in close contact with
anyone outside of this list after
you had contact with patient zero?

He hands Stu a sheet. It has a list of names on it.

STU

No. Look, I saw what happened to
Mr. Champion. I'm not going
anywhere until I can see my
friends. They're all here in this
building: Bill Hapscom, Vic
Palfrey, Norm Bruett, Vic's wife --

DR. DENNINGER

Your friends are dead, Mr. Redman.

A beat. Stu is floored. He gets slowly to his feet.

DR. DENNINGER

And just since we've been talking,
more cases are coming in. More
people you know, I'm sure. We
need to move.

*
*

STU

(re: his friends)
All of them?

DR. DENNINGER

I read you served in the armed
forces, so I know you care about
the welfare of your country. This
is that big. We need a lucky
break, Mr. Redman, and we need it
very quickly.

(beat)
All it takes is one.

EXT. BRAINTREE AIRSTRIP - TARMAC - DAWN

Stu, now in a full biohazard suit, is escorted by guards
out to a small CDC jet. The sun is almost up.

INT. CDC JET - DAWN

Everyone has taken seats away from one another. The SEAT
BELT ALARM CHIMES. Stu looks out the window.

STU'S POV

As the plane taxis, he can see a few military trucks parked beyond the fence along the airport road. As they take off and climb, however, he sees it's not just a few vehicles, but dozens, some with gun platforms. They are starting to make a perimeter around his town. He yells over to the guard closest to him.

STU
What is this? WHAT ARE YOU
MOBILIZING FOR?!

*
*

The guard looks at him, unable to hear him over the ENGINE NOISE and his MASK. So Stu yells louder:

*
*

STU
THE PEOPLE! WHAT'S GOING TO
HAPPEN TO THE PEOPLE?

*
*
*

But the guard just looks away. Stu sits back in his seat, truly terrified now.

*

CUT TO:

"THIS IS THE END" MONTAGE

Across the country, people gather at SHOPPING MALLS, WORSHIP SERVICES, ARENA FOOTBALL GAMES, SCHOOL PAGEANTS, HAPPY HOURS, HOLIDAY PARTIES, BONFIRES, etc., charting a typical American Saturday night. It's a LOUD country: CAR HORNS, MUZAK, CHEERING CROWDS, and HOLY SINGING dominate.

It is also a country in transit. As Col. Starkey anticipated, crowds also surge through AIRPORTS, TRAIN STATIONS and BUS DEPOTS as holiday trips begin ramping up.

The fact that no one understands this is the end of the party -- the last weekend before mass die-offs begin -- gives these images grace and pathos.

FLASH ON FLAGG'S EYE

*

hovers like a black sun over Vegas.

*

CUT TO:

INT. DELTA FLIGHT - FIRST CLASS - DAY

LARRY UNDERWOOD (35) is startled out of a bad dream.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's on a red-eye flight in first class, badly hung over. *
He yawns, wincing, and sees the YOUNG WOMAN (25) beside *
him has out a laptop. She's looking at him, blushing. *

YOUNG WOMAN

Sorry! I thought it was you.
First an upgrade and now this.

He looks at her laptop and sees she's watching a clip *
from "American Idol": Larry himself sits on the stage *
playing guitar in a shaft of gold light. As a camera *
circles around him, he smiles into it and croons. *

Larry gives her his best sleepy smile. He's got a
rakish, square-jawed charm, and it is always on.

LARRY

Following the show, huh?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, yeah. I'm rooting for that
little girl, actually.

LARRY

What a voice, huh? She's kind of
an asshole though. Did I miss
breakfast?

He takes a pill out of his pocket and dry swallows it.

LARRY

Vitamins --

Behind them, someone CHAIN SNEEZES. He drops his voice.

LARRY

To be honest, I'm hung over. *
Comes with the fifteen minutes, I
guess.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, I think you're gonna get more
than fifteen minutes.

She's flirting now. Out the window, the Rockies scroll
by silently underneath them.

YOUNG WOMAN

You can't tell me who wins, can
you?

LARRY

You'll find out when I do. But
you're not rooting for me anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG WOMAN
So change my mind --

INT. DELTA FLIGHT - BATHROOM - DAY

Larry has the Young Woman pinned against the sink in the tiny first-class bathroom and is screwing the hell out of her. Beside them, the "RETURN TO YOUR SEATS" SIGN PINGS.

LARRY
(quiet, playfully)
Bitch likes that, huh -- Huh --

*
*
*

INT. DELTA FLIGHT - FIRST CLASS - DAY

Larry follows the woman out of the bathroom and back to their seats. They are both rumpled and grinning. But everyone is trying to see out the right side of the plane. They retake their seats and look out the window. Larry spots another jet to the north.

*
*
*

LARRY'S POV

It's a huge Airbus, and it's in some kind of hard bank, arcing through the sky in their direction. It gets closer and closer, then frighteningly so.

BACK TO SCENE

LARRY
What's it doing?

They watch with mounting alarm as it races toward them. CALL BUTTONS are pushed. Suddenly, their own plane begins to climb, trying to get above it. Larry and the Young Woman scramble to get on their seat belts. Drinks spill. An overhead compartment comes open.

Then there is a chorus of GASPS as the Airbus passes just a few hundred feet under them.

*

EXT. DELTA FLIGHT'S AIRSPACE - DAY

The Airbus falls in a sickening arc and crashes into the ground, a hundred miles east of the Rockies. It explodes. From 30,000 feet, it's just a tiny stitch of fire in the patchwork of snowy fields that stretch on to the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT - A TERMINAL - DUSK

*
*

Larry comes off the jetway to a scene of chaos.

Thousands of people are crammed into the terminal. The Young Woman deplanes and stands beside him, blown away.

*

As Larry's flight deplanes, many are sneezing now. Invisible pathways of communicability open up in all directions around them. The plague jumps silently from person to person, zigging up and down lines, through crowds...

*

A BUSINESSMAN with a Jersey accent waiting to charge his cell phone sees Larry's expression at the pandemonium.

BUSINESSMAN

All flights are grounded. They're letting 'em land but not take off. Same thing at JFK.

YOUNG WOMAN

Just in New York?

BUSINESSMAN

Everywhere.

LARRY

What's the reason?

Larry watches as a WOMAN (70s) collapses at the next gate. Some around her step in to help. Others turn away.

BUSINESSMAN

They haven't given one. I hope you're home, pal. You're gonna be here a while.

*

The Young Woman appears at his elbow.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm in Astoria. Let's share a cab.

*

Larry, distracted, but also uninterested, starts walking.

LARRY

That's okay. Nice to meet you --

The Young Woman glares at his back. Then she shouts:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG WOMAN

'Nice meeting you'? Are you
kidding? Asshole! I hope that
little girl wipes the *floor* with
you.

*

But Larry doesn't turn back.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORIENT POINT, NY - DUSK

*

A trio of CDC vehicles comes through the old Long Island
towns of Stovington, which is as quaintly New England as
any up the coast. People's holiday lights are coming on.

*

*

*

The convoy gets as far out on the point as possible and
then pulls up to a private dock where a ferry is waiting.

*

*

NEWS BROADCASTER (V.O.)

*

*Contrary to previous flu seasons,
the CDC is recommending not
seeking vaccinations at this time.*

*

*

*

*

(beat)

*

*'We're dealing with an especially
contagious strain this year,' says
Pat Frato, Chief of the CDC's
Influenza Division. So our strong
advice is to stay at home with bed
rest and fluids, and out of places
where infected people may be
gathering. Traveling over the
holidays, in particular, is being
discouraged. This year, we're
urging people to consider
'staycations' and cancel any
unnecessary trips --*

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After a mile of cold, black water, there is a small
island with a compound of massive, slit-windowed
buildings that look like some hybrid of hospital and
prison.

*

*

*

*

*

INT. STOVINGTON PLAGUE CENTER - QUARANTINE ROOM - NIGHT

Stu is in scrubs, in a porcelain-lined room, promoted to
something truly top secret now. There's just a bed,
toilet, chair, and an airlock door. DR. DEITZ (55) comes
in with an orderly, ELDER (35). A NATIONAL GUARDSMAN
(25) waits in an anteroom.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. DEITZ

Mr. Redman. I'm Richard Deitz.
I'm taking you downstairs now for
blood draws and a brain scan.
Then we'll let you get some sleep.

*

In the anteroom, Stu sees a hamster cage. The hamster is
inside, running on an exercise wheel.

*

STU

No.

Elder looks at Deitz, then at the National Guardsman.

DR. DEITZ

You object to a brain scan?

STU

I object to being locked in. I
didn't agree to that.

*

DR. DEITZ

It's for everyone's safety.

STU

Tell you what: You want a brain
scan, bring me my clothes. Let me
walk out of here, and you have my
word, I'll walk right back in.

DR. DEITZ

What'll that prove?

STU

That I can.

(beat)

I'll wear a biosuit, whatever you
want, but given the shape furball
is in next door, I think we both
know I'm not catching.

*

*

*

DR. DEITZ

We don't know that for sure.

But Stu stares Deitz down, a standoff. Deitz sighs.

DR. DEITZ

You just flew 1200 miles. You can
object all you want, but in the
end, you're going to help us
because it's the right thing to
do.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

Maybe. But let's get one thing straight: I stop listening when people like you start talking about doing the 'right thing.'

(beat)

You've got no right to detain me.

*

DR. DEITZ

Actually, I do. Given the seriousness of this release --

STU

Release? What did you people do?

DR. DEITZ

-- and in the interest of public safety --

Stu stands. Elder takes the smallest step forward.

*

STU

What the *fuck* did you people do?!

DR. DEITZ

-- I *can* compel you to cooperate, under the terms of the Biosecurity Protection Act --

STU

Bullshit --

DR. DEITZ

-- which was signed into law in an emergency session of Congress two hours ago. Don't make me have to.

Stu gives Deitz a big Texas smile and says:

STU

You know what? Keep my clothes.

He tries to pass them, but Elder steps in his path. Stu shoves him, but the Guardsman comes in and TASES Stu. He staggers to his knees, taking the volts.

STU

Stop --

ELDER

Again!

So the Guardsman gives him a second jolt. Stu goes dark.

CUT TO:

INT. FT. IRWIN ARMY BASE - ELEVATOR/LABS - DUSK

Col. Starkey rides an elevator for a long trip down. He peels off his sweaty gloves and gas mask, relieved. The elevator's intercom CRACKLES TO LIFE. *

LT. COL. CREIGHTON (V.O.)

(quietly)

Bill. What the hell are you doing?

COL. STARKEY

Read the brief on my desk.
London. Hong Kong. Madrid.
Zurich. Bogota.

LT. COL. CREIGHTON (V.O.)

It's not over. We've got innings left. You're needed up here. *

Col. Starkey speaks without a hint of fear or indecision.

COL. STARKEY

If only he hadn't run, Len. Just a scared kid, running away.

LT. COL. CREIGHTON

Bill --

When the door opens, Starkey steps out into the dead lab complex. Two dozen bodies are grouped around the elevator doors, the only exit. He has to step over them. *

It's eerie, tomb silent except for a TINY MOTOR somewhere. He follows the SOUND down a hall, stepping over bodies and overriding the part of his brain screaming at him not to stay, not to breathe. *

He goes on until he finds what he's looking for: the spinning centrifuge. He pulls the plug and it slowly winds to a satisfying halt. He glances up at a CCTV camera, which is trained on him now, following his movements.

Then Starkey sneezes. He looks amazed. It's this fast?

He goes and stands in front of a camera in the corridor, next to a dead scientist with a sign around her neck reading: "IT WORKS. ANY QUESTIONS?" *

He takes out his service revolver, puts it in his mouth, and fires. *

CUT TO:

EXT. UNLV - THOMAS AND MACK CENTER - NIGHT

A UNLV SECURITY GUARD (40s) drives his golf cart around the campus arena, stuffing his face with a fast-food burrito. He is on his cell phone.

SECURITY GUARD

They're saying not to go to the
ER, babe. Just -- look, just wait
until I get home, all right.

He's about to drive off toward Cox Pavilion when he sees:
One of the arena's doors is standing open somehow.

INT. THOMAS AND MACK CENTER - WILL CALL - NIGHT

He comes in with his flashlight up, completely puzzled as he can now hear what sounds like a FULL PRACTICE going on out in the arena. BALLS are DRIBBLING, HITTING BACKBOARDS and SWISHING NETS. He heads down an access ramp up toward the court. A few of the lights are on in there.

INT. THOMAS AND MACK CENTER - MAIN COURT - NIGHT

Lloyd is standing courtside, watching, when the Security Guard comes up beside him, his mouth slack.

SECURITY GUARD

What the fuck?

He's so taken aback by what he's seeing, he barely notices Lloyd. Or the man and woman sitting up in the bleachers. Flagg's first acolytes.

LLOYD

He's just practicing --

OUT ON THE COURT: Flagg is on the center line, head back, hands raised like a televangelist. He's got four dozen balls in motion. He's controlling most of the vectors, so there is something ordered in the chaos, and mesmerizing.

CLOSE ON BALLS

are whizzing past Flagg's face.

FLASH ON: An almost subliminal image of an American flag, all its stars upside down. Then gone. A national reset is about to happen.

ANOTHER ANGLE

But then the Guard realizes something even more bizarre:
Flagg is not standing on the center line. He is floating
two feet above it.

Lloyd looks over at the man and tells him, simply:

SECURITY GUARD
My wife. This morning. She
dreamed about him --

LLOYD
Go get her.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

A LONG BEAT OF BLACK. Then MURKY UNDERWATER SOUNDS
begin.

FADE IN:

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. HOOVER DAM/LAS VEGAS STRIP - STU'S
POV - DUSK

Stu surfaces in a large desert lake. But he can't keep
his head above water. He's behind the great wall of
Hoover Dam with its bleached Deco towers.

FLASH ON: The black pyramid of the Luxor hotel in Vegas.

FLASH ON: Sunset light falls on a vast fountain complex
drained of water. A man's hand reaches out to it.

FLAGG (V.O.)
Come. Cibola. Seven-in-One.

It is Flagg's reassuring voice -- half-devil, half-saint.
He's gotten very good at these broadcasts.

FLASH ON: A closeup of Flagg's eye, its pupil slowly and
hypnotically dilating until it's almost iris wide.

Then Stu is underwater again, being sucked down. He's
pulled into dark tunnels, shaken and forced through, but
then he is shot out of the epic face of the dam in a
breathtaking release. Rather than fall, he ascends.

FLASH ON: With a wave of Flagg's hand, the fountains
begin to fill. All the lights of Vegas come on in the
dusk including the huge spotlight at the apex of Luxor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG (V.O.)
Come. All of you.

*

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - STU'S ROOM - FIRST LIGHT
 (REALITY)

Stu wakes from the intensity of this dream startled and disoriented. He is in rough shape. He's lost twenty pounds. His beard's grown in, and he has a junkie's worth of needle marks from months of IVs and tests.

He goes to the toilet and scoops up a little bit of the water that's still in the very bottom. Overhead, only one of the room's five fluorescent tubes is lit. He drinks.

*

When he hears a NOISE in the ANTEROOM, he gets up quick as he can and positions himself by the room's only chair. The airlock door opens and Elder, the orderly, enters.

*

*

There is something off about him as well. His hair looks unwashed, but he has fold marks in his spotless nurse's uniform as if he's just taken it out of its plastic. He squints at Stu. Capillaries in his eyes have already begun bursting. He speaks as if every word hurts.

*

ELDER
 Sit down, Redman.

Behind him, Stu can see a bulky cart with long tubes.

STU
 I heard shots last night. More trouble?

*

Elder doesn't answer. He just points to the chair.

STU
 I need to eat, okay? I need water. I've been getting half of what I need, maybe less. I don't see anyone for days at a time --

*

ELDER
 We've got a test now. You can eat after. Sit down.

A beat. Stu shifts his weight over the balls of his feet.

*

*

STU
 That's a blood transfuser. I'm not wrong, am I?

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elder puts a hand on something in his pocket. Stu sees.

STU
(carefully)
If our blood types aren't
compatible, that'll kill us both.
You know that, right? It's not my
blood that's immune.

*
*
*

The orderly loses his facade of calm.

ELDER
You're O Positive. I'm A
Positive. I checked. Now sit the
fuck down!

STU
Look, I'm not a doctor, I'm just
some redneck, but about this,
you're *dreaming* --

*

ELDER
Aren't we all?

It's an odd thing to say, but there's no time to ponder
it. Elder steps forward, taking the taser from his
pocket.

But Stu is quicker. He brings the chair around in a
vicious arc. He's weak, but he understands the physics
of it. The chair hits Elder so hard a leg breaks off.
He falls down yelling, waving the taser.

*

Stu tries to get past him, but takes a hit to the calf
and stumbles. Then Elder is on top of him, trying to put
the taser under Stu's chin, ZAPPING it over and over.

Stu knocks it out of Elder's hand and uses the last
weapon he's got: He headbutts Elder twice, breaking his
nose. Elder recoils.

*

Stu reaches out for the taser, but it's a foot away under
the bed. He strains for it, but Elder is on top of him.
And then something unexpected happens: The taser slides
across the dirty tiles and into Stu's hand as if called.

*
*

Stu only allows himself a split-second of what the fuck,
then wastes no time using it. He jams it up under
Elder's chin and ZAPS it. Twice. Because: payback's a
bitch.

*
*
*

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - 3RD FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Stu comes out into a corridor, unsteady on his feet, but intent on escape. The whole building must be on auxiliary power. The halls are dim, filthy. Stu hears a GROAN. *

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - 3RD FLOOR NURSES' STATION - DAY

Stu comes up, taser ready. A second NURSE, a Latino man, sits slumped against the wall clutching a bottle of saline, ropes of bloody snot hanging from his nose. He's removed his faceplate, very weak. *
*
*

MALE NURSE

Hey, you're not supposed to be out.

STU

Who else is in here? I need room numbers. You've got healthy people locked up --

MALE NURSE

It's down to you, man. *

Stu is stunned. He sees a ring of keys on the man's belt.

MALE NURSE

Hey. There's a fire ax down on the wall to the left. Bring it here -- *
*
*

STU

What for?

MALE NURSE

Use the flat end. Whatever you did to Elder, do it to me.

Instead, Stu snatches loose the keys and continues on. *

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - 3RD/2ND FLOOR STAIRWELL - DAY

Stu comes down a stairwell, but it is gated off at the level below him, revealing only darkness. There's no keyhole. He takes a side door instead.

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - 2ND FLOOR WARD - DAY

He comes into a huge dark ward with rows of beds, a dead body strapped to each. He heads for the double doors on the opposite side. Halfway across, one of the bodies EMPTIES ITS BLADDER onto the floor. Stu starts running.

INT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - 2ND FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Stu bolts down another hall and through a door. He finds himself at the top of a half-flight of stairs bathed in the red glow of an EXIT sign. The stairs go down to a fire door, then down another flight into shadows below.

The fire door is locked, but there's a keyhole. Stu begins going through keys, one after another.

The silhouette of a person on all fours detaches from the shadows at the bottom of the stairs and begins crawling up to him. Stu sees it and hurries, beginning to panic.

STAIRWELL VOICE (O.S.)

*Come down here and eat some
chicken with me, beautiful --*

Stu gets the door open just as the man on the stairs reaches out for his waist. He YELLS and kicks him in the face, sending him tumbling back down into the dark.

*
*
*

EXT. CDC PLAGUE CENTER - SIDE YARD - DAY

Stu stumbles outside into fresh air, blinded by the sunlight. He keeps running. When he looks back and sees he's not being chased, he collapses in the overgrown grass.

STU

Thank you thank you thank you --

It is summer now. Half a year has passed. A breeze SHURS the green trees overhead. Other than a distant GULL CRYING it is silent. There is no one.

*
*

CUT TO:

"ESCAPE FROM LONG ISLAND" MONTAGE

1. Stu has found an aluminum dinghy and rows himself back across the strait toward the mainland.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2. He ditches the dinghy beside a low boulder below the municipal dock where a wheelchair is lying on its side, abandoned. He hikes up to the main street of Stovington. Shop windows are smashed and there are signs of crowd damage, but it is all months old. There is no one.

*
*
*
*
*

3. At a shattered grocery store, he stands in a dim aisle guzzling down the syrup from a jar of peaches.

*

4. He finds a car with its window smashed open. He leans in and honks the horn. It SOUNDS WEAKLY, the battery just about nil. He tries the radio, but there's just dead air.

*

EXT. LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY - DAY

Stu has found a moped with good tires. He motors his way down the expressway, which is nearly empty. He passes old wrecks, and bodies lying composting in the road, but most people, it seems, died in their homes.

He passes a sign reading "NEW YORK CITY 32." Grey weather is moving in. It begins to rain.

EXT. ADAMS STREET (BROOKLYN) - DUSK

The moped finally gives out while Stu is riding through a vacant Brooklyn. The sun's about down and a foggy rain is moving through the city. Compounded by smoke from various street fires around the city, visibility is down to about a block. Rats run the curbs like commuters.

The bodies here have been rotting for some time, their faces and hands bird-pecked and tattered. A lone crow hops up onto the chest of one and CAWS at Stu. Stu claps once and drives it off.

*
*
*
*

He begins up the long, ascending curve of the access ramp for the Brooklyn Bridge. The lanes coming into Brooklyn are empty, but the Manhattan-bound lanes are jammed. He can see silhouettes slumped behind the wheels of cars.

Near the top of the ramp, huge National Guard trucks have blocked off any movement onto the bridge. Before it gets too high to scale, Stu climbs up over the fence and onto the center pedestrian promenade. He passes a machine-gun barrier there. Then he begins across.

He can't see anything of Manhattan yet. The bridge seems to enter the fog and disappear. Towering over him in the mist is the Gothic face of its East Tower, through which the promenade passes like a thread in a needle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Once he's out on the center span, something begins to form out in the fog in mid-air: Blocky shapes. Stu catches it in the corner of his eye and looks.

*
*

At first, it is too strange to interpret, but in a moment he realizes he's looking at letters -- huge block letters ten stories over the river. In a moment, he can read the word "MAERSK."

And then he understands what he's seeing: It is the huge, sky-blue prow of a massive container ship. And the thing is moving. Toward him.

Stu starts to jog, then to run. A quarter mile ahead, he can make out the outlines of the bridge's West Tower.

*

As the ship drifts through the fog, he can begin to see the shipping containers like a wall of huge multi-colored bricks. He begins to sprint.

The thing is going to hit the center span of the bridge a little to the west of its midpoint. Other than the sound of the RIVER LAPPING against the massive hull far below, and Stu's SHOES on the wooden promenade, the event is surreal in its silence.

He passes the prow of the ship and his perspective flips to the other side of its massive hull. It's too close. He may not make it. He begins to yell himself on.

*

STU

COME ON COME ON COME ON COME ON --

He's almost to the West Tower, and he can see the vaguest shapes of some of the buildings of Manhattan when, all at once, the ship hits and he's thrown off his feet against the platform's fence rail.

*
*
*
*

There is an epic SHATTERING OF MASONRY as the center span is shoved to the side and its massive south cable snaps. Stu is almost decapitated by all the secondary cables that rip across the walkway just beside him.

*

On the ship, the containers jerk forward from the impact and go tumbling off the front like child's blocks.

Stu staggers to his feet and runs on as best he can, but the whole bridge is swaying. Support girders over the eastbound lanes rip free and chunks of pavement as big as swimming pools begin breaking off into the fog below.

*

Then one of the bridge's two center CABLES SNAPS. Stu is a few yards from the West Tower when the whole span tilts 70, then 90 degrees with an ECHOING SERIES OF BOOMS as the south side of the roadway shears off at the towers.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu clings to the north guardrail as everything peels off into the fog below, leaving only the north-most cable system hanging intact.

When the shuddering stops, Stu is able to climb up a tangle of rebar and back onto the solid pavement where the road is ripped off at the West Tower. He breathes.

He wipes his bloody hands on his jeans and keeps moving. *

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - WEST RAMP - DUSK

He comes down into Manhattan and sees a much bigger blockade at this end, a kind of reinforced riot wall 30' high, which blocks his view of Lower Manhattan. It doesn't look like anyone's manning it, but Stu calls out anyway: *

STU *

I'm not sick -- ! Don't shoot! *

There's no way around it, so he starts climbing. When he swings over the top, he's not prepared for what's on the other side: *

Tens of thousands of rotted corpses lie in heaps at the bottom of the barricade, all down the access lanes and into City Hall Park. At some point, a massive crowd tried to rush this gate and get off Manhattan island. The dead crowd is crawling with an equal number of rats and crows. *

He sees, out in the field of corpses, a lone woman moving through them. Before he can stop himself he calls to her, and the thousands of crows take to the air in a massive gang. The woman doesn't look up. She doesn't even flinch. *

Stu climbs down the wall and picks his way through the dead masses toward her. It's only when Stu gets closer that he realizes it is a drag queen, aka THE MONSTER SHOUTER (60), in a filthy sequined gown. The man is mumbling to himself, covered in bird shit. He's going through the bodies, looking for cigarettes. When he finds a pack, he puts them in a laundry basket he's carrying. Stu has to put a gentle hand on the man's shoulder to get him to look up. But the man merely tells Stu: *

MONSTER SHOUTER

Monsters coming.

Stu sees the man's mind is gone. The man just nods and smiles and moves from corpse to corpse. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONSTER SHOUTER
Monsters coming now.

So Stu keeps moving. The skyscrapers of Lower Manhattan, their tops lost in the fog, stare down at him impassively, all of them dark. It will be night soon.

*

"HIKE UP THROUGH MANHATTAN" MONTAGE

Stu walks through the city as dusk turns to night. SILENT LIGHTNING lights up the clouds overhead, giving Stu snapshot visions of the city as he goes.

1. Stu walks through the West Village. Bodies lie in the streets, some piled along the curbs in health department bags, others sewn up in homemade shrouds or just left on the pavement. None is freshly dead. Rats are everywhere. Cats watch from stoops. New York goes on four legs now.

*

2. Past the Flatiron Building, two dead men hang by their necks from a street lamp, the word "SQUATTER" scrawled across one's bare chest and "THIEF" on the other.

*

*

*

*

3. In Union Square, Stu finds the remains of a massive vigil with thousands of rain-filled candles beside ruined pictures. He walks among them like a cosmonaut. Waiting for him at the end, is a billboard for tourists reading: "WHILE IN NEW YORK, WHY NOT SEE A SHOW?"

*

*

*

*

*

4. Stu sits on a roof cornice on Central Park East, thirty floors above the street. He has a six-pack of beer and a little American flag he's found somewhere tucked into his pocket. He looks out at the show. A massive fire to the north is razing Harlem, three city blocks wide and blocking off access to the George Washington Bridge.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

His face registers his growing realization that the world as he knew it really is over. Possibly everywhere.

*

*

INT. THE MET - GALLERIES - NIGHT

*

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Stu roams from gallery to gallery with a camp lantern. He stops at David's *The Death of Socrates*, Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Bosche's *Christ's Descent Into Hell*. Finally, he stands before Buonisegna's *Madonna and Child*. The child caresses its mother's face. Stu reaches out and touches the spot, the canvas, 700 years of history.

INT. THE MET - TEMPLE OF DENDUR - NIGHT

Stu has camped on the platform of the museum's 15 B.C. Temple of Dendur. By the lantern light, he takes out half a dozen prescription pill bottles he's collected from some pharmacy. With a soldier's detachment, he begins taking them, one after another.

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. COLORADO HOMESTEAD - DAY

Sunflowers sway in the sun. Stu walks through a tall field of them. He follows the sound of a WOMAN HUMMING to a yard with a small house with a porch up on jacklifters. A very old woman sits on the glider there, MOTHER ABIGAIL FREEMANTLE (black, 108).

STU

I'm sorry.

She HUMS on, but her voice also addresses Stu directly:

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

Sorry for what, child?

STU

For getting out.

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

*Getting out? You can't, Stuart.
Not you. You have a part to play
in this. We all do, but yours is
the decider.*

(beat)

*You have to choose where to stand.
With him, or with me.*

Stu looks at her, not comprehending.

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

*He hasn't called you yet? He
will.*

STU (V.O.)

He has, but -- He doesn't know my
name. Not like you.

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

*That's good. He doesn't know
you're there yet. But he will.
He will find you out, and tempt
you. And it'll be a road of
trials for you when he does.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLASH ON: A mountain peak rises up from garlands of Western Pine, a rough pyramid of sandstone.

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

*He'll promise you dominion. But
it's not his country to remake.
You'll have to stop him.*

*
*

STU (V.O.)

Stop him? I'm just a -- I'm
nobody.

*
*

As he says this, a cloud moves over the sun, dimming the light. A breeze begins to gather.

*
*

STU (V.O.)

This doesn't make any sense --

MOTHER ABIGAIL (V.O.)

*You're greater than you know.
Stay around a little longer and
you'll see -- You're our hope,
child. You.*

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

(beat)

*Look for me on the Lincoln
Highway. I'll see you on the Old
Lincoln Highway. Can't you feel
what's coming?*

Stu looks to the west and sees a massive end-of-days line of thunderheads building over the Rockies, whipping up wind and turning the light weird.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MET - TEMPLE OF DENDUR - NIGHT (REALITY)

Stu comes awake with a flinch, jolted out of his haze from the vividness of the dream. He puts a hand to his eyes, unable to see what a desperate, hunted look he has.

*
*
*

Then he gets himself up onto all fours, sticks a finger down his throat, and starts throwing everything up, all the poison, all the doubt.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

*

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

It is a sunny smoky morning. Stu comes into Times Square. He's got on a small backpack loaded with supplies.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's also found a Remington 798 rifle with a scope, which he's slung over one shoulder. He's got a book open in his hand, following it like a map.

With the book's help he finds, at the intersection of Broadway and 42nd Street, a plaque embedded in the pavement reads: "Eastern Terminus of the Historic Lincoln Highway." Under it is a bronze map of the U.S. with a route drawn from New York to San Francisco.

*
*
*

STU

This is -- nuts.

*

He looks around as if embarrassed. But he starts walking.

*

EXT. 7TH AVENUE - DAY

He comes down 7th Avenue until he sees the first route marker, a red-white-and-blue square with a letter "L." He is almost out of Times Square when he hears echoing off the buildings:

*
*
*

MONSTER SHOUTER (O.S.)

MONSTERS! MONSTERS COMING!

He gets to the corner of 7th and 40th and sees, half a block over on Broadway: The Monster Shouter is walking along the center line, shouting himself hoarse. He's in a slip, having taken off his dress in the hot sun. Stu can see he is painfully thin.

So he drops his pack and takes out some of the food and water. He starts walking over to the man, then freezes:

*

A TEENAGER (13) jogs silently up behind the Monster Shouter and slits his throat with a tac knife. The man dies mid-shout, blood streaming down his chest.

*
*

This is happening one short block from where Stu is standing, exposed, in the middle of the next intersection.

TEENAGER

You live here, you pay. I told
you: No squatters.

*
*

Two more people come up chuckling, what is possibly the teen's TWIN and a fit MAN (60). They are not gangbangers. They look like they might have all met at a prep school.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

If any of them looks in Stu's direction, he will be seen instantly. Stu checks his options, and starts slowly walking himself backward, increasing the distance.

TWIN

(laughing)

He was right, though.

*

And that's when the Teenager looks over and sees Stu. His laughter fades, but his smile does not. He yells out:

TEENAGER

Hey. Guy. That's a nice piece --

Stu says nothing. He keeps backing away. He watches as the older man glances down 7th out of view, and gestures to someone Stu can't see. The Teen starts walking over.

*

STU

Walk the other way, kid.

But the kid doesn't. Stu flips the rifle into his hands, with a soldier's muscle memory. The kid doesn't stop.

*

*

TEENAGER

'Kid'? Hey, man, screw you. I
got a hundred grand I'll trade you
for the rifle. No kidding --

*

*

The other two start walking over. Stu curses under his breath. He cannot shoot a boy.

*

TEENAGER

You didn't *steal* that thing off
somebody, did you -- ?

That's all Stu needs to hear. He aims past the Teenager, shoots the older man in the leg, then turns and bolts. He grabs his pack as he passes it. The two boys run after.

EXT. 40TH STREET - DAY

Stu's backpack bounces on his shoulders. He can see signs for the entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel two blocks ahead.

As he runs across the intersection with 8th Ave., two more MEN dart in from the south to cut him off, knives out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Without knowing how, Stu -- who is thirty feet away -- puts out a hand and knocks the knives out of the men's grips, sending them skittering on the pavement.

*

EXT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - ACCESS LANE - DAY

Stu darts across the maze of lane lines directing traffic to the Lincoln Tunnel's access ramp. The entrance looms ahead, a black hole in the city. Behind him, the two boys are catching up. Stu pumps his arms and runs even faster.

Stu sees: On the street above the tunnel, a city bus has crashed into the guardrail and is hanging over the opening. Stu feels the opportunity more than calculates it.

EXT. STREET ABOVE LINCOLN TUNNEL - DAY

Stu comes down the access lane, weaving between all the jammed cars. The boys are just twenty yards behind. Above the entrance, the bus CREAKS the slightest bit.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. McCARRAN AIRPORT (LAS VEGAS) - RUNWAY - DAY

Las Vegas is in the process of being rebuilt. A work detail of a dozen people is carting bodies on trucks out the tarmac of McCarran Airport where they are burning them in giant piles. Lloyd Henreid manages them. More people can be seen back on the Strip.

*

*

*

*

Flagg observes the proceedings from where he lies sunbathing on the hood of a convertible Hummer parked nearby. The black pyramid of the Luxor can be seen behind him on the Strip.

*

*

Something catches Flagg's attention, some little blip on his mental radar that wasn't there a moment ago.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. STREET ABOVE LINCOLN TUNNEL - DAY

The wreck CREAKS a little more, visibly moving an inch as Stu runs up to the entrance beneath it.

EXT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - ACCESS LANE - DAY

As Stu comes the final few yards, crossing under the bus into the darkness of the tunnel, the wreck shifts another inch, then three, all it needs to begin sliding forward.

It gives way and the whole thing falls, smashing down onto cars in the tunnel's entrance, right in the boys' faces. They back up, spooked by the whole thing.

INT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - EAST END - DAY

Inside the tunnel, Stu catches his breath while he digs through his pack for a flashlight. He turns it on to see what fresh hell he's in now.

TEENAGER (O.S.)

What the fuck was all *that*?!

TWIN (O.S.)

He made it. We going in after him?

Stu doesn't wait to see. He climbs onto the raised walkway that runs along one side of the tunnel and goes on.

CUT TO:

EXT. McCARRAN AIRPORT (LAS VEGAS) - TARMAC - DAY

Lloyd climbs behind the Hummer's driver's seat.

LLOYD

That's floors five, four, and three. We can be done with the tower by tomorrow --

But he notices Flagg is not moving. He looks mesmerized. Then he jumps off the hood and into the passenger seat.

LLOYD

Everything all right?

FLAGG

Oh, yeah. It's pippin' time, Lloyd! I think I got a brother out there -- I never had me a *brother*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, without Lloyd's touching it, the engine TURNS OVER
and the car begins driving back to Luxor. *

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - DAY

Stu's far enough in the tunnel now that it's pitch dark
except for his flashlight. He sweeps it over the frozen
traffic below and sees grotesque faces staring out from
behind windshields. He pins it to the walkway and keeps
moving. *

Up ahead, something blocks his path: A dead man in a
business suit, his hollow face turned to Stu. His eyes
have shrivelled. Anxious, Stu begins mumbling through
the first song that comes to mind, Cream's "White Room." *

STU
*I'll wait in this place where the
sun never shines --* *

When he gets to the dead man, he steps over him without
breaking his stride. Then, further ahead, he can see
another two bodies blocking the walkway.

STU
*Wait in this place where the
shadows run from themselves --
(to himself)
Oh, fuck that --* *

He literally changes his tune.

STU
I'm dreaming of a white Christmas.

He tries to step over the next bodies as automatically as
he did the first, but his boot catches on something. He
steadies himself and sings louder. *

STU
With every Christmas card I write. *

Up ahead are more bodies, a pile of them, as if some kind
of massacre took place here. It is too high to step
over. Without stopping, Stu climbs it like a pile of
tires. His light catches glimpses of the rotting
expressions of the people he's stepping on.

STU
*May your days be merry and bright,
and all your Christmases be white --*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And he almost makes it. But he puts his weight on someone's arm, hears the dead bone SNAP, and pitches forward. He falls to the walkway with a yell. The flashlight tumbles over the edge, smashes on a car hood, and goes out.

The last thing he sees before everything goes black is a WOMAN'S BODY just ahead. Her skin still has color and the blood on her still fresh. She's slashed her own throat, and recently. He sees the razor still in her hand. Then he's in the dark. *

He frantically searches his pockets and comes up with a lighter. He flicks it on. He can only see a few feet in any direction now. He crawls around the dead woman. She's got the razor in her own hand, only a day or two dead. What scared her badly enough to turn a razor on herself? *

He gets to his feet and inches forward. But then he hears it: a SOUND behind him, and below, on the road. *

He has to choose -- the lighter or the rifle. He picks the rifle. He slides it off his shoulder and aims it into the blackness. There is only his BREATHING in the dark.

Then the SOUND comes again. It ECHOES briefly. It's a CAR DOOR being KICKED from the INSIDE. *

STU

STAY BACK --

But the SOUND comes again, this time rising to a frantic POUNDING, as if something is trying to get out, Stu starts FIRING OFF ROUNDS, part warning, part panic. *

TILES disintegrate. GLASS SHATTERS. And someone is SCREAMING inside of all the noise. A man. Stu stops shooting. The SCREAMING turns to SOBBING. Frightened sobbing.

Stu tries, but he can't make himself leave whoever it is. Not this time. He calls out, against his better judgment:

STU

WHERE ARE YOU -- ?

He listens for a direction, and then flicks on the lighter to track down the car. He climbs down to the roadway and starts moving among the black shapes on flat tires. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The person starts BANGING AGAIN on the door. Stu runs to it. He gets to a police cruiser caught in the river of other cars, grills on every window in the backseat, and sees: Someone is trapped in the back.

It is Larry Underwood. He's been slowly starving back here, and out-of-his-mind high on something. His arm is caught in a seatbelt.

Stu opens the door. The dome light goes on, emitting a weak glow. Littering the seat beside Larry are empty foils of something, and liquor bottles, the aftermath of some kind of end-of-the-world binge. Larry sees Stu looming over him and screams. Stu tries to get him up and out, but Larry hammers him with his fists.

STU

Don't fight me. Are you hurt?

Larry is freaking out, tripping the dark fantastic. He's wide-eyed, sweating.

LARRY

Don't look in here, man. I ain't
no nice guy --

Larry starts making BUZZING sounds. He kicks at Stu.

STU

You want me to leave you, pal?

This sinks in. Larry tries to get out of the car so fast, he decks his head.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Stu has got one of Larry's arms around his shoulders and is half-carrying, half-dragging him out of the tunnel. He's looking back, making sure they're not being followed. Larry pauses in his buzzing long enough to say:

LARRY

You were singing, man --

They come to where they can see the tunnel's end. A pair of military trucks blocks the exit, in front of which is the now-familiar piles of gunned-down civilians.

EXT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - WEST END - DAY

They come out on the Jersey side to find dead cars lined up as far as they can see.

STU
Maybe you should start telling me
what you took, so I can figure out
how to sober you up --

LARRY
(weeping)
No singing. That's over. Okay?

STU
Sure, pal. No more.

LARRY
Is somebody -- following you?

STU
Not anymore.

Stu looks behind him one last time, and then steers Larry toward the Port Authority Building above the highway.

FLAGG (V.O.)
Redman --

CUT TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

An eagle is flying, a snake in its claws. It climbs the sky, passing the Vegas Stratosphere tower.

FLASH ON: Two plush red seats at one end of a conference table, the only seats there. They suggest power, exclusivity, equality -- a kind of double throne.

FLASH ON: A nude woman, seen from behind, stands in front of the Luxor. Her hands are above her head, worshipfully.

FLAGG (V.O.)
*You're better than the life you've
lived, Redman.*

The eagle drops the snake, no longer burdened.

FLAGG (V.O.)
*Better than company you've kept.
There's a place here for you, Stu.
A right place.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu stands on the Strip, looking up at the black pyramid.

STU (V.O.)

No.

*
*

FLASH ON: Several naked women are pulling Stu into a bed. One has the white tail of a doe strapped around her waist and shows it off, laughing silently.

Stu and Flagg walk down the Strip. People lying on the pavement everywhere start getting up. They are rising by the hundreds, smiling.

FLAGG (V.O.)

You will want for nothing. All is possible. All permitted.

*
*
*

But Stu says:

STU (V.O.)

I'm not with you.

*

FLASH ON: The snake falls writhing down through the air.

Flagg slowly turns to him, now wearing a posh black carnival crow mask.

FLAGG (V.O.)

Then you will die.

*

In a painting, the Monster Shouter sits in place of Buoninsegna's *Madonna*. He has Stu's severed head in his lap.

CUT TO:

INT. PORT AUTHORITY BUILDING - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - NIGHT
(REALITY)

Stu jerks awake from this dream. It takes him a moment to remember where he is. A lantern-lit office cubicle.

He's has gotten Larry into a sleeping bag and is sitting watch beside him. He's dozed off while reading. He picks back up his book. It's titled *DOWN THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY*.

CLOSE ON BOOK

*

He flips through pictures of the patriotic "L" logo on the sides of roadside diners and barns, on mile-markers and concrete posts, on water towers.

ANOTHER ANGLE

*

Larry comes awake, squinting at the lamp, then at Stu. Stu puts down the book and hands him a jug of Gatorade he's found. Larry looks unsure, but takes it.

STU

The electrolytes in there still
might be worth something.

*

*

(beat)

*

I'm Stu Redman. I'm not
dangerous.

Larry isn't in much of a position to doubt him. He nods.

LARRY

Larry Underwood. What time is it?

*

STU

Almost sunup, I guess. You okay?

*

Larry winces down a few swallows of the warm Gatorade.

*

LARRY

Just confused how I'm not dead.

STU

Looks like I got you in time.

*

(beat)

I hope you're not sorry I did. I
guess I could leave you to it, if
you're determined.

*

LARRY

It's not like that.

Larry looks past him, humiliated, all of it coming back.

*

LARRY

I crawled in there shit-scared. It
was the safest place I could find
before I realized I couldn't get
out. No handles. No food, no
water, nothing except what I had
in my pockets.

*

*

*

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*

STU

Looked like some pretty high-grade
stuff.

*

*

*

LARRY

Not enough of it.

*

*

Stu waits for him to continue. Finally, he sits up a bit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY
I was with a lady.

*

STU
I saw her.

LARRY
I didn't know her. Well. We were just getting out. But she got halfway through and froze up. She was already past what she could handle, but down there -- I didn't know she had that razor. Her husband's, I guess. I heard her do it.

*
*
*
*
*

(shaking his head)
So I thought: What's waiting on the other side anyway? A whole dead country, probably.

STU
Maybe. Maybe. For now.

*

Larry drinks again, then he surprises Stu by saying:

LARRY
She's convinced you, then.

STU
Who?

LARRY
The old lady from the dreams.
Mother Abigail.

Stu is so floored, the look on his face makes Larry smile.

LARRY
What -- ? Did you think you were the only one having them?
Where've you been?

*

STU
You're gonna have to catch me up.

*
*

EXT. 495 (WEEHAWKEN, NJ) - DAWN

The sun is coming up behind them as they walk. Larry is a little shaky on his feet, but clear-eyed now.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

I heard it called everything from 'Superflu' to 'A-Prime' to 'Tube Neck.' But we knew it on the east coast as 'Captain Trips,' because of how it got a foothold.

*
*

(beat)

They were burying people anywhere they could: construction holes, underground lots. Then the curve shot up, and they just left them in their beds and nailed up the doors. That's when the killings started -- anyone who looked sick. They were shooting people, setting them on fire in the streets. It seemed like it couldn't get worse. Then the power went. No one was ready for that kind of dark.

*
*
*

STU

Some were.

*

LARRY

Yeah. Most people abandoned New York when summer kicked in. A big fucking oven with a million and a half dead people in it. That's when most people started dreaming.

*
*
*
*
*
*

STU

What about -- Could anyone do other things? Out of the ordinary -- ?

*

LARRY

Like what?

Stu reconsiders asking. He shrugs and Larry buys it.

LARRY

Rita was dreaming too, but she wouldn't admit it. Couldn't get her head around it.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

(beat)

But that mountain -- in the old lady's dreams -- it's real. I looked it up. It's the Flatirons, in the Rockies. Right outside Boulder.

Stu smiles an odd smile.

STU

Right off the Lincoln Highway.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry looks at him, confused. The what? *

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER *

Stu has laid a map of the entire route across the hood of a wrecked mail truck. From Manhattan to San Francisco it winds across America, cutting just north of Boulder. *

STU

By highway, Boulder's two days,
but this route's longer -- it goes
through all these little towns and
back roads -- but this is how
we're supposed to go. I don't
know why. But that's the
invitation. *

LARRY

Who knows what you'd find on back
roads these days. There's gonna
be people for sure. *

And it's clear he doesn't necessarily mean the good kind. *

STU

I want to do this right. *

Larry looks at him, then the map, deciding. He nods,
then gives Stu a sly look. *

LARRY

Then we're gonna need rides. *

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (PENNSYLVANIA) - DAY

Stu and Larry come down the Pennsylvania portion of the Lincoln Highway on the backs of brand-new Indian Chief Vintages, all chrome and leather fringe. The saddlebags are packed with camping gear and Larry is grinning like a dog; this is clearly some lifelong ambition of his. *

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN (POWTANVILLE, OH) - DAY

Through an empty downtown, Donald Merwin Elbert, aka "The TRASHCAN MAN" or TRASH (30), wanders. He has a big stick of jerky in one hand and some fiber cord in the other. He goes from car to car, checking gas caps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An African-American kid in a Bulls Jersey, DARRELL (18), ducks out of one of the stores carrying out a case of bottled water. He and Trash see each other and freeze.

EXT. TRACT HOUSE (POWTANVILLE, OH) - DAY

Darrell leads Trash to a house where an SUV is parked, half-packed, and shoves the bottled water inside. *

DARRELL

Mrs. Yates, we got company!

MRS. YATES (50s) comes hurrying out a side door, all 300 lbs. But her excitement drains away when she sees Trash. *

MRS. YATES

Of all the God-damned people --

TRASHCAN MAN

Afternoon, Mrs. Yates.

MRS. YATES

Don't 'afternoon' me, Devil.

(to Darrell)

You went to the market and brought back bruised fruit, Darrell. My son Carl went to school with this piece of shit.

TRASHCAN MAN

You all going somewhere?

MRS. YATES

Don't you tell him! That's the last thing we need. You don't know who this is?

Darrell shakes his head. Mrs. Yates says to Trash:

MRS. YATES

I saw Joanne Fabrics was on fire last night, but I never dreamed it was you.

(off Trash's look)

Look at him grin. I thought you was locked up in Michigan City.

TRASHCAN MAN

They let us out back in March on account of everybody gettin' sick. *

MRS. YATES

Isn't that nice of them. Giving you back to the world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. YATES (CONT'D)

Didn't they see your record?

(to Darrell)

He's a *pry-o-maniac*. Burned down the Methodist Church when he was still in school. Burned up Old Lady Semple's pension checks. Mailboxes. Trash cans. Whatever he could get his hands on. Cats. What is it they called you?

TRASHCAN MAN

Mrs. Yates, come on. Don't --

MRS. YATES

'Trashcan Man'!

Trash looks visibly injured by this nickname.

MRS. YATES

'Trashcan Man'! 'Trashie'!

That's what Carley used to say.

'Hide your cash, here comes

Trash'! Carl was a *good boy*. A *good man*. Not like you, Trashie.

Trash just gives her a little fuck-you bow and walks away. Darrell sees him out. Mrs. Yates yells after them.

*

MRS. YATES

(to Trash)

That was her *pension money*, asshole!

With that, Mrs. Yates hauls herself back into the house.

TRASHCAN MAN

I'm heading west anyway. To Gary.

DARRELL

I came down from Chicago and I can tell you: There's nothing in Gary.

TRASHCAN MAN

Yes, there is.

Trash goes to the SUV and opens the fuel door. He takes out one of his fiber cords and slips it into the tank. He lights it and keeps walking, saying to the coming fire:

TRASHCAN MAN

I love you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Darrell, wide-eyed, runs for cover. The SUV EXPLODES, shattering the windows on the house. Mrs. Yates appears in one, cut up and screaming. Trash just smiles, happy.

CUT TO:

"LINCOLN HIGHWAY, PA" MONTAGE

Signs along the Lincoln Highway evoke the crazy jumble of U.S. history: Shawnee Petroglyph Site, Gettysburg Battlefield, the Flight 93 Memorial, etc.

The route takes Stu and Larry up main streets, through state parks, down back roads, and over covered bridges, showing off parts of America invisible from interstates. The iconic red-white-and-blue "L" markers guide them.

*
*
*

Though the landscape is mostly empty, they pass evidence of the plague's devastation. Old accident sites, blackened house frames, and always: Bodies in the road.

*

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (OHIO) - DAY

When they cross the Ohio border, they come to a barn with a sign painted across its roof in big white letters. "BOULDER'S WHERE IT'S AT. 30 WEST TO COLORADO 25 SOUTH." It's signed "HAROLD LAUDNER" and "FRAN GOLDSMITH." In the shade by the roadside are the paint cans.

*
*
*
*

LARRY

Spreading the good word. Someone really hung his ass out for those last couple of letters.

(beat)

Maybe we'll catch up to them.

*
*

Larry goes to take a leak on the roadside. Stu waits on his bike. On the road, he sees where a moving truck once collided with an Amish buggy. The skeletons of the horses are bleaching in the sun, loose harnesses still on them.

*
*
*

FLASH ON: The black pyramid of the Luxor.

Stu blinks away the image and, for a moment, sees that the dead horses are trying to get to their feet. It is a horrifying vision, but then they are back to still again, the dark illusion passed. Stu regains his poise.

*

Larry comes back, zipping his pants. He's looking toward the woods beside the fields.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Do you hear that?

Then Stu does: a DOG BARKING. An Irish Setter bounds out of the woods across the fields, tail wagging. It comes and leaps up on Stu, ecstatic. Stu ruffles its ears.

*
*

GLEN (O.S.)

Kojak! Get down off that fella
before you get bit!

They look up and see GLEN BATEMAN (55) coming into the field wearing a bush hat, hand raised. Stu raises his in return. Glen is a bear of a man, but with a kind face.

GLEN

He heard your bikes. He's a
sweetheart, but I'll warn you the
second things get aggressive, so
does he. You'd have to shoot us
both.

STU

You've got nothing to worry about.

Kojak circles Glen, but then heads back over to Stu, working hard to keep himself from jumping again.

GLEN

Good. I believe you. Apparently,
so does he.

(beat)

I haven't seen anyone new in two
weeks. I was starting to worry.

*
*

LARRY

You seen a lot of people?

GLEN

They're around. Last month, I saw
two dozen. Holed up in a hotel in
Scranton. They were scared,
trying to decide what to do next.

*

He gestures to their packed bikes.

GLEN

Looks like you boys have a plan.
What's it gonna be: Heaven or Las
Vegas?

*
*
*

STU

We're going to Boulder.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN

We were hoping you'd say that.

He turns back toward the woods and gives a wave. In a moment, a dark-haired woman, NADINE (40), comes out of the trees holding hands with a squinting child, JOE (8). The kid is in a dirty T-shirt and bare feet, with wild hair.

*

GLEN

Ran into them in Philly. That's Nadine, and Joe. We don't know his real name, actually. He won't talk. Maybe one of you can get it out of him. I sure as hell can't.

*

*

*

*

*

Glen notices the sign, then the paint cans on the side of the road.

*

*

GLEN

Look at that. So they wouldn't explode up there in the heat. Smart, whoever they are.

*

*

*

*

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIANA 469 HIGHWAY EXCHANGE - SUNSET

HAROLD LAUDNER (17) is up on the maintenance scaffold of a large billboard. He's pocked with acne and a little on the chubby side, but he must have once been much bigger. His clothes look like holdovers from heavier days.

*

He's painting another message. This time on the billboard where the Lincoln Highway runs under I-496 near Fort Wayne. All the lanes of the highway will be able to see it.

FRANNIE (O.S.)

You're gonna need another can.

*

FRANCIS "FRANNIE" GOLDSMITH (22) climbs up the ladder to him, hauling up a can of paint.

HAROLD

Stay down. If someone comes through here --

But she gets to the catwalk and hands up the paint. He helps her the rest of the way up. Frannie has a sober and intelligent beauty, all the more so because she's seven or so months pregnant.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She pries open the paint can with a screwdriver and starts mixing it with one of the brushes.

*

HAROLD

I told you, I don't know if that's good for the baby.

*

FRANNIE

I'm holding my breath.

*

To prove she is, she looks up at him and says nothing, her cheeks puffed out. She keeps stirring. Harold watches her crouched there in her summer cutoffs.

HAROLD

Frannie. Let's get married.

Frannie caps the paint and breathes again.

FRANNIE

Oh, hell.

HAROLD

What does that mean?

FRANNIE

Are you kidding? I can't tell.

*

HAROLD

No I'm not kidding. Damn, Frannie. What an answer.

Frannie stands up and gives him all her attention, full of sympathy, but with a clear boundary.

*

FRANNIE

I don't want to marry you, Harold.

HAROLD

Why not? Fran--

FRANNIE

I have to think of my reasons why not.

*

HAROLD

You don't love me.

FRANNIE

In most cases, love and marriage are mutually exclusive. Pick another choice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

No. You just want to score points off me. You always have, you and my sister and the rest of them.

FRANNIE

I deserve that. I'm sorry.

*

HAROLD

I'm sure you wish you were riding with someone you actually liked.

*

*

FRANNIE

I like you fine, Harold. In fact, I'd say you're my favorite person in the world right now.

HAROLD

Big joke.

FRANNIE

No joke. Don't be angry.

He doesn't say anything, just paints.

FRANNIE

All right, let's talk --

*

HAROLD

We were talking. You had your chance and you said 'Oh, hell.'

FRANNIE

I wasn't even going to marry Jess! And he offered. I'm not going to be someone's wife just because he's trying to do the right thing.

*

*

HAROLD

That's not what I'm trying to do.
(furious at himself)

Well, it *is*. Damn it -- you know what I mean. I'm trying to help us both.

*

*

*

FRANNIE

When we get to Boulder, Harold, when this baby comes, I'm going to need a lot of help. It would be easy to say yes to you now just for that reason, but I can't make myself feel something I don't.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All it would take is for Frannie to step up and just touch him, hold his hand, as some kind of tenderness in this moment. But she can't. Harold tells her flatly:

HAROLD

Don't worry. I'm not gonna run out on you.

She looks at him: Was that somehow an option? *

In the distance, they begin to hear MOTORCYCLES. Harold looks. Frannie looks. There's no time to climb down and hide, only to hope whoever is coming comes in peace. *

CUT TO:

INT. WOOSTER JUNIOR HIGH - BASKETBALL COURT - SUNSET

Stu and the others are setting up camp on the basketball court in an old brick YMCA building. Larry lays out sleeping bags. Joe and Nadine are playing with a deflated basketball. Stu and Glen put together dinner, talking. *

STU *

Those people you saw, in Scranton
-- where were they going? *

GLEN *

They took a vote. 10 said
Boulder, 14 said Vegas. *

STU *

Why? *

GLEN *

Vegas is a smart choice right now.
Because of the dam. You can plug
shit in down there and it'll work.
That, and he's -- appealing. *

(beat) *

This End-of-Days stuff has turned
a lot of people into wide-eyed
acolytes, ready to be told what
they gotta do to get God or Allah
or Kukulkan to turn off this big
cosmic high colonic. They'll
listen to anyone with a little
sangfroid. *

STU *

(amused) *
You've got a dim view of humanity. *
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU (CONT'D)

What were you before all this? A
sociology professor?

*
*

GLEN

Physics. Though things have
gotten a little complicated on
that subject as well.

At the other end of the gym, Larry finishes with the
sleeping bags and goes over to Nadine and Joe. Nadine is
beautiful, going prematurely grey. Larry takes a long,
unnoticed look at her as he walks up.

*
*
*

LARRY

You want to try to find a pump,
Joe?

But Joe gives him a frosty stare and heads off with
Kojak. Nadine shrugs, but there's little warmth in it.

*
*

NADINE

I've known him two months and he's
said as many words to me. It took
him a week before he'd let me sit
next to him. Two weeks before I
could clean him up a little. He
still won't let me cut his hair.

*
*
*
*

Larry's charm comes on. He can't help it. She's pretty.

LARRY

So cut mine. I'm due. We can
show him how easy it is.

Nadine gives him a sad smile, without any encouragement,
and heads after Joe. Larry silently curses himself.

GLEN (V.O.)

Science accepts that two particles
can interact with one another over
big distances. Why not two *minds*?

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

They all sit in the court's center circle with dinner.
Joe is off to the side watching them as he eats.

*
*

LARRY

Or two million. Who knows how
many people are receiving these
dreams.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

Or how far his *influence* extends.*
*

GLEN

In quantum physics, you'd call it
spooky action at a distance.
 Entanglement. But most people
 will end up calling it what
 they've always called it: God.

*
*
*
*
*

LARRY

We do seem to be sharing some kind
 of authentic psychic experience.

GLEN

Maybe we always were, but there
 were so many of us camped on the
 planet it was just noise, with the
 occasional *deja vu* or lucky hunch
 slipping through --

(beat)

Now that most people are gone,
 maybe those of us who are left are
 just hearing each other better.

NADINE

Or maybe we didn't catch this
 'brain flu' because we don't have
 normal brains.

STU

We'll probably never know.

*

LARRY

It's like having a CB in your
 head, but you can only receive.

GLEN

(realizing)

Actually, how do we know that?
 Maybe we can transmit, too. Maybe
 we already are --

*

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

*

Glen comes back into the gym with some dusty legal pads
 and markers. He passes them around.

*

GLEN

Nadine, draw something. Specific,
 but still basic. Let's not blow
 our circuits right out the gate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She thinks, then sketches something only she can see.

GLEN

Now try to get it into our heads.
Show us what to draw --

A long beat as she tries, eyes closed. Each man draws. *

GLEN

Okay. Show us.

Nadine turns her pad and it's a crucifix. Larry's is a wedding dress. Glen's missed it completely with a flower bouquet, though perhaps influenced by Larry's thinking. But Stu has drawn a scarecrow, arms out. *

GLEN

Whoa, Stu.

LARRY

Okay. Now me. *

They repeat the process. Larry draws first. When he turns it over, it's a roller skate. Glen's drawn a moon, Nadine a weird sort of sock puppet. But Stu shocks them again: He's drawn a roller skate. It's even tilted the same way.

GLEN

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! *

LARRY

I think I even felt you in my head, man.

NADINE

My CB must be busted.

But Stu reaches out and turns Nadine's drawing upside down. Suddenly, it becomes a loose sort of roller skate. *

GLEN

So this is how we get connected now. It's the new Internet. *

Stu half-smiles. He's right. *

STU

Again --

CUT TO:

EXT. ARKANSAS RURAL ROUTE 139 - SUNSET

NICK ANDROS (23) is cycling through Arkansas wheat country, a small pack on his back. He's making good time, in a rhythm. He's a wiry kid with intense focus.

He passes a sign reading "WELCOME TO MISSOURI! The Show-Me State" and comes up on the site of an old crash. As he slaloms around it, he sees: It's a satellite. It lies in pieces along the road -- black foil drums, charred and shattered solar panels, and part of a long blackened antenna. Any flag on its side has burned away. He pedals on. *

EXT. MAIN STREET (PALMYRA, MO) - SUNSET

Nick bikes into the town of Palmyra, MO. On Main Street, a dead man lies on the center line. Nick is just gliding past it when the MAN sits up. Startled, Nick loses control of the bike and goes over the handlebars to the pavement. The Man scampers over. *

TOM (MAN)
You took a spill! *

Nick finds himself looking up into the guileless face of TOM CULLEN (30s). The man has the familiar eyes and thick cheery speech of a person with Down Syndrome. *

Nick hurries out his notepad and holds up a pre-written "I'M GLAD TO MEET YOU, I'M NICK ANDROS" note. Tom looks at it, then gives it back.

TOM
I did school, but not with that -- *

Nick looks at him, confused. Tom points to the paper.

TOM
M-O-O-N, that spells 'can't read.'

Nick watches Tom's lips, trying to understand. Once he does, he sits back on the road in disbelief.

TOM
You're bleeding, mister.

Tom looks at his scraped hands, then around for a drug store. He spots one and heads to it. Tom follows along.

TOM
That open sign's a liar. Mr. Norton's gone. -- Hey, why don't you wanna talk?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nick puts a hand over his mouth, and shakes his head.
Tom doesn't get it. The store's locked, so Nick takes a
trash can from the curb and smashes the glass. Tom's
aghast.

*
*
*
*

TOM
You can't do that! If it's
locked, you can't go in. It's
illegal!

But Nick reaches in, unlocks it, and goes inside.

TOM
Didn't you hear me? What are you,
deaf?

He's just using a common phrase, but Tom's expression
blanks for a moment as he figures it out.

TOM
Hey -- You are! Can't hear!
Can't speak! Tom Cullen figured
it out!

*
*
*
*

But then his face blanks again, and he calls to Nick:

TOM
Then how are we supposed to talk?!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (INDIANA) - DAY

Stu's group buzzes through more farmland. They've found
Honda scooters for Nadine and Joe and for Glen, to which
they've jury-rigged a kid trailer for Kojak.

*
*

The dog's snout in the wind, happy as can be. Stu,
however, looks haggard, like he's working on very little
sleep. They talk over the engines.

*
*
*

GLEN
It's played out that way through
so many civilizations --
(beat)
Look: With one person, you get a
saint. Two fall in love. Three
make a society. And four build
the temple to put it in. Then
things take a turn.
(beat)
Five bring majority rule. Six
design a flag.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN (CONT'D)

And seven get you your first
 succession. And then what do you
 have?

*
*
*

STU

Heaven or Las Vegas.

*
*

GLEN

Bingo. But you know who wins this
 time? Not the barbarians. It's
 the techies. People who can get
 it all up and running again.

*
*
*
*
*

(tapping his head)

That's the new gold.

*
*

LARRY

Let's practice some more.

*
*

STU

Okay, think of another one, Lar,
 and try to keep me out like
 Nadine's doing. I can't feel her
 at all.

*
*

GLEN

(to Nadine)

How are you doing it?

But Larry begins slowing down. Ahead of them, up on a
 billboard, is Harold and Frannie's half-finished message.
 "GET TO BOULDER. USE 30 WES-- " Then it just ends.

*

They look around, but there's no one. Stu climbs up to
 touch the paint. It's dry, which isn't encouraging. And
 the paint cans are still up on the ledge in full sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN BAND SHELL (PALMYRA, MO) - DAY

Nick has brought his bike and gear over to the town's
 band shell. He sits on the stage watching Tom play with
 about a hundred Matchbox cars in the fading light.

TOM

Mom and Mrs. Blakely, Jesus took.
 I think most of the others went up
 to St. Louis maybe. Everybody's
 always talking about what a little
 town this is --

Nick glances at all the town's dark windows, pulled
 shades, then helps Tom line up a new parking lot of cars.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM

But everybody likes Tom Cullen.
Everybody. At the library, the
 movie theatre, the car wash place --

Nick can't help but smile at Tom's unguarded enthusiasm.
 But Tom's expression grows troubled.

TOM

So, if they all went to St. Louis,
 why didn't they wanna take me?

*

He looks at Nick as if he might really know.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (INDIANA) - DAY

Stu's group rides to a place the Lincoln Highway should
 be, but instead find a huge body of water with every kind
 of debris, as if a tsunami has pushed inland. They can't
 see across it. The road just disappears into it.

*

*

STU

What is this?

GLEN

Everyone, meet Lake Michigan.

LARRY

We're ten miles from Lake
 Michigan!

GLEN

Not anymore. I was wondering if
 we'd see this. Up in Chicago, the
 city's river originally flowed
into Lake Michigan, not out.
 Pumps reversed it. It was called
 a miracle of engineering. Without
 'em, this is what you get.

*

They stand looking at the heaps of flotsam, whole
 neighborhoods worth of human belongings carried here.

EXT. EDGE OF LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

They follow the southern edge of the lake, going around.
 It's one long shoreline of the dead with all their
 belongings, speared by rotting lumber and chunks of
 drywall.

*

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everything from the old world is wrecked and here on display: lawn gnomes, smashed TVs, Coke machines, shopping carts, chandeliers, cribs, and ten thousand other things. There are so many bodies, skeletal and sunbaked, out in the debris that the group rides in silence.

When Stu looks, he sees: A crow is watching them from atop the pile. It CAWS.

Larry sees something as well and stops. He gets off his bike and climbs out a few yards into the flotsam.

NADINE

Larry, that can't be safe --

Larry pulls on something, prying it loose. He finally gets it free and holds it up like a prize. It's a guitar case. He grins.

STU'S POV

But behind Larry, the crow stands up. It is now a man dressed in black, with the crow's-head mask. He reaches out to touch Larry, and before Stu can cry out, Larry is slaughtered by the man's touch.

BACK TO SCENE

STU

No -- !

Larry, already coming back with the guitar, looks at Nadine. Stu seems to be caught in some kind of waking nightmare.

STU'S POV

The other dead out in the lake are getting to their feet, pulling themselves free of the debris. There are thousands of them. All are in masks. They are everywhere now, coming from all directions.

BACK TO SCENE

Stu staggers off his bike and runs to get between his group and the dead, who -- in his mind -- are starting to circle them. Stu puts his hands out, yelling.

STU'S POV

But they lay hands on Joe, then Nadine.

BACK TO SCENE

STU

NO! NO! NO!

Kojak begins BARKING at Stu, Joe begins to cry. And just like that, the dream is over. Stu looks around, catching his breath. He has real tears in his eyes, his nerves about frayed through. He drops to his knees. Larry is already at his side.

LARRY

It's all right. We've got you --

Stu looks around and sees how terrified he's made Joe and Nadine, how concerned Glen and Larry are. Kojak comes and nuzzles him. But Stu is not comforted. Not at all.

STU

Go! Without me. It's not safe -- !

LARRY

No.

NADINE

Stu -- !

STU

I'll catch up. Just go on.
Please.

LARRY

Never. We ride together. End of conversation.

Stu looks up into Larry's face. He's close to breaking.

LARRY

(quoting Stu)
No. We do this right.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN BAND SHELL (PALMYRA, MO) - DUSK

Nick has nodded off. He comes awake in the dusk to see bats wheeling about over the park. Lightning bugs flare here and there. Tom is gone, but has put no less than a dozen blankets over Nick while he's slept.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nick takes out a road atlas from his pannier. He looks at all the roads between here and the Lincoln Highway, which he's highlighted in yellow. There's still a lot of ground to cover. Then he looks at all of Tom's little cars and sighs at the choice he has to make.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIANA DRIVE-IN - DUSK

Stu's group has gotten tents and camped in the cinder lot of a drive-in theatre. The peeling screen looms over them, blocking them from view of the distant highway.

*
*

Stu seems a little hollowed out, exhausted, but okay.

*

Larry has the guitar. It's a simple learning guitar, but its strings are intact. They shine in the campfire light as he tunes it up. Nadine is trimming cob corn with a box cutter and handing it to Glen who's pan roasting it. Joe sits on a swing set beneath the movie screen a few yards away, watching Larry.

When he starts to play, it's Canned Heat's "On the Road Again."

LARRY

*Well I'm so tired of cryin' but
I'm out on the road again. On the
road again. I ain't got no woman
just to call my special friend --*

*
*
*

Suddenly Joe is standing right at Larry's elbow, nodding along. He gives Larry a thumbs-up. Larry keeps playing --

LARRY

Thank you.

JOE

Weckome.

Larry beams and keeps singing. Nadine watches them, astonished. She, at Larry, amazed and moved. His voice is golden. But then Joe looks past Larry and says:

JOE

Feller --

LARRY

What's that, Joe?

Kojak BARKS, and gets in front of Stu.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Feller --

Joe points. They look and see: Trashcan Man is standing out on the tall grass, looking in at their campfire. *

Stu and Larry exchange a look. Larry puts down the guitar so as to pull Stu's rifle near to his side. Nadine takes the box cutter in hand and moves to Joe. Stu steps forward, quieting the dog with a hand. *

TRASHCAN MAN

I smelled your cookin'. I'm camped back there beside the golf course. I can trade you for it. It's been a while since I ate hot.

STU

We can spare a little, sure.

He comes forward. Glen hands him the plate he's prepared, ready for whatever strange chat is about to begin. But Trash just mumbles thanks and heads back across the lot. *

Everyone looks at one another. Kojak barks once and Stu gives him a good belly rub. *

GLEN

I think that's your dog now, Stu. *

NADINE

He was sort of the quiet type, no? *

LARRY

I don't like him knowing where we are. You get any impression, Stu -- ?

STU

He liked the fire. That's all I got. He wasn't thinking about Vegas or Flagg, or Boulder either. I was planning on setting up watches tonight anyway. That settles it. *

LARRY

We can handle the watches. *

He tosses Stu something from one of the supply bags. It's extra strength Sominex, a sleep aid. Stu nods, grateful. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NADINE

I can't shoot a gun, but I can
keep one of you company.

*

Larry looks up when she says this, but if she's saying
this for his benefit, she doesn't give herself away.

*

*

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Everyone is sleeping except for Larry and Nadine, who sit
close to one another, but not too close. They've let the
fire die, but there is a huge, bright moon. The screen
above them glows white. Joe is asleep in the closest
tent. Somewhere nearby, STU SNORES.

*

*

*

NADINE

It's hard to want to go to sleep
when you know what's waiting for
you.

LARRY

He's a spooky dude, huh? I always
thought that city was a little
terrifying already. Now what
happens in Vegas really does need
to stay the fuck in Vegas.

*

*

*

*

*

NADINE

I don't mind the Vegas dreams. I
grew up in Vegas. It doesn't
scare me. I mean dreams about
before --

*

*

*

LARRY

Before?

NADINE

I thought I was living the wrong
life. I never married, never had
kids. I was a teacher, but only
because I couldn't think what it
was I was supposed to be doing.
And every day just seemed like a
little more false momentum,
waiting for something, some
crucial moment that never came.

She tears up a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NADINE

Mid-life jitters, I guess.
That seems so minor-league now,
thank God. In a weird way, I like
this much better. Sorry.

(sincerely)

You know what I mean at all?

Larry just shakes his head.

LARRY

I miss porn and nachos too much.

She laughs the sweetest, most vulnerable laugh. So he leans in and kisses her, deeply. She stays with him for a beat, but then pulls away. He moves to her neck and she lets him. But when she stands, she is crying.

LARRY

What is it?

NADINE

Didn't you just hear what I said?

She says this sincerely. She wipes her face and crawls in beside Joe. He whimpers in his sleep. She zips the tent.

Larry stands. He looks around, as if for someone to corroborate how confusing this just was, but then he sees:

LARRY'S POV

Someone is cutting across the far end of the moonlit lot. It's Trashcan Man. He disappears out the entrance of the drive-in. Larry moves to Glen's tent. He wakes him.

LARRY

Take watch. Neighbor just cut
across our yard.

EXT. INDIANA ROUTE 912 - NIGHT

Larry comes out of the drive-in and follows the road up the wooded hill beyond. When he gets to the top, he sees he's standing at the edge of a field of twenty or thirty big white chemical storage tanks, each one three-stories-high, pale in the moonlight.

It takes him a moment to see Trash climbing over the main entrance fence, which has been closed and padlocked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He disappears amongst the giants. Then he can hear him
CLIMBING THE METAL STEPS of one of the tanks.

LARRY
(to himself)
What are you up to, friend?

EXT. CHEERY PETROLEUM - TANK #1 STAIRS - NIGHT

Larry climbs the fence and heads to the first tank. He
begins up the little stairs that wind around to the top.

EXT. CHEERY PETROLEUM - TANK #1 - DAY

At the top, he sees Trash crouched down at some exposed
pipes in the center of the tank. He's got matches out
and is looking very carefully at something. Larry is
about to call to him when he distinctly hears Trash say:

TRASHCAN MAN
I love you.

And then Trash gets up to run. He sees Larry there, but
just zooms right past him. It takes Larry a moment to
see that Trash has jammed some kind of thick fuse into a
vent pipe and lit it. The running spark disappears into
it.

LARRY
Holy --

Larry starts running.

EXT. CHEERY PETROLEUM - TANK #1 STAIRS - DAY

Larry comes down the stairs three at a time. He tumbles
down the last dozen, but keeps running. Trash is gone.
He climbs the fence, drops over, and sprints for his
life.

EXT. INDIANA ROUTE 912 - DAY

Larry's about eight hundred yards away when tank #1 blows
with a huge KA-WHAP! and lights up the night.

The blast wind races through the trees along the road and
when it hits him, Larry is knocked forward. Tanks #2 and
#3 blow. Then the rest go in an epic chain. The whole
sky swirls orange and black. He gets up and keeps
running.

EXT. INDIANA DRIVE-IN - NADINE'S TENT - NIGHT

The EXPLOSIONS ECHO over the countryside. Kojak is BARKING his head off. Stu launches out of his tent to see the hill north of the drive-in bloom in huge columns of fire. Glen is just beside him when the wind blows by them. Nadine and Joe appear in the opening of their tent.

Then Stu feels, more than senses what's next. There is a movement through the trees in the woods as the first tiny bits of shrapnel begin falling.

STU

GLEN

Am I the only one seeing -- No -- !

So Stu yanks Glen down into the doorway of Nadine's tent where he pulls everyone together as pieces of blackened metal begin shredding the giant movie screen and piercing the ground all around them. It sounds like a factory has been turned upside and is being shaken out over them.

He keeps his face down, but lifts one hand to the sky.

Nadine is SCREAMING, clutching Joe to her, both of them under Stu. Parts of the tent roof glow silver. They can't see outside, but they all hear the chaos raining down.

When it tapers off, Stu brings down his hand and the silver immediately disappears.

EXT. INDIANA DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

They come out and see, in the massive light of the fires: metal chunks and pieces have piled up around the tent, leaving a perfect untouched circle five yards wide at the very spot where they were just crouching.

The dog runs up and licks Stu's hand as if there's some eldritch aftertaste there. Glen looks at what Stu's done, then at Stu, in amazement. Nadine looks around, panicked.

NADINE

Stu, where's Larry -- ?!

But Larry appears at the gates to the drive-in, scraped up from his slide on pavement, but okay. Stu motions the others to stay and runs over to him.

LARRY

*He set them to blow. You think
Flagg's behind it?*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Little fires have caught in the tattered movie screen and in some of the trees. *

STU *

I think when Flagg hits us, it's
going to be a direct strike. *

From here, Larry can see Trash's tent in the weedy woods behind the drive-in and runs to it. Stu and Kojak follow. *

INT. TRASHCAN'S TENT - NIGHT

The tent is on the edge of an overgrown golf course. It's still empty. Larry ducks into it behind Kojak. *

STU *

Careful, Lar. *

Larry finds a duffle bag and opens it up. He stares at its contents: FUSE CORD, TIMING DEVICES, and other tools of the trade. And GRENADES. A dozen of them. Larry zips it up and takes it. *

STU (O.S.) *

We have got to go -- *

LARRY *

You just lost your toy privileges,
asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS (OUTSIDE GARY) - NIGHT

Trashcan Man is watching the inferno he's created from a railroad bridge nearby. He jumps up and down, tickled and proud. A massive roiling column of flame boils to the heavens. Then he realizes it is speaking to him. *

FLAGG (V.O.)

*Live by the torch, die by the
torch. I see what you've done and
I am pleased.*

TRASHCAN MAN *

(in awe)
You saw? *

FLASH ON: The black pyramid of the Luxor Hotel in Vegas. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG (V.O.)
*I will set you high in my
 artillery, Donald. You're needed
 here.*

Trash hops up and down, he is so excited, so moved.

TRASHCAN MAN
My name. You know my name!

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN BAND SHELL (PALMYRA, MO) - DAWN

The morning is bird-filled and dewy. Tom Cullen comes
 walking up across the wet grass of the park, two big jars of
 peanut butter in hand. He gets to the band shell, but --

*

*

Nick is gone. All his stuff, too, as well as Tom's cars.
 All that's left is a pile of folded blankets.

Tom's face goes blank for a moment and an expression of
 real sadness comes over him. But a BIKE HORN BEGINS
 HONKING over in the town square. It's the old WOOGA
 kind. Tom runs toward it.

*

*

*

*

EXT. MAIN INTERSECTION (PALMYRA, MO) - DAY

Nick is walking two bikes, his own and a mountain bike
 he's fixed up with a horn, headlight, and panniers. He
 sees Tom running toward him, relief plain on his face.

TOM
 Oh, mister --

*

*

Nick puts the kickstands down and makes a pedalling
 motion. Then he points way into the distance. Tom
 thinks.

TOM
 You want me to go with you?

Nick nods.

TOM
 Can I take my cars?

*

Nick crouches over a pannier and opens it, revealing all
 of Tom's matchbox cars. Tom shouts with joy:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM
TOM CULLEN'S GOING!!!

EXT. MISSOURI RURAL ROUTE 81 - DAY

Tom is faster than Nick expected. He pedals furiously, all concentration. They get to a sign reading "IOWA STATE LINE." Tom slows to a stop and waits for Nick.

TOM
Is this still Ralls County,
mister?

Nick shakes his head. This gives Tom pause. He looks out at the vast countryside ahead of them, scared now.

TOM
Is it the *world*?

It takes Nick a second to realize what Tom is asking.

He nods. Tom looks behind them, and ahead. Then he gathers his courage, and says:

TOM
Okay. Okay, let's go.

He starts pedalling. Nick follows, full of admiration.

CUT TO:

EXT. LINCOLN HIGHWAY (ILLINOIS/IOWA) - DAY

On a steel trestle bridge over the Mississippi River, an old flag hangs in tatters. Some of its stars have come unsewn and fallen onto the pavement below.

*
*

Stu's group rides out onto the bridge and slows to a stop halfway across. They get off to stretch their legs. Kojak jumps out of his little trailer, tail wagging.

STU
Five minutes.

Stu goes to the edge and looks out at the wooded river banks. It is a beautiful summer afternoon.

*

Glen and Joe come up to look with him. Joe starts to drop some of the stars in the river. Catfish come up to investigate. A lot of them.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN

The irony of this is that, mixed
in with the rest, I never seen so
many pretty places in all my life.

*
*

STU

I'm starting to think that's why
Mother put us on this road instead
of the highways. So we could see
all this. Fall back in love with
it.

(beat)

Before we have to take our stand.

*

Glen looks at Stu, and nods.

A few trestles down, Larry walks up to where Nadine is
sitting in the shade. She watches him come up.

*
*

LARRY

Sorry I did that last night. I
shouldn't have come at you like
that.

*
*
*
*

NADINE

I worried it might happen.

*
*

LARRY

You didn't seem so worried at
first.

*
*
*

He's joking, and grins his grin at her. She shakes her
head, gets up, and stalks off down the bridge.

*
*

LARRY

I was kidding!

*
*

NADINE

Yeah, I know.

*
*

Larry trades a look with Stu. Glen raises his eyebrows.

LARRY

How about we take the lead.

STU

We'll give you a head start.

CUT TO:

LARRY

rides up on his Chief and slows beside her.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Get on.

(beat)

I've got your stuff. Stu's got
Joe. It's time to talk.

She looks at him. Then she climbs on behind him.

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (IOWA) - DAY

Larry drives slow so they can hear each other. The road
moves from woods to fields and back into woods.

LARRY

Before you tell me whatever it is
you're gonna tell me, let me say
something first.

*
*
*

He comes into a wide curve in the road and leans a little
into it.

LARRY

I don't want anything from you you
don't want to give. I'm not gonna
try to talk you into anything, or
steamroll you. But I don't want
to just roll over. I'll be
honest: I didn't used to be, and
it's work, but I can tell you,
Nadine, and please believe me, I
really am a nice guy --

*

*
*
*
*
*
*

There is a vinyl-sided house trailer blocking the road.
A dozen or so people are standing around it in little
groups. Larry brakes and barely keeps from skidding out.
A bearded man in aviator sunglasses, GARVEY (40), calls
out:

*
*
*
*

GARVEY

OKAY --

He stands in the middle of a loose line across the road
with three other men -- VIRGE, RONNIE, AL (30s) -- all
armed. Behind them are eight stoned-looking women,
Frannie included. Harold is standing with them, unarmed.

*

NADINE

(quietly, to Larry)
None of the women have guns.

GARVEY

Now DISMOUNT. Come on. Slow
slow.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

We don't want anything here.
We'll just back on up --

GARVEY

Get off the bike. And step away
from each other.

In the near distance behind them, they all hear ENGINES.
Garvey looks past them, his gun coming up a hair. *

NADINE

Joe --

And that's enough for Larry. He arches his back a little
so that the rifle comes into reach. Then he goes for it.

LARRY

GET DOWN!

Garvey sights Larry, but just as he pulls weight on the
trigger, Frannie suddenly comes alive and screams: *

FRANNIE

NOW!

Her yell causes Garvey to flinch. Larry pulls Nadine
behind his bike as the bullet meant for his head misses
by an inch. More of the women, including DAYNA JURGENS
(30), rush Garvey's gang, disrupting their first shots. *

Harold ducks behind the trailer and yells for Frannie.

The men struggle with the women, who are clawing and
kicking. Virge gets off a shot and the face of the woman
attacking him explodes. Frannie can hear the woman's
blood RAIN DOWN on the pavement. But his rifle bucks and
goes clattering across the road. Frannie races after it. *

Stu and Glen ride INTO VIEW. Stu hears the GUNFIRE as he
sees it. He gets both scooters off the road as bullets
shred the trees around them. Joe screams. The kid
trailer tips over and Kojak bounds out. *

Glen's last glimpse before Stu pushes him and Joe down-
slope of the road is Al receiving a lucky head shot from
Larry, pinwheeling him back against the trailer. *

STU

Keep him down -- *

Glen nods and keeps Joe low, so he won't see any of it.
Stu grabs his rifle and starts running in a crouch toward
the mayhem, looking for a shot, but the men are in the
middle of so many women now he can't risk it. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Garvey keeps shooting at Larry while Ronnie fires into the women, screaming:

RONNIE
Yaah! BITCHES! YAAH! You
bitches!

Three women drop bloody and flopping on the pavement. But Frannie has picked up Virge's rifle. Instead of shooting Ronnie, she swings it around and brains him with the butt of it. He drops on his stomach and she hammers his head. *

Stu aims at Garvey and fires, taking off the man's ear. Garvey bellows and duck-runs behind the trailer.

Virge, without a gun, sends one of the women to the ground with a nasty punch, then he shoves his way through to get behind the trailer as well. Harold, hiding with a chunk of asphalt from the road, slams him in the face.

Virge doesn't fall, but stumbles along SCREAMING. He puts his hand on the trailer to brace himself and Harold smashes it, breaking fingers.

They hear an ENGINE STARTING on the other side of the trailer, so Stu leaps up, runs after. Passing Larry and Nadine, still on the ground behind their bike. *

STU
Joe's all right -- !

NADINE
Oh my God. Oh my God. *

Stu gets to the trailer and sees: there's a station wagon and a cop car hidden behind it. Garvey is backing the cop car away like a missile, Virge hanging out of the window. Stu aims at the tires, but he's out of ammo. *

Garvey squeals into a braked turn, then he peels out and floors it. Stu concentrates on the back tires -- trying to blow them with his mind. *

But behind the trailer, Nadine begins SCREAMING and his attention is pulled in that direction. Frannie runs up, her hands bloody. He sees how pregnant she is. *

STU
Are you shot?!

FRANNIE
I'm okay! It's your friend -- !

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu starts running back.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG - DRIVEWAY - DUSK

The station wagon comes down a long gravel track followed by the bikes. The track cuts through a windbreak and ends at a camp meeting hall. The wagon aims its headlights at the hall and parks. Everyone jumps out.

*

*

STU

(to Harold)

Go back to the main road and make sure nobody can see us down here. Be sure.

*

Harold goes. Stu says to Glen and Nadine:

STU

Help me bring him inside --

He turns to tell Frannie to take Joe, but she's got him.

*

In the headlights, Stu, Glen, and Nadine carry Larry into the hall. There is a lot of blood. Dayna helps get the two other women inside as well.

*

*

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG - MAILBOX - DUSK

*

Harold runs up the drive to where it meets the road and looks back. There is the thin glow of headlights back there, but nothing can be seen.

*

*

*

He turns and looks around, but does not see Garvey anywhere. He heads back, not seeing the crow up on the telephone line watching him go.

*

*

*

INT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - MESS - NIGHT

They bring in Larry and lay him on a long wooden dining table. He's conscious, but fading, grunting with pain.

*

Frannie appears with a second lantern. Stu removes a jacket tied over Larry's wound to see. He's taken a shot to the chest that's left a ragged hole. It's WHISTLING.

*

*

*

GLEN

That's his lung --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NADINE

The bullet came out his back,
under his shoulder blade. Two
holes. Two.

*
*
*
*

Stu rips off some tape from their med kit and makes a
flutter valve to fix over it so the air can get out, but
not back in. He makes one for Larry's back as well.

*
*
*

STU

We should have kept driving, found
a clinic, something -- With pain
meds. Sterile tools.

*

NADINE

He's cold, Stu.

*

Larry rolls his eyes up at them, he's pale and very weak.
Harold runs back in.

*

HAROLD

No one can see down here unless
they're coming through the woods
on foot. If you don't need the
headlights anymore --

STU

Shut 'em off.

(beat)

Is anyone here more qualified to
do this than me? Is anyone a
doctor, nurse? A vet? Anything?

*

One of the women stands up, SHIRLEY HEMMIT (50s). She is
sunburned and slow-moving, hollow.

*
*

SHIRLEY

I was a midwife.

*

Stu looks to see who's said this. The woman seems to be
in a deep haze. He asks Frannie, who's at his elbow.

*

STU

What's going on with her?

FRANNIE

They were forcing tranquilizers on
us. They had a mason jar full of
them. The orange ones worked, but
the pink ones must have been too
old. That's how some of us fooled
them. She must be on an orange --

*

Shirley looks at Larry, at the blood. She says, vaguely:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHIRLEY

He won't make it.

Dayna sits Shirley back down. Larry starts missing every other breath, his death spiral speeding up. *

STU

I'm going to try something.

Larry moans. Frannie mops the cold sweat off his face with her shirt. Stu says to Glen:

STU

Get his other shoulder and hold him down. I don't know if this is going to hurt --

Glen takes up a position opposite Stu. Nadine nods. *

FRANNIE

What are you going to do?

STU

Take his leg -- He might kick. *

Harold takes hold of his calf while Glen holds him down at the hips.

Before he can second guess himself, Stu puts one hand directly onto Larry's chest wound. Larry bucks at the pain. He puts the other hand under Larry and finds the hole in back. Larry YELLS, about to pass out, but there is the faintest silver light under Stu's fingers. *

It seems to be causing Stu some great effort. His eyes are narrowed, his jaw clenched, like a marksman taking a long shot. But as they watch, Larry begins panting, and then -- amazingly -- breathing normally. But when Stu removes his hand, the wound is raw-looking, but closed. He puts his hands back over it once more and when he removes them again, it looks better. *

STU

Breathe, Larry. Tell me if it hurts -- *

Larry, a little dazed from this, does. He takes a good, full, deep breath. Frannie and Harold look on in disbelief. A moment ago, he was almost dead. *

LARRY

Actually, it kind of tickles.

Larry raises his arm as if to show them. Stu tears up, both from relief and exhaustion. All of them do. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY
 (laughing)
 Right through here. It *tickles*.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE IOWA LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The moon has come up, a big bloody moon above the woods and fields. But it slowly becomes Flagg's eye, which combs over landscape slowly, feeling Stu and his powers, and seeking him out. Horses in the fields feel Flagg's gaze upon them. They shudder and shy.

1. In a hasty roadside camp, Garvey is taping his shot ear and Virge is wrapping up his broken hand. They turn to the moon, as if called.

2. On the roof of a gas station elsewhere in the county, TWO MEN are camped. They come awake in the moonlight and look up, one and then the next.

3. On the highway, another MAN sleeping in a canvas-cover Army truck gets out to see the moon. His hand slides off the door handle and drops to his side. A voice speaks to him. It is Flagg's voice, speaking to them all.

FLAGG (V.O.)
Bring him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - PORCH - NIGHT

Stu washes the blood off his hands at an old enamel pump on the porch. Then he goes and sits on the rail, spent and deep in thought. In a moment, the screen door opens. He barely hears it.

FRANNIE
 Heavy thoughts?

He turns to look at her, something hard in his eyes. But then he relaxes a little, his guard coming down again. He can trust this woman.

STU
 I was thinking about sneaking off.
 Tonight.

Frannie looks at him, waiting for more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I'm not sure I'm cut out for this.
And if I'm not, no one else should
have to pay the price for it.

A beat. Frannie's tone is clear, tough.

FRANNIE

We're all making choices, you
know. We're all looking for the
same thing.

STU

And he's still looking for us.

FRANNIE

Garvey --

STU

Flagg. He's honing in on me.
Whenever I -- flex myself, I feel
it.

FRANNIE

He must sense how strong you are.

He shrugs.

STU

What about you? Those men, they -- ?

She understands and saves him from saying it out loud.

FRANNIE

The others girls, yeah. Not me.
Not yet. Not like this. But they
would have eventually. Harold
they were testing. Or teasing.
I'm not sure which, but they kept
him around. He was faking well
enough, but he wouldn't have
lasted much longer if they'd made
him do anything really ugly.

(beat)

You and your friend saved us both.

Stu nods, but there's no pride in it. Frannie crouches
beside him.

FRANNIE

You were a hell of a shot back
there. Not to mention whatever
the hell you did just now on that
table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I'm still figuring it out. It's a
big set of question marks.

(vaguely)

Army of One. Taking lives, saving
lives.

FRANNIE

So far you're way up on the saving
part. If that helps.

He looks at her. She doesn't seem intimidated by him at
all. And there's an attraction on both sides that's
beautifully apparent. She puts a hand on his shoulder.

INT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dining hall, Larry is letting Joe look him over,
Nadine and Glen at his side.

Harold sits by the cold fireplace with the women, but
he's watching Frannie and Stu through the front window,
to see what happens next.

FLASH ON: A snake is falling, falling through the sky.

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - PORCH - NIGHT

Stu gestures to her belly.

STU

You ready for what you got coming?

FRANNIE

No. But I've got three weeks or
so to get ready. Boulder means a
lot to me for a place I've never
seen.

Her whole energy shifts a little, tensing up.

FRANNIE

We haven't seen anyone yet who's
got family alive.

(beat)

I don't know a lot about genetics,
but that can't be good news.

STU

(remembering)

Hey. I saw twins --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks at him, at the hope he's offering, not sure if she'll let herself believe him. *

STU
In New York. Twin brothers.
Teenagers. Both were fine.

She's about to reply when then they hear a sound out in the dark. A CHUFFING sound. *

A horse comes out of the dark and stands 30' from the porch. A second horse joins it, as if drawn by their voices. Both are beautiful. Neither has a saddle. One is pulling up on a front hoof. Stu looks at it closely. *

FRANNIE
He's hurt, Stu -- Must have heard
our voices. *

But Stu gets Frannie up and walks her toward the door. *

STU
Tell the others we're leaving
after all. And bring out my rifle -- *

FRANNIE
Stu, what's going on -- ?

But as they get to the door, a third horse appears out of the dark beyond railing behind them and grabs Stu, hard, and tosses him down the stairs into the yard. The other horses rush forward. *

Frannie screams and tries to go down after him, but the first horse snaps at her.

INT./EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Harold and the others hear Frannie SCREAMING and move. Glen and Larry grab guns. Harold follows them out to the porch in time to see:

The first two horses have Stu between them -- one gripping him by the belt and the other by the back of his shirt. They gallop off with him up the driveway into the dark.

Glen shoots at the horse nearest the porch, driving it off into the dark, while Larry runs after Stu. Harold grabs Frannie's arm and pulls her inside. *

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Larry races after Stu and sees: Where the driveway meets the road there is a pickup idling. The horses dump Stu into the bed where two men are waiting and then run off. One man punches Stu unconscious. The other aims and fires his shotgun at Larry, who dives into the wild grass. Then the truck PEELS OUT and speeds off.

*
*
*
*
*

Larry runs back to the camp, yelling to Glen.

LARRY

Use the gas in the scooters -- top
the motorcycles off -- NOW!

*

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Stu is dazed. The shooters handcuff him. In a mile, the pickup meets up with a police car and the Army truck. They transfer him to the back of the covered truck.

*
*

Stu comes to enough to see Garvey crouching in front of him, with his taped and bloody ear, and a mason jar full of pills in his hand. Stu tries to get up, but Garvey shoves him back.

*
*

He shakes out two pills at random -- one pink, one orange -- and forces them into Stu's mouth. Then he holds Stu's jaw and nose shut. Stu starts to buck and kick, but finally has to swallow.

*

*

GARVEY

You can sleep all the way to
Vegas, Redman.

*
*

Then he sucker punches him for good measure. Stu is out.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG MEETING HALL - PORCH - NIGHT

Larry tries to operate as calmly as Stu would. He scans the map as everyone loads up. Glen and Harold find him.

*

GLEN

Bikes are ready.

Larry shows them on the map.

LARRY

I guess we know where they're
taking him.

*
*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)

The fastest is for them to cut
down to Ewing, then here or here
to I-70.

(beat)

We'll try to catch them before the
split. Surprise 'em. But be
ready; these fuckers like to
ambush.

*
*
*

Larry goes to Nadine and Fran who are standing with Joe
by the wagon. He talks to them as he goes through
Trashcan Man's duffle in back.

*

LARRY

You've got rifles. Keep to our
route and look for Mother. She's
there somewhere. We'll get Stu
and meet you in Nebraska, past
Omaha. A town called Hemingford
Home. It's on the map. Get there
and stay out of sight. We'll meet
you there as soon as we can. Four
shots means it's us.

*
*

*
*

Frannie nods. Joe hugs Larry, crying silently.

*

JOE

Get him, Rarry!

*
*

Larry strokes Joe's face and nods. And then Nadine
surprises him with a hard hug. A few feet away, Frannie
just squeezes Harold's hand, like a sister. Harold looks
terrified. Larry takes one Indian and Harold rides with
Glen on the other. The women get into the wagon, Frannie
behind the wheel.

*
*
*
*

EXT. CAMP RIVERDOG DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

At the end of the driveway, the bikes go one way, the
wagon the other.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL IOWA - FIRST LIGHT

Garvey's convoy barrels through a chain of tiny Iowa farm
towns. The morning skies ahead look low and full of
rain.

*
*

INT. MILITARY TRUCK - FIRST LIGHT

In the back of the military truck, Stu comes up through his drug haze. He sees ruined buildings scrolling by. And then he sees -- just for a moment -- the solemn profile of a town square statue. He tries to see more, but Virge, who is now guarding him, notices.

*
*
*
*

He climbs over to Stu with the mason jar. He shakes out two more pills -- one orange, one pink again -- and shoves them into Stu's mouth.

*
*

Foggy, Stu tries to spit them out before Virge can get his jaw shut. One pings off the canvas wall and falls to the bed. It's the orange one. As Virge is getting another, Stu knees the jar out of his hand. It shatters on the floor of the truck. Virge decks him in the ribs and Stu cries out.

*
*

VIRGE

Fucking dirty fighter --

Virge grabs two more pills off the floor and forces them between Stu's teeth. Stu can't see what color they are, but Virge gets the upper hand and makes Stu swallow.

*
*
*

Stu closes his eyes, trying another plan.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. IOWA HIGHWAY - FIRST LIGHT

Larry, Glen, and Harold race on. A sign on the roadside reads "EWING 11." Thunderheads are gathering south of them.

*
*

EXT. EWING, IA - FIRST LIGHT

When they ride into Ewing, they see it was clearly the site of some kind of "Shroud" Protocol fiasco, practically leveled by mortar fire. Weeds have reclaimed it.

*
*
*

A statue of Chief Black Hawk stands in a small, ruined park at the intersection of two possible routes. A four-lane road heads south and a two-lane southwest.

*
*

They slow down and come to a stop in the intersection.

Garvey's gang is nowhere to be seen.

HAROLD

We missed them?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN

It's a coin toss from here. FUCK.

HAROLD

They're in trucks, right. They'd
take the bigger road --

Larry closes his eyes and -- because who the fuck knows? --
tries to summon up anything Stu is sending. Suddenly, he
is surprised with an image: *

FLASH ON: The tops of the ruined buildings of Ewing, as
seen from the back of the military truck.

Larry gets a little vertigo with the image, but he stays
with it, eyes clamped shut.

FLASH ON: No street signs or tall landmarks are visible. *

Just for a moment, however, he sees the solemn profile of
a statue pass. And then it is gone. *

Larry opens his eyes and sees: It is the same statue he
is looking at. He quickly figures out how the angle
could work -- from the southwest. He pulls forward and
confirms it, then launches off in that direction. Glen
follows, Harold barely hanging on. *

EXT. SOUTH OF EWING, IA - DAY

Larry and Glen ride side-by-side, hugging the road and
topping out their speed. The country past Ewing is as
rural as it gets -- rolling fields of corn gone wild as
far as they can see. The first wand of lightning strikes
twenty miles ahead.

Up there, by the strike, Larry spots Garvey's convoy. It
begins to sprinkle rain.

INT. MILITARY TRUCK - DAY

Up with Garvey's gang it is already raining hard. Stu
has his eyes nearly closed, but he sees the headlights of
the police car and pickup truck come on behind them as
the sky continues to darken. *

Further back, Stu can see Larry and Glen's bikes gaining
on them. Neither has on its running lights so they are
less visible in the rain. Stu gets his knees drawn up
and pretends to stir in his sleep, drawing Virge's
attention to him. Virge leans over, pulling up his
eyelid. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And Stu makes his move. He rolls onto his back, gets his feet on Virge's chest and shoves him backward.

INT. COP CAR - DAY

Garvey has his windshield wipers on full bore. Between sweeps, Virge comes flying out of the back of the military truck, hits the hood, and smashes through the center of his windshield. Garvey almost loses control of the car. He steers off the shoulder and then back onto it. Virge is not dead. He's mewling and bleeding, head and shoulders through the glass.

EXT. PICKUP - DAY

Because of Stu's distraction, Larry is able to get close enough to the pickup truck to shoot out its back tire.

It immediately swerves off the wet pavement, clipping the cop car, which swerves the other way to counter. As Larry and Glen blow past them both, Larry lobbs a grenade he's brought from Trash's duffle at the pickup. It lands just behind it, and when it blows it lifts the back of the truck five feet off the ground, shattering its windows. It doesn't flip, but it shudders to a halt. The men flee the burning truck, bringing with them a long, tubular weapon.

*
*
*
*
*

Garvey stops long enough for them to jump in, and then he takes off after the bikes.

EXT. BIKES - DAY

The light is starting to go weird on them. Yellow storm light. Danger light. It begins to hail, pellets bouncing off Larry's shoulders. They pass a sign reading "PLYMOUTH 11." Lightning strikes the field behind the sign.

INT. MILITARY TRUCK - DAY

The truck speeds along. Stu uses his power to pop the springs on his handcuffs. He tosses them aside and climbs to the back of the truck. When he gets there, he sees Larry and Glen fifty yards behind, the cop car catching up quickly behind them. But then he looks up and the color drains from his face.

Over them, five thousand feet up, a wide cloud vortex is beginning to rotate.

EXT. BIKES - DAY

Harold sees the terror on Stu's face and follows his sightline, craning his head back.

*
*

HAROLD

Holy Jesus -- !

*

Behind him, one of Garvey's men crawls carefully out and sits on the window sill of the cop car. He mounts the tube on his shoulder -- a rocket launcher -- aims, and then a wand of smoke races at the bikes.

*
*
*
*

The rocket shoots past Harold and Glen and explodes on contact behind Larry. It knocks him forward and he fishtails, nearly dumping his bike. Harold screams.

*

A DEEP HUMMING VIBRATION begins everywhere around them.

The wind is picking up fast, blowing rain sideways across the road. The vortex funnels and touches down half a mile to the north. It immediately pulls up dirt, sleeving itself brown.

The whole convoy comes up on a concrete bridge over the Randolph River. A section of railing a few meters behind Harold explodes as a second rocket hits it.

*
*
*

Garvey is almost on them, the rocket launcher reloading. They are about to be back in rifle range as well.

*

At the far end of the bridge, Larry sees a rusted semi cab pulled to the side, blocking one lane. The military truck swerves around it, almost tossing Stu out the back, but he hangs on. Larry screams to Glen:

*

LARRY

GET AHEAD OF ME --

*

Glen does. Larry feels on his belt for a second grenade. He slows to 40 mph. The cop car is now about 100 yards behind him. Larry has to time this very, very well.

*

LARRY

THREE --

When he gets near to the semi cab he pulls the grenade pin with his teeth.

LARRY

TWO --

He slows to 30 mph just long enough to toss the grenade into the rig's coupling.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And then Larry opens the throttle wide. He pops up on one wheel for a second, barely hanging on.

INT. MILITARY TRUCK - DAY

Stu watches it happen:

*

As the cop car passes the semi, the grenade explodes, jerking the whole cab over enough that the cop car is suddenly pinned. Virge's body and the man with the rocket launcher fly out, hitting the bridge at better than 60 mph and rolling out of their skins.

*

*

*

*

Just upriver, the tornado rips through a treeline, scouring it to the ground. It crosses the river and for a moment the funnel goes black with river water. Then it turns pale brown again and starts hiping out at the side.

*

*

The canvas over Stu's head rips along the seam and splits, opening him up to the sky. Lightning hits to the right of the road, throwing everything into momentary X-ray.

*

*

*

STU'S POV

The clouds of the upper vortex are forming a face, a horrifying pair of dead eyes, a yawning mouth. It is Flagg, or Stu's vision of Flagg.

BACK TO SCENE

Stu holds onto the awning frame. They have seconds left. The bikes won't stay upright much longer, fighting through the blowing rain. Up ahead, Stu can see two farmhouses -- one on either side of the road.

He'll have to choose. The mile marker ahead of them quivers violently and then is yanked out, shooting past Lar. He closes his eyes and sees in his head:

*

*

FLASH ON: Pitch black. The sound of frightened breathing.

*

Stu looks from one house to the other. There's no time to be wrong. The funnel is moving straight in line to intercept both the truck and bikes, killing everyone -- except for whatever Flagg has planned for Stu.

*

STU'S POV

Behind the house to the south, he sees a small metal vent pipe sticking out of a mound fifty yards behind the back porch, the top twirling like a pinwheel.

*

BACK TO SCENE

The RUMBLING VIBRATION is DEAFENING, so Stu points to the house as they pass it -- not a save-yourself plea, but a gesture of command. The bikes turn for it. Stu stills himself, gathers his energy, and then steps off the back of the speeding truck.

*

*

EXT. IOWA HIGHWAY - DAY

Stu hits the pavement on a rolling strobe of silver. He tumbles over twice, three times, awkward in these magical acrobatics, but is able to get up and keep running. He's drugged and exhausted, but he fights on. Behind him, the truck is sucked sideways off the road.

*

*

*

*

Stu cuts across the overgrown lawn and past the house to where Larry and Glen have dropped their bikes next to the storm shelter. They are pulling on the closed door.

*

LARRY

IT'S LOCKED!

STU

(running up)

FROM *INSIDE* --

*

But Harold steps up, full of bravado, and tries to open it with his mind, imitating Stu. To his surprise, there's the faintest glimmer of silver. His eyes go wide, but it is not even a hundredth the power needed to open the door.

*

*

*

*

*

Everyone else is looking across the road, where:

*

The other house is pulled apart and carried up and up. Then the road itself disappears. They are in the base now and debris is getting raked across the yard toward them, shredding the sod.

*

Stu shoulders Harold aside and puts his hands around the handle. It begins to glow serious silver, but suddenly the door opens and Nick Andros' sober face appears.

*

*

*

INT. STORM SHELTER - DAY

Everyone rushes down into the dark space. There are other people there. Harold has a split-second before they are plunged into darkness to see that the couple he has just sat next to is dead, and has been for almost a year.

Stu sees the house beside the shelter breaking apart, the whole back porch catapulted at them, and then the door shuts with a SHATTERING IMPACT. The whole ungodly, titanic engine of the tornado sweeps over them and lingers. Harold is screaming in the dark. Larry, too.

Finally, the sound begins to recede, leaving a BUZZING vacuum in its wake. Everyone catches his breath. After a long moment, Stu opens the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANDOLPH RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

Garvey, alone now and on foot, watches the tornado disburse a couple of miles down the road. The funnel shakes loose all its debris, and then is gone. Garvey kicks in the headlight of the cop car, furious, and now terrified.

Then he hears Virge moaning where he lies flayed by the pavement, somehow still alive. He marches over to him, not to help, but to finish him off with a boot heel to the middle of his head.

GARVEY

Shithead.

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - MEZZANINE - DAY

Flagg's voice echoes through the huge inverted ziggurat of the Luxor's interior.

FLAGG (O.S.)

Not GOOD enough? NOT GOOD
ENOUGH?!

Flagg is up on the mezzanine in his private area, which looks up into all the levels of the Luxor. People crossing through the lobby freeze in their tracks. Lloyd, who is standing guard, rushes up the steps to find Flagg is destroying the room, turning over tables and flinging chairs, so angry is he.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG
I'M THE STORM INSIDE THE STORM,
you fuckers! I'M THE FUCKING
FINGER OF GOD!

He half-sits, half-collapses on top of one of the
overturned chairs, spent. Lloyd approaches carefully.

FLAGG
That took it out of me, Lloyd.

He looks exhausted from the chase, the mental exertion.

FLAGG
All this for one goddamn *cowboy*?

Lloyd doesn't know exactly what Flagg means, but he's
seeing cracks where there was only power before, and it
unnerves him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORM SHELTER - DAY

Stu comes out unsteady on his feet, so Larry takes his
arm and helps him. They watch the tornado breaking up to
the south. Both houses are gone. Garvey is nowhere
close, still trapped back at the bridge.

Glen comes out followed by Harold, then Nick. He puts a
hand on Nick's shoulder.

STU
Gentlemen, the beer's on me.

It THUNDERS, but the storm's wandered away.

TOM (O.S.)
That's just angels bowling up in
Heaven, mister. That's all *that*
is.

Stu nearly jumps out of his skin, so surprised is he when
Tom says this. He's been standing in the dark door of
the shelter and Stu didn't feel him there. At all.

STU
(to Larry)
There's a trick I could use --

Tom is looking at the sky, trying to calm himself down.
Stu smiles at him, amazed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nick writes out a note on wet notepaper and hands it to Larry, who reads it.

GLEN

I'm Nick. He's Tom. Can someone
please tell him my name's not
'Mister.'

CUT TO:

EXT. HEMINGFORD HOME, NE - DAY

A farm truck and two new scooters ride into Hemingford Home. They park under the water tower in the center of town. Larry gets out and fires FOUR SHOTS into the air. *

In a moment, Nadine and Frannie come out with Joe and the others. There are tears and embraces. Larry takes Nadine and Joe into his arms. * *

INT. HEMINGFORD HOME POLICE STATION - DAY

Everyone has gathered in the lobby of the police station. *

STU *

We're under the radar, I think. I
figured it out. Flagg can't see
us now. But Garvey knows we're
taking this road. *

(beat) *

We've got a few hours on him. We
slit the tires on every vehicle we
passed for 20 miles, but he'll
find something. And he'll have
more men when he gets here. *

GLEN *

Flagg's a pro. Sending us spies
and assassins at every turn. *

STU *

Then so should we.

Stu looks at them all. *

STU

If we could get someone into
Vegas, to look around, we could
make a plan. Flagg's not going to
stop, and we don't know the first
thing about what he's got going on
down there. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

You can't see anything?

STU

No. He's got his shields up, too. *

FRANNIE

I'll go. I'm the last person he'd expect.

HAROLD

Frannie --

STU

I don't want you down there. If the baby comes early, you'd be vulnerable, maybe medicated. It's not an option.

Harold sees the look that passes between them. He bites down on his bile and says nothing. A beat. *

NADINE

Then I'll do it.

LARRY

Like hell.

NADINE

Larry, I know Vegas. I'll be able to see a hundred things that might be of use to you with one look around. And I can keep him out.

(to Stu)

I kept you out, didn't I? Wasn't I best at that?

Stu nods. But then he looks at Tom. Nick sees. He writes down something and hands it to Stu. Stu reads it.

STU

He wouldn't have to do anything, Nick. Just stay a day or two and then head back with Nadine.

LARRY

If he's letting anyone leave. *

STU

That's a possibility. I'm not saying it wouldn't be risky.

NADINE

He's building an empire. He needs people now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NADINE (CONT'D)

In the dreams he's inviting people
to help. That's what I'll say I'm
there for. That and the A.C. I
can say I ran across Tom on the
way.

*

STU

I'm not sure I can protect you
from up here. I'm not even sure
I'll be able to read you.

NADINE

If it helps, I want to do it.

She looks at Larry. He's the one in the room who knows
exactly what she means. But he doesn't look happy about
it.

TOM

(uneasily)
Tom Cullen's going?

*

*

STU

Just to look around.

*

Larry is looking at Nadine, pleading with his eyes. She
just shakes her head. It's decided.

*

STU

We'll leave here in an hour.

*

*

EXT. HEMINGFORD HOME, NE - DAY

*

Everyone is packing, sleeping, or saying their good-byes.
Stu stands in the center line of Hemingford Home and just
listens. The trees SHURR. It is a beautiful afternoon.
He sees a faded Lincoln Highway mural on a gas station
wall.

*

*

*

*

*

When a crow comes flying up the highway, he braces for it
to land and watch him, but it passes over Stu like he's
not there. Maybe they have a chance. He goes inside.

*

*

*

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (NEBRASKA) - DAY

The group rides along a rural road that rolls through
vast, tallgrass prairie. They have the farm truck,
scooters, and now a Ford Bronco. Cloud shadows drift.

*

They come to a stop at the intersection with Route 81.
Everyone gets out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harold and Glen start moving each person's things into the right car. Frannie stands with Stu, almost protectively.

*
*

TOM

M-O-O-N. That spells 'hickey.'

*
*

For a moment, Nadine doesn't know what he's talking about. But then she realizes and touches her neck where there is, in fact, a pale mark. She shoots Larry a look, meaning it to be stern, but it comes out half a smile.

*
*
*
*

She goes over to Stu with a road atlas.

*

STU

It's clear?

NADINE

81 South almost to Wichita, 54 into New Mexico, 40 to Kingman. Then follow signs to the Hoover Dam.

STU

They'll have the dam locked down and guarded. They'll probably pick you up there and escort you into the city.

*

She nods, more to herself than to Stu. Larry comes over.

*

FRANNIE

Stop and sleep, okay? You'll still get there by tomorrow afternoon.

NADINE

How do we -- reach each other?

STU

Don't try. Just be in whatever's happening. The most important thing is to avoid Flagg.

*
*

LARRY

If you see him, go the other way. That is not negotiable.

STU

If you never see him, even better. We just need info about how he's set up the city, how he's running things, what his plans are.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Impossibly, a small herd of buffalo is crossing the road ahead. Tom stands stock still next to Nick, not wanting to startle any of them. He whispers:

TOM

Nick, *those ain't cows* --

But Nick is smiling sadly. He looks at Tom, points to him, then puts his hands together and makes a sign for a bird flying away.

TOM

When I get to Boulder, can I stay
in your house with you? Right
where you live?

Nick nods and Tom smiles. Tom hugs him.

Nadine hugs Joe, who is somehow keeping himself from crying. She brushes away his long bangs. He really does need a haircut.

NADINE

I'll see you in a few days. Tom
and I are gonna take a ride. Keep
Larry company, and the others.

Joe nods. Joe takes Larry's hand and Nadine sees it. She nods to herself. It's okay.

Harold just stands next to Glen and watches. Frannie and Stu. Larry and Nadine. Stu notices him watching and Harold drops his eyes.

Tom comes back, excited.

TOM

Tom Cullen's gonna live with Nick
in Boulder, Colorado. Mile high!

Larry and Nadine look at one another. Then Nadine nods, which is somehow more intimate than a kiss. Then she heads for the Bronco. She taps her head as she passes Stu. Tom gets in as well, ready to go. He waves.

Nadine pulls away and they watch her head south.

Then Stu looks back the way they've come. Larry shakes his head and takes Joe back to the truck.

GLEN

Will we see them again, Stu?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I can't see what's coming. But
neither can he.

*

Larry slaps the top of the truck.

LARRY

We're running out of road, Stu.

STU

We're running out of a lot of
things. But she's right up ahead.

*

*

FRANNIE

You feel her?

Stu nods.

STU

We'll see her in an hour.

*

*

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (NEBRASKA) - DAY

They come down a rough section of the Lincoln Highway in
the rolling Nebraska prairie. Up ahead, they see a pair
of parked pickups. The gates are down and several people
are sitting in back. Stu's group strains to see, but Stu
knows.

*

*

*

*

*

In the back of one of the trucks, MOTHER ABIGAIL (108)
sits in a lawn chair under a sun umbrella. When she sees
Stu coming, she gets to her feet. So do the others.

*

Stu gets off the bike and goes over. Mother is beaming.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

I've been hardly waiting to meet
you, Stuart.

Stu can't help but grin, any last doubt lifted from him.

STU

I can't tell you what it means to
me you're real --

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Oh, I'm real. And so is he. It's
high time we talked.

*

Stu looks back the way they've come. The road is still
empty, but only as far as they can see.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU
We're bringing trouble with us --

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL
(unconcerned)
Walk with me, Stuart.

*

EXT. FARM TRACK (NE) - DAY

Stu and Mother come along a twin-rut path that runs along
the Platte River, like a kind of red-dirt Gethsemane.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL
People have been on the road too
long. It's time to build that
city on the hill. They'll need
you to show 'em how.

*

*

*

*

STU
You're the one we've been dreaming
of --

MOTHER ABIGAIL
But I've been dreaming of you,
Stuart -- What do you think of
that?

*

Stu shakes his head, but can't quite find any words.

MOTHER ABIGAIL
Going on two years now. I sent
that man Campion to you. Did you
think it was chance?

*

*

*

Stu remembers. That seems so long ago.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL
When I understood the circle was
opening, what was coming, I knew
you were the answer. I just
didn't know the question. Now I
do.

*

*

*

*

*

*

(beat)
It's a war, Stuart. For souls.
And you must win it.

Stu looks at her, and sighs.

*

STU
I don't believe in the soul. To
be honest with you.

*

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL
Even now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu gives her the slightest shrug. Mother Abigail smiles.

STU

There so many ways of seeing it
all. We can't hang our hat just
on one -- God and Jesus. That's
what I believe.

*
*
*
*

Mother Abigail surprises him by laughing, gently.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Oh, that doesn't matter.

*

STU

No?

*
*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Not at all. At your Sunday best,
or your darkest hour of doubt, He
believes in you.

*
*
*
*

(beat)

When we get to Boulder you'll see.
You'll call them all together.
And once they see I'm just an old
woman who doesn't glow in the dark
or part the sea, it'll be you
they'll look to.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

STU

But I'm no one.

*
*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

(emphatically)

Lay that down right now, once and
for all. Because you've *always*
been someone. Always.

*
*
*
*
*

He tears up.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Only now you're *more*.

*
*

(beat)

You're getting strong. You'll
pass me soon. There is no Boulder
without you. No use questioning
it. Your life is bigger than you
thought it was.

*
*
*
*
*
*

STU

That's what Flagg tells me, too.

*
*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

And it's true. But the truth can
be turned.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

I say it not to flatter you, but
to humble you. Learn the
difference.

*

They walk in silence for a few moments.

STU

I don't want to tell anyone what
to do. Any more than I have to --

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Telling people what to do isn't
hard when you know what the right
thing is --

(off his look)

This man needs to be stopped. And
soon. Or he'll set it all to
burn.

*

*

*

Up ahead, they can see their two groups mingling, almost
twenty people between them now.

STU

We can be there in four hours.

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Not yet. We'll stop tonight. We
need rest and to plan. When we
come into Boulder tomorrow, you
must be out front. It's what's
meant.

*

*

*

*

Stu nods, not sure he follows, but deferential to the
greater power he walks beside.

EXT. LINCOLN HIGHWAY (NEBRASKA) - DAY

They are crossing back to the vehicles when they see
Larry, Glen, Nick, Frannie, and Harold all pull their
rifles. Larry calls to him. Then Stu hears MOTORS
coming. It's Garvey. And eight other motorcycles.

*

*

*

*

STU

Mother, get behind --

*

*

But Mother motions him to stay and strides purposefully
out to the center line of the road, putting herself
deliberately in their path.

*

*

Glen yells to Stu.

GLEN

WHAT'S SHE DOING?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu shakes his head. He watches as the motorcycles begin to slow and Mother walks up to meet them.

Mother puts out her hands and they come to a stop. All of Garvey's men are looking at her, some unblinking, others behind mirrored sunglasses in which she's reflected.

*

*

She calls in a calm voice, but with a great authority:

MOTHER ABIGAIL

You searched for days for these children. But it was for nothing. They slipped through your hands like water.

*

*

The men blink at her, expressionless.

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Right through them. A senseless pursuit, and it's over. *Senseless.*

*

*

One by one, the men drop their weapons and get off the bikes. They begin walking right up to Mother. Stu holds off his group's trigger nerves with a hand. Then they walk right past her, shuffling the slightest bit like a pack of sleepwalkers.

*

*

*

They walk up to Stu's group. Harold almost takes a shot at Garvey, but Larry stops him.

HAROLD

He's right here!

STU

No --

Harold glares at Stu. Frannie shudders as the men come up, but she moves between them and where Dayna is holding Shirley Hemmit. But the men move right past them all in a daze. Their eyes never leave the horizon.

*

*

*

*

Stu walks out to where Mother stands watching them go.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

They'll walk three days and three nights, then they'll wake back to their senses -- thirsty, but alive.

*

*

*

*

STU

They'll go to Vegas, with news of us.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER ABIGAIL

It will be over by then, Stuart.
One way or the other.

Stu looks at her, then at his group, trying to keep up
with how quickly this is escalating.

*
*

EXT. MAIN STREET (BIG SPRING, NE) - DUSK

The combined caravan rides into the next town and stops
at the first intersection. Stu turns to Harold.

STU

Mother wants to sit down and make
a plan for Boulder. Can you find
a place we can sit and talk?

*
*

A beat. Harold nods, and heads off. Stu looks over at
Frannie, and she gives him a little appreciative smile.

EXT. MAIN STREET (BIG SPRING, NE) - DUSK

Harold walks the town. Past the main intersection,
there's an historic inn, the "Phelps Hotel." Next to it
is a gas station. He goes over to the station.

*

INT. GAS STATION (BIG SPRING, NE) - DUSK

Inside the little store of the station, he rifles through
the shelves until he finds: a spool of bright yellow
waxed carpenter's twine. He takes it.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. PHELPS HOTEL - NIGHT

One of the downstairs rooms is lamplit, people sitting
around a table inside.

INT. PHELPS HOTEL - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

*

Mother Abigail, Stu, Larry, Nick, and Glen all sit around
the big oval table in spindle-back chairs. Another five
chairs are unoccupied. They're in deep discussion.

*

GLEN

Anyone can see how living in Vegas
is easier. That's his main
selling point.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN (CONT'D)

Winter will be mild and they're
not homesteading down there. They
are fully wired.

(beat)

But it won't last.

*
*
*
*

STU

You mean Wild West kinda stuff?

MOTHER ABIGAIL

He means Wild *Earth* kinda stuff.

GLEN

This country's gonna go through
changes, and I mean big ones. The
whole natural order's in flux,
everything reverting to what it
was before man came along, deserts
included. Winters in the Rockies
are going to be rough, but without
irrigation, the Mojave in summer
will be unlivable in another year
or two. A 120-degree dustbowl.

*

*
*
*

LARRY

Jesus. You think he'd try to take
Boulder, then?

GLEN

Assuming we make it through our
first winter, we'll have done most
of the heavy lifting. Everything
will be up and running there. It
will be a paradise by comparison.

*
*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

He won't be happy until he's back
in the Garden for good.

Frannie comes in, worried.

FRANNIE

I can't find Harold. His backpack
is gone, and so is a scooter --

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

(to Frannie)

Your friend has been put upon.
He's considered things from both
sides.

*
*

FRANNIE

He said he hasn't dreamed much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER ABIGAIL

He has. Oh, yes.

*

GLEN

Do we go after him?

MOTHER ABIGAIL

People have to choose. That's the world now. He has his part to play like everyone.

FRANNIE

But we're so close --

*

Everyone is looking to Stu. He shakes his head.

STU

If he wants to go, let him go.

*

Mother Abigail nods when he says this. Only Nick sees it.

And so Frannie comes up to the table and pulls out a chair for herself. It sticks, then comes loose suddenly with a jingle, as if freed somehow. She looks down:

*

FRANNIE'S POV

Tied to the center spindle is one end of a length of waxed yellow twine.

BACK TO SCENE

She picks it up. At the other end of it is what looks, at first, like a set of keys. She holds them up just as Stu looks under the table. Larry realizes immediately.

*

LARRY

Everyone OUT! NOW!

*

*

UNDER THE TABLE: Stu sees a row of grenades duct-taped to the table's underside. Frannie has just pulled the pins.

*

*

*

Larry and Nick leap up from the table, two seconds from dying. But Mother is faster. She half-stands out of her seat and throws open her arms, creating a translucent globe of energy in front of her, the center of which is the center of the table.

*

The grenades explode. The portion of the table inside the globe detonates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It heaves upward and disintegrates into a hurricane of fire, wood shards, and metal shrapnel. But the whole thing is contained, like a hellish snow globe.

*

EXT. OUTSIDE BIG SPRING, NE - NIGHT

*

Harold is watching this from a dark hiding spot past the end of Main Street. He sees a flash of light dying down, but none of the first-floor windows blow out. There is no fire. The men standing guard begin yelling, but there's no explosion. Something has intervened.

*

Scared now, he climbs up to the road and begins to run down it, away from the group, pushing the bike. In a minute he jumps on and starts it. He heads south, not west.

*

*

INT. PHELPS HOTEL - NIGHT

Mother's energy field knocks everyone away from the table. They see the fire storm, just inches away.

*

*

When the globe collapses, so too does Mother, who's taken the brunt of the blast. Stu is by her side in an instant. Glen and Larry rush outside after Harold. Frannie watches the incredible thing about to take place.

*

*

*

Mother is scorched with ectoplasmic ash. Stu cradles her, but it's painful. He puts out a hand, which crackles silver, trying to decide how to begin, but she puts a hand on his and stops him, serene in spite of everything.

*

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

No. It's for you to carry now.
I'm going home.

*

*

(beat)

*

Take my other hand. I'm about to
give it over to you, what I have --

Stu looks at her, unable to accept what's happening.

*

MOTHER ABIGAIL

That's why he wants you. He can
take what's yours. Your gift.
And that must not happen. But you
can take his also. Just like you
can take mine. I'll show you.
Hold my hands.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

Stu hesitates, like a child.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER ABIGAIL

The people in Boulder -- they are
your army now. That's why I
gathered them there. I was the
beacon, but you are the hand that
must wield them. And quickly.
Before he grows so powerful it
won't matter.

(beat)

Now let me help you.

Like a man drowning, Stu takes her other hand. There is
a jolt of power, a spasm of passage as her magic moves to
him. A bright, electric image of the features of her
face pulls to Stu. *

The image ripples like flame being pulled by wind.
Something like a smile crosses her face as she releases
and he receives. When it stops, she is just an old woman
again. She says, weakly:

MOTHER ABIGAIL

Let them know, Stuart. No one is
alone. *

Stu touches her face, then his own. And then it's over. *

EXT. PHELPS HOTEL - NIGHT

Stu comes outside with Frannie, who is helping him. He
is wincing, as if aching in some profound way. *

FRANNIE

Larry and Glen went after Harold,
but he could have gone in any
direction.

STU

He's heading to Vegas. Flagg has
more plans for him, I'm sure. But
Mother was right. He already
regrets what he's done.

In all directions, the horizons are dark. Frannie begins
to weep for Mother, and for Harold. Stu puts a hand on
the back of her neck and puts their foreheads together. *

FRANNIE

He knows we're going to Boulder.
He could try anything. *

But Stu says now, with complete authority: *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU
We won't be there for long.

FADE OUT.

*

FADE IN:

EXT. ROUTE 25 (NEW MEXICO) - FIRST LIGHT

Harold is walking along the side of the highway, pushing the scooter, which is disabled somehow. He looks like he hasn't slept.

He passes a sign for "WAGON MOUND 2 and SANTA FE 112."

But there's a glint of chrome behind him and a car comes up on him fast. It's NASCAR: A hot orange Dodge Avenger. He looks around for a place to hide, but it's too late. The car downshifts in a BURST OF BACKFIRES right beside him.

The driver, aka THE KID (40), sits low in the seat, hair cut in a "flow," grinning like some kind of middle-aged Justin Bieber. He takes off his sunglasses and yells over his engines in a thick, Louisiana accent:

THE KID
Hey, boy. You outta gas or juice,
or both?

*

HAROLD
No. Must be the plugs or
something.

*

The Kid pulls ahead and cuts Harold off. The Kid gets out, all 5'5" of him. He's dressed in skinny jeans and a motocross jacket, a pistol in a holster on each thigh. His boots give him an extra three inches.

THE KID
Y'all long, tall, and ugly.
Whatchall say?

Harold says the only thing that comes to mind:

HAROLD
I like your car.

*

The Kid laughs, then he takes out his pistols and shoots Harold's scooter dead. Harold leaps back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE KID

I got the reflexes. I got the timing. I got three-fifths of a second. You believe that?

He doesn't wait for an answer. He heads back to his car.

THE KID

Get a beer outta the back seat. Y'all are with me now.

INT. THE KID'S CAR - DAY

Harold rides beside The Kid, terrified, grimacing his way through a warm Coors. The Kid can't be doing less than 90 mph. An African-American mannequin in a see-through teddy sits posed in the back seat.

THE KID

Coors beer's the *only* beer. I'd *piss* Coors if I could. You believe that happy crappy?

HAROLD

Sure.

THE KID

I like you. What they call you?

HAROLD

Harold.

THE KID

Harold, man, they call me 'The Kid.' Outta Shreveport Looseyanna.

(beat)

Well, I guess you're goin' where I'm goin'. Las Vegas, Nevada.

HAROLD

Cibola. Seven-in-one.

THE KID

Goin' West and jine up. Get in on the ground floor of civilizashun. No Rocky Mountain High for us.

(beat)

You gettin' those dreams, too? The old lady ones?

Harold doesn't answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE KID

Some 100-year-old nigger saying
 'Come to supper with Jesus so you
 can freeze your tits come
 Halloween.' No fuckin' way --
 Flagg's the man I'm going to see.

*

HAROLD

I let him down.

*

*

THE KID

What'cha say?

*

*

They rocket into the next town, and The Kid looks at
 Harold with his greedy, dead eyes. Harold thinks better
 of telling this man the truth and says, instead.

*

*

*

HAROLD

I haven't been sleeping that well.

THE KID

Don't tell me, I'll tell you, ya
 fuckin' bug. Looks like we need
 more Coors and a see-fucking-esta.
 Drinkin', ballin', and snoozin':
 The American Dream!

*

*

CUT TO:

"MOTHER'S PROCESSION" MONTAGE

1. Stu and his group have found a simple coffin in Big
 Springs. It has been loaded into the back of the pickup
 truck and the bed filled with sunflowers cut from the
 fields. They lash a sunflower onto every vehicle. The
 pickup begins driving west. The others fall in behind
 it.

*

2. They follow Interstate 80 across the state line into
 Colorado. They pass a row of vehicles heading to Boulder
 that have pulled off to the roadside. The people
 gathered there look startled by the procession until they
 see the sunflowers and realize who's inside.

3. Even more vehicles have joined the procession as it
 passes increasing numbers of people heading to Boulder.
 By the time they pass their last "L" marker and turn
 southbound onto Route 87, the procession has doubled.
 They start passing people on foot who stop to watch the
 coffin pass. Hats are removed. People's hands shield
 their eyes, cover their mouths.

*

*

*

4. When the procession enters Boulder, it is thirty
 vehicles long.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

People on the streets watch it pass in shock. It heads through downtown and out to where the city meets the lower slopes of the Flatirons. Stu looks at them all. All of them are deep in grief, and just beginning to register how scared they are.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. BANDELIER MOTOR COURT - PARKING LOT - DAY

The Kid's car pulls into the parking lot of a desert motor court. The Kid gets out, well past drunk.

He staggers over to one of the rooms and kicks in the door. It takes him three tries. Harold gets out and looks around as if to make a run for it, but The Kid calls out:

*
*
*
*

THE KID
Bring in Miss Peaches.

INT. PARADISE MOTOR COURT - ROOM #5 - DAY

Harold comes in carrying the mannequin. The room has two beds. The Kid is lying on one, so Harold lays the mannequin on the other. A can of beer lands next to it.

*

HAROLD
We should find some water, maybe --

THE KID
Drink up, boy.

Harold opens it and sips. The Kid looks at the dark TV.

THE KID
No electricity, no TV. Where's my HBO? Where's my *Playboy*?

He shoots the TV. Startled, Harold drops the beer.

THE KID
Don't you waste that. Pound it!
I guess you all are my TV today.

*

Harold drinks the beer until it's gone. The Kid throws him another. Then he points the gun at Harold's head. Harold drinks.

*
*

THE KID
Now get outta your pants and fuck Miss Peaches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

What -- ?

THE KID

There's holes. I drilled 'em
myself. Front and rear. Now do
it.

Harold hesitates, so The Kid shoots the wall by his head.

Harold has no choice. He strips down to his boxers and
gets on the bed with the mannequin. The Kid crouches
next to him and puts the gun to Harold's temple. Harold
is trembling.

THE KID

Do it like you mean it or y'all's
brains are gonna be hanging up on
that wall.

Harold manages to find a hole and start humping the
thing. The mannequin's face stares blankly at the
ceiling. The Kid checks to make sure Harold isn't
faking.

*
*

THE KID

Whadda think's gonna happen to us
once we get to Vegas tonight?

Harold's circuits are overloading. He manages to say:

HAROLD

Meet Mr. Flagg.

THE KID

We're gonna meet him, all right,
and he's gonna meet us. We'll see
who's the big man after that.
He's one hard baby, but the Kid's
handled hard babies before. I
shut 'em up then I shut 'em down.
(beat)
We'll lay low for a while. But
once I figure the situation, we'll
send him around the curve.

Harold is tensing up, close to the end.

*

THE KID

Gonna take over. Strip his gears
and leave him way out at the
Cadillac Ranch. Stick with me,
Harold. We're gonna eat more
chicken than any man ever seen.
You close?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harold climaxes. He begins to cry, waiting to be shot, but The Kid just goes back to his bed and shuts the light.

THE KID

Now get some sleep, ya fucking bug. We leave in two hours.

EXT. PARADISE MOTOR COURT - DAY

Harold lets himself quietly out of the room, clothes in hand. The Kid is SNORING, passed out inside. *

Harold dresses and goes to The Kid's car, but the keys aren't in the ignition.

Harold curses under his breath and starts to look around for another way out. And then he sees:

In the parking lot is a grey wolf. Harold can't breathe. *
It trots over and nuzzles up to him. Harold nearly *
screams. Slowly, he raises his hand and strokes its fur. *

HAROLD

Cibola. Please help me. That
man's no friend of mine.

The wolf licks Harold's hand, then nudges him back toward the room. It licks his face to show him it's all right. *
So Harold goes. He nods in humbled thanks and watches the wolf streak off. Then he closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAUTAUQUA PARK - DAY

The 115-year-old campus of Boulder's Chautauqua lies directly beneath the pyramid Flatiron peak. There are stately lecture halls, an auditorium, dozens of cottages: a camp town unto itself. *

Hundreds of people are gathering to pay their last respects to Mother Abigail. They come from every direction to stand in line outside the century-old Community House.

INT. COMMUNITY HOUSE (CHAUTAUQUA) - DAY

Mother's casket is set up on the lower level of a huge open space, circled above by a wrap-around balcony. People file by the closed coffin. Nick watches from upstairs in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Below them, a DESPERATE WOMAN (60s) begins opening the coffin. Nick runs down to intercept her.

*
*

DESPERATE WOMAN

Just her hand -- Hold her hand --

I dreamt it so long --

Others are trying to pull her away, but she gets the lid open. Mother lies inside, still and serene.

Nick reaches the woman and puts a hand on hers, pleading with her with his soulful eyes.

He gets her to look at him breathe, calming her down. She breaks into sobs and lets go. Nick closes the lid, puts an arm around her, and leads her away.

*

INT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM - DAY

Stu is sitting in one of the upstairs rooms, deep in thought. Frannie comes in and goes over to put a hand on his shoulder. He looks up, as if coming out of a dream.

STU

I was trying to feel Nadine.

*

FRANNIE

Are you worried?

He looks at her, but doesn't answer the question.

*

STU

Where are the others?

FRANNIE

Glen's got crews going to the police departments and armories in Boulder. Larry took a couple of trucks up to the base in Fort Collins. He'll be back before ten.

(carefully)

Stu, people are acting out. There's a lot of panic. I worry people just arriving will see what's going on and not come in. You'll have to talk to them.

*
*
*
*
*
*

STU

She wants me to take these people into war. Not fight back, not counter attack, but start a war.

(beat)

Because God told her to.

*
*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frannie puts one hand on her belly, one on his shoulder.

*

CUT TO:

INT. LUXOR - CARD HALL -- DAY

In the temple-like card hall of Luxor's casino, all of the slot machines and tables have been removed, creating a large, open space now outfitted with rows and rows of chairs, like a megachurch.

The room is close to full, with five hundred or more people packed in. Flagg is up at the dais where he first met Lloyd. Lloyd sits off to the side, second-in-command.

*

As Flagg addresses the crowd, his tone shifts in and out of evangelical rhetoric, as it suits him.

*

FLAGG

You. All. I've many things to share with you. But first let me say to our new friends: Welcome Home. I've called you, and you've come. And after so many uncertain miles, a home at last.

*

People CLAP. Out in the audience, Nadine applauds along with everyone else.

FLAGG

You do not have to be afraid anymore. Not of pestilence, for we are well. Not of hunger or cold, for we have stores of power. And not from enemies on the road or among us, because our home is an ordered home.

(beat)

Anything that disorders it shall be cast out. Without delay. And anything that ennobles it will be embraced.

More applause. A few rows behind Nadine, Tom Cullen sits clapping also. He even calls out a little CHEER. Flagg smiles.

*

FLAGG

Let's begin with my own favorite part of these meetings. Let those who are joining us for the first time stand and be welcomed.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nadine is not prepared for this, but she stands without a trace of hesitation. So, too does Tom. About fifty people in all stand.

FLAGG

Now come forward. So I can meet
each of you. A moment of personal
connection to welcome you in.

*
*
*

Flagg grins his showman's grin.

Nadine looks around as the new people begin moving toward the center aisle and lining up before Flagg. She looks to the back of the room, for some kind of discreet exit, but men stand at every door.

So she smiles and starts moving toward the line. She ends up about twenty people back.

*

People go up and shake Flagg's outstretched hand. But Flagg doesn't stop there, he puts a hand to each person's head and Nadine can see --

*
*

NADINE'S POV

There is a silver glow, a kind of glimmer under his hand, some kind of magic. Then the transaction is over and the next person goes up. As she gets closer, she can see more clearly that, at the moment of glimmering, something is not being bestowed on each person Flagg is greeting; something is being taken. It slips silently from each person and into Flagg.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Nadine glances back and sees Tom is about a dozen people behind her. It takes everything she's got not to panic and betray herself. She calms her mind and keeps moving forward, now sixth in line, now fifth, now fourth.

Her lips are moving a little, and it becomes clear she is shielding herself by repeating remembered prayer over and over. She's also reaching into her pocket where she takes something into her hand.

*

She looks back again to Tom and sees he is watching her now, watching what she's going to do.

Now third. Now second. Now next. She moves up to Flagg, and he reaches out his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nadine is smiling, sincerely, too. She's completely sure of herself. She has found her moment, all momentum to it suddenly and clearly making sense.

NADINE

Forgive me.

FLAGG

Forgive? What would you like me
to forgive?

*

*

NADINE

I didn't mean you.

*

And with that, she sticks Flagg's throat with the box cutter in her fist. His eyes widen in the pure shock of being completely surprised this way.

He's able to reach up a hand in time to keep her from slicing his throat open and gutting his windpipe, but the knife opens up a deep gash across his hand. He stumbles back, but only a step. Lloyd races to Flagg's side as the room breaks into chaos. He elbows Nadine in the face before he can even think it through.

*

*

*

Her nose breaks and she stumbles back. But in an instant, Nadine is off her feet and being forced backward through the air. Flagg clamps one hand over the bleeding hole in his throat and extends the other toward her. He stops her midway over the crowd, about ten feet off the floor.

*

*

She hangs in midair, eyes popped open wide, unable to breathe. Then Flagg begins to close his free hand slowly into a fist. Nadine SCREAMS in agony, wincing in incredible pain as her brain is squeezed inside her head. She shouts out:

NADINE

HE IS JUST A MAN! NOW'S THE TIME!

(in agony)

HE CAN BE --

But her head is crushed before she can finish, blood shooting out of her eyes and ears. But something has blasted past Flagg and out of the room. He senses it. Nadine's face is crushed, but it is smiling.

*

EXT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM - DAY

Stu suddenly goes to his knees with the force of the message. Frannie crouches next to him, alarmed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANNIE

Stu -- Stu!

*

STU

'Now's the time! He's mortal!'

*

And then it is gone. Stu slowly comes back to himself and looks at her.

*

STU

'And he can be killed.'

He gets quickly to his feet and heads for the door, telling Frannie as he goes:

STU

Open the auditorium. Let everyone know. We meet at midnight.

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - CARD ROOM - DAY

Flagg lets Nadine's body drop to the floor. Most people have backed off a few rows, but almost everyone has stayed in the room. They look at Flagg for what he does next.

He holds up his hand, covered in his own blood. But when he shows his neck, it is healed.

*

*

Some people, most in fact, erupt in APPLAUSE. Lloyd is beside Flagg, looking from him to Nadine to the crowd. Flagg raises a hand for quiet and says:

*

*

*

FLAGG

Erect a scaffold outside and hang her from it three days. She will have company soon. If there is one spy in our midst, there will be others. This is a campaign of terror by Boulder against us, and it is just beginning.

Tom stares at the body crumpled on the floor, terrified.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAUTAUQUA - COMMUNITY HOUSE - DUSK

A smiling Larry comes with Joe up to the front of the Community House to find Frannie and Stu waiting for him. Frannie takes Joe inside while Stu tells Larry.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry looks at him in sick understanding. He puts a hand to his head. Stu puts a hand on his shoulder, which he shakes off, furious, but then he lets Stu embrace him.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. LUXOR - CASINO - DUSK

The Kid comes up to Luxor from the Strip, Harold at his side. Flagg's meeting is breaking up. People are coming out of the front doors by the dozens.

THE KID

You believe this happy crappy?
That hardcase puts out a *signal*.

He calls out to some of the people coming out. One of whom is Tom. Harold doesn't notice him, though they pass within ten feet of one another.

Lloyd comes out, sees Harold, and walks right to him. He looks tired, but he keeps his professionalism intact.

LLOYD

Mr. Laudner, welcome to Las Vegas.
Mr. Flagg's sorry he can't greet
you himself. It's been a night.
But your suite is ready upstairs.
Just ask at the front desk --

Harold nods, reddening at this formal attention. He looks at The Kid, who drops his voice.

THE KID

Don't you fucking walk away.
Y'all are with *me*.

But Harold goes and doesn't look back. Lloyd is joined by another of Flagg's men. The Kid smiles at them.

THE KID

And what am I supposed to do?
Huh? You got a suite for me?

EXT. LUXOR HOTEL - NIGHT

Outside the Luxor, a scaffold has indeed been erected. On it, hangs the body of Nadine, for public display.

*

Beside her hangs the Kid, crucified and not quite dead. He hangs in his final pain, murmuring over and over, delirious in the moonlight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE KID

Don't tell me -- I'll tell you --
Ya fucking *bugs*.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. CHAUTAUQUA - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

People walk in pairs and small groups toward the century-old, barn-like Chautauqua Auditorium. As they come in, they find it lit by a hundred or more lanterns, all hung from the lofty rafters and beams. It is beautiful.

*
*

INT. CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM - CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

Stu and Frannie sit in the lofty auditorium's control booth watching it fill. He takes Frannie's hand.

Glen sticks his head in and says:

*
*

GLEN

It's time.

Stu nods and Glen goes.

STU

I've never spoke to more than ten
people at once in my entire life.

Frannie can't help but smile at his sudden shyness.

STU

These people. They think they can
rest now, that they're safe from
it all, from Flagg. How do I tell
them I want to march them right to
his door?

(beat)

People will die. People already
have. How do you ask people to do
that?

Frannie touches the place where she's seen his tattoo.

FRANNIE

Someone asked you once.

She gives him a kiss, their first, which he does not want
to let go of. But he does.

INT. CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM - FLOOR - NIGHT

Frannie comes out and joins Larry, Nick, and Glen. They look around at the hundreds of murmuring people crowded into the rows. Larry holds Joe's hand, numb.

*

LARRY

We should be up there with him.

FRANNIE

He wants to do it alone.

*

INT. CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

Stu comes through the narrow wing and walks onto the stage. No introduction. No fanfare. He just walks out. People slowly quiet.

STU

My name is Stuart Redman. I've met some of you, but to most of you I am a stranger. And I'm about to ask a lot from you for a stranger. Before I do, I want you to remember why you all came here, to this place, and what you hoped to find. It wasn't this, I know. I was with Mother Abigail when she died. I think she knew she wouldn't join us here because she could see the bigger story, and it's a story in which all of us play parts.

*

*

*

There is MURMURING in the crowd. Stu doesn't stop to let it get a foothold.

*

*

STU

She told me to give you a message. She said 'No one is alone.' Some of you will think she was talking about God, and maybe she was. But I understood her to mean all of us, together, now.

He has to stop for a moment. When he looks out into the crowd, he sees many, many people are crying.

STU

We're only just meeting, most of us, now. We'll be neighbors soon, and then friends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu finds Frannie and Larry in the audience. Nick, too.
Frannie nods. He is doing well.

STU

That is the dream. And you came
here because you trusted Mother.
You didn't come here because it
would be easier. Winter's coming,
but we'll figure that out. I'm
sure of it. But I need to tell
you -- in that bigger picture --
he wants us to stay and thrive
here, for Him. I'm talking about
Flagg now.

*

*

A beat. There is more MURMURING in the crowd.

*

STU

The Dark Man. The Walking Dude.
Whatever you've been calling him.
(beat)

*

Just as you've chosen to come
here, others have chosen Las
Vegas. I don't know how many, or
their reasons, but I can tell you
just as sure as we are here, they
are there. And just as sure as we
will be making plans for getting
through our first winter, they
will be making plans for taking
Boulder, maybe even as soon as
this Spring. Mother foresaw it
and asked me to stop it. Stop
him. Stop Flagg now. With your
help.

*

*

*

Now there is open talking in the crowd as the
implications land for people. Someone yells out:

BOULDERITE #1

You're picking a fight? With him?

*

STU

Bringing a fight to him now means
cutting him off at the knees. If
we wait for him to come to us next
year, he'll have more people, more
weapons, better strategy, and
circumstances of his choosing.

BOULDERITE #2

What makes you think he wouldn't
know we were coming?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I can shield us. Keep us off his
radar. I think I have been.

*
*

BOULDERITE #2

All of us? Hundreds of people?

STU

Mother wasn't the only one with
gifts. She chose me because I can
fight Flagg and win.

BOULDERITE #3

Then go take him out!

STU

I can't do it alone. Those of you
who cannot abide that can stay.
But I can't promise your safety
here alone.

Stu has to raise his voice a little to quiet the crowd.

*

STU

I see what you're thinking. That
I'm trying to scare you. And I
am. And you should be afraid.
Some of us will die either way.
But I think fewer will if we act
now.

*

Stu looks at them, how unconvinced many of them are. So
he plays his trump card.

STU

In a moment, each of you must
decide, but before we do, I want
to show you, so you know, how
Mother Abigail died and why.

(beat)

And also a woman named Nadine.
She's already paid the ultimate
sacrifice for you. You'll
understand when you see it.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Larry looks up, tears in his eyes. Others look
unprepared for the opportunity, scared even. Can he
really do this?

*

STU

And after you've seen, I will ask
one more thing of you. A gift you
can give me that will make all the
difference.

*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU (CONT'D)

(beat)

I won't show the children, but if
you want to see, close your eyes.

And most of them do.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (OUTSIDE BOULDER) - DAWN

The sun has come up and a long convoy of vehicles is
parked out on the start of Boulder's intercity turnpike.
Vans and SUVs mostly, as well as some church and school
buses and a few moving trucks. Stu is supervising.

Glen and Nick are hooking up some solar cells to the roof
of one of the vans, linking them, and running the cord to
charge a 900-amp car battery charger. Frannie is helping
load gear into trucks. Food, med supplies, weapons,
ammo.

Larry is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. CHAUTAUQUA - CABIN PORCH - DAWN

Joe is sitting on a kitchen stool with a towel around his
shoulders while Larry finishes up giving him a haircut.
When he's done, Larry crouches down next to Joe, who he
sees is crying, and says:

LARRY

We're gonna go get him back, okay?

Though this time, his meaning has changed.

EXT. DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (OUTSIDE BOULDER) - DAWN

Stu finds Frannie hauling duffles and takes one from her.

FRANNIE

Change vehicles every time we
stop. It'll give you a chance to
be with everyone who wants to
help.

STU

How many total?

FRANNIE

By Nick's count, it's 450.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He nods. It's less than he thought.

FRANNIE

I'd say thirty of those are a little young, or old, for comfort.

STU

We need everybody. How many military?

FRANNIE

About fifty.

STU

Put one in each car. Make squads of ten. They can teach on the way.

Frannie looks concerned. Stu puts a hand on her shoulder.

STU

This can happen without anyone dead but him. I'm not saying it will, but I'm saying that's what I'm going to try to do.

Frannie nods. They see Larry walking up, his own duffle over his shoulder, ready to go.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - PENTHOUSE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Flagg stands at the corner of a pale conference table, zoned out. Trashcan Man sits, starstruck, watching Flagg. Flagg comes back to his full senses and says to him:

FLAGG

He must be in Boulder by now. That means we have only a little time left. Do it tonight. Sleep later.

TRASHCAN MAN

Yes, sir.

FLAGG

Make up a list of what you need and bring it to me. Only to me.

TRASHCAN MAN

My life for yours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Flagg smiles, content, apart from the problem of Stu. *

FLAGG

Now do me proud, Donald. *

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - PENTHOUSE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lloyd is guarding the door. He can hear some of what is being said. When Trash comes out, he watches him go. *

CUT TO:

"CONVOY TO ZION" MONTAGE

1. The Boulder convoy comes down the turnpike. The Denver skyline is behind them, hazy in the distance. *

2. They cross through the Rockies, the peaks of which are snowy, but the slopes of which are still summer green. *

3. The land sweeps down off the Continental Divide and into the Unita Valley. They cross into Utah and pass signs for ARCHES and CANYONLANDS National Parks. *

4. They turn off 70 and onto the smaller 89 South that runs behind the Unita Mountains, out of view. They split into groups and gas up at Junction and Circleville.

5. Stu looks exhausted, but he keeps climbing into new vehicles and talking to everyone he can. When people are willing, he takes their hands and pulls their silver.

6. Finally, they come a back way into Zion National Park just as the sun is setting, painting the desert red. *

EXT. ZION NATIONAL PARK - WATCHMAN CAMPGROUND - DUSK

The convoy is circled around the big Watchman Campground. They've formed a tent city with campfires blazing. People are making their dinners. Armed guards with night vision goggles have been posted around the perimeter. *

EXT. WATCHMAN CAMPGROUND - STU'S CAMP - DUSK

Stu, Larry, Frannie, Glen, and Nick, and a half-dozen Boulderites, have gathered around one of the trucks. Stu has spread out a map of Las Vegas and is pointing things out to them, making marks with a sharpie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

From Nadine, I know Flagg's got
two gun turrets on hills above the
city, and one out at Hoover Dam.
Howitzers, I think. From the Army
base. Probably 155mm.

*
*

GLEN

What kind of range?

STU

25 miles with any aim. They're
here and here. 'Little Sister
Peak' to the north and 'Anthem
Radio Tower' to the south. At
Hoover Dam, there's probably one
here, on 'Fortification Hill.'

*

*
*

Glen chuckles darkly at how history is repeating.

*

STU

I have to get into the city alone
and find Flagg. If I don't use my
powers, I'm stealth. As soon as I
do, though, he'll hone in on me in
half-a-second.

*
*
*
*
*
*

(beat)

Hopefully too late.

A beat. He's really talking about killing Randall Flagg.

STU

Here's the breakdown: The sun
sets at 7:10 PM. At 7:30, one
group takes Hoover Dam and shuts
it down. I want Vegas to go dark.
Some people will run. At the very
least, it will confuse them.
Flagg will send backup to the dam
and it'll get hot fast, but we
don't need to hold it, just take
it and then retreat before they
come.

*

*

*
*

(beat)

When the city goes black, a small
team will take down the howitzer
on Little Sister Peak to make it
safe for the rest of our numbers
to show themselves on route 15.
Flagg will send some of his people
that way, but I'm betting he'll
want to protect the dam with most
of his resources.

Fran shudders at the word "resources."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

A double diversion.

STU

So I can slip through. *

FRANNIE

How will you get in? *

STU

I'll have a better shot if no one
knows. *Frannie looks at him. She understands, but it's a hell
of a thing to leave blank. *

GLEN *

How many people you think he has,
Stu?

STU

More than us. *

Larry looks over the map.

LARRY

I'll take the dam.

STU

Good. We can convoy around
through Flagstaff. The rest can
go right down 15.

(beat)

Nick, you can take Sister Peak.
We've got two sharpshooters in the
group, one military. They'll be
with you. *

Nick nods. *

STU

Glen can take the main group down
15. Consider people manning the
guns and anyone who's armed and
shooting as combatants. But the
goal is surrender. Take as many
prisoners as possible. Send them
and any defectors back to the rear
camp and Fran's team. Shoot no
one who's unarmed. Help anyone
who is willing to drop his or her
weapon. *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU (CONT'D)

(beat)

They've been told we're a threat
for the wrong reasons. Give them
a chance to see we're not.

EXT. ZION NATIONAL PARK - WATCHMAN CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Larry is sitting at the largest campfire with a couple
dozen Boulderites, and Stu and Frannie. He has his beat-
up guitar out. When he starts to play, surprisingly,
it's an old spiritual, sad and healing.

*

LARRY

*By the floods, the floods of
Babylon, we sat down and wept and
wept for thee, Zion. We remember,
we remember, we remember thee,
Zion.*

Stu and Frannie get up and go to their tent. Stu puts a
hand on Larry's shoulder.

STU

Get some rest. We'll leave at
five.

Larry nods and continues playing.

INT. STU'S TENT (ZION NATIONAL PARK) - NIGHT

Larry's PLAYING can be heard inside the tent. The
shadows of the camp flickering on the tent walls.
Frannie and Stu are together, intertwined. She has her
head on his chest.

FRANNIE

Where should I be?

STU

At least five miles back. Keep
all the doctors, or people with
medical training, with you.

(re: the baby)

How's she doing?

*
*
*
*
*

FRANNIE

(smiling)

It's a she? You can tell?

*

Stu nods. They hold one another and listen to Larry
play.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANNIE

I don't think she knows how scared
her mother is about tomorrow.

STU

Good. Maybe she won't have to.
For a long time.

FADE OUT.

*

*

FADE IN:

*

EXT. ZION NATIONAL PARK - WATCHMAN CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

The sky is blueing up with the coming of dawn. Larry
loads up their groups into a third of the vehicles. Stu
goes to Frannie.

STU

Lay low until noon. Then head
out.

She nods. She's tearing up, but only a little. They
don't have to speak. He is in her head. She kisses him
and he goes. Larry turns away from this, trying to stay
focused. Others who are awake early watch them go.

*

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Stu and Larry drive off. Stu watches Frannie bathed in
the red of their taillights as they drive off. He takes
a breath, and lets her go.

LARRY

It's just about too much. Isn't
it?

Stu looks at him and nods. Larry looks back, murder in
his eyes.

LARRY

That changes today.

CUT TO:

"GOING TO MEET THE MAN" MONTAGE

Stu's caravan makes its way on back roads toward Vegas:

1. They speed through sand dune country near Kanab.
Sand has started to cover the road in places, the whole
landscape quickly forgetting civilization.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2. They gas up out of spare tanks on the Navajo Bridge over the northeast corner of the Grand Canyon. They don't stop to take in the SPECTACULAR VIEW.

*
*

3. They pass through Williams, then Kingman, and see the worst of what America's done to itself. A wind-bent sign reads VEGAS 105. It has lines of bullet holes through it.

*
*

EXT. ARIZONA ROUTE 93 - DAY

Stu's small convoy comes up and pulls off beside a sign that reads HOOVER DAM 7.

STU (V.O.)
Here. Here's good.

*
*

INT. VAN - DAY

The clock reads 4:00 PM. Stu looks at Larry, shoulders his pack, and they shake.

STU
Take it. Shut it down. And then
get out of there.
(to Larry)
Let me do the rest. Understood?

Larry nods. Stu looks like he's about to say something more, something profound, but chooses not to. Instead, he touches everyone else in the van and then jumps out.

*
*
*

Without ceremony, he begins following a dry arroyo west away from the highway and down toward the Colorado River. It's going to be a long, tough next few miles.

*

People in the vans watch him go: their one best hope now going straight into the maw alone.

*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. NEVADA ROUTE 15 - DUSK

Frannie, Glen, and Nick's convoy pulls off at signs for Valley of Fire State Park. Nick's van, with his two sharpshooters and handful of men -- in combat gear with night vision equipment and scoped rifles -- heads off west down a two-lane side route.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA ROUTE 93 - DUSK

The sun is red on the horizon now, almost down.

Larry's teams are using the fact that the backside of the slope leading to the Hoover Gorge is now in shadow. His fifty people jog up 93 in the dim twilight, carrying every kind of firearm -- handguns, pistols, rifles, shotguns. A few carry tasers instead.

*

When they get to the split in the road, Larry breaks off north with fifteen people and heads down toward the dam.

*

A second group of fifteen heads off south side and up the back of Fortification Hill.

The rest continue straight up the highway to the top of the slope where the high bypass bridge spans the canyon.

*

*

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG SISTER PEAK - DOWNSLOPE - DUSK

Nick and his group of six crawl up to the top of Big Sister Peak. They can see, across a quarter-mile saddle, the top of Little Sister Peak, fifty or so feet below them.

*

On top of Little Sister is a Jeep road ending at a microwave tower and solar array. An SUV is parked there, a few yards from a Howitzer 155. Four men are manning it.

They can see the lights of Vegas winking on in the dusky desert light in the distance. Most of the neon is off, to save power. But the massive spotlight on top of the Luxor comes on, an ominous beacon.

*

*

*

*

Nick looks down on Route 15. He can see Flagg's roadblock, but the road is empty; Glen and the rest of the Boulderites are in hiding, waiting for his signal.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLORADO RIVER - DUSK

Stu climbs down to the last terrace on the bank of the Colorado. The canyon is black with shadow, though the sky above is every shade of sunset orange and purple. He's not visible from the dam or the bridge due to the twists in the canyon.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The river is flat water here, but it's moving at a good clip. He calculates where he wants to end up on the other side and then slips into the river and enters the current, his backpack buoyed with floatation.

*
*
*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. HOOVER DAM ACCESS ROAD - DUSK

Larry's group comes to the edge of their rocky cover. They have a view of both the dam and the west side of the bridge. The dam is guarded at each end by a dozen people. It looks like there are more men up on the bypass bridge.

*
*

EXT. FORTIFICATION HILL - DUSK

The other fifteen Boulderites make their way up the dark backside of the Fortification Hill. This is not a military group, though there are a few soldiers. Mostly, they are men and women in so-so shape, and terrified.

*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. COLORADO RIVER - DUSK

In the swift Colorado River, Stu misses his mark and ends up dragged fifty yards further downstream. But he gets a hold and is able to pull himself up out of the water.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORTIFICATION HILL - DUSK

The team gets as far as they can before they must come out of cover. They can HEAR the Las Vegas manning the howitzer laughing and chatting, but they cannot see them.

*

TEAM LEADER FORT HILL makes sure his people are ready, their scared faces all tuned into his every move. Then he pulls a signal, and they swarm the hill.

*
*

And it all begins.

*

The Las Vegas hear them coming and turn. There are five of them and they fire, dropping two of the Boulderites immediately. But they are outnumbered and outgunned and shot down in seconds.

*

Team Leader Fort Hill shoots off a flare, which is the signal for --

EXT. ARIZONA ROUTE 93 - DUSK

The team on the highway rushes onto the bypass bridge and are immediately fired on. They quickly shoot down the six guards posted there on the east side and then take cover behind the row of parked trucks sealing off that end.

*
*

TEAM LEADER BYPASS
LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS!

But no one does. All the Las Vegans out on the span are now returning fire.

Some of the Boulderites begin to panic, not ready for this, but most of them crawl under the trucks and fire. No one has much advantage. As with Boulder's army, most of the Las Vegans are not trained soldiers.

*

The Boulderites force them back, and move down the bridge in increments, taking fire and losing men and women as they go. One woman is shot through the neck. The man next to her, in the chest. A few Boulderites panic and run. By the time the team is halfway across, they are down to half their numbers.

*
*
*
*
*

TEAM LEADER BYPASS
GO GO GO GO GO.

But they keep moving forward, soldiers and civilians alike, until they've reached the other side. They watch as Las Vegans retreat to the nearest rock formations and traffic barriers, then dig in and start returning fire.

*
*

But the Las Vegans can no longer target the dam, so one of the Boulderites runs to the rail and shoots a signal.

*
*

Advantage Boulder.

*

EXT. HOOVER DAM - TOP OF DAM - DUSK

When the flare arcs up over the dam, Larry motions his squad to run with him onto its eastern side. They run up, poised to shoot, but they see all the Las Vegans on the dam are retreating. They walk right through the eastern barricade and start running across in formation.

*

But one man is standing right on the center point of the dam. He has his hands up in surrender, no gun visible. Larry and the others run toward him, shouting at him to get down on the ground, but just stands there grinning.

*

Larry first sees he has something in his hand. Then he realizes who it is: It's Trashcan Man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry skids to a stop, realizing what is about to happen. Trash looks at him. He couldn't be happier. He says to the coming chaos:

*

TRASHCAN MAN

I love you.

And then hits the detonator in his hand. Larry is just turning to shout to his team to run when the Hoover Dam, packed with dynamite, explodes. Trashcan Man's greatest creation.

The blast itself is immense. It blooms into a heaving cloud of concrete dust and metal shrapnel, concussive and wide. It knocks everyone on the bypass bridge to the pavement as it tears out a twenty-story jagged chunk through the center.

*

Lake Mead immediately begins to collapse through it, pulling down great shafts of concrete as it floods through the dam's inner compartments and shreds them. A frenzied wall of water as high as Statue of Liberty begins coursing down the canyon downstream. Toward Stu.

*

Advantage Flagg.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY - PULLOUT - DUSK

Frannie and about three dozen Boulderites are waiting in front of a truck stop just outside the Vegas city limit.

She is standing out on the off-ramp when they hear the EXPLOSION in the far distance. Then she can see a plume of smoke on the horizon in the direction of the dam.

EXT. BIG SISTER PEAK - DUSK

Nick sees the plume and then watches as the city goes dark. Rattled, he motions for his team to get into position. The sharpshooters take aim. The rest get into a crouch, ready to move.

*

*

*

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DUSK

As the city's electric grid shuts down, people on the streets call to one another. Some who've heard the explosion, or see the blast cloud, begin running.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAS VEGAN
It's Boulder -- ! THEY BLEW THE
FUCKING DAM!

*
*

People begin to panic.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. COLORADO RIVER - DUSK

Stu has climbed halfway up the west side of the Colorado, through a series of gullies. He is looking upstream where he can see the plume scarring the darkening sky. The canyon walls are TREMBLING, scree coming down on him. He can hear a massive ROAR. He half-shuts his eyes to scan for Larry, but catches himself.

STU
Don't --

CUT TO:

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - FLAGG'S SUITE - DUSK

Flagg catches the slightest signal of Stu's power, and sends him a gift.

*
*

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. COLORADO RIVER - DUSK

Stu scrambles as fast as he can, grabbing onto weeds and thorns, anything to head up the slope faster.

The flood is fifteen stories high, a deafening chaos of water. But what Stu sees when it reaches him is a tide of blood. First it rushes past him a hundred yards below where he's climbed, painting the canyon walls foamy red, but then it starts rising fast.

When it reaches him, he's torn away from the slope. He fights against it to keep himself from getting pulled under, using as little silver as possible to keep safely pinballing off the jags of rock.

*
*

Finally, he is thrown into an elbow of rock as the canyon turns and he clings to it, gets on the upstream side. He's pinned there, but he's able to start clawing upward.

*

By a stroke of topographic luck, the slope opens forward and he's able to start climbing again, soaked in blood.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Battered, exhausted, and cold, he starts climbing up the rest of the way to the top. His face is bleeding and his hands are torn up. He didn't use much of his power, but he can't be sure now what Flagg knows. So he hurries.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - FLAGG'S SUITE -- NIGHT

Flagg is sitting in a low chair, which has been placed in front of his slanted floor-to-ceiling windows. He has a complete view of downtown, all dark now. His eyes are closed. He's scanning, scanning, looking for Stu, heedless of the chaos in the streets.

*

*

The glow of a flashlight can be seen under the doors. A knock comes. Lloyd comes in, looking concerned. Flagg opens his eyes, but doesn't turn to face him.

LLOYD

I'm sorry to -- interrupt.

FLAGG

Scared of the dark too, Lloyd?

*

LLOYD

It's just -- people are leaving, sir. They think we're under attack.

FLAGG

(mildly)

We are.

Lloyd blinks at him.

*

LLOYD

We don't have a plan --

Finally, Flagg turns to look at him. His eyes are black, glittering in the light of Lloyd's flashlight.

FLAGG

Oh, I have a plan, Lloyd. Don't you worry.

LLOYD

Groups of our people are running away. In cars, on foot.

FLAGG

But he is coming, Lloyd. Toward us. He's somewhere on the river.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LLOYD

You can feel him?

FLAGG

Not anymore. He's in control.
More than I would have thought.
But he'll reveal himself soon
enough. He'll have to.

(beat)

I can, however, feel you.

Lloyd bristles slightly, feeling Flagg inside his head.

FLAGG

And I appreciate your loyalty.

LLOYD

Of course.

Flagg nods, satisfied.

FLAGG

For anyone who wants to leave the
city, put together a convoy. You
can lead them out and hide in the
hills until this attack is over.

LLOYD

What about you?

FLAGG

I'll be here, Lloyd, to welcome
you back. And I will be twice
what I am now. Redman has come
into his power. He has the old
woman's as well. Can't you feel
it?

Lloyd gives the smallest shake of his head. Flagg
smiles.

FLAGG

Take our people out of the city,
Lloyd. Take them north.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOULDER CITY, NV - DUSK

Stu comes jogging up a dirt road from the canyon to the
outskirts of Boulder City, a suburb of East Vegas. He
begins checking abandoned cars for one that's fairly new.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When he finds one, he pulls out the skeletal remains of the driver, reaches in, and pops the hood. He pulls out of his backpack a small scuba bag. Inside is the car battery charger.

*
*
*

INT. CAR - DUSK

Stu speeds through dark neighborhoods, his headlights off. He can see well enough to make his way without them, but only barely; there is little light left in the sky.

He clips a street sign bent over an intersection, webbing his windshield, but he can't use his powers to guide him. He has to keep under Flagg's radar. And he has to hurry.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG SISTER PEAK - DUSK

To the north of Vegas, Nick's group puts on infrared goggles. He gives the signal to the sharpshooters.

*

EXT. LITTLE SISTER PEAK - DUSK

The LAS VEGANS manning the Howitzer hear the FFETS of bullets and then three of the four tires on their SUV deflate. They can't tell where the shots are coming from, so they can't take cover.

BOULDER SHOOTER (O.S.)
HANDS UP HANDS UP HANDS UP AND ON
THE GROUND --

The men comply and Nick's group runs up out of the dark with plastic wrist restraints out to subdue them.

Nick takes out an infrared strobe, holds it over his head and flips it on.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - DUSK

Glen is watching Little Sister Peak with his own infrared goggles.

*

GLEN'S POV

Nick's infrared beacon is flashing on top. It becomes invisible when Glen takes off his goggles.

BACK TO SCENE

GLEN

It's secure. Let's go. Flank the road and move forward.

The people around him begin to move.

CUT TO:

EXT. TROPICANA AVENUE (LAS VEGAS) - DUSK

Stu drives to within a block of the Vegas Strip and pulls over. People are running in the street. He leaves the car idling and gets out. A man passes, hand-in-hand with a child. Stu calls out to him:

STU

Take it --

They do. The man loads in his child and drives off with the car, looking at Stu wide-eyed as if he recognizes him from some kind of mental wanted poster.

Stu walks onto the Strip. New York New York is dark, but the silhouette of the miniature Statue of Liberty is visible, as are the castle turrets of the Excaliber across the street. There is a huge billboard across the side of the Excaliber advertising a show --

A man in a white tunic wielding a sword spars with a man in a blue tunic with a mask on, wielding a scythe.

(NOTE: This is a nod to the iconic cover of the original edition of King's novel, and the inspiration for some of the nightmares Flagg has been sending Stu.)

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - NIGHT

Lloyd leads over a hundred Las Vegans out of the city and through the roadblock.

They get a few hundred yards past it and hear Glen shout:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN

PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPONS! WE WILL
NOT FIRE ON YOU IF YOU DROP YOUR
WEAPONS.

Lloyd looks around, confused, and sees: Boulderites have
them surrounded on both sides of the highway. Is this
Flagg's plan? Why?

*
*

LLOYD

(to himself)
Fuck.

*
*

GLEN

OUR ACTIONS ARE NOT AIMED AT THE
PEOPLE OF LAS VEGAS. WE DON'T
WANT YOUR LIVES, YOUR CITY, OR
YOUR PROPERTY. WE WANT TO OFFER
HELP AND SHELTER TO ANY OF YOU WHO
NEEDS IT.

(beat)

DROP ALL WEAPONS AND COME FORWARD,
HANDS UP SO WE CAN SEE THEM.

People around Lloyd are looking to him. He slowly puts
down his weapon, overwhelmed. He makes the call, though
he doesn't sound convinced when he yells:

*
*
*

LLOYD

Do what he says. DO WHAT HE SAYS.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE SISTER PEAK - NIGHT

Up on the hill, Nick and his group of sharpshooters have
set a perimeter and are lying on the ground all around
the howitzer surveying the hillsides.

Behind Nick, the howitzer begins to move on its own. It
loads its own shell and aims itself at the Basin Highway
below. The other men see it happening. They yell to one
another. One of them shakes Nick and turns him around
just as the big howitzer goes off.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - NIGHT

Lloyd's Las Vegans are just putting down their weapons
and walking forward to be frisked when they hear the
artillery explosion up on the dark hillside.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harold Laudner is among them. He turns back to Little Sister Mountain to look and watches in horror as --

*
*

The shell WHISTLES UP and then TOWARD THEM.

*

LLOYD

Oh my God -- !

It EXPLODES in the dead center of the group, shattering the pavement and killing dozens of Boulderites and Las Vegans in equal numbers. People scatter in every direction, SCREAMING.

*
*
*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE SISTER PEAK - NIGHT

Nick and the others are trying to disable the howitzer. One of the men tries to keep the next shell from loading itself into the chamber. His fingers are taken clean off.

Nick looks around for something to stop it, screaming at his men to get away. He sees: The gun's muzzle is aimed low enough that he'd be able to reach it. So he picks up one of the waiting shells and runs forward.

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CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Stu is coming up to the ominous black pyramid of the Luxor when he hears the shelling. When the second round is fired, he closes his eyes, thrusting out a hand in their direction. Flagg has forced his move, but he can feel people are dying.

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*

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - NIGHT

As the SECOND SHELL SCREAMS IN, it explodes over the group in a flash of silver, an evolved version of Stu's rescue at the drive-in.

*
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*

Shrapnel and fire slides down the sides as if down a dome made of glass. Some people at the edges are still injured and killed, but Stu has saved many many more.

*

Glen shouts:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLEN
IT'S STU. KEEP RUNNING -- ALL OF
YOU!

CUT TO:

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - FLAGG'S SUITE - NIGHT

Flagg is sitting in his perch about the city when this happens. His eyes flash open and he can see immediately where Stu is down on the Strip. *

He launches himself out of the chair, shattering the window in front of him with his mind. He charges out it and into the air fifteen stories over the street. *

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Stu whirls around to see:

Flagg is walking down the slope of the casino, kept from sliding by his power. His cowboy boots crack the glass under his feet as he goes. He is grinning at Stu.

Above and behind him, the spotlight at the top of the pyramid comes ablaze. Flagg glances around the city, turning all the lights back on with his mind, the darkness a ruse. All of it expendable.

"VIVA LAS VEGAS" MONTAGE

1. The garish lights of all the Strip's casinos blaze on.
2. The fountains burst up into bubbling life.
3. The Stratosphere needle comes alight and the rides atop launch into motion.
4. Groups of people hiding in the dark streets see all this, see Flagg coming down the Luxor with death in his eyes, and break for it. *

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

The path between them is lit up with the city lights. Stu starts running toward the Luxor to meet Flagg head-on. *

Before Flagg even reaches the ground he throws a field of force square at Stu. Stu is driven back 20'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Flagg shatters every window within a block and as glass rains down, he redirects it all at Stu.

Stu is able to roll into a crouch and shield himself from all the glass. It hits the silver inches from his face and shoots off, a billion pieces, down the street behind him as if shot out of a jet engine.

People in the street are getting cut to tatters, so Stu muscles the whole thing back at Flagg. But Flagg teases the blast apart and walks down the middle, untouched. He grins back at Stu.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE SISTER PEAK - NIGHT

Nick sees the silver shield of protection over the people fleeing up Rt. 15 dissipate as Stu's focus is disrupted. So, as the third shell loads in, Nick raises the one in his hands and shoves it into the front bore of the howitzer. It doesn't slide in, but he's able to wedge it there. When the gun fires, the two shells meet and HOWITZER EXPLODES, a double blast of metal and fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Flagg keeps walking until he and Stu are 50' apart.

FLAGG

Shake my hand, and the others can live.

STU

I'm not here to shake your hand.

Flagg laughs.

FLAGG

You don't want all this. Shake my hand, and then you can go back to being some longhorn who hunts deer and gets drunk at a gas station with his buddies.

STU

I know what I am now. And I know how to use it.

Flagg's smile dries up and we see, for the first time, the hating grimace behind the smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG

Then you better.

Flagg turns his attention north.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - PULLOUT - NIGHT

Frannie and some of the others from the rear camp have come down half a mile toward the shelling and commotion. They can see a massive group of people coming up the highway on foot. Many have flashlights or lanterns. Then she hears the WEEPING and MOANING of the wounded.

She starts moving toward them, yelling over her shoulder.

FRANNIE

Doctors! Someone go back and bring the vans up! Now!

She is about to reach the first of the walking wounded when a blast from Flagg hits her.

She staggers back, CRYING OUT in pain, clutching her belly. She cries out again. Then it stops as suddenly as it began. One of the BOULDER DOCTORS runs to her side.

FRANNIE

It's all right. It hurt for a second, but then it --

In the doctor's flashlight, he can see her pant leg runs wet, blood or amniotic fluid, it's hard to tell.

But then doubles over again in pain, screaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Stu is trying to help Fran, but Flagg is striding toward him, pulling out pieces from the fronts of casinos with his mind -- Excalibur's turrets, pieces of New York New York -- and hurls them at Stu.

Stu is able to deflect it all, but barely. There are people getting caught in these "handfuls" of destruction Flagg is wielding. They get snatched off the street with the debris and hurled into Stu's face, dying right in front of him as they meet his barrier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Horrificed, Stu tries to stop it all by pulling up the pavement from under Flagg's feet in a heave. Flagg stumbles backward, and Stu leaps to the edge of the broken road over Flagg, pinning him to the ground with his mind, YELLING:

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*

STU
THESE ARE YOUR PEOPLE -- !

*
*

Behind him, Flagg starts plucking cars up off the street. They fly through the pulsing lights of the strip, arcing toward Stu's back.

Stu senses them and whirls around to protect himself. The cars bounce off of his mental shield, but tamping it down a little at a time. They lose their guts and fluids on impact and tumble away.

*

This is both exhausting and inexact. Stu is taking some of the blow of each attack and weakening from it, as is Flagg.

But Flagg is up like a shot and on top of Stu, shoving him to the ground and straddling him, hammering him into place with psychic blows, one hand covering Stu's face.

FLAGG
Watch her die. Watch them all
die.
(perversely)
Horseyrider?!

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*

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - PULLOUT - NIGHT

Frannie is being carried back to the rear camp on a blanket. She is in labor, having the baby now.

People have gathered around, both Boulderites and Las Vegans, looking on with about as much surprise at a live birth as they did at the shelling attack.

*

BOULDER DOCTOR
Frannie. Don't push. Not yet.

Frannie is grunting in pain, struggling with the birth. She can hear and see the destruction happening down on the Strip. Her mind races to find Stu's, but she can't. Another blast from Flagg rips through her.

*

*

The Doctor tells the other carrying her:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOULDER DOCTOR

Put her down! Get me that pack.
Get ready, Fran --

*
*

Frannie screams in agony. The people carrying gently put her down. One man crouches at Frannie's side and takes her hand. It is Harold.

*
*

She looks up into his face and recognizes him through her pain. She starts shaking her head, but Harold has tears in his eyes, pleading with her silently not to give him away.

*

His hand is glowing silver. He's nowhere near as strong as Stu, but he puts his arm out and a silver forms around him like a loose shadow, deflecting Flagg's attack.

*
*
*

Relieved of the pain, Frannie holds onto his hand and takes what help he can give her. She begins to push.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Flagg is trying to pull Stu's power out of him. But Harold's sudden entrance into the melee blindsides him for a second. It's enough for Stu to send up a blow to Flagg's chest and crack his sternum. Flagg yells in rage. Stu forces him onto his back.

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*

Stu takes Flagg by the throat, choking him, his thumb on Flagg's windpipe.

*
*

Each is trying to pull the other's power into himself. The familiar silvery lines pull away from their features showing the tug-of-war between them. But the life is nearly choked out of Flagg.

*
*
*

With real surprise, Flagg sees he is beat. He leans up and, for an instant, the silvery lines of their powers touch. It sends each of the men rocketing away, like repelled magnets.

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*

Stu is thrown back, but gets to his feet and runs back at Flagg.

*

But with his last surge of power, Flagg pries the glass and iron spotlight off the top of the Luxor in a bright comet arc. Just as Stu is about to lunge and deal the coup de grace, it comes falling out of the dark and impales Flagg himself. It skewers and crushes him feet from Stu, its floodlight still bright with Flagg's power. But as Flagg dies, it fades to nothing. He says to Stu:

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*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLAGG

The people. -- *Now they're yours.*

He says this as if this isn't a gift, but a curse, as if
Flagg is taking Stu's victory from him, twice.

Stu has a single moment where he could take Flagg's power
and he almost does. He goes to his knees at Flagg's
side, about to pull it forward. But finally, he cannot.
He sees it leave Flagg and suddenly he has in front of
him just a man -- someone Stu might have known in life,
just a guy from the middle ranks, like he used to be.

Then all the lights in Vegas go out, the fountains shut
off, and the city is again plunged into darkness, this
time for good.

Stu staggers back a step, and then falls on the pavement.
He's taken many injuries in the fight and is, perhaps,
dying himself.

Stu touches his chest and neck, and sees how he is
bleeding in many places. He concentrates his power to
try to stop it, to heal himself, but he is too weak.

The Strip around him has been demolished. A few people
who have been hiding wander out and begin calling to one
another.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - PULLOUT - NIGHT

Frannie is heaving and panting, pushing and screaming,
but finally there is a CRY as the BABY is born. People
in the crowd around her MURMUR.

The doctor holds the baby up to examine it. He nods, the
baby looks good. It cries, bloody and squinting in the
light of all the flashlights pointed at it.

Fran cries, too, exhausted, but cannot keep from asking:

FRANNIE

When will we know? When will we
know if she'll catch it?

BOULDER DOCTOR

Soon, Frannie. We'll know soon.
Stay calm. Whatever happens, she
will need that. Rest now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frannie nods and looks for Harold, but he's slipped into the crowd and away. *

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Stu is on the ground, slipping away, when someone walks up, just a shape in the dark and moving slowly, his flashlight sweeping over Stu. When Stu moves to try to see who it is, the figure startles.

TOM (O.S.)
Mister Redman? *

STU
Tom? Tom I need help -- *

Tom Cullen comes to his side in the dark. *

TOM
Come on. We'll go to the hospital. *

He tries to help Stu up. Stu winces.

STU
Not that kind. I need -- *

TOM
Oh. I know what it is. Tom Cullen knows.

STU
You do?

TOM
That man Flagg took it from people. I saw it. He took them by the hand and got their silver. You need my silver, Mister Redman?

STU
I won't take it unless you want to give it. You won't get it back.

TOM
Will it help you?

Stu nods. Without hesitation, Tom puts his hand in Stu's. Stu is moved to tears. Without hesitating, he pulls Tom's magic out of Tom and into himself. Tom smiles at the funny feeling it gives him. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stu lets go of his hand and puts both his hands on his own chest. He glows with silver energy. *

He lies there, healing, looking up at Tom. And then at the stars in the sky behind him. *

STU

Thank you. Thank you -- *

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY NORTH - PULLOUT - DAWN

In the first light of morning, the last of the survivors of the Battle of Las Vegas are coming up the highway to the pullout. Behind them, the city is dark again, patches of it smoking.

Stu arrives on foot with Tom at his side. He looks over the crowd for familiar faces.

Most of the killed and wounded have been brought in. Of the 450 they came with, at least a hundred are dead, and not counting those who died on Hoover Dam. Many, many more are hurt. At least 300 Las Vegans are with them now. *

Stu looks around, taking it all in, doing his own private calculations of benefits and costs. He sees a long row of tents has been set up. He can tell which one Frannie's inside.

TOM

Can you help me find Nick? *

Stu looks at Tom. He thinks how to tell him. *

STU

Nick's gone, Tom. He died in the night.

(pointing back)

Up on that hill, helping us try to keep people safe.

Tom looks at him, then back at the hill. A beat.

STU

There was a battle here. 'Little Sister Peak.' Will you remember that? That Nick died at the Battle of Little Sister Peak? We'll write it all down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tom nods. He may never have been sadder than he is now. He puts his hands together and makes a gesture of a bird flying away. *

STU

That's right.

TOM

He'll be in a book? A history book.

STU

Yeah. He will. So will you.

Tom already looks proud, not of himself, but of Nick.

TOM

Is he still up there?

STU

No. They brought him down.

TOM

That's good. I'm glad.

Stu looks at the long row of bodies in sleeping bags.

STU

He's there, Tom. That green one --

Tom looks at him, confused.

TOM

Can I say goodbye? Will he hear me?

STU

Yes, I think so. If he can where he is, he will.

TOM

You mean if he's in heaven. You don't think he's in the other place, do you?

STU

Not a chance.

Tom nods and goes. Stu takes a moment to steady himself, feeling what Tom is feeling. Then he goes to the tent to find Frannie.

As he approaches it, he can hear the BABY COOING inside, and he visibly relaxes. Now he does cry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He knew it was true in his mind, but it's another thing to hear it with his own ears. And be sure.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE FLATIRONS - DAY

The peaks of the Flatirons glow coldly in the white afternoon light. Most of the aspen trees have dropped their leaves, but still a few are hanging on. *

EXT. CHAUTAUQUA - EDGE OF PARK - DAY

People around the Chautauqua are busy, carrying firewood up to the cabins, putting up storm windows, and battening down for winter. In fact, the first stars of snow are in the air, floating down. A few people stop to watch it. *

Stu is helping a crew putting up snow fencing. Glen is there. They put the last roll in place and step back. *

STU

We hit a thousand yesterday.

GLEN

We should have a party.

STU

Yeah. Maybe it's time. *

They look up at the peaks, then at each other. Glen can see the toll taken on Stu, the constant questions of whether it was all worth it. *

GLEN

You don't think he's gonna walk in here, do you?

STU

Harold? He knows we'd put him in jail.

(thinks)

But maybe that's better than wherever he is now.

Glen looks at the mountain, then back at Stu.

GLEN

And Flagg. You really don't feel him anymore?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STU

I have dreams sometimes. But I
have dreams about a lot of things
now. Most of 'em good.

Glen nods.

EXT. CHAUTAUQUA - DINING HALL - DAY

Stu goes up the steps of the dining hall and walks down the wrap-around porch. Frannie's there with her DAUGHTER (2 months), both of them bundled up against the afternoon chill. She is with a circle of other men and women who are sitting with Boulder's children -- Joe included coloring with, reading to, and rocking them.

Frannie's eyes meet Stu's. They just look at one another for a long moment. She looks down on the baby and then smiles, lovely enough to be a painting herself.

All at once, the holiday lights hung around the porch twinkle to life. Some of the porch lights come on as well and the lights inside.

People around the lawn all stop and start to APPLAUD and CHEER. The kids around the table are grinning ear-to-ear. Frannie smiles, then laughs. Stu does as well. Maybe they'll be okay after all.

The snow continues to fall. From the main driveway of the Chautauqua Park, something trots up and stops in the yard. It's Kojak. He's worse for wear, having travelled far by some internal compass. No one has seen him yet.

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*

He BARKS.

*

FADE OUT.

CREDITS

*

TITLE CARD: INITIAL CLOSING CREDITS.

*

FADE IN:

EXT. TULUM, MEXICO - DAY

Harold walks into a shattered gulf town from the white sand beach. The shops have long since been looted. Vegetation has grown up unchecked for nearly a year.

*

He looks around, having walked many miles to get to this place. His sneakers are falling apart on his feet.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He continues into town, through weeds and shattered glass down the main street, until he sees something in one of the shop windows.

He goes over and reaches in through the broken display case. He pulls out a pair of new gaucho boots. He puts them on. They fit.

At the far end of town, a group of people has gathered to split up supplies from a foraging run. They watch him approach warily. Some have guns, others machetes.

But Harold exudes ease and confidence now. He puts a hand up in greeting and says, in perfect Spanish:

HAROLD

Hola!

(beat)

¿Cuál de ustedes es el que manda?

(Which one of you is in charge?)

And he is smiling. Always smiling.

CUT TO:

CREDITS

*

TITLE CARD: REMAINING CLOSING CREDITS.

*

FADE OUT.

THE END

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