

THE STORM

Written by
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And The Prophet said,

"Listen now - for there comes a great wind...

And *behold* - the SKY turns RED with the blood
of our ancient gods...

And so despair - for your huddled masses
shall *wither* beneath it..."

- *Anonymous*

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The SUBURBAN STREET shows no signs of life - it remains submerged in HEAVY DARKNESS...

Its ranch-style homes are but HULKING BLACK SHAPES... grim monstrosities still frozen in the gloom. But as golden RAYS of DAWN begin to *FAN OUT* in all directions... and thus SWEEP AWAY the night... we see the quiet sprawl for what it is:

A virtual GHOST TOWN.

We now begin to DRIFT down the street lined with houses... EMPTY HOUSES whose CRABGRASS LAWNS are OVERGROWN or *DYING*...

All have one unfailing characteristic:

Decrepit **FORECLOSURE SIGNS** stand *TILTING* and eager to FALL. All have them... all but one. We arrive at the ONE HOUSE on the entire street that bears no sign...

Its lawn is GREEN and neatly trimmed. There's a car in the driveway - and soft FLUORESCENT LIGHT in a window...

Where all others have clearly slipped and fallen...

...someone appears to be hanging on.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOM STETLER, 38, stands at the bathroom mirror in his threadbare undershirt and crinkled boxer-briefs...

His wife DONNA, 37, is seated on the toilet beside him. There's a faint *tinkling* sound as she reaches for a wad of quilted tissue paper...

Tom is methodically combing his hair... when he notices several DARK STRANDS have fallen into the bleached SINK below. He eyes the emancipated hairs with a look of suspicion - and *betrayal*. Tom then leans closer to the MIRROR, begins to scrutinize his jagged HAIRLINE...

TOM
(somewhat dramatically)
It's finally happening...
I'm losing it.

Donna tears off a few more squares of toilet paper.

DONNA
Your hair is fine, Tom. You're
just a *shedder*. Always have been.

The man seems unconvinced.

TOM
(gruffly)
Hmm.

He turns and exits the bathroom, heading into...

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

...the master bedroom. We hear the toilet *FLUSH* as Tom approaches an oversized CLOSET. He opens one of its sliding doors -- and reveals a collection of slacks, ties and dress shirts. Tom's gaze moves past the OFFICE ATTIRE... and lands on quite a different kind of WORK SHIRT...

He reaches out and removes a bright yellow *POLO* with LOUD orange STRIPES. Tom *flicks* a plastic BADGE pinned to the breast that READS: *Welcome to BURGER TIME, my name is: TOM*

Suddenly, a HAND *falls gently* on Tom's shoulder. Donna has snuck up behind her husband, and is pressing herself against his body...

TOM
(still eyeing the shirt)
This thing makes me look like some
kinda low-rent circus performer or
some shit.

Donna nuzzles his freshly-shaven neck.

DONNA
It's only temporary. There's
gonna be other opportunities -
always are.

Tom forces a smile... as he turns and kisses his wife's cheek. The man then heads for the bathroom once more, carrying his overly colorful "uniform"...

As Donna watches him walk away, her strong and supportive facade begins to *crack*. We see it in her face:

She's worried too.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

TWO UNMADE BEDS are but DISHEVELED ISLANDS upon a SEA of scattered ACTION FIGURES, COMIC BOOKS and GAME CONTROLLERS...

A space has been CLEARED in the middle of the room, where:

BRIAN, 12, and his cousin JEFF, also 12, are sitting cross-legged on the floor.

Before them, a large BLACK CAT is parked on its haunches, patiently watching JEFF. The boy is nonchalantly *jiggling* a handful of LOOSE CHANGE...

BRIAN
No way she's gonna be able to do
it. No way.

The cat passively licks its shoulder -- then returns its attention to Jeff...

JEFF
Wanna bet?

BRIAN
Everybody knows cats don't do
tricks... especially like what
you're talkin' about.

JEFF
Again - wanna bet?

Brian squints his eyes... gives his cousin a LOOK:

BRIAN
Sure.

JEFF
Okay then - if Athena performs as
promised, I get something of yours.
If she fails, you get something
of mine. Deal?

BRIAN
I want your Empire Luke in
Bespin gear.

JEFF
What...? That thing's *vintage* -
it's like irreplaceable.

BRIAN
I know...
(performing)
...and I *wants it*.

JEFF
Fine. I want your *Web of
Spider-Man* number four.

Brian hesitates... inhales sharply. Athena promptly lets out a pathetic *meow* - she's turning impatient.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(to Brian)
C'mon...

BRIAN
Okay, done.

Jeff smiles broadly.

JEFF
Here we go...

The boy starts to remove the CHANGE from his HAND... and place it on the HARDWOOD between himself and the cat. Jeff lines the COINS up one by one: QUARTER, DIME, NICKEL, PENNY. Athena remains in POSITION...

JEFF (CONT'D)
Alright Athena... show me
twenty five cents.

The cat doesn't move.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(encouraging her)
C'mon, girl... twenty five cents --

The cat promptly sticks out its PAW... and sets it gingerly on top of the QUARTER.

BRIAN
(eyes widening)
What the shit --

Jeff remains *focused* on his pet.

JEFF
Now... show me *thirty* cents...

Keeping her hold on the quarter, Athena places her other paw on the NICKEL...

BRIAN
(utterly stunned)
Dude this is freakin' crazy.

JEFF
Now show me *five* cents, Athena --
five cents...

The cat releases the quarter, but stays on the nickel. Brian seems unable to believe his eyes:

BRIAN
Bullshit!

JEFF
None whatsoever. Go ahead... give
it a try.

Brian wastes little time.

BRIAN
Show me *fifteen* cents, Athena -
fifteen...

The cat keeps her paw on the nickel... as she casually reaches for the *DIME*...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(starting to chuckle)
Freakin' spooky, man.

Jeff smiles as he pulls a fish-shaped CAT TREAT from his pocket... and offers it to Athena. The jet-black feline happily accepts... then heads for an empty corner to be ALONE with her REWARD.

JEFF
(to Brian)
And so, *Cuz*... your beloved *Web*
of Spider-Man number four is *mine*
at last.

BRIAN
Oh big deal. We live together
now anyway. What's the difference
if it's on your side of the room
or mine?

Brian watches a contented Athena finish off her savory treat.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(shaking his head)
So how'd you teach her to do that?

JEFF
Wasn't easy. It's all about word
association. You start by putting
food on the coins --
(too much to explain)
-- it's a whole thing.

BRIAN
Man, you musta had a lotta free
time on your hands.

Jeff's mood suddenly seems to *DARKEN*. He slowly begins to pick the coins up off the floor...

JEFF
Yeah...
(beat)
...guess I've been alone a lot.

Brian now realizes his comment was grossly insensitive.

BRIAN
Hey I'm sorry, I didn't mean --

JEFF
(waving him off)
Dude, no big deal.

A moment of awkward silence hangs in the air, until:

BRIAN
(delicately)
You like bein' here, right?
(beat)
I mean... you don't still feel
like you're all alone, do ya?

JEFF
No, no.
(reassuringly)
Getting to live with my cousin, and
my *best friend* -- that's awesome.
But still...
(beat)
...I miss 'em.

Brian slowly nods... and wistfully looks away:

BRIAN
Me too. They were the coolest aunt
and uncle ever.

Jeff gets on his feet... and approaches Athena in the corner.
He picks up his cat, and she *purrs* in his arms:

JEFF
I'm just glad your mom and dad let
me keep Athena...
(quietly)
She makes it home.

DONNA (O.S.)
Alright you two...

The woman of the house suddenly APPEARS in the doorway:

DONNA (CONT'D)
Come eat your breakfast - you're
gonna miss the bus again.

BRIAN
Okay, mom.

JEFF
We're coming, Aunt Donna.

Donna smiles warmly at her nephew... then turns to leave.
Athena promptly jumps from Jeff's arms... and chases after
the matriarch.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Tom enters the kitchen DRESSED FOR WORK. He adjusts his ill-fitting *BURGER TIME SHIRT*... as he passes Donna stirring a cup of coffee at the counter. Tom then takes a chair at the TABLE, where Brian and Jeff are getting their breakfast:

TOM
Gents.

BRIAN
Hey, dad.

JEFF
(with a playful salute)
Unc.

Tom reaches over... and squeezes his nephew's shoulder affectionately. Donna then hands her hubby his morning CUP. The mug READS: *WITHOUT THIS, YOU'RE ALL DEAD*.

TOM
(taking the cup)
Sanka, milady.

Meanwhile, Jeff proceeds to pour himself a bowl of CEREAL...

ping, ping, ping ---

...and Brian WATCHES the action *intently: ping, ping, ping ---*

Finally, Jeff STOPS THE FLOW of *Frosted Toastie O's*... and looks into his generous BOWL. The boy's expression is one of obvious DISAPPOINTMENT.

BRIAN
Nothing?

JEFF
Nada.

BRIAN
Gimme that --

Brian takes the CEREAL BOX from Jeff... and we now see an ADVERT on the package that *SCREAMS*:

SECRET SURPRISE IN EVERY BOX!

Brian hastily POURS HIMSELF A BOWL... but comes up empty -- just a lotta plain ol' cereal. He then peers inside the box itself... but observes nothing.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
That's it. I'm sticking my
hand in.

JEFF
Dude, do it.

As Tom finishes a sip of coffee:

TOM
Don't stick your hand in.

BRIAN
I'm stickin' it in.

TOM
Don't.

BRIAN
(with practiced severity)
Dad... I need it.

TOM
What is it anyway?

BRIAN
It's a secret surprise. A *secret surprise*, dad. Do you have any idea what that means?

Tom shakes his head "no".

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Means it could be anything...

Jeff nods in agreement, and looks his uncle dead in the eyes. He punctuates Brian's thought:

JEFF
Anything.

Tom manages a smile... and decides to join in the spirit of things:

TOM
You mean like it could be a Spanish doubloon... or maybe a lock of Bigfoot's hair...?

BRIAN
(slapping the table)
Now he gets it.

Tom grins at the boys. He grabs the box of cereal... and heads for the kitchen counter. He quickly procures a sizable MIXING BOWL... and prepares to pour out the entire package of *Frosted Toastie O's*, when:

DONNA
Stop.

She takes the mixing bowl away...

DONNA (CONT'D)
Use this one.

...and replaces it with an even larger POPCORN BOWL.

TOM
Thanks, babe.

The boys LOOK ON... as the man of the house DUMPS ALL THEIR CEREAL into the plastic receptacle: *ping, ping, ping, ping* ---

JEFF
And there it is.

Sure enough, resting atop the copious MOUND of toasted product is a small, SILVER PACKET. The anticipation in the room is palpable... as Tom *snatches* the sealed packet -- and prepares to rip it open...

BRIAN
Wait --

Tom LOOKS UP at his son and everyone *FREEZES* -- holds a beat. Then Brian *NODS*... indicating he's now READY:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Okay.

Tom immediately *tears open the packet*... and LOOKS INSIDE.

JEFF
Well...?

Tom unceremoniously EMPTIES the silver pouch into the palm of his hand... and two innocuous little items FALL OUT:

TOM
It's a coupla Skittles.

Brian eyes the brightly-colored candies with utter DISDAIN:

BRIAN
Bullshit.

Donna whips her head:

DONNA
Hey.

BRIAN
Two Skittles... what sense does that make?

JEFF
I like Skittles.

Brian gives his cousin a *LOOK*:

BRIAN
Are ya sure?

Tom nonchalantly pops the edibles into his mouth... and Donna takes it upon herself to pour the displaced CEREAL back into the box from whence it came:

DONNA
(while pouring)
Okay, hate to be the "mom" and put
an end to all this... *weirdness* --
(beat)
-- but the three of you need to get
your butts in gear. Pronto.

She finishes replacing the cereal...

...and closes up the box: *SNAP* -- .

EXT. STETLER HOME - MINUTES LATER

The FRONT DOOR *flies open*... and the two boys emerge from the house lugging their worn-out BACKPACKS. They trot down the front steps... and begin their walk to the BUS STOP at the end of the street:

BRIAN
Wish we'd get hit with a snowstorm
or something.

JEFF
(in complete agreement)
No shit.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tom is rinsing out his coffee cup at the sink... when his cellphone begins to *SQUAWK* behind him. Tom's aging BLACKBERRY is resting on the TABLE -- where Donna now sits munching a piece of jam-laden TOAST...

TOM
Hon, can you see who that is...?

Donna promptly *leans over* and glances at the noisy HANDSET:

DONNA
(mouth full of toast)
It's someone from the restaurant.

Tom frowns, quickly dries his hands. He heads for the table and snatches his phone:

TOM
Hello?

TINNY VOICE (O.S.)
Tom, it's Gene --

The man's voice through the phone sounds *distracted...*
...in a HURRY...

TOM
Yeah Gene, what's up?

GENE (O.S.)
Don't bother coming in today, okay?

TOM
What? What do you mean -- ?

GENE (O.S.)
I mean just stay home - alright?

Tom appears confused - and somewhat *irritated*. Donna gives her husband a look that says: *WTF?*

TOM
(lowering his voice)
Gene, I really need the hours...

GENE
Look, I'm not opening the
restaurant today - understand?

Tom doesn't.

GENE (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
You haven't seen the news yet --
have you?

TOM
No, what --

GENE
(hastily)
I gotta go. Take care of yourself
and your family, Tom.

The man HANGS UP. Tom lowers his handset with furrowed brow.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Brian and Jeff continue their march toward the bus stop. They pass darkened, neglected homes... where RUSTING FORECLOSURE SIGNS sway lazily in the breeze... back and forth... back and forth:

SKINK... KRIK... SKINK... KRIK...

JEFF

I gotta say... this neighborhood is
verging on *creepy*.

BRIAN

Yeah... all these people lost their
jobs - just like my dad. We're the
only ones left on the whole street.

Brian's expression then *shifts*... revealing deep anxiety -
a kind of pure *angst* only a twelve-year-old can possess:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I heard my dad say this country has
no future.

Jeff kicks a stone on the sidewalk.

JEFF

That's not true. Of course there's
gonna be a future.

BRIAN

Yeah, but what he meant was...
(beat)
...it isn't gonna be very good.

A quiet moment then ensues... and the boys pass another
shoddy foreclosure sign: SKINK... KRIK... SKINK... KRIK...

At last, they arrive at their stop on the corner. Jeff
strips off his backpack... and leans up against the metal
STOP SIGN. Its bright red placard appears like a geometric
HALO over the boy's head...

JEFF

Let's just ditch today, man - I'm
not feelin' it.

Brian shakes his head.

BRIAN

Won't get away with it. Can't get
away with jack anymore.

Brian then spots something HEADING THEIR WAY...

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Here she comes --

The YELLOW SCHOOL BUS is a bit grungy, and on the verge of
disrepair. The aging transport is already carrying a number
of ROWDY KIDS as it APPROACHES...

JEFF
(defeated)
Great.

Just then, the bus unexpectedly comes to an abrupt *HALT* -- but it's still halfway down the street. Brian and Jeff can see the DRIVER has a *CELLPHONE* to his ear -- the man's face is etched with a look of extreme *HORROR*...

Suddenly, the bus driver *turns his steering wheel HARD* -- and proceeds to make a *sharp U-TURN*. The school bus then heads back the way it came -- and at a serious clip. Brian and Jeff are *SPEECHLESS*. Finally:

BRIAN
Kooky.

DONNA (O.S.)
(calling out)
Brian! Jeff!

The boys *whip their heads* down the block, where Donna is *WAVING THEM HOME*:

DONNA (CONT'D)
C'mon you two -- back inside!

Brian and Jeff share a *LOOK*.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The Stetlers are all standing in front of the TV with *MOUTHS AGAPE* -- *TRANSFIXED* by what they're *SEEING* and *HEARING*...

Their pale faces are masks of *SHOCK* and *DISBELIEF* as we pan across them one by one: Tom... Donna... Brian... then Jeff...

NEWS ANCHOR
We've just received more satellite photos of the object, which we'll put up on the screen for you now...

A tense moment passes ----

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
(to a producer off-camera)
Connie, do we have it...?
(two beats)
Okay, here we are:

A series of still SATELLITE IMAGES are presented -- they are at once BREATHTAKING and HORRIFIC:

Half the frame shows the BLUE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH... while the other depicts a MASSIVE ANOMALY IN SPACE -- something that looks to be on direct a COLLISION COURSE with the planet we call home...

But the anomaly is no comet or asteroid. It has the appearance of a GASEOUS CLOUD... DEEP RED in color, but not so dense as to be opaque. White-hot STARS and black swaths of SPACE are still visible through the cloud's twisting mass.

Long tendrils of CRIMSON VAPOR protrude from the anomaly, and seem to REACH for the EARTH... like enormous GHOSTLY FINGERS.

BRIAN

(in a low voice)

Dad... what is that thing...?

Tom has no answer. Donna takes her son's hand to try and comfort him... and herself as well.

NEWS ANCHOR

With us now from NASA's science division is Doctor Eric Remmel. Mr. Remmel, obviously everyone is extremely concerned about this situation -- myself included. Can you give us any idea of what we're looking at here...?

At once, The Stetlers INCH CLOSER to the SCREEN:

DR. REMMEL

Well the anomaly was only detected a few hours ago, so for the most part what we have are theories and conjecture. The object is moving at an extremely high rate of speed, and thus entered our solar system without any warning...

NEWS ANCHOR

(incredulous)

You want us to believe the U.S. government only found out about this a few hours ago...?

DR. REMMEL

Well... I don't represent the entire U.S. government. Now, if I may continue --

More images of the monstrous CLOUD appear on screen -- the thing has already moved CLOSER to the earth...

DR. REMMEL (CONT'D)

We can assume this is some kind of "cosmic storm cloud"...

(MORE)

DR. REMMEL (CONT'D)
*...made up of various gasses, dust
 particles... possibly some
 radioactive elements.*

The ANCHOR is visibly ALARMED:

NEWS ANCHOR
*Does that mean the cloud
 is lethal...?
 (trying to contain panic)
 What should we expect, Doctor?*

DR. REMMEL
*Again, I can't say with any
 certainty - but I would expect
 the cloud to have some level of
 toxicity. We estimate it to be
 about five times the size of
 earth... so when it hits... our
 planet will be completely covered --*

At this, Donna INHALES SHARPLY:

DONNA
*(voice trembling)
 How can this be true...?
 Things like this don't happen...*

As if trying to convince herself:

DONNA (CONT'D)
They just don't happen...

Jeff then SPEAKS UP - his young voice gripped with ANXIETY:

JEFF
*What if this is just a hoax...?
 Like when Orson Welles did that
 War of the Worlds thing a hundred
 years ago or whatever...?*

BRIAN
*(jumping in)
 Yeah - we read about that in
 Social Studies...*

Tom promptly lifts the REMOTE... and switches the channel...
 ...but the COVERAGE is the same:

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR
*The cloud is expected to reach the
 earth in less than four hours --*

TOM
*(gravely)
 Not a hoax, guys.*

ON TV

A crude and hastily-made 3-D GRAPHIC appears on screen...
The rendering depicts the EARTH being OVERTAKEN by a
gargantuan mass of SWIRLING, RED VAPOR...

FEMALE REPORTER

-- and given the anomaly's current
rate of speed, it should take
approximately six hours to pass
over the earth... before continuing
on towards Jupiter --

The GRAPHIC shows the ENVELOPED PLANET finally being
UNCOVERED - as the crimson cloud proceeds further into space.

FEMALE REPORTER (CONT'D)

We ask you please stand by for your
local affiliate, to receive event
times and other details concerning
your area...

The Stetlers huddle CLOSER TOGETHER as the broadcast
transitions to a LOCAL NEWSMAN:

ON TV

The anchor appears barely camera-ready, as he stands before
an enlarged MAP of several RURAL TOWNSHIPS:

NEWSMAN

(visibly nervous)
Residents of Dayton County and
other outlying areas should expect
the purported event to commence at
approximately 11:45am...

Tom glances at the CLOCK on the cable box: it's 8:28.

NEWSMAN (CONT'D)

We advise everyone to stay indoors
for the duration - which should be
six hours, or more. I repeat, do
not go outside for any reason --
including medical emergencies...

Donna places her hands over her mouth, as if in prayer:

DONNA

Oh my god...

NEWSMAN

Secure all your doors and windows.
If you have access to a bomb or
storm shelter, we strongly suggest
you use it...

Jeff turns to his adopted family with some measure of hope:

JEFF
 You guys have a shelter
 or anything...?

Tom slowly shakes his head "no". The man's growing
 FRUSTRATION and CONCERN is palpable...

ON TV
 A PRODUCER wearing a headset rushes into frame... and hands
 the NEWSMAN a couple of "PROPS"...

NEWSMAN
 As a further precaution, we advise
 wearing one of these:

He holds up a rubber GAS MASK with a plastic FACE SHIELD.

NEWSMAN (CONT'D)
 If you don't already own a gas
 mask, you might have trouble
 obtaining one in short order...
 so this will also provide
 some protection:

He now holds up a high-end PAINTER'S MASK fitted with
 SILVER BREATHING CANISTERS...

NEWSMAN (CONT'D)
 This is a Bowman's Painter's Mask --
 which you should be able to find at
 any hardware store...

Tom bites his bottom lip. He's heard enough -- it's time to
 take action:

TOM
 Donna --

She turns to her husband with WORRIED EYES.

TOM (CONT'D)
 I want you and the boys to make
 sure every window in this house is
 closed up *tight* --

BRIAN
 What are you gonna do, dad?

TOM
 I'm gonna drive to O'Reilly's...
 (beat)
 ...pick up some of those masks.

DONNA
 Will they be open...?

TOM
Sure as hell hope so.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Tom *rushes* into the bedroom and *snatches* his KEYS from the night stand. As he turns to leave, he catches his REFLECTION in the BATHROOM MIRROR across the way. The man PAUSES and clenches his fists...

CUT TO:

Tom THROWS OPEN THE CLOSET DOORS -- and quickly removes a BUTTON-UP SHIRT and WINDBREAKER JACKET... He leaves his neon *BURGER TIME* polo DISCARDED on the floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM / EXT. FRONT PORCH & DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Donna and the boys are hovering by the FRONT DOOR as...

...Tom finishes *throwing on his clothes*, and starts to leave. He gives his wife a fast *peck* on the CHEEK:

TOM
Won't be long -- I promise.

As he hurries out the door, Brian and Jeff begin to FOLLOW...

TOM (CONT'D)
(to the boys)
Where do you think you're going...?

BRIAN
Dad, everyone in town is gonna be trying to get in that store --

JEFF
We thought you might need some backup.

Tom feels a quick swell of PRIDE as he looks at his two boys. He then glances up at his WIFE in the DOORWAY:

TOM
(unsure)
Donna...?

DONNA
I'll be fine - just get going!

Tom gives Brian and Jeff the *NOD*... and they quickly follow him to the CAR. Donna watches her family climb aboard their in-need-of-retirement *BUICK SKYLARK*...

...then SHUTS the FRONT DOOR and *LOCKS IT*: *KLIK*.

INT. CAR / EXT. DRIVEWAY & STREET - CONTINUOUS

Brian has taken the front seat next to Tom, while Jeff is in the back, UPRIGHT and *ALERT* - like a gopher out of its hole.

Tom impatiently *TURNS THE KEYS*, and: *GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA* ---

The engine sounds like a collection of STEAK KNIVES being tossed in a DRYER: *GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA* ---

TOM
Shit -- not now -- !

He shuts the motor OFF -- and observes the RED OIL LIGHT on the dash staring back at him like an *EVIL EYE*...

TOM (CONT'D)
(hissing under his breath)
Fuckin' unbelievable...

He *throws open* his DOOR -- and JUMPS out of the car...
Brian and Jeff give each other a WORRIED LOOK.

Tom *CROUCHES* beside the car... and looks UNDERNEATH. He sees a large collection of BLACK FLUID forming a miniature LAKE in the driveway. Tom *bites his tongue* -- then CALLS to his son:

TOM (CONT'D)
Brian, pop the hood --
and the trunk --

Jeff looks over the backseat:

JEFF
(to Brian)
How you supposed to do that?

BRIAN
Like this --

The boy *reaches over* toward the DRIVER'S SIDE... and POPS the appropriate LEVER for the hood: *CHUNK*. He's clearly done this before. Brian then reaches for the TRUNK LEVER -- a little further down...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(stretching his torso)
This one's a bitch --

The boy succeeds in *pulling* the LEVER: *KA-CHUNK* -- but at the same moment, he inadvertently *BUMPS* the GEAR STICK -- and knocks it from PARK into *DRIVE*. Neither boy takes notice, as both are consumed with what's happening OUTSIDE...

Tom is under the HOOD, gazing into an OIL RESERVOIR that is *BONE DRY*. He promptly RUNS to the other side of the car...
...and *RUMMAGES* through the TRUNK -- to procure:

Two yellow-bottled QUARTS of MOTOR OIL. Inside the car,
Jeff TURNS to Brian:

JEFF
(growing nervous)
Dude, should we just get our *bikes*?

Brian shakes his head:

BRIAN
He knows what he's doing.

Tom is under the HOOD once more... opening the *second* bottle
of PENNZOIL -- when:

He *jerks* the CAP too hard -- and sends *greasy crude* SPLASHING
UP all over himself:

TOM
Son of a ----

The man quickly finishes *POURING*... then wipes his BLACKENED
HANDS on his JEANS --

TOM (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
Fuck...

He *shuts* the HOOD - *WHACK!* - and *jumps* back in the car: *SLAM!*
Tom immediately HITS THE PEDALS and *TWISTS THE KEY: GREVVVV* --

The engine STARTS with a metallic *GROWL* -- then quickly
transitions into a steady *HUM*. But at the same moment, the
car unexpectedly *LURCHES FORWARD* and *SLAMS* into the garage's
HOLLOW WOODEN DOOR: *KRACK* -- *KRUNCH* --

Thinking fast, Tom *shifts back* into *PARK*... and the Skylark
gentles down -- its bumper *STUCK* halfway inside the garage.
Tom does all he can to contain his mounting *FRUSTRATION*:

TOM (CONT'D)
Brian...

BRIAN
(indignant)
Don't look at me!

JEFF
(fixated on the DAMAGE)
Holy shit...

Tom then gives a LOOK that says: *Fuck it*.

TOM
Doesn't matter...

In an instant, he *shifts* into *REVERSE*... and BREAKS FREE of the garage door -- taking an even larger SEGMENT of the cheap wood with him: *K-r-E-t-C-h* --

As Tom continues to *reverse* out of the driveway... his WIFE suddenly APPEARS through the GAPING WOUND in the GARAGE DOOR:

DONNA

Tom -- what the hell?!!

But he's a man on a mission - nothing's gonna stop him.

TOM

(waving her off)
Don't worry about it --

Jeff STICKS HIS HEAD OUT THE WINDOW... as they *PEEL* into the street:

JEFF

We'll be back, Aunt Donna!

The woman watches her family *TAKE OFF* -- OUT OF SIGHT...
...her confidence *SHAKEN*.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Full of *nervous energy*, Donna approaches a BEDROOM WINDOW that's partially open... and tries to shut it:

DONNA

(annoyed)
Ugh...

The window's peeling, wooden frame is STUCK. She tries again with a bit of *VENOM* and -- *SHUNK* -- the window finally SHUTS, and she *LATCHES IT*. Donna then glances at the CLOCK on the night stand, checks the TIME: it's 8:51.

At once, the woman has a THOUGHT... She grabs the CORDLESS ALARM CLOCK and *marches* out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Donna makes a *beeline* for the TV... and places the alarm clock next to it. As she proceeds to *SET THE ALARM* for 11:45am, the TV's chilling coverage continues...

BRITISH NEWSWOMAN

This so-called "cosmic storm cloud" is literally five times the size of our planet... and no one has any idea what it's made of...

As we observe TELESCOPE FOOTAGE of the awe-inspiring
PHENOMENA in space:

BRITISH NEWSWOMAN (CONT'D)
*The entire human race is united in
the hope we can survive this...*

Donna finishes setting the alarm... and HURRIES out of frame.

INT. CAR / EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tom and the boys are BARRELING down a RURAL ROAD outside
their secluded DEVELOPMENT. The mood in the car is TENSE and
QUIET - all EARS are trained on the RADIO...

RADIO PERSONALITY
*Alright, at the top of every hour,
we'll be taking a quick break from
the news to play a song... just a
few personal selections I intend to
hear -- before I go...*
(beat)
*It's now 9:00 -- and this is
Mr. Bob Dylan:*

A bit of jangly guitar and church-style organ help introduce
Dylan's nasaly, but heartfelt prose:

*Storm clouds are raging all around my door...
I think to myself - I might not take it anymore...*

For a moment, it looks as though TOM is going to change the
station... but he relents. Maybe it's a song worth listening
to after all:

*But oh, what a wonderful feeling...
...just to know that you are near...*

As BRIAN looks out his WINDOW with REFLECTIVE EYES, he
glimpses something:

A rotting COW'S SKULL rests in GRAVEL on the ROADSIDE.
Brian regards it like a BAD OMEN, and quickly TURNS AWAY...

But we LINGER on the **SKULL** a moment: we observe its
LEMON-YELLOW TEETH... BLACK-HOLE EYE SOCKETS... and all the
LITTLE BITS of DRIED MEAT still clinging to the BONE...

At once, thousands of FIRE ANTS come swarming over the putrid
SKULL... DEVOURING it... like CRIMSON DISEASE.

EXT. ROAD & TOWN / INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

FROM HIGH ABOVE
We watch the little Skylark turn off a BARREN ROAD...

...onto a CITY STREET. Tom and the boys enter the local SHOPPING DISTRICT... comprised of SQUAT BRICK BUILDINGS and CURVING LAMPPOSTS. They begin to pass establishments that have been BOARDED UP for GOOD:

RAY'S BOOK CELLAR, KRISSY'S ARTS & KRAFTS, MR. MOO'S MUSIC...

The few stores that remain in business: a pizzeria, a liquor mart, a laundry mat... are CLOSED at the moment. The rural town appears EMPTY... LIFELESS...

The trio now begins to pass a modest-sized GROCERY STORE... whose weathered SIGN reads: *FOOD KING*. Tom and the boys are visibly *DISMAYED* as they OBSERVE:

The store's FRONT WINDOWS have been *SMASHED* and *BROKEN*...

Two FIGURES are emerging from the DARKENED INTERIOR... pushing SHOPPING CARTS literally *overflowing* with countless SUPPLIES: *bottled water, canned soup, toilet paper, flu medicine* and more...

The "thieves" are an ELDERLY COUPLE... still dressed in their PAJAMAS and SLIPPERS. The senior citizens pay the passing BUICK no mind, as they hurry along -- *pushing* their LOOT...

BRIAN

They're *totally* ripping that off...

JEFF

But they're *old*...

(beat)

When you're old, you're not supposed to do stuff like that --

TOM

They're just people...

(beat)

...which means they're capable of anything.

As the three CONTINUE ON:

BRIAN

(with wide eyes)

Check it out!

They ROUND A CORNER... and the GREEN PLACARD above O'REILLY HARDWARE comes into view. Beneath it, the street is absolutely *JAMMED WITH VEHICLES*...

In an area that should only accommodate ten or fifteen cars, at least *FIFTY* trucks and sedans have been LEFT SITTING in an ugly mess of NIGHTMARISH parking logistics.

JEFF
 (to Brian)
 Man, you were right... whole town
 must be here.

TOM
 Not the whole town...

Tom slows to a CRAWL... and STOPS several stores down --
 still a good distance from the cluster-fuck in front
 of O'Reilly's...

TOM (CONT'D)
 (grabbing his doorhandle)
 Alright...
 (forcefully)
 Both of you *stay here, in the car* --
 and keep it running. God knows if
 we'll be able to get the damn thing
 started again...

As he STEPS OUT of the car:

BRIAN
 What are you gonna do?

Tom isn't sure...

TOM
 See what's what.

He SHUTS his DOOR -- *WHACK!* -- and MARCHES OFF toward the
 hardware store's ENTRANCE. Brian and Jeff WATCH intently
 through the car's DUSTY WINDSHIELD as...

...Tom reaches O'Reilly's GLASS DOORS -- and HESITATES. The
 boys can see him FURROW HIS BROW... as he scrutinizes the
 shop's *hazy interior*. At last, Tom CAREFULLY enters the
 store... and DISAPPEARS FROM SIGHT.

BRIAN
 (in a low voice)
 Think he's gonna be okay...?

Jeff doesn't answer... he's quietly taking stock of
 his SURROUNDINGS:

The street's *SAGGING* STORE FRONTS... with their DARKENED
 WINDOWS... are like EVIL FACES *grinning* back at him...

Brian can see the GROWING FEAR in his cousin's EYES:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 Hey --

He POPS OPEN the GLOVE BOX...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
-- check this out.

...and removes a small, PLASTIC CASE.

JEFF
What is it?

BRIAN
It's a gun.

Jeff tilts his head, *squints his eyes*:

JEFF
No way...

Brian nods "way".

JEFF (CONT'D)
Let me see.

Brian is happy to oblige. He SNAPS OPEN THE CASE... and shows its contents to Jeff. The boy looks *PUZZLED* instead of impressed:

JEFF (CONT'D)
That's not a real gun -- that's just a *flare gun*, man.

Brian lays his hand on the BLACK PISTOL GRIP... he brandishes the OVERSIZED BARREL:

BRIAN
You shoot someone with this, it'll do some damage -- believe me.

JEFF
Why's it in the glove box?

Brian shrugs:

BRIAN
I don't know, it's for emergencies - ...in case we get stuck on the side of the road or whatever.

Jeff is suddenly DISTRACTED by something OUTSIDE...

JEFF
Dude -- you hear that?

BRIAN
What...?

JEFF
Listen --

Jeff sticks his head out the window... and Brian follows suit. Both now hear intense *SHOUTING* and *HARSH TONES* spilling from O'Reilly's -- out into the street...

INT. HARDWARE STORE / EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tom is standing in a LONELY AISLE near the front of the store. He's keeping his distance from the CLAMORING HORDE directly AHEAD:

At least *sixty PANICKED LOCALS* are struggling for supremacy at the lengthy CHECKOUT COUNTER at the back of the store. They have the look of an UNRULY CROWD *rushing the stage* at a THRASH CONCERT...

TOM
(sotto)
Jesus --

Men and women alike are *PUSHING, POINTING, and SHOVING* -- They're **SCREAMING** in each other's faces:

MIDDLE AGE MAN
(to another)
It's called *customer seniority*, my friend. I practically live in this goddamn store -- *who the hell are you?!*

YOUNG WOMAN
(pleading to another)
My daughter has *asthma*, she's only five... she's still just a *baby*.

SECOND WOMAN
(unsympathetic)
Nobody forced you to get knocked up, *bitch*.

Behind the counter, the proprietor's continual *PLEAS* for ORDER fall on DEAF EARS:

O'REILLY
Everybody just calm down, godammit!

Tom LOOKS ON -- troubled by the UGLY DISPLAY, unsure how to proceed... when:

A HAND suddenly GRABS HIM BY THE ARM -- and Tom JUMPS -- He quickly SPINS AROUND to find:

BRIAN
Dad - it's me...

TOM
 Brian, *what the ----*
 I said stay in the car!

JEFF does his best to HIDE BEHIND HIS COUSIN, as he *hisses*
 in his EAR:

JEFF
Told you.

BRIAN
 (to his dad)
 We got worried...

He gazes upon the *RABBLE* at the back of store:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 I mean, look at these assholes...

BESPECTACLED MAN
 (to an elderly gentleman)
Don't freakin' push me, old man!!

JEFF
 (in disbelief)
 Dude, that's Mr. Bremmer...

TOM
 Who?

BRIAN
 Our *Social Studies* teacher...

Tom then notices something in his son's HAND:

TOM
 What are you doing with that?!

Brian glances down at the *FLARE GUN* in his *sweaty grip*...

BRIAN
 It's for protection --

TOM
 (angrily)
Gimme that thing.

Tom *SNATCHES* the "piece" from his son... and *STUFFS IT* in his JACKET. Meanwhile, the STORE OWNER has had ENOUGH of the *MELEE* in his establishment. O'Reilly *SCRAMBLES ATOP THE CHECKOUT COUNTER*... while cradling a *YELLOW CHAIN-SAW*...

He holds the BLADED TOOL over his head... and gives the CORD a good *RIP: ZZREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE* ----

As the SOUND of *WHIRRING METAL TEETH* cuts through the air...

At once, ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE. Dozens of other patrons go absolutely *BERSERK* -- and begin to SWARM THE COUNTER like a HOST of MINDLESS INSECTS...

TOM
(visibly shaken)
Okay, we're done here --

He and the boys start *BACKPEDALING* towards the DOOR in almost comic UNISON...

BRIAN
Now what are we gonna do...?!

Tom has no idea... until:

TOM
Wait a minute --

His gaze is trained on a SHELF nearby that's stocked with large ROLLS of SILVER DUCT TAPE...

As VIOLENT BEDLAM continues at the back of the store:

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)
*Where's the fuckin' masks
you bastard -- ?!*

Tom grabs FOUR ROLLS of TAPE and quickly HANDS THEM to BRIAN:

BRIAN
What are these for?

TOM
I've got an idea...

The man then *whips out* his WALLET -- and looks inside: he's only got a couple bucks in cash. Without hesitation, Tom removes a beat-up CREDIT CARD... and *SLAPS IT DOWN* on the SHELF where the duct tape once resided.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE & STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tom and the boys now EMERGE FROM THE STORE... and briskly move past the LOGJAM of abandoned VEHICLES in the street. As they approach their CAR... Tom REALIZES:

TOM
You guys just left the car *running*
in the middle of the street...?!

BRIAN
(cradling rolls of tape)
You told us not to shut if off!

Tom wants to shout a thousand obscenities... but opts simply to SHAKE HIS HEAD. As the three scramble inside the *chugging* SKYLARK, Jeff can no longer contain his feelings of uncertainty and *EXCITEMENT*:

JEFF
This is freakin' nuts!

The boy takes the back -- and SHUTS HIS DOOR: *WHACK!*

EXT. RURAL ROAD / INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

THE STETLER MEN *tear down* the ROAD... *kicking up* DUST ----
---- *GUNNING* for HOME...

Brian glances over at his father with a look of CONCERN:

Tom's *hurried driving* is on the verge of being *RECKLESS*... But the boy hasn't the nerve to call him on it. Meanwhile, the familiar VOICE on the RADIO keeps everyone company... like another passenger along for the ride:

RADIO PERSONALITY
...they're calling it an "anomaly" -
whatever that means... a "cosmic
storm cloud" - whatever that
means... or, and I love this one, a
"plasma-charged gas giant" --
whatever the hell that means...
(beat)
Know what I call it? I call it
some scary shit.

Tom raises an eyebrow.

RADIO PERSONALITY (CONT'D)
It's forty thousand miles across,
and it's gonna cover this entire
earth for about six hours
straight... That's scary shit.
(beat)
Oh yeah, in case you haven't
noticed, I'm lifting the ban on
so-called "dirty words" for the
remainder of this broadcast...
(beat)
On a day like today, you realize
some of the "rules" we've chosen to
live by are total bullshit...

Brian and Jeff manage to crack a smile - Tom does too.

RADIO PERSONALITY (CONT'D)
Anyway, this thing is slated to go
down at 11:45am --

Tom checks the IN-DASH CLOCK: it's 9:36.

RADIO PERSONALITY (CONT'D)
*-- which means you've only got a
 couple hours left to get your sweet
 butts parked indoors.*

At this, Tom ACCELERATES from 80 to 85...

VREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE ----

...causing a noticeable STRAIN on the car's tired ENGINE:

VREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE ----

BRIAN
 (with furrowed brow)
 Dad...

Tom doesn't acknowledge his son... He *tightens his grip* on the STEERING WHEEL -- *CRIICK* -- as the dusty Skylark enters a SHORT TUNNEL cutting through a ROCKY OUTCROPPING in the barren landscape...

EXT. DARK TUNNEL & RURAL ROAD / INT. CAR - SAME

RADIO PERSONALITY
*Forget walkin' the dog, forget
 takin' out the trash, forget
 chasin' the Ice Cream Man -- and
 don't even think about steppin' out
 for some fresh air...*
 (beat)
...cuz there ain't gonna be any.

Tom and Brian keep their eyes on the DIM TUNNEL ahead...
 ...while Jeff is pressed up against a dirty SIDE WINDOW in the backseat. He *peers* into the PASSING GLOOM and OBSERVES:

TWO HOMELESS MEN resting in the SHADOWS near the tunnel's CEMENT WALL. The BEARDED and *disheveled* VAGRANTS are presumably unaware of any coming calamity: they SIT QUIETLY in the tunnel's OPEN AIR...

JEFF
 (in a low voice)
 Wonder what's gonna happen
 to them...?

TOM
 (quickly; distracted)
 What?

The Skylark promptly EMERGES FROM THE TUNNEL into BRIGHT SUNLIGHT -- and the VAGABONDS become but PHANTOMS in the DARKNESS behind...

JEFF
 (with futility)
 Nothin'.

INT. TUNNEL - SAME

The homeless men *WATCH* the *Skylark* as it *HEADS OFF* toward the *SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT* in the distance. One of the vagrants forms his *HAND* into the shape of a fleshy *GUN*... and pretends to *FIRE* at the fast-moving vehicle:

HOMELESS MAN
 (in a whisper)
Pow...

His grime-laden *COMPANION* *chuckles* with a blackened *GRIN*.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Donna sits *INDIAN STYLE* on the living room floor... gazing up at the TV, and nervously chewing her fingernail. For a thirty-seven year old woman, she looks an awful lot like a frightened child...

ON DONNA'S EYES
 Her glassy *BLUES* reflect more *OMINOUS FOOTAGE* of the *SCARLET VAPOR* threatening to *ENVELOP THE EARTH*...

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Is there any evidence an event like this has occurred before -- perhaps sometime in the ancient past?

EXPERT CORRESPONDENT
No evidence we know of - but that doesn't mean it hasn't happened.
 (beat)
I'm not sure most people are aware of this, but there's still some debate about what actually caused previous mass extinctions...

NEWS ANCHOR
You mean, like the dinosaurs?

EXPERT CORRESPONDENT
Correct. Was it really an asteroid collision that wiped them out... a meteor strike... or was it something else...?

Donna *SWALLOWS HARD* as she absorbs the expert's unsettling remarks. The woman is so *ENGROSSED* in the broadcast, she nearly has a *HEART ATTACK* when:

The FRONT DOOR suddenly *SWINGS OPEN* ----

DONNA
(clutching at her chest)
Tom!!

He comes BOUNDING into the living room with the boys in tow.
Donna *hurries* to greet her husband:

DONNA (CONT'D)
(talking fast)
*Oh my god Tom, I tried calling
your parents but I couldn't get
through and then --*

She PAUSES to CATCH HER BREATH... and Tom gently takes her by the shoulders, tries to calm her down:

TOM
Babe, it's *okay*...

DONNA
(remembering; realizing)
Did you get the --

TOM
(waving his hand)
No, no --

BRIAN
Mom, we couldn't...

TOM
(to Donna)
But don't worry - I've got a plan.

Donna then observes the rolls of SILVER DUCT TAPE her son is carrying. The woman FURROWS HER BROW...

DONNA
What --

JEFF
(cutting her off)
Wait a minute...

The boy's eyes are GLUED to something on the floor nearby:
A *clawed-up* MOUSE TOY.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Where's Athena...?

Donna shakes her head -- she has no idea. Jeff promptly CALLS OUT to his pet:

JEFF (CONT'D)

Athena!

Everyone holds a beat -- the cat doesn't show. Jeff tries again:

JEFF (CONT'D)

Athena -- !

...nothing.

TOM

(to Jeff)

I'm sure she's --

Before the man can finish, Jeff *TAKES OFF* out of the room... BRIAN then looks at his parents, somewhat worried:

BRIAN

She always comes when he calls...

INT. HOUSE / EXT. YARD - CONTINUOUS

Jeff pops into the KITCHEN and LOOKS AROUND...

He snaps a glance at the FOOD AND WATER BOWLS resting on the linoleum -- still no cat. Jeff's concern is GROWING. He takes the LOOSE CHANGE from his pocket... and proceeds to *SHAKE IT* in his FIST -- as he CONTINUES ON through the house:

JEFF

(while jiggling change)

Athena... where are you, dumb cat?

He *hurries* down an EMPTY HALLWAY... and TURNS into the BOYS' BEDROOM. Jeff *scans* the MESSY AREA -- but finds it devoid of life...

JEFF (CONT'D)

(feebly)

Athena...?

He then approaches his BED... and DROPS TO HIS KNEES. He lifts the hanging BEDSHEETS... and checks UNDERNEATH:

The boy spies only a half-solved *Rubik's Cube*... and a package of UNOPENED TUBE SOCKS. Jeff GETS ON HIS FEET... ...and turns his attention to the BEDROOM WINDOW:

The boy UNDOES THE LATCH -- and THROWS THE WINDOW OPEN. He quickly STICKS HIS HEAD OUT...

JEFF (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Athena -- ?

...and surveys the FRONT YARD. His eyes land on a *BLACK SHAPE* moving in the cut grass. For an instant, Jeff thinks he's spotted his cat... but the *SHAPE* quickly *REVEALS ITSELF* to be:

An enormous *BLACK CROW*. The inherently wicked-looking bird repeatedly *STABS* at the *LAWN* with its *OBSIDIAN BEAK*:

SHUMP -- SHUMP -- SHUMP --

The crow *PLUCKS* a wriggling *EARTHWORM* from the moist soil... and *DEVOURS IT* in cruel fashion: *SNAK -- SNAK -- SNAK --*

Jeff finds himself transfixed by the spectacle... unable to look away, until:

JEFF (CONT'D)

Ah -- !

A large *HAND FALLS* on his *SHOULDER*... and the *startled boy JUMPS -- banging* his *HEAD* on the *WINDOW*:

JEFF (CONT'D)

Ow!

Jeff swiftly *SPINS AROUND* to face his *ATTACKER*:

TOM

Hey hey, take it easy...

JEFF

(collecting himself)

Oh... Uncle Tom...

(while rubbing his scalp)

I can't find her...

(starting to panic)

What if she got out... what if she *ran off* or something...?

Tom reaches for the *WINDOW*... and *SHUTS IT* once more.

TOM

I'm sure she's just hiding around here someplace...

(beat)

...can probably sense somethin' weird is goin' on. Animals are like that.

Tom's logic connects with his nephew - we can see the boy begin to *cling to it*...

Tom looks him in the eyes:

TOM (CONT'D)

But right now... I need your help, okay? We're running out of time...

Jeff knows his uncle is right. The boy swallows his anxiety... and nods "okay".

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

We find Donna and the boys LINED UP in front of Tom, who now holds the four rolls of SILVER DUCT TAPE:

TOM
We're gonna seal up every window...

He hands a ROLL to Donna.

TOM (CONT'D)
...every door...

He hands ANOTHER to Brian.

TOM (CONT'D)
...and every vent in this house.

He hands a THIRD ROLL to Jeff.

TOM (CONT'D)
We're gonna make this place
air tight.

Brian gets it:

BRIAN
Like a submarine...

TOM
Damn straight.

The ALARM CLOCK next to the TV reads: 10:32am.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

We begin with CLOSE UPS of each family member handling their SILVER ROLLS... and *tearing off* LONG STRIPS of TAPE:

SHUKK -- RIIP -- SHUKK -- RIIP --

We then follow DONNA into the BATHROOM, where she SNATCHES a single SQUARE of TOILET PAPER from the dispenser -- and approaches the WINDOW...

Pinching the bit of TISSUE, she holds it against the EDGE of the SHUT WINDOW: the thin paper begins to gently *FLAP* back and forth... back and forth...

Clearly some air is leaking through. Donna immediately GRABS HER TAPE -- and gets to work.

We now find TOM taping up a LARGE WINDOW in the LIVING ROOM. He adheres STICKY SILVER STRIPS to the fine edges all around the GLASS...

The man works with *precision* and *care* - he makes sure every application is FLAT and EVEN. Meanwhile, the *FLICKERING SCREEN* nearby keeps him "informed":

TV COMMENTATOR
*...Protection? There might not
 be any. What protection does
 an ant have if you drop it in
 the ocean...?*

Tom hears the commentator's discouraging remark... but chooses to ignore it. He lays down another strip of tape.

Meanwhile, BRIAN is tending to a SUNNY KITCHEN WINDOW... As he SEALS UP a METAL EDGE, the boy looks outside... fixes his gaze on the SKY -- as if expecting something to APPEAR...

But the morning canopy is ALL BLUE from horizon to horizon... Not a wisp of cloud dares blemish its azure perfection. Brian lowers his gaze... and continues his work.

We then find JEFF *kneeling* in front of an AIR CONDITIONING VENT that's low to the ground. As he *COVERS* the airway with *STRIPS OF TAPE*, we cut to the **REVERSE ANGLE**:

We now observe Jeff from *INSIDE THE VENT* -- through its VERTICAL SLATS -- which give the impression of ultrathin PRISON BARS: |||||

The boy applies one *final* TAPE STRIP... and *OBSCURES HIMSELF* from view: =====

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Tom is doing a final WALKTHROUGH of the house...

He traverses the LIVING ROOM... gives the MODIFIED WINDOWS with their *SILVER BORDERS* an *approving look*. He continues on toward the FRONT DOOR:

All the CRACKS around the door - especially the BOTTOM CRACK - have been SHIELDED with MULTIPLE LAYERS of THICK TAPE. Even the DOORKNOB has been neatly *sealed* where it meets the wood.

Satisfied, Tom keeps moving. He turns a corner -- and heads into... the MASTER BEDROOM. Donna and the BOYS are standing atop the QUEEN SIZE BED -- putting the finishing touches on the window above it...

TOM
 How we lookin'?

Donna whips her head:

DONNA
Almost done. I ran outta tape, so
the boys are giving me a hand.

As Brian applies a final *MEAGER SHRED*:

BRIAN
And that's it for me.

Jeff *twirls* an empty ROLL on his finger:

JEFF
I'm out too.

We now see Tom is holding an expended cylinder of his own.
He sets it on the dresser... as he approaches the WINDOW for
closer inspection:

TOM
(nodding approvingly)
Well I think we're in good
shape here...

Donna and the boys climb down off the bed...

TOM (CONT'D)
Can you guys think of anything we
might've missed?

DONNA
(mind working)
No...

Jeff shakes his head as well. But then Brian speaks up:

BRIAN
Wait --
(beat)
What about the door to the garage?

At this, Tom's expression *shifts* -- to one that says: *Shoulda
thought of that.*

TOM
Right...

DONNA
Seeing as how the garage has been --
(searching for right word)
-- *compromised*...

FLASH ON
the GAPING HOLE in the structure's OUTER DOOR.

BACK TO SCENE

DONNA (CONT'D)
...we better take care of it.

INT. HALL / DOOR TO ATTACHED GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tom and his family are now gathered in the hallway next to the kitchen. They face the UNTOUCHED DOOR that leads to their *adjacent* garage...

DONNA
(to Tom)
You sure we don't have any
tape left?

TOM
Yep - already checked.

Donna glances at the CLOCK on the WALL: 11:26.

DONNA
(worried)
Not much time...

TOM
(getting frustrated)
Alright, let me think...

JEFF
If there's no more tape, let's just
use somethin' else...

Brian then has an inspired IDEA:

BRIAN
I got it --

The boy TAKES OFF RUNNING -- and Tom calls after him:

TOM
Brian!

INT. HOUSE / BOYS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boy *hurries* into his room... and *throws open* a DRESSER DRAWER. As he begins to RUMMAGE through the packed drawer, Jeff suddenly appears in the DOORWAY:

JEFF
What're you doing?

Brian immediately produces a *PLASTIC SACK* and HOLDS IT UP:

The sack is decorated with ARTWORK depicting a *GRIM REAPER* presiding over a field of *JACK O' LANTERNS*. Jeff can see the plastic bag is *BULGING* at the bottom...

JEFF (CONT'D)
 (approaching Brian)
 You still have leftover
 Halloween candy...?

BRIAN
 Just this --

Brian dumps the sack's contents onto his BEDSPREAD...
 ...revealing a sizeable collection of *BUBBLE GUM*: there are
 multiple packs of *BUBBLE YUM*, *BUBBLICIOUS*, *HUBBA BUBBA*, *FRUIT*
STRIPE, *BIG LEAGUE CHEW*... and numerous pieces of *BAZOOKA*.

JEFF
 (as if taking note)
 So you're not a gum guy...

INT. HALL / DOOR - SHORT TIME LATER

We START on a small WASTEBASKET that's practically
 OVERFLOWING with USED GUM WRAPPERS - then PAN OVER to find...

...the Stetler family, gathered once more at the entrance to
 the garage. Tom is on his knees, filling in the door's
 BOTTOM CRACK with pieces of *CHEWED GUM*...

Behind him, Donna and the boys are each *WORKING THEIR JAWS* -
 preparing more FILLER. Donna promptly removes a *MOIST WAD*
 from her mouth -- and gives it to Tom...

He *sticks* the gum into place... then extends his EMPTY HAND
 toward the BOYS:

TOM
 Another...

Jeff responds first -- he fishes a saliva-coated HUNK from
 his mouth... and places it in his uncle's WET PALM:

JEFF
 This doesn't gross you out at all?

Tom doesn't answer. He takes an additional piece from
 BRIAN... and *PRESSES IT* into place:

TOM
 That should do it.

Tom rises to his feet -- the man's bent knees *CRACKLE* and *POP*
 as they straighten out. Donna *WINCES* at the sound. Tom then
 examines his handiwork:

All the cracks around the door have been completely *STUFFED*
 with a RAINBOW PATCHWORK of used BUBBLE GUM: *pink, blue,*
green, yellow, purple, orange and *red*. The man is satisfied.
 After a quiet moment passes:

BRIAN
 (timidly)
 Now what...?

No one answers. With their work finally finished, everyone begins to feel the FULL WEIGHT of their TERRIFYING SITUATION. Almost in unison, they each check the CLOCK on the wall:

It's 11:37.

INT. LIVING ROOM / EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

The family is gathered in front of the TV once more. They stand perfectly QUIET... perfectly STILL...

All eyes are on the FLAT SCREEN -- which presently displays a curt message: **PLEASE STAND BY.** The TENSION and FEAR hanging in the air is so THICK -- you could almost reach out and touch it...

Suddenly, the STATIC CARD on the TV gives way to a rather DISTURBING IMAGE: SZSHHHHHHH ----

ON TV

The LOCAL NEWSMAN is now broadcasting from what appears to be a CEMENT BUNKER fitted with OVERHEAD FLUORESCENT LIGHTS...

The man is wearing a BLACK GAS MASK as he sits upon a metal folding chair... using all his willpower to keep from FIDGETING nervously...

At the sight of this, the Stetlers seem to BRISTLE - the grim scene being presented to them only deepens their DREAD...

MASKED BROADCASTER
 (muffled, metallic voice)
The object is due to reach us any moment now...

Donna can't help but GASP -- as Tom CHECKS THE CLOCK: 11:42.

As if acting on instinct, the family moves CLOSER TOGETHER... they CLING TO ONE ANOTHER.

MASKED BROADCASTER (CONT'D)
I'm not sure there's anything left to say...

The ominous figure lowers his head, and lets out a chilling, exasperated BREATH....

Then... what starts as a mumble... slowly turns into an improvised PRAYER:

...draws attention to the fact the GLASS in front of their faces is starting to *QUIVER*. It's as if the window is feeling the first *whispered rumors* of some *onrushing* FORCE...

TOM
Everybody, *back...*

They all quickly oblige... and proceed to *BACKPEDAL* a "safe" distance from the window... Then:

RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK --

Everyone JUMPS at the *SHRILL, horrible* SOUND:

RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK --

Tom *loses his shit*:

TOM (CONT'D)
What the fuck!!

DONNA
(realizing)
My alarm clock!

It's now 11:45. Donna *rushes over* and *SLAMS THE SNOOZE* *BUTTON* on her ALARM: *BeeeP -- !*

Quiet again. Brian and Jeff are breathing heavy... and clutching at their chests - like two old men fighting off a sudden heart attack. Outside, nothing has changed... even the windows have STOPPED their vibrating. But then:

WOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHMMMMMMMMMMMMMM.....

A new SOUND reaches their ears that *PENETRATES* their bodies -- *sinks* into their very *BONES*:

WOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHMMMMMMMMMMMMMM.....

It's like a **THUNDEROUS BELLOW** from some *TITAN* of myth:

WOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHMMMMMMMMMMMMMM.....

The Stetlers *CRY OUT* and COVER THEIR EARS -- they BACKPEDAL FURTHER into the living room... as:

WOHHHHHMMMMMMMMmmmmmm..... --- - -

The *SONIC WAVE* passes... and *f a d e s.....*

But in its absence, yet another *sound* begins to BUILD...

...a high-pitched *WHISTLING* SOUND... a sound of *WIND*... and just the faintest *crackle* of *ELECTRICITY*: -- *zzzzzzzzmmmmmm --*

All eyes are GLUED TO THE WINDOW... as it offers a perfect FRAME through which to view the oncoming APOCALYPSE:

OUT THE WINDOW

The BLUE SKY is turning a **DEEP RED**... as if *HOT BLOOD* were *spreading* over an AZURE SHEET...

DONNA (CONT'D)
(screaming hoarsely)
Oh my god ----

Both Brian and Jeff *HUG THE WOMAN* -- and HIDE THEIR FACES...
Tom *HOLDS ON* to as much of his FAMILY as he possibly can:

TOM
(emotional; with grit)
I'm here you guys -- I'm here...

OUT THE WINDOW

IT finally ARRIVES... approaching *QUICKLY*...

...the **SCARLET CLOUD**... the **CRIMSON ANOMALY**... a great *ROILING MASS* of *RED VAPORS* -- *GASSES* -- and floating *PARTICLES* that appear faintly *LUMINOUS*...

The STORM FRONT'S *size* is BEYOND COMPREHENSION - its *MISTY CORPULENCE* devours both EARTH and SKY without prejudice...

EXT. STREET - SAME

EXTERIOR WIDE ANGLE SHOT

THE STETLER HOUSE looks terribly *ISOLATED* sitting among its DARK and NEGLECTED neighbors...

But one by one... the FORECLOSED HOMES are CONSUMED by the *GHOSTLY MONSTROSITY* as it *BILLOWS* and *CHURNS*...

whoooooooooooooooooshhhhhh ----

Finally, the only residence with a car in the driveway is also... **DROWNED IN RED:** *whoooooooooooooooooshhhhhh ----*

INT. STETLER HOUSE / EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

We find the Stetlers still *HUDDLED* and *COWERING* in their living room -- all appear to be *HOLDING THEIR BREATH*:

Donna covers her NOSE and MOUTH with *CUPPED HANDS*...

Brian and Jeff's T-SHIRTS are *PULLED UP* over their NOSES...

Tom's LIPS are *PURSED* -- his JAW tightly *CLENCHED*...

All EYES remain *trained* on the WINDOWS -- which now appear to be *TINTED RED*. Beyond the glass, the WHOLE WORLD has taken on a strange, CRIMSON HUE...

But the SCARLET WINDS and *TWISTING VAPORS* outside are not dense enough to obscure the neighborhood completely: its HOUSES, LAMPPOSTS and STREET SIGNS remain visible -- though they now have the appearance of being *PAINTED WITH BLOOD*...

Tom finally EXHALES... allows himself to *BREATHE* once more. He *INHALES DEEPLY* through the NOSE... and FURROWS HIS BROW...

DONNA
(through cupped hands)
You smell something...?

TOM
(as if surprised)
No... nothing at all.

He then gently DETACHES HIMSELF from the *CLINGING GROUP*:

BRIAN
(through his shirt)
Dad...

Tom gives his son a look that says: "*It's okay.*" The man moves a little *CLOSER* to the WINDOW... and *SCANS* the NEIGHBORHOOD outside. Apart from the BIZARRE COLORATION and *SWIRLING MISTS*, everything appears to be "normal"... *INTACT*.

TOM
Don't see any damage either...

Donna finally REMOVES HER HANDS from her FACE...

The boys follow her lead... and slowly LOWER THEIR SHIRTS -- leaving the COLLARS noticeably *STRETCHED OUT*. As the kids quietly observe the *STRANGE NEW WORLD* beyond the GLASS:

JEFF
(in awe)
Doesn't even look real...

Tom remains concerned:

TOM
Well it is.

FLASH ON
THE PLANET EARTH as if viewed from the surface of the *MOON*... The *BLUE SPHERE* we call home is but a *SHIMMERING MARBLE* in the midst of the *PHANTOM CLOUD* surrounding it...

BACK TO SCENE

INT. LIVING ROOM / EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Tom is now *FLIPPING THROUGH CHANNELS* on the TV... trying to find a signal...

TOM
...we've still got power --
just no TV.

Donna is handling his CELLPHONE -- *THUMBING IT* like a PRO:

DONNA
(shaking her head)
Blackberry's not working either...

BRIAN (O.S.)
Who *cares*...

Brian and Jeff are *PRESSED AGAINST THE WINDOW* -- scrutinizing the *ALIEN LANDSCAPE* that is their NEIGHBORHOOD:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(full of wonder)
It's like we're on *Mars*
or something...

Jeff catches his drift:

JEFF
And this house is like our *ship*...

Brian likes the analogy:

BRIAN
Dude...

TOM (O.S.)
(sternly)
Guys -- get away from the window.

BRIAN
Why?

DONNA
(jumping in)
Because you're too close to the
weird crap from *outer space* --
that's why.

The boys *SULLENLY RETREAT* from the WINDOW... and *plop down* on the COUCH.

TOM
Donna... can you help me with this?

The man is now handling his wife's CORDLESS ALARM CLOCK, *puzzling* over it...

DONNA
What are you doing?

TOM
Tryin' to reset the alarm for 5:45 -
six hours from now...

Donna takes the clock from her husband... and starts
programming BUTTONS:

DONNA
Why can't you figure out how to
work this thing...?

TOM
Just dumb I guess.

As Donna RESETS THE ALARM, she lowers her voice to a volume
only Tom can hear:

DONNA
So... what do you think -- ?
I'm feeling like maybe we're
gonna be *okay* here...

TOM
Me too --

But the man still has reservations:

TOM (CONT'D)
-- just gotta get through the
next six hours...

DONNA
I can do six hours.
(beat)
Took me *sixteen* to have that
son of yours.

TOM
Yeah... pain in the ass
since day one.

Donna cracks a smile... and looks back toward the COUCH.
She finds it EMPTY -- her boys are *missing*...

INT. KITCHEN / EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Brian and Jeff are standing on their TIPTOES... and clutching
the WINDOW LEDGE above the kitchen sink. Their view of the
rose-colored BACKYARD is predictably *BIZARRE*...

As Brian observes fine particles of *REFLECTIVE MATERIAL*
zipping through the air...

BRIAN
So crazy --

...Jeff seems TROUBLED by something:

JEFF
Hey Brian...

BRIAN
Yeah.

JEFF
(squinting)
Why does the lawn... look like
it's *moving*...?

BRIAN
What...?

Brian then *shifts his focus*... and quickly SEES what his cousin is talking about:

The entire LAWN appears to be a single, *LIVING ENTITY* -- one that's *WRITHING... SQUIRMING... UNDULATING...*

BRIAN (CONT'D)
What the --

Both boys instinctively *LEAN FORWARD*... until their NOSES are *TOUCHING THE WINDOW*. It's then they realize:

The yard's grassy surface is literally *CRAWLING* with THOUSANDS of *glistening EARTHWORMS*...

DETAIL SHOT - EXTREME CLOSE UP
We witness several WORMS *wriggling UP* out of the SOIL...
...to join their *slithering brethren* on the surface. The worms seem to be moving in a *FRENZIED* and *ERRATIC* fashion... as if driven *MAD* by something... as if no longer ruled by *natural* instinct:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Freaky --

DONNA (O.S.)
Okay guys...

The boys *WHIP THEIR HEADS* -- they've been discovered. Donna addresses them sympathetically, without anger:

DONNA (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna tell you again.

The kids don't argue. They push away from the window...
...and Donna ushers them OUT of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOM is standing in the middle of the living room -- his ARMS FOLDED -- his eyes *trained* on the WINDOW...

OUT THE WINDOW

Just down the street, a strange OBJECT is *ZIPPING* through the rouge-colored air... parting the ALIEN MISTS as it *moves*...

The object is SPHERICAL, perhaps three feet across, and comprised entirely of **CRACKLING RED ELECTRICITY**. As it travels ever *CLOSER* -- Tom hears a faint NOISE: *zzzzzzmmm ----*

TOM
(quietly; to himself)
What the hell is that...

DONNA (O.S.)
Looks like ball lightning --

Tom *SPINS AROUND* -- Donna and the boys have snuck up behind him:

TOM
What?

DONNA
Ball lightning. I saw some once on Grammy's ranch in Idaho...

Tom returns his attention to the window. The ELECTRIC ORB is heading their way, *HURTLING* over the neighboring ROOFTOPS... until: *KRA-KOOM -- !!*

Everyone *JUMPS BACK* as Donna's "ball lightning" *SLAMS* into a SHINGLED ROOF -- only a few houses down: *KRA-KOOM -- !!*

A massive HOLE is *BLOWN OUT* of the roof...

JEFF
Gnarly -- !!

...and crimson electricity *LIGHTS UP* the empty home's LIVING ROOM WINDOWS -- only to *DISSIPATE* and go DARK again.

DONNA
(voice trembling)
Think that's just a onetime thing?

Tom perceives more *CRACKLING LUMINANCE* on the distant horizon... heading *AWAY* from them...

TOM
(gravely)
No.

Donna continues to observe the *GAPING WOUND* in the neighboring roof... then LOOKS UP at her own CEILING. The woman's eyes FIX on something:

Winding through the PLASTER above her head is a slim CRACK --

Donna scowls at the sight of it.

INT. HALL / DINING ROOM - LATER

We start on a FRAMED PICTURE... hanging slightly crooked among several others...

The PHOTO captures TWO SMALL BOYS sitting at opposite ends of a foaming BUBBLE BATH. The kids are GRINNING as they wear HATS made of FROTHY SOAP...

PENCILED on the picture's WOODEN FRAME is a quick NOTE:

Brian and Jeff, age 4.

Donna soon ENTERS FRAME... and passes by. She's carrying a chipped PLATE... and upon that: a golden-brown POT PIE. The woman TURNS A CORNER -- and heads into...

...the DINING ROOM. Tom and the boys are patiently WAITING at the TABLE, already served. Donna sets her plate down... and TAKES HER SEAT:

DONNA

So... I know Thanksgiving is still a couple weeks away --

(beat)

But I thought it might be nice to treat *this* as our holiday meal...

Brian looks down at his LUNCH with dubious eyes:

BRIAN

Mom, these are pot pies...

DONNA

They're turkey pot pies.

(beat)

And anyway, that doesn't matter...

She unfolds her LINEN NAPKIN, sets it on her lap.

DONNA (CONT'D)

I just think if we're gonna say what we're thankful for...

(beat)

...now's an appropriate time.

Jeff appears mildly confused. Brian EXPLAINS to his cousin:

BRIAN
Every Thanksgiving, we all have to
make up something we're thankful
for... or whatever.

Donna gives her son a LOOK:

DONNA
I wouldn't exactly put it
like *that*.

Hoping for a little support:

DONNA (CONT'D)
Tom?

He feigns enthusiasm for her idea:

TOM
Yeah... sure.

DONNA
Fine. I'll start.

She sighs.

DONNA (CONT'D)
I'm just thankful we're all here...
...together... right now...
(beat)
...sharing this moment.

She doesn't want to get too emotional:

DONNA (CONT'D)
That's all.
(quickly)
Brian, your turn.

The boy looks a bit... *uncomfortable*:

BRIAN
Um, I don't know...
(beat)
Like you said -- I'm glad we're all
still here and everything.

DONNA
No, no repeats... c'mon.

Brian sighs, looks up at the ceiling:

BRIAN
Okay...
(beat)
I guess... I'm thankful we still
have a *house* to live in...
(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

(beat)
Cuz... I know there's a lotta
people who don't.

There's a moment of silence... and Donna gives her son an approving look. Everyone then TURNS TO JEFF -- he's up:

JEFF

Uh... well I'm thankful I got to
live with my Aunt Donna --
(glances over at her)
-- and not Aunt Daphne...

Brian gives his cousin a KNOWING LOOK:

BRIAN

Dude that woulda sucked.

Donna tries not to laugh. She scratches her nephew's head affectionately... then moves to change the subject:

DONNA

Okay... Tom?

The man HESITATES a long moment... it's clear he has yet to think of something. His SILENCE hangs HEAVY in the room...

DONNA (CONT'D)

Tom...?

He eyes their CHIPPED PLATES... the dining table's numerous *SCRATCHES* and *STAINS*... and finally the *ominous* RED WINDOW across the way. He perceives more BALL LIGHTNING in the distance that *FLASHES BRIGHTLY* -- then quickly DISAPPEARS. The man continues to come up short...

Donna is visibly DISTURBED by her husband's inability to think of *anything* he's thankful for. But rather than disappointment, her expression is one of *sadness*...

Tom just wants it to end:

TOM

I'm thankful for this meal we're
about to eat -- so let's get to it,
shall we?

He immediately *BREAKS INTO HIS POT PIE* with his FORK... and the boys follow suit. But Donna sits QUIETLY a moment... ...before finally joining in.

Then, as Brian digs at his pie's FLAKY CRUST, his fork encounters some unexpected RESISTANCE:

BRIAN
 (frowning slightly)
 Mine's still kinda frozen in
 the middle...

Jeff discovers his cuisine is also under-cooked...

DONNA
Shit -- I was afraid of that. I
 think there's something wrong with
 the oven... heat's all uneven --

TOM
 It's fine, don't worry about it.

To the boys:

TOM (CONT'D)
 Just mix the cold parts together
 with the hot parts, and it'll all
 get nice and warm.

As Brian and Jeff resign themselves to taking his advice...

Merow -- Merow -- Merow --

...an unexpected, but *familiar* SOUND reaches everyone's ears:

Merow -- Merow -- Merow --

BRIAN
 Hey --

JEFF
 Athena!

Jeff immediately JUMPS FROM THE TABLE and *CHASES* the sound:

Merow -- Merow -- Merow --

JEFF (CONT'D)
 She's in the kitchen...

As he excitedly *BOLTS* that direction, Donna turns to her SON:

DONNA
 Brian -- go see, okay?

The boy nods... and *takes off* after his cousin.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JEFF is scanning the kitchen again... still no cat. The
 feline's *CRYING* continues: *Merow -- Merow -- Merow --*

JEFF
 (growing worried)
 'thena, where are you...?

Merow -- Merow -- Merow --

In desperation, Jeff looks behind the REFRIGERATOR --
 and *squeezes his body...* He PEEKS behind the STOVE --
 and *strains his neck...* Then:

BRIAN (O.S.)
 (darkly)
 Dude...

Jeff TURNS toward the sound of his cousin's voice...
 He sees Brian STANDING ACROSS THE ROOM with his BACK TURNED,
 eerily STILL. *Merow -- Merow -- Merow --*

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 She's not in the kitchen.

The blood *DRAINS* from Jeff's FACE:

JEFF
 (quietly horrified)
 Oh shit...

BRIAN then begins to BACKPEDAL... slowly *REVEALING...*

...the BACK DOOR he's been standing in front of. Athena's
 whereabouts are now perfectly clear: *Merow -- Merow --*

But the REAR DOOR is *sealed shut* with SILVER DUCT TAPE - just
 like its counterpart up front. Jeff instantly races to a
 nearby SIDE WINDOW to confirm what *CAN'T BE TRUE*:

But there she is - his sweet cat... holding her ground on the
 BACK PORCH... as *CRIMSON VAPORS* and *SCARLET MISTS* *tease* her
 WHISKERS and FUR: *Merow -- Merow -- Merow --*

As if somehow sensing Jeff's proximity, Athena's *CRIES*
 suddenly become even more *INSISTENT*:

MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --

JEFF (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
I knew she got out...

The boy practically JUMPS from the window to the DOOR... and
 quickly *PRESSES UP AGAINST IT*:

JEFF (CONT'D)
 (trying to sound "up")
 Athena, I'm gonna let you in --
 don't worry!

MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --

As Jeff *REACHES* for a small FLAP of *DANGLING TAPE*:

BRIAN
Wait -- what're you gonna do...?

Jeff turns to Brian, gives him a surprisingly *INTENSE LOOK*:

JEFF
I'm gonna open this door --

TOM (O.S.)
No you're not --

The boys *SPIN AROUND* to see Tom and Donna *MARCHING TOWARDS THEM* through the kitchen...

DONNA
(deeply concerned)
Jeff...

JEFF
(fighting tears)
Aunt Donna, she got stuck outside --
we gotta let 'er back in!

Tom goes to the *SIDE WINDOW* as Jeff did. He sees poor Athena, so *frightened*, so *desperate* on the step: *MEROW* --

But Tom also sees the *ALIEN WINDS swirling* around his *STOOP*... The man slowly steps away from the window:

TOM
(gravely)
We're not opening any doors, any
windows... or anything else.

JEFF
(not understanding)
So how are we gonna get 'er back in
the house...?

Tom doesn't reply... Donna and Brian also remain silent.
The answer is now clear to all:

JEFF (CONT'D)
(starting to crack)
No... no, we can't leave --

He can't bring himself to finish the thought. Tom rushes over... and takes his nephew in his arms. He speaks to him *gently* - but with an edge of *desperation*:

TOM
Please try to understand...

He indicates the GHOSTLY RED TENDRILS *licking* at the WINDOW:

TOM (CONT'D)
I can't let any of *that* into this
house... If I do, I'm putting you
at risk - along with everyone else.

MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --

JEFF
But what about *Athena*?!

The boy's PAINED EXPRESSION nearly breaks Tom's heart:

TOM
(gently as possible)
We have to come first - *you* have to
come first. *Athena*, she's just a --

Jeff won't allow him to finish his thought:

JEFF
She's not *just a cat*, she's *family*!

The anguished boy *TEARS HIMSELF AWAY* from his uncle...

TOM
Hey --

Exasperated, Tom looks over at his WIFE for some *HELP*...
Donna then GOES TO THE WINDOW... and takes a PEEK at their
beleaguered PET: MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --

The woman can't bring herself to look at the TREMBLING FELINE
for more than a second or two...

DONNA
(feigning optimism)
She seems *okay* -- just *scared*
is all...

Tom jumps on Donna's train of thought, reengages his nephew:

TOM
Listen, we may find out there's no
danger at all...
(beat)
...and when this thing finally
passes, we'll let *Athena* back
inside... and everything will go
back to normal.

JEFF
(unappeased)
But you don't know that!

At this, something inside Tom seems to HARDEN - he's reached the end of his rope:

TOM
 You're right. I have no idea how
 any of this is gonna turn out...
 (frustration building)
 ...and that's why the goddamn
 door... is staying *shut*.

Everyone is a bit TAKEN ABACK by Tom's sudden OUTBURST of ANGRY RESOLVE. He continues:

TOM (CONT'D)
 (with finality)
 Now that's it -- everybody back to
 the table...

But nobody moves. They simply look at Tom - their faces etched with *sadness* and WORRY...

TOM (CONT'D)
 (gesturing adamantly)
C'mon --

Now they move. As the family heads for the dining room once more, Brian puts a comforting arm around his cousin:

BRIAN
 (softly)
 It'll be okay, man...

But Jeff says nothing, makes no acknowledgement. The boy appears decidedly LOST...

Merow --

INT. DINING ROOM / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Stetlers return to where their "holiday meal" sits abandoned... and Tom continues giving orders:

TOM
 Everybody grab your plates -- we'll
 eat in the living room...

DONNA
 Tom, what're you --

She's STOPPED COLD by a new round of excruciatingly LOUD CAT WAILS: *MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --*

Tom *WINCES* at the SOUND. Brian glances at JEFF - the boy looks like he's somewhere else, like he's TUNED OUT the whole world. Tom then PICKS UP HIS PLATE and announces his PLAN:

TOM
We're gonna put a movie in... and
turn the volume up nice and *loud* --

MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --

As Tom heads for the LIVING ROOM with his MOROSE
FAMILY in tow:

DONNA
(carrying her plate)
Tom, what movie?

TOM
Whatever... doesn't matter.

He parks himself on the COUCH... while Brian and Jeff sit
INDIAN STYLE around the coffee table. Jeff remains SULLEN,
and *disengaged*...

DONNA
(to Tom)
Don't you remember --

BRIAN
(finishing her thought)
We sold all our DVD's to *Moo's*...
before they closed down.

TOM
(sotto)
Oh yeah...

In the distance: *MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --*

DONNA
(remembering)
Wait... there was one disc they
wouldn't take -- it had a scratch
or something...

She grabs a dusty TRAVEL CASE by the TV... and *ZIPS IT OPEN*.
The case is EMPTY... save for one DVD: 1995's *CLUELESS*.

MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --

TOM
(impatient)
Perfect - put it in.

Donna immediately slips the DISC into the PLAYER... then
takes a seat beside her husband on the couch...

MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --

Tom *SNATCHES* the REMOTE and *CRANKS THE VOLUME* as...

MEEROOW -- MEEROOW -- MEEROOW --

...the movie STARTS -- and successfully DROWNS OUT Athena's perpetual WAILING:

ON TV

Fast-paced images of wealthy teenagers LIVING IT UP are set to one RAUCOUS ANTHEM that RATTLES the SPEAKERS:

"Looking out a dirty old window... the cars in the city go rushing by... I sit here alone and I wonder why..."

Jeff doesn't watch the screen - he keeps his eyes on his plate, while lazily forking chunks of gravy-soaked turkey...

The Muffs continue SINGING: *"We're the kids in America..."*

Then, just as the film's INTRO is wrapping up... the screen jitters... and CLUELESS starts ALL OVER AGAIN:

"Looking out a dirty old window... the cars in the city go rushing by... I sit here alone and I wonder why..."

TOM (CONT'D)

What...?

BRIAN

(matter of fact)

It's got a scratch - remember.

Donna then picks up the REMOTE. As her FINGER hovers over the STOP BUTTON -- Tom quickly intervenes:

TOM

Leave it on.

Donna looks at her husband -- they hold each other's gaze a moment... and she finally sets the controller DOWN.

We're the kids in America... We're the kids in America...

BRIAN

(incredulous)

We're just gonna watch the beginning over and over...?

Tom says nothing. Jeff seems oblivious to the absurdity of the situation:

JEFF

I gotta use the bathroom.

DONNA

(sympathetically)

Okay - go ahead, sweetheart.

She squeezes the boy's shoulder as he gets up to leave.
But Tom's EYES *follow his NEPHEW...*

...as he ambles out of the room.

*"Outside, a new day is dawning...
Outside, suburbia's sprawling everywhere..."*

INT. HALLWAY / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jeff turns a corner, and proceeds to pass by the KITCHEN...

He STOPS. Despite the MUSIC still *BLARING* from the living room... he can now hear the heart-wrenching *YOWLS* coming from the BACK DOOR: *MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --*

The sound of his cat *pleading for help* is too much for the boy to bear. He COVERS HIS EARS... and continues on toward the BATHROOM...

INT. LIVING ROOM / HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom appears to be *wrestling with something* in his mind... He abruptly GETS UP off the couch... and begins to retrace his nephew's footsteps --

DONNA
Where you going?

TOM
I'll be back in a sec.

The man keeps moving. He passes the kitchen... and checks the BACK DOOR -- it remains SEALED SHUT: *Merow -- Merow --*

Tom then continues toward the BATHROOM. He quietly approaches the CLOSED DOOR... *leans close to it...*

He hears the toilet lid FLIP UP -- a *ZIPPER* being undone...

Tom suddenly looks ASHAMED: *how could he not trust his nephew?* The man promptly TURNS... and heads back the way he came...

INT. LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

As Brian watches the FLAT SCREEN with a BLANK EXPRESSION...

"I sit here alone and I wonder why ---- "

...Tom passes in front... and reclaims his seat on the couch. Donna seems to understand exactly what he was up to:

DONNA

Well?

Her husband shakes his head - gives a look that says:
"It's fine, don't worry about it."

INT. HALLWAY / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We start on the BATHROOM DOOR which is now *OPEN*...

...then PULL BACK through the HALLWAY... until we find ourselves in the KITCHEN. We now *pan over*... to DISCOVER:

Jeff is at the BACK DOOR -- the boy's eyes are TEARFUL and *WILD*, as he....

...carefully **REMOVES** the *STRIPS* of DUCT TAPE plastered to the DOOR: *sheeriip -- sheeriip -- sheeriip --*

Meanwhile, Athena continues to make her unhappiness known: *MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --*

JEFF

(quiet; voice shaking)
Hold on, Athena -- hold on...

At last, the door is completely UNENCUMBERED...

---- *SheeeRiiip* ----

...and Jeff *reaches* for the BRASS KNOB with a *SWEATY HAND*... But he HESITATES. The boy looks over his shoulder -- he's still alone... *no one* is watching...

MEROW -- MEROW -- MEROW --

Jeff can't wait another second. He quickly OPENS THE DOOR...

...and Athena *DARTS INSIDE*. Jeff instantly SHUTS THE DOOR AGAIN -- *SHOOOMP* -- as the CAT makes a *BEELINE* for her FOOD. Jeff then eyes his rescued pet a moment...

As she happily munches *Meow Mix*, Athena seems perfectly *fine* - already over her ordeal. Suddenly, the boy notices something *FLOATING* around his head:

FINE PARTICLES of *RED MIST*. In a PANIC, he *WAVES HIS ARMS WILDLY* ---- and the strange vapor mercifully *DISSIPATES*...

Jeff then gets to work *REAPPLYING* the LONG STRIPS of TAPE he methodically set aside. But this quickly proves problematic, as the silver binding has lost some of its *cling*...

JEFF (CONT'D)

(hissing)
Shit --

Meanwhile, Athena is *lapping* at the delicate surface of her CERAMIC WATER BOWL: *LAPP -- LAPP -- LAPP --*

When we return to Jeff, his immense WORRY has given way to considerable *RELIEF*...

The boy is now putting the FINISHING TOUCHES on the DOOR... He's managed to *SEAL IT UP AGAIN* -- although his work is noticeably *SLAPDASH* compared to before...

Satisfied nonetheless, Jeff then approaches his beloved CAT -- still *HUNCHED* over her FOOD...

JEFF (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Athena...

As he reaches down to *pet her*... the boy NOTICES SOMETHING he previously *MISSED*:

The cat has a small PATCH of MISSING FUR along her rib cage. Within the BALD SPOT, there is a kind of *GELATINOUS BOIL*:

The *grotesque blemish* is MAROON-RED... and faintly *LUMINOUS* -- like the *phantom mists* outside the window. At the sight of this, Jeff is visibly ALARMED...

He continues to reach for Athena... when SUDDENLY:

SHHKEEERAAW ----

THE BLACK CAT *whips around* -- and *LEAPS AT HIS FACE*...

JEFF (CONT'D)
Athe --

The animal lets out a chilling *HISS-GROWL* as it *SWIPES* Jeff's *CHEEK* with its considerable *CLAWS*: *SHHKEEERAAW* ----

JEFF (CONT'D)
(screaming in agony)
Ahhh!!

Athena then *hits the ground running* -- and *TAKES OFF*...
...down the hallway... toward the MASTER BEDROOM...

Jeff is left standing with his right cheek *SHREDDED* -- the pubescent flesh is *marred* by THREE BLOODY CUTS...

JEFF (CONT'D)
(wincing in pain)
Awww --

DONNA (O.S.)
Jeff, what the hell...?!

The injured boy *SPINS AROUND*... as Donna and the others come *RUSHING IN* from the living room...

TOM
Christ's sake - what was that?!

BRIAN is the first to notice his cousin's *GRISLY WOUNDS*:

BRIAN
Dude, your fa--

In a flash, Donna *hurries past her son*... and *TAKES HOLD* of her *TREMBLING NEPHEW*:

DONNA
(with furrowed brow)
Oh my god... *what happened*...?

But TOM already knows. He's standing at the *BACK DOOR* -- assessing the *REAPPLIED TAPE*. He *SHAKES HIS HEAD* at the slightly *crooked*, somewhat *crinkled STRIPS*...

TOM
(in a low voice)
Where'd she go?

When Jeff doesn't answer, Tom *TURN*s to face him. The man makes every effort to suppress his *GROWING anger*:

TOM (CONT'D)
Jeff...

The boy appears to be in a state of *SHOCK* ----

TOM (CONT'D)
(slowly; calmly)
Where is she?

Jeff slowly *LIFTS HIS ARM*... and silently *POINTS* down the hallway... toward the *MASTER BEDROOM*.

Donna then studies her nephew with a shifting mixture of *disappointment*... *sympathy*... and *CONCERN*:

DONNA
(examining Jeff's cheek)
Tom, I need to clean this up...

TOM
(nodding; also concerned)
There should be some peroxide in the bathroom.

Jeff casts his eyes downward... his *SHAME* now outweighing all else:

JEFF
 (quietly)
 I'm sorry you guys.

There's a moment of silence. No one responds -- until:

Tom lays a forgiving hand on Jeff's shoulder... and Brian speaks for the group:

BRIAN
 (softly)
 We get it, man.

DONNA
 (to Jeff)
 C'mon kiddo, come with me...

She promptly leads her nephew in the direction of the bathroom... and Brian follows. As the three ROUND A CORNER, we can hear Brian's voice *trailing off*...

BRIAN (O.S.)
 Dude you look like a total *badass*
 right now...

Tom is left STANDING in the kitchen -- his eyes FIXED on the hallway... toward the MASTER BEDROOM.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeff is SITTING on the CUSHIONED TOILET LID... as Donna opens a PLASTIC BOTTLE of HYDROGEN PEROXIDE. Brian WATCHES from the OPEN DOORWAY:

DONNA
 (to Jeff)
 This is definitely gonna sting --

Trying to sound manly:

JEFF
 I can take it.

Donna then proceeds to *drizzle* the ANTISEPTIC FLUID into the boy's OPEN CUTS: *ssssssssssssssssssssss* ----

Jeff *INHALES SHARPLY* as the peroxide BUBBLES... and *FIZZES*... like *spilled cola*: *ssssssssssssssssssssss* ----

Jeff's EYES then WELL UP with *HOT TEARS*. But as Brian LOOKS ON... he quickly realizes his cousin's watery eyes are not due to physical pain:

JEFF (CONT'D)
 Can't believe she did that to me...

The boy has clearly been hurt in more ways than one.

INT. HALLWAY / MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom now STRADDLES the DOORWAY to his BEDROOM. He scans the quiet space... sees nothing -- nothing but the BLOODY VAPORS *churning* outside the WINDOW...

TOM
Athena...?

Merow --

Tom looks toward the BED -- the cat must be UNDERNEATH. He enters the room... and quickly grabs an empty COAT HANGER from the CLOSET...

Merow --

TOM (CONT'D)
It's okay, girl -- it's okay...

Tom then KNEELS near the foot of the bed. Using the WOODEN HANGER, he carefully LIFTS the dangling COMFORTER... ...and looks UNDER his CALIFORNIA QUEEN --

But the man perceives only DARKNESS...

TOM (CONT'D)
(softly)
Athena...?

At once, Tom beholds a FLASH of **SCARLET EYES** in the shadowy space before him: SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

The cat utters a uniquely DISTURBING, wholly UNNATURAL SOUND:

SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

No animal should sound like *that*. Tom immediately DROPS THE COMFORTER... and WITHDRAWS FROM THE BED. As he does:

THUMP -- WHUMP --

The California Queen JUMPS several inches OFF THE FLOOR ---- as if being STRUCK by something POWERFUL underneath:

THUMP -- WHUMP --

TOM (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Holy shit...

SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

Tom begins to RETREAT FROM THE ROOM... when SUDDENLY, he
BACKS INTO:

DONNA (O.S.)
Tom...

TOM
(startled; spinning)
Jesus -- !

Donna and the boys have gathered near the entryway -- Jeff
now has a large wad of GAUZE taped to his CHEEK...

DONNA
(to Tom)
What's going on...?

As if in answer, the bed JUMPS AGAIN -- and CRASHES BACK DOWN
upon the HARDWOOD with a loud THUDD --

TOM
Something's wrong with the cat.

SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

The *bloodcurdling* sound motivates everyone to BACKPEDAL
further into the HALLWAY... and Tom swiftly SHUTS the
BEDROOM DOOR: *SHOOMP -- CLICK*.

The man then turns his attention to Jeff's BANDAGED FACE:

TOM (CONT'D)
You okay...?

The boy solemnly nods "yes".

DONNA
Tom, how --

The woman is INTERRUPTED by more CALAMITOUS NOISE coming from
her bedroom: *WHUMP -- WHUMP -- WHUMP --*

Athena now seems to be HURLING HERSELF against the DOOR:

WHUMP -- WHUMP -- WHUMP --

The door RATTLES on its HINGES as it's HIT again and again:

WHUMP -- WHUMP -- WHUMP --

Jeff starts to LOSE IT:

JEFF
What's wrong with her?!

BRIAN
 (realizing)
 It's just like the worms... she's
 gone *psycho* or something --

Donna looks at her son:

DONNA
 The *worms*...?

Just then, Athena's VIOLENT ASSAULT on the door STOPS...
 ...and everything goes SILENT. The Stetlers hold a beat...
 as UNCERTAINTY hangs in the air. Then:

SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK --

They hear Athena start *SCRATCHING* at the door... *CLAWING* at
 it *FEVERISHLY... FEROCIOUSLY...* with *CRAZED ABANDON*:

SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK --

We get the impression the cat is actually *WHITTling AWAY* the
 thin wood: *SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK -- SNIK --*

BRIAN
 (growing worried)
 Dad, you think --

Tom answers before his son can finish:

TOM
 No -- no way...

But then: *SNIK -- PLINK -- SNIK -- PLINK --*

Several WOODEN SPLINTERS *hit the ground* as Athena's lengthy
 CLAWS begin to *PENETRATE THE DOOR*:

SNIK -- PLINK -- SNIK -- PLINK --

DONNA
 (in disbelief)
 She's gonna get through...

Tom seems determined *not to let that happen*:

TOM
 Like hell she is --

Jeff looks at his uncle with real CONCERN:

JEFF
 You're not gonna hurt her...
 ...are you?

TOM

No...

(considering alternatives)
We'll block the door --

With that, the man *TAKES OFF* toward the KITCHEN...
...and his family swiftly follows. Behind them:

SNIK -- PLINK -- SNIK -- PLINK --

INT. KITCHEN / HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the Stetlers come *RUSHING* into the kitchen... the room appears somewhat *RED* -- faintly *TINTED* -- thanks to the *CRIMSON LUMINANCE* just outside the windows...

BRIAN

(to his father)
What are we gonna block the door with...?

Tom doesn't answer - he's already decided on a course of action. He heads straight for the *REFRIGERATOR*... and quickly *UNPLUGS IT*. The man grips the sides of the *FAMILY-SIZE APPLIANCE*... and gives it a good *SHOVE* --

The fridge goes nowhere.

TOM

Boys -- gimme a hand...

Brian and Jeff hurry over... eager to help the man of the house. All three now *PUUUUSH* with everything they have...

The towering appliance *shimmies* an inch or two -- but then turns *STUBBORN* once more...

FLASH ON BEDROOM DOOR

Athena has now *CARVED* a significant HOLE in the door -- large enough to fit a *GOLF BALL* through...

The *BREACH* is rapidly getting *BIGGER*:

SNIK -- PLINK -- SNIK -- PLINK --

Through the *JAGGED OPENING*, we see only *flashes... glimpses* of the *ANIMAL: coarse BLACK FUR... burning EYES... tumorous GROWTH... and oversized CLAWS...*

We don't see enough to tell *what she's become...* but we know it isn't pretty...

BACK TO SCENE

As Tom and the boys continue their *STRUGGLE* with the *FRIDGE*:

BRIAN
(through sweaty bangs)
This thing *bolted down* or what...?

TOM
(straining)
No --

The man forces himself to *PUSH EVEN HARDER*: he *SHUTS HIS EYES... GRITS HIS TEETH...* and THEN:

The *damn thing* finally starts *MOVING*. Pleased with himself, Tom *OPENS HIS EYES...* only to *REALIZE*:

DONNA
(working up a sweat)
Alright everybody, keep *pushing...*

His wife has *JOINED IN* - and made all the difference. Tom almost cracks a smile...

THE STETTLERS now *FORCE* the METAL FRIDGE across the kitchen floor... *GOUGING* the CHEAP LINOLEUM as they go. Tom and Donna both take note of the *DAMAGE* they're inflicting...

TOM
(dismissive)
That definitely doesn't
matter anymore...

FLASH ON BEDROOM DOOR
The *GROWING HOLE* in the door is *SHARP* around its *EDGES* - giving the impression of malformed *TEETH...*

Beyond it, the *frenzied* BLACK SHAPE is *eager* to *ESCAPE*:

SNIK -- PLINK -- SNIK -- PLINK --

BACK TO SCENE

The Stetlers manage to make it *OUT OF THE KITCHEN...*

skraaatchhh ----

...and *ONTO* the hallway's *HARDWOOD FLOORING*:

TOM (CONT'D)
(to the group)
Just go straight back...

Their movement through the *HALLWAY* proves somewhat easier than before... they *SLIDE* across the hardwood ---- only scratching it a *little ----*

JEFF
(abruptly)
I can't see where the wall is...

BRIAN
Me either --

Both Tom and Donna now REALIZE:

The HALLWAY is *too narrow* for anyone to see past or around the large OBSTRUCTION they're *ramming through it...*

TOM
(not actually sure)
We're almost there --

AT THE DOOR, an *inscrutable* DARK FORM is just starting to EMERGE through its GAPING APERTURE: SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

The Stetlers continue to PUUUSH... *straining their muscles, gnashing their teeth...*

TOM (CONT'D)
I think we--

The man is CUT SHORT when: BAAAM--!!

The REFRIGERATOR unexpectedly SLAMS UP AGAINST the DOOR FRAME at the END of the HALL: BAAAM--!!

Upon IMPACT -- Tom and the others LOSE THEIR GRIP on the cumbersome CONTAINER... and stumble BACKWARDS...

They regain their composure -- and assess their HANDIWORK:

The LARGE SILVER ICEBOX more than covers the clawed door... and its heavy, metallic body would appear IMPENETRABLE.

huuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrgggg --

But Athena's bizarre vocalizations continue to HAUNT through all the obstructions. She now emits a THRUMMING GROWL -- so low, it's almost inaudible: huuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrgggg --

BRIAN
(timidly)
Well she's alive...

JEFF
(morose)
Yeah.

Then, WITHOUT WARNING: SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----

The ANIMAL CRIES OUT once more... and beings *ferverently* SCRATCHING the ALLOY CONTAINER blocking its way:

SHINK, SHINK, SHINK, SHINK, SHINK, SHINK,

But Athena seems to get nowhere... as her *ATTACK* on the refrigerator's METAL BACKING slows... and slows... then CEASES all together: *SHINK, SHink, Shink, shink, -- - .*

The cat's bass-heavy *GROWLING* begins anew:

huuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrggggg --

Tom then approaches the fridge... *REACHES* for the HANDLE --

DONNA
What are you doing...?

TOM
Just checking --

At once, he OPENS THE FRIDGE... *SCANS* its shadowy interior:

TOM (CONT'D)
(squinting)
Looks okay...

He SHUTS the door again: *SHUUMP --*

When he TURNS to face his family... we see Tom is now clutching a couple CANS of *Dr. Pepper*. He TOSSES one to Brian... and the other to Jeff. As the boy *CATCHES IT*:

JEFF
So what now?

CUT TO:

HANDHELD POV
We observe the storm cloud's GASEOUS RED WINDS *breaking* over a POINTED ROOFTOP somewhere in the neighborhood...

We witness several OBJECTS being *CARRIED ALOFT* by the alien breeze: a yellow *hamburger wrapper*... a torn *baseball cap*... ...and a *plastic bag* that *READS*:

Thank you for shopping at Ralphs.

DONNA (O.S.)
Unbelievable...

We finally realize this HANDHELD POV belongs to DONNA... ...as she *GAZES* through a pair of camping-style BINOCULARS:

INT. LIVING ROOM / NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

The woman and her family are lined up on the COUCH that faces the MAIN WINDOW. They're taking turns *surveilling* the *SURREAL WORLD* outside...

As Donna continues *GAZING* at the CRIMSON MIST:

DONNA
 (to all and none)
 What do you think it is...?

Tom shakes his head.

TOM
 Could be anything...

BRIAN
 (in a low voice)
 Like the secret surprise.

Father and son share a look. Donna then lowers her binoculars:

DONNA
 Okay... who's next?

BRIAN
 (pointing)
 Jeff is.

Donna smiles faintly... and hands her nephew the SPECS...

As Jeff LIFTS THEM to his BANDAGED FACE -- we notice tiny *drabs* of MAROON FLUID *leaking* through the GAUZE...

BINOCULAR VIEW
 Jeff PANS across the FRONT YARD... where *SWIRLING MISTS* appear like *TORTURED PHANTOMS* in a REDDISH HELL...

The boy pans a little *FURTHER*... and finds: a BLACK CROW perched atop the RED STOP SIGN down the street.

JEFF
 Think that's the same crow I saw...

BRIAN
 What?

JEFF
 (never mind)
 ...crow that was in the yard.

BINOCULAR VIEW
 As Jeff continues to study the DARK SHAPE... he notices a few *problems*. The creature's *pale underbelly* is DEVOID OF FEATHERS... and *RIDDLED* with SCARLET BOILS that appear faintly *LUMINOUS*...

The crow is *STABBING* at the LESIONS with its *TWISTED BEAK*... causing CRIMSON FLUID to *SPILL* upon the STOP SIGN below...

The sign's WHITE LETTERS are made **RED**... and speak no more.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Holy crap...

TOM
 (concerned)
 What is it?

JEFF
 It's freakin' *sick*...

BRIAN
 (intrigued)
 Lemme see...

He TAKES THE SPECS from Jeff... and quickly finds the BIRD:

BINOCULAR VIEW
 The creature is no longer *pecking*... it appears to be *LOOKING* at Brian... looking right into the *LENSES*. The boy is STARTLED -- and *swiftly* LOWERS THE GLASSES.

TOM
 (a little impatient)
 Brian...

His son decides to TAKE ANOTHER LOOK... and the result is no better: the *foul thing* is still WATCHING.

BRIAN
 It's weird -- but that crow is lookin' at us... watchin' us or something --

Tom furrows his brow... and reaches for the binoculars... Brian hands them over -- and Tom *TWISTS THE FOCUS*...

BINOCULAR VIEW
 What starts as a shimmering *BLUR*... soon turns CRYSTAL CLEAR:

Through scarlet vapors, the BLACK CROW *stares back* at Tom... ...but also *TAKES FLIGHT* -- and comes STRAIGHT FOR HIM ----

The man DROPS THE LENSES:

TOM
Shit...

Just then, the WINDOW is *STRUCK* by the bird's IMMENSE WINGS:

-- *WHUMP* --

The dark fowl *GRIPS* the WINDOWSILL with its CRACKED TALONS... ...and *peers* through the GLASS. The thing's BLACKENED EYE SOCKETS are but HOLLOW WELLS tinged with *REDDISH LIGHT*...

Donna *GASPS* -- and everyone JUMPS TO THEIR FEET. Before any can even *speak*:

TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

The great crow begins *STABBING* at the window with its *CURLED* and *BLACKENED BEAK*: TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

Immediately, the GLASS starts to *CHIP AWAY*... like bits of crystalline *SHRAPNEL* from punctured ICE: TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

Thinking fast, Tom grabs a *People Magazine* from the coffee table... and *RACES* to the WINDOW. He *WHACKS* the GLASS -- but the DARK FORM on the other side doesn't even flinch:

TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

Brian SPEAKS UP - his voice betraying a mixture of both *SARCASM* and *TERROR*:

BRIAN
Think it'll get through...?

Tom's EYES start to go *WILD* - his mind *RACING*. He *BARKS OUT*:

TOM
Go get the *hammer* -- and *all*
the nails.

Brian is CAUGHT OFF GUARD by his father's ABRUPT REQUEST:

BRIAN
Wat - where are they -- ?

Donna seems to know *exactly* what her husband is thinking:

DONNA
(to her son; quickly)
In the kitchen, under the sink.

Brian NODS... and motions for his COUSIN to *come with*. The two instantly *TAKE OFF* -- their sneakers *squeaking* on the hardwood. Behind them: TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The boys make a *BEELINE* for the CABINET beneath the sink. Brian quickly LOOKS INSIDE:

The dim space is *CRAMMED* with cleaning products, paper bags, and all kinds of forgotten JUNK. Brian starts to *RUMMAGE*...

JEFF
Bri...

BRIAN
(while digging)
Hmm.

JEFF
Think they hate me now...?

Brian shoots his cousin a look that says: *Don't be stupid.*
The boy then finds what he's been searching for:

A bright orange TOOL BOX.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom and Donna have turned their attention to the WOODEN
BOOKCASE beside the couch...

They swiftly remove STACKED BOARD GAMES and FAMILY HEIRLOOMS
from the dusty SHELVES, as: *TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,*

The CROW at the WINDOW has *chiseled* a substantial DIVOT in
the glass. Hairline CRACKS are beginning to SPREAD from the
epicenter - - - the entire window is preparing to SHATTER...

As Tom observes:

TOM
No time --

He gestures for his wife to STEP ASIDE... and the man
promptly *TIPS* the BOOKCASE -- *DUMPING* the remainder of its
contents onto the FLOOR: *C-r-A-s-H --*

Working fast, Tom then *DRAGS THE BOOKCASE* to the middle of
the room... and LAYS IT DOWN. Without hesitation, he
proceeds to *STOMP* the thing to *PIECES* - separating its
fastened parts from the SOLID BACKING...

Meanwhile, Donna glances at the WINDOW which remains
UNDER SIEGE: *TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,*

DONNA
(voice trembling)
Tom...

Just then, the boys RETURN from the kitchen:

Brian *brandishes* the HAMMER - as Jeff cradles a BOX OF NAILS.

BRIAN
Got 'em --

Without a word, Tom hastily COLLECTS THE ITEMS from his boys.
At the same time, Donna starts to *lift* the LARGE WOODEN PANEL
that was once part of the bookcase:

DONNA
(urgently)
Boys, help me with this --

Brian and Jeff RUSH to her aid... as Donna does all she can to stave off PANIC:

DONNA (CONT'D)
(explaining to the boys)
We're gonna put this up against
the window, okay?

Tom quickly adds:

TOM
Hold it *flush* --

With that, Donna and the boys HOIST the flat piece of TIMBER... and *HOLD IT FLUSH* against the window's duct-taped frame. The SOLID SLAB *covers* the glass completely...

...and the BLACK FOWL outside is OBSCURED from view. But the SOUND of its rhythmic *BATTERING* continues: *TEK, TEK, TEK* ----

Tom immediately starts to *NAIL* their WOODEN BARRICADE firmly into place: *WOK - WOK - WOK - WOK* --

The man works *FRANTICALLY... FEVERISHLY...*

WOK - WOK - WOK - WOK --

In his HASTE, Tom *SMASHES HIS FINGER* -- and *SPLITS IT OPEN*:

TOM (CONT'D)
Ahh!!

DONNA
Tom!

But the man doesn't even shake it off - he just *KEEPS GOING*:

WOK - WOK - WOK - WOK --

When his RIOTOUS HAMMERING is finally *finished* --

-- everyone notices something strange... and unexpected:

SILENCE. No *pecking... no shattering of glass... nothing.*

JEFF
(to all and none)
Think it's gone...?

The boy quickly gets his answer:

TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

But... the sound no longer seems to be coming from the window they just boarded up:

BRIAN
(pointing)
Look --

The massive crow has simply *MOVED* to the next window over...
and started ANEW: *TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,*

TOM
(steaming)
Son of a bitch...

Thinking fast, DONNA starts grabbing *SHELVES* from the
disassembled pieces still strewn about the floor:

DONNA
We'll use these --

She *HIGHTAILS IT* to the *SECOND WINDOW...*

TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK, TEK,

...and *LAYS UP* the first *BOARD* - covering only *HALF* the *PANE:*

TOM
(talking fast)
Jeff -- hand me some more nails --

The boy swiftly *OBLIGES...* and Tom doesn't wait to *POUND*
ONE IN: WOK --

But just then, *THE CROW stiffens...* and stops its pecking.
The creature *cocks* its *DARK HEAD...* and *spreads* its immense
BLACK WINGS...

The bird then *PUSHES OFF* from the windowsill - and *TAKES*
FLIGHT. It soon *DISAPPEARS* into the *SCARLET HAZE* outside...

In the living room, there's a brief moment of *RESPIRE --*

DONNA
(sighing)
Thank god.

-- and Tom takes the opportunity to *VENT:*

TOM
Jesus Christ -- !!

Everyone is *SHAKEN* by his sudden *OUTBURST...* but the man is
quick to *COLLECT HIMSELF:*

TOM (CONT'D)
Okay -- it's okay...

He then looks toward the *DINING ROOM...* and observes its
UNGUARDED WINDOW. He shifts his gaze to the *KITCHEN...* where
still more *WINDOWS* are *WITHOUT PROTECTION...*

Tom lowers his head... and sighs.

TOM (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Shit.

BRIAN
What's wrong, dad?

Tom addresses his entire family:

TOM
(matter of fact)
We have to board up every window
in this house.

Donna checks the CLOCK: it's 3:50.

CUT TO:

Another **BOOKCASE** FALLS TOWARD CAMERA -----

-- this one dumping paperback copies of *Harry Potter* and
Choose Your Own Adventure: C-r-A-s-HhH ----

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Brian and Jeff are *RANSACKING* their own room, *plundering it*
for precious WOOD. As Brian *KICKS APART* his IKEA *SHELVING*:

KAK -- KAK -- KAK --

...Jeff is *ripping the DRAWERS* out of his K-Mart *DRESSER*:

SHUMP -- SHUMP -- SHUMP --

BRIAN
I kinda feel bad...

JEFF
(dumping out clothes)
Why?

BRIAN
Cuz I think I'm enjoying this...

At once, Brian *SLAMS HIS FOOT DOWN*...

...and his **BOOKCASE** is *TOTALED: S-m-A-s-H-h-H* --

Jeff manages a *SMILE*... but then *WINCES IN PAIN*. His
lacerated cheek is too *TENDER* even for grinning...

The boy *TOUCHES HIS BANDAGE*... and finds it *WET*. He looks at
his *FINGERS* -- they're stained *RED*... but not with blood:

The FLUID on his fingertips is *foreign...* faintly *LUMINOUS...*

Jeff is clearly *DISTURBED*. As he wipes the "evidence" on his jeans:

JEFF
Hey Bri...

His cousin is preoccupied -- he's *PULLING APART* one of the DRESSER DRAWERS:

BRIAN
Yeah.

JEFF
I gotta piss.

BRIAN
(absently)
K.

As Brian *DISMANTLES* the FLIMSY DRAWER with his BARE HANDS...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(enjoying himself)
Kneel before Zod --

...Jeff quietly EXITS the room.

EXT. HOUSE / STREET - CONTINUOUS

As the Stetler HOME remains ENVELOPED by *CHURNING VAPORS*...

A MALEVOLENT POV
WATCHES from the STREET...

The UNKNOWN ENTITY turns its GAZE from the old *BUICK* in the DRIVEWAY... to a FRONT WINDOW currently being *BOARDED UP*. As Tom's insistent HAMMERING echoes through the neighborhood...

WOK - WOK - WOK - WOK --

...the POV moves CLOSER.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SCREEN BLACK
We begin in DARKNESS... and hear a door *CLICK SHUT*. Then a switch is *FLICKED* - and a flood of *pale light* REVEALS:

JEFF is standing at the BATHROOM MIRROR. We can see the small WINDOW behind him has already been *BOARDED UP*...

Slowly, *carefully*... the boy proceeds to *REMOVE* his BANDAGE:

skriiiiiiiiiip --

He *inhales sharply* as the TAPED GAUZE separates from his face
...and takes *long strands* of COAGULATED GORE with it...

skriiiiiiiiiip --

Jeff then examines the raw CLAW MARKS in his cheek:

They appear to have grown DEEPER... more SEVERE ----

The lacerations themselves are LEAKING the LURID SUBSTANCE
that is *not blood*... but something ELSE...

JEFF
(horrified; hissing)
Shit --

The boy starts to *tremble*... and wipe SWEAT from his brow...
But something doesn't feel right. He *leans closer* to the
MIRROR... and SEES:

It isn't *sweat* that troubles his brow. The PORES in his FACE
are now *oozing* the same RUDDY LIQUID...

Jeff starts to PANIC:

He quickly TURNS ON THE FAUCET... and WASHES HIS FACE --
The boy CLEANSSES HIMSELF: SPLASH -- SPLASH -- SPLASH --

But when he checks the mirror again...

JEFF (CONT'D)
No --

...the OOZING simply starts ANEW. The boy's EYES are now
WIDE WITH FRIGHT -- but more than that, they've turned a
REDDISH HUE -- not merely *bloodshot*...

...but **RED**.

Jeff then notices something ELSE in the mirror:

His white GOT MILK? T-SHIRT is turning a dark MAROON COLOR...

A large STAIN is SPREADING through the COTTON FABRIC around
his ABDOMEN... Jeff *opens his mouth* as if to SCREAM ----

-- but no sound escapes his lips.

FLASH ON

The OMINOUS POV outside now hovers in the DRIVEWAY...

We hear only the thing's HEAVY BREATHING -- a *raspy*,
gurgling DISTURBANCE: *skguuuuuurrrrrr --*

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Brian enters the KITCHEN carrying a BUNDLE of *CRACKED SHELVES* and *BUSTED HEADBOARDS*...

The boy's father is standing on a STOOL while BARRICADING the WINDOW above the SINK: *WOK - WOK - WOK - WOK --*

Brian sets his PLUNDER on the floor... adding it to an existing PILE: there are various CABINET DOORS, BROKEN CHAIRS, and one *amputated* COFFEE TABLE...

TOM
(to Brian)
No more, okay?
(driving in a nail)
This is the last one --

WOK --

BRIAN
What about the window in there -- ?

Brian *indicates* the MASTER BEDROOM down the hall... still *BLOCKED* by the SILVER FRIDGE. We can *almost hear* Athena's rumbling purr: *huuuuurrrrrrrgggg ----*

TOM
We're skipping that one.

As Brian turns to leave:

TOM (CONT'D)
Hey --

The boy looks back at his father... the man has a gentle expression on his face:

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm proud of you.

Brian is a bit surprised:

BRIAN
...for what?

TOM
For how you've handled yourself today. You could've acted like a child... gone to pieces...
(beat)
I'm sure a lot of people have.

Brian basks in his father's praise a moment... as the man COMPLETES HIS WORK: *WOK -- Wok.*

The MOTIONLESS BOY is *cloaked* in SHADOWS... and hints of STEAM. Tom doesn't know what to think... or feel:

TOM (CONT'D)
(to his nephew)
What's... *going on*?

Without drama or pretense, Jeff simply...

...steps into the light. At this moment, Tom's expression doesn't change - he's too *SHOCKED* for that. But his EYES seem to *retreat* into his head, as he BEHOLDS...

ON JEFF
The boy is now SHIRTLESS... ...and *covered* HEAD TO TOE in the CRIMSON FLUID that was seeping from his pores. He looks as though he'd been *dipped* in PHOSPHORESCENT BLOOD...

TOM (CONT'D)
Jeff...

The boy's SCARLET EYES appear *vacant*... *LOST*...

DONNA (O.S.)
(through the door)
Tom...?!

The DOORKNOB is now TURNING back and forth: *clik, clik, clik,*

TOM
(to his wife)
Don't open the door!

DONNA (O.S.)
(misunderstanding)
I'm *trying* to open it --
-- *it's locked* --

clik, clik, clik,

TOM
No, *don't* -- *just hold on*...

Meanwhile, JEFF is standing very *still*... he's not really looking at his uncle, but *through* him...

Tom REACHES OUT to take hold of the *DRENCHED BOY*... but then HESITATES... and *WITHDRAWS*...

TOM (CONT'D)
(gently)
Jeff -- Jeff, can you hear me...?

Outside in the HALL, Brian can't hold his tongue any longer:

BRIAN (O.S.)
Dad, what - is - happening -- ?

TOM
Jus -- gimme a minute you guys!

Tom returns his attention to his "nephew":

TOM (CONT'D)
 Listen... I'm gonna --

The man runs out of words as Jeff slowly LOWERS HIS HEAD...
 ...and methodically *BITES DOWN* on the FORMICA COUNTER TOP...

TOM (CONT'D)
 Hey...

The CRIMSON BOY *bites down* HARD...

TOM (CONT'D)
 Stop...

...HARDER --

TOM (CONT'D)
 Stop it -- !!

...HARDER STILL -- and THEN:

K - r - A - c - K --

Jeff's front teeth BREAK IN TWO on the unyielding SINK --

K - r - A - c - K --

...and he unleashes a SCREAM that causes TOM to RECOIL:

GHRIIII--AAAA--WWW----

The UTTERANCE is a kind no human being should be capable of:

GHRIIII--AAAA--WWW----

Jeff now appears FERAL -- CRAZED. He LUNGES at his uncle...

GHRIIII--AAAA--WWW----

...and Tom FALLS BACKWARD onto the TILE: WHAKKK --

Through the DOOR, we hear Donna and Brian turning HYSTERICAL:

DONNA (O.S.)
ToM -- !!

BRIAN (O.S.)
DaD -- !!

Mother and son are heard to BATTER the LOCKED DOOR -- they're throwing their FULL WEIGHT against it:

BAMM -- BAMM -- BAMM --

Meanwhile, Tom is under *ATTACK...*

Jeff is ON TOP OF HIS UNCLE... pressing his *ruddy THUMBS* into the man's tender *EYE SOCKETS...* Tom *CRIES OUT* in *PAIN...*

TOM

AHH ----

...and Jeff *SCREAMS BACK AT HIM: GHRIIII--AAAA--WWW----*

Tom tries *desperately* to *REPEL* his nephew... but the "boy" proves incredibly *STRONG --* incredibly *DERANGED...*

Jeff continues to *VIOLATE* his uncle's *EYES:*

TOM (CONT'D)

GHAAAA ----

BRIAN (O.S.)

Dad - we're coming!!

The *DOOR* continues to be *BRUTALIZED* from out in the hall:

BAMM -- BAMM -- BAMM --

The ceaseless *PUMMELING* is causing the *HINGES* to *SEPARATE* from the *FRAME...* until: *S-m-A-s-HHHHH --*

The *DOOR* is finally *BROKEN DOWN --* and its wooden surface *CRACKS* the back of Jeff's *SKULL: CHUNKK ----*

Donna and Brian then *STUMBLE* into the *BATHROOM* as...

...Tom *SCRAMBLES* from underneath his *ATTACKER* and the *FALLEN DOOR*. The man *SNATCHES* a *TOWEL* that's hanging nearby... and *frantically* *wipes* *CRIMSON FLUID* from his *FACE:*

DONNA

Tom --

TOM

(hissing)

I'm okay...

But his aching *EYES* now appear *BRUISED* and *BLOODSHOT...*

BRIAN then *fixes his gaze* on the *COLLAPSED DOOR* resting *ATOP HIS COUSIN --* obscuring the boy from view. Before anyone can object, Brian *grabs the door...* and *LIFTS IT...* to *REVEAL:*

BRIAN

(horrorified)

Jeff...

The GORE-SLICKED adolescent seems to be *unconscious*, or *DEAD*.
Upon *first sight* of Jeff's GROTESQUE CONDITION, Donna *GASPS* --
and her eyes *FILL WITH TEARS*... Brian almost appears *ANGRY*:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
What happened to him?!

He *REACHES* for his cousin... but Tom *STOPS HIS HAND*:

TOM
Don't touch 'im...

BRIAN
What? We haveta --

TOM
(interrupting)
Just don't touch him yet --
(beat)
We don't know what any of *this*...

He indicates Jeff's grisly *RED FORM*:

TOM (CONT'D)
...is.

DONNA now *takes action* -- she snatches a *SQUARE* of *TOILET PAPER* from the roll... and holds it under her nephew's *NOSE*:

The slip of quilted tissue *flutters slightly*... and Donna appears *thankful* -- *RELIEVED*:

DONNA
He's breathing...

This only make Brian more *INCENSED*:

BRIAN
(exploding)
We have to help him!!

Tom tries to *PLACATE* his son:

TOM
We will... we will...
(mind working)
When the storm passes... we'll get him to a doctor -- somehow...

Then... without warning:

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWWWW ----

ANOTHER INHUMAN CRY *rocks the Stetlers* where they stand:

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWWWW ----

But this *UNHINGED BELLOW* doesn't belong to Jeff - it's deeper, louder, more *POWERFUL*... and:

DONNA
(voice shaking)
That's coming from outside...

INT. HOUSE / EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

We start on a *SMALL SQUARE* of *DUCT TAPE* applied to a *SMOOTH WOODEN SURFACE*...

A *HAND* enters frame... and quickly *PEELS AWAY* the *SILVER SCRAP* ---- to *REVEAL*:

The glistening *PEEPHOLE* on the *FRONT DOOR*. *TOM* is at the door, while *Donna* and *Brian* *HOVER* behind him. The man of the house promptly puts his *EYE* to the *PEEPHOLE*... and *SEES*:

ANAMORPHIC VIEW

A *GRIM FIGURE* is standing *ATOP* the *BUICK* in the *DRIVEWAY*, surrounded by *SWIRLING, BLOODY VAPORS*...

We recognize the *VISITOR* as the *HOMELESS MAN* from the *TUNNEL* - the same man who "shot" at *Tom's* car as it sped off for the suburbs. But the disheveled derelict has undergone some disturbing *changes*:

His bearded *FACE* is now a dirty canvas for numerous *PULSATING BOILS*... his *EYES* are like *SAUCERS* full of *CHURNING MAGMA*... his *CHIN* is *WET* with *SCARLET DRIPPINGS*...

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWWWW ----

CRACKLING ELECTRICITY in the *SKY ABOVE* -- zzzmmm -- produces a *STROBING EFFECT* around the man that is eerily *MESMERIZING*. But *Tom* perceives something in the vagabond's *GRIP*...

...something more *HORRIFYING* than all else:

The visitor is holding the *SEVERED HEAD* of his *COMPANION* from the tunnel: *dangling flesh* around the *NECK* indicates it was literally *RIPPED* from the body...

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWWWW ----

Tom *SWALLOWS HARD*... as:

DONNA (O.S.)
Well -- ?

TOM
There's uh... there's somebody in
the driveway --

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWWWW ----

BRIAN
Somebody...?

As Tom continues to look through the peephole, the homeless man seems to *STARE BACK AT HIM...*

DONNA (O.S.)
 What should we do?

Just then, the diseased derelict *HURLS* his friend's DETACHED CRANIUM... and it *STRIKES* the FRONT DOOR: *WHOKK* --

Tom *JUMPS BACK* -- as Donna *CLINGS* to her frightened SON:

BRIAN
What was that...?!

Tom doesn't answer. He eyes the peephole again, and *SEES...* ...nothing but *RED*. Tom's *VIEW* is now *OBSCURED* by a thick *SMEAR* of COAGULATED *GORE...*

Tom then looks around the LIVING ROOM and *REALIZES*:

He has no way to track their deranged visitor... as all the windows in the house have been *BOARDED UP*.

DONNA
 (questioningly)
Tom.

TOM
 (at a loss)
 I don't know, I don't know...

Then:

THUD... THUD... THUD...

The Stetlers all LOOK UP --

THUD... THUD... THUD...

-- as the *CEILING* is being *POUNDED*:

THUD... THUD... THUD...

A sprinkling of *PLASTER DUST* falls upon Tom's *CHEEK...* ...and he *surmises*:

TOM (CONT'D)
 Son of a bitch is on the roof --

THUD... THUD... THUD...

DONNA
Why...?

Brian knows:

BRIAN
Cuz whoever it is... they're
freakin' *crazy*.

Tom and his family can hear the FOOTFALLS OVERHEAD start to travel *AWAY FROM THEM...* toward other parts of the house...

Tom proceeds to *FOLLOW THE SOUND...* while keeping his eye on more PLASTER DROPPINGS *cascading* from the CEILING:

THUD... THUD... THUD...

Donna and Brian stick close to the man... as he enters the HALLWAY... and approaches the MASTER BEDROOM...

THUD... THUD... THUD...

As they near the SILVER FRIDGE still BLOCKING the DOOR...
...the FOOTFALLS above suddenly *CEASE*. There's a moment of perfect SILENCE -- not even Athena is heard beyond her makeshift barricade...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(timidly)
Do you think --

The boy is CUT SHORT by:

WHUMP -- C-r-A-s-H-H-H ----

We HEAR the bedroom WINDOW being *SMASHED TO PIECES* -- the one window that was never boarded up: *C-r-A-s-H-H-H ----*

SOMEONE is *CLIMBING THROUGH: crunch -- crumble -- crunch --*

TOM
Holy shit...

The Stetlers BACKPEDAL SEVERAL PACES as... ATHENA finally makes her presence KNOWN: *SHHKEEEEERAAAAW ----*

We now HEAR a *CONFRONTATION* ensue... between THE INTRUDER and the RABID PET:

SHHKEEEEERAAAAAAW ---- GHRIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAA--WWWWWWAA ----

The VIOLENT CACOPHONY of *SMASHES, THRASHES, and HITS ---*

---- soon ENDS with a high-pitched YELP... and the snapping of thin bones: KRiiK --

The contest's LOSER is *clear*:

BRIAN
Athena...

The murderous *INTRUDER* then *TRIES THE DOOR*... but of course finds it *BLOCKED: GHRIIIIIIIII ----*

Tom *SHOUTS* at the unseen *INVADER*:

TOM
Get the hell out of our house --

The *POUNDING* now begins... the relentless *BASHING* of some mindless, elemental *EVIL: CHUDD... CHUDD... CHUDD...*

TOM (CONT'D)
(trying to speak clearly)
We are armed. I have a gun...

And still: *CHUDD... CHUDD... CHUDD...*

Donna whispers to her husband, *hisses* at him:

DONNA
We don't have a gun --

Brian *DISAGREES*:

BRIAN
Yes we do --

Before Tom can interject... something stops him *COLD*:

SILENCE. The *BOMBARDMENT* has abruptly *STOPPED*. Beyond the door, the deranged vagrant can be heard *moving* to the *WINDOW* again. There are more *KRAKS* and *KRUNCHES* of *broken glass* -- as he *CLIMBS BACK OUT*... and madly *BRAYS* at the world:

GHRIIIIIIIiii --

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(surprised; elated)
He left --

Donna *SIGHS*... and mutters:

DONNA
Thank christ --

TOM
C'mon...

Tom ushers his family back toward the *LIVING ROOM*...

INT. LIVING ROOM / HOUSE - SAME

...where he checks the *CLOCK* by the *TV*: it's *5:33*. The man takes his wife's *TREMBLING HAND*:

TOM
 (quietly to Donna)
 It's almost over...

Donna tries to smile... but doesn't quite make it.

BRIAN (O.S.)
 Hey you *guys* --

Husband and wife TURN at the sound of their son's *concerned VOICE*... and find him standing near to the kitchen -- *transfixed* by something...

Without hesitation, Tom *hurries over*...

...and SEES what his son has already DISCOVERED:

The DOOR to the ATTACHED GARAGE... is **AJAR**. Blood *drains* from Tom's FACE as he moves CLOSER and OBSERVES:

The assorted BUBBLE GUM used to seal up the cracks now *HANGS* from the wooden frame in *LONG COLORFUL STRANDS* ----

Tom then glances at the *pristine* DOORKNOB... and Brian speaks aloud what BOTH are thinking:

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 We never locked it...

Tom's heart *FREEZES* inside his chest:

TOM
 Jesus...

A *second* later:

DONNA (O.S.)
 (crying for help)
 T-O-M -- !!

Father and son *SNAP THEIR HEADS* -- then *SPRINT* toward the LIVING ROOM -- moving as *ONE*:

TOM
 Donna!!

BRIAN
 (short of breath)
 Mom --

But Tom quickly *PULLS AHEAD OF HIS SON* -- with a LOOK of extreme *HORROR* on his FACE. He *GRABS* Brian by the *SHIRT*...

...and *PUSHES* him *BACK* -- *AGAINST* the *WALL*:

TOM
(with wild eyes)
Stay back --

Tom's *FORCEFULNESS* appears to work -- Brian *STAYS PUT* as his father *RACES OFF... OUT OF SIGHT:*

TOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
D-o-N-n-A --

OFF-CAMERA CLAMOR: *KRASH -- SLAMM -- KA-THOOM --*

DONNA (O.S.)
No ----

From where Brian is currently *PLANTED*, he *can't see* the raucous *FRAY* in the living room -- but his *TERRIFIED EYES* do *LOCK ONTO...*

...the *COAT RACK* by the *FRONT DOOR* -- where his father's *JACKET* is hanging. As Brian's *GEARS START TURNING...*

...the living room suddenly *FALLS SILENT. Except...*

...there is one sound -- one *quiet little* sound... like that of an *EGG* slowly *CRACKING: skriiiiiiccckkkk ----*

Brian's imagination is *RUNNING WILD...* he looks like he's *SINKING* into the *DRYWALL* behind him...

skriiiiiiccckkkk ----

But the boy's *TREMBLING GAZE* returns to the *JACKET...* and something *HARDENS* within him. He makes a *RUN FOR IT ----*

But upon accessing the *LIVING ROOM*, the boy *FREEZES* in his *TRACKS*. His *FACE* becomes a mask of *BLACK DESPAIR* as he *WITNESSES* what no child ever should:

Mom and dad are being *HELD IN THE AIR...*

...and *THROTTLED* by something that is not a man, but surely a *GROTESQUE MOCKERY* of one:

skriiiiiiccckkkk ----

Brian can't tell if his parents are *alive or dead...*

Their bodies simply *HANG LIMP...* as the *HOMELESS MAN* *clutches* their *THROATS* -- *ONE* in each *HAND:*

skriiiiiiccckkkk ----

The tumor-ridden *FIEND* regards his victims the way a diseased *JACKAL* might regard fresh *MEAT...*

It's more than Brian can handle:

BRIAN
 (going to pieces)
Stop ---- !!

At once, the INVADER *LETS GO* of Tom and Donna... and their rag-doll bodies *FALL* to the FLOOR: *THUMPP -- THUMPP --*

The unwholesome *THING* then *turns on Brian...*

...and *BEARS DOWN ON HIM:*

GHRIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWW ----

The boy is *STARTLED INTO ACTION...* he makes a *BEELINE* for the JACKET... and *GRABS IT* off the HOOK...

His attacker's *FESTERING HANDS* will be *UPON HIM* any second... Brian frantically *REACHES* for the ***FLARE GUN*** he knows is *INSIDE* the COAT...

INTERIOR POCKET VIEW
 Brian's *UNSTEADY HAND* finds the concealed "*WEAPON*"...
 ...but *FAILS* to retrieve it. The GUN is *STUCK --* caught in a *THICK TANGLE* of *THREADBARE LINING ----*

As Brian continues to *WRESTLE* with the JACKET...

GHRIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWW ----

...the *CRAZED INTRUDER* *grabs the boy* by his THROAT... and *LIFTS HIM* in the AIR...

Brian *DROPS THE COAT...* as precious *LIFE* is *squeezed* from his young body...

skriiiiiicccckkkk ----

The Stetler family is on its way to *EXTINCTION* - all is most certainly *LOST...* until:

SKRAAAAAA --

A *familiar FIGURE* suddenly *APPEARS* - wielding Tom's *HAMMER...*

Brian's *FADING EYES* *recognize* his awakened *COUSIN --* still *GLAZED* in *LURID SECRETIONS...*

SKRAAAAAA --

Jeff *SWINGS* the *SHARP END* of the *HAMMER --* and it *LODGES* in the vagrant's *MEATY SHOULDER:*

SKlutch --

The homeless man instantly *DROPS BRIAN...*

...and *takes hold* of JEFF. As Brian remembers how to *breathe* again:

KRIIK --

The hulking derelict *SNAPS* Jeff's *NECK*...

KRIIK --

...and *TOSSES* his *LIFELESS BODY* into the *DARKNESS* of the *HALL*...

BRIAN (CONT'D)

No -- !!

Brian will never know if his cousin acted out of love, or only *MADNESS*...

GHRIIIIIIIIIII--AAAAAAAAAAA--WWWWWWWWW ----

In an *INSTANT*, the *MURDERER* is *ON TOP OF BRIAN* -- at his *THROAT* once more...

The boy *SNATCHES* the *JACKET* that's crumpled nearby...

...and in a moment of *CLARITY*, Brian *REALIZES* he needn't struggle with the ensnared *PISTOL*. He simply *presses the coat AGAINST* his enemy's *CHEST*... and:

PHOOOOMM ----

Brian *FIRES* the *FLARE GUN* straight *THROUGH THE JACKET*...

PHOOOOMM ----

...and the invader's torso **EXPLODES** in a *DAZZLING BURST* of *WHITE SPARKS* -- and *BLINDING PHOSPHORESCENCE* -----

GHRIIIIIiii -- -

The bearded man literally *COMES APART* -- and *FALLS* to the *FLOOR* in several *CAUTERIZED HUNKS*:

THUMPP -- THUDD -- THUMPP --

Brian swiftly *COLLECTS HIMSELF*...

...and *scrambles* toward his *PARENTS* lying nearby. The two remain *MOTIONLESS*... and *FACEDOWN* on the *HARDWOOD* ----

Brian reaches *DONNA* first...

With some effort, the angst-ridden boy *TURNES* his mother *OVER*:

The woman's *PALE EYELIDS* are *CLOSED*... her *THROAT* is *PURPLE* and *BRUISED* -- she appears quite *DEAD*:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Mom --

Then Brian *hears* something: faint *rasping*... like a RUSTY VALVE slowly being OPENED...

Donna is still breathing:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Mom -- !

The woman *OPENS* her WEARY EYES... as:

RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK --

The ALARM CLOCK beside the TV comes ALIVE: the time is 5:45.

RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK --

EXT. STETLER HOME / NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

THE STORM OUTSIDE... with its *TWISTING VAPORS* and *LUMINOUS MISTS*... begins to **DIMINISH** ----

---- and finally *FADE* from view...

The suburban neighborhood that was *DROWNED IN RED*...

...shows its GREENS, BLUES, and BROWNS once more.

EXT. SPACE - SAME

From a GOD-LIKE VIEW, we observe the interstellar CLOUD leave this EARTH behind...

...and continue on through the dark vacuum of SPACE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Brian is helping his *DISORIENTED MOTHER* up off the floor...

As Donna starts to get her bearings:

DONNA

(hoarse)

Sweetheart...

BRIAN

I got you, mom --

Meanwhile, the alarm clock continues to BLARE...

RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK -- RENK --

...until a SHAKY HAND... *slaps down* the SNOOZE BUTTON.
We quickly realize the HAND belongs to:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Dad!

Tom is *CONSCIOUS*... and trying to pull himself together.
Brian and Donna RUSH TO HIS AID:

DONNA

Tom --

The sight of his family *alive*, and in one piece, is all the man needs. Tom GRABS his WIFE and SON -- and pulls them CLOSE to his trembling CHEST:

TOM

Thank god...

The man now knows exactly what he's thankful for:

TOM (CONT'D)

...thank god...

As they continue to embrace, Tom and Donna both observe the CHARRED REMAINS of their would-be KILLER resting nearby...

TOM (CONT'D)

(with furrowed brow)

Brian --

Before Tom can finish his thought:

shizzzzzzzzz ----

The FLAT SCREEN beside them suddenly BUZZES to LIFE:

shizzzzzzzzzz ----

BROADCASTING has RESUMED:

ON TV

A reporter wearing a plastic HAZMAT SUIT is standing on a ROOFTOP... with the NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE in the background. Several of the ICONIC BUILDINGS appear to be in FLAMES...

ROOFTOP REPORTER

(coming in mid-sentence)

-- atop Rockefeller Plaza in Manhattan. The storm has passed... but the danger has not.

(metallic voice)

The alien cloud allegedly contained what some are calling, "mutagenic properties"...

(beat)

(MORE)

ROOFTOP REPORTER (CONT'D)

*As a result, this city and
presumably many others, are now
being torn apart... by anyone...
and any **thing**, that was unable to
find suitable shelter...*

*The camera operator then moves his LENS away from the
reporter on the roof... to the CITY STREETS BELOW...*

New York is an absolute WAR ZONE:

*CARS are on FIRE... STOREFRONTS are being SMASHED... POISONED
PEOPLE and RABID DOGS are RUNNING WILD... ATTACKING each
other... attacking the WORLD ITSELF...*

*As Brian's YOUNG EYES absorb the MAD SPECTACLE on TV...
he mutters a curt phrase... with a gravity beyond his years:*

BRIAN

No future...

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

The evening sun is sinking LOW behind the STETLER HOUSE...

...and a WAVE OF DARKNESS is washing over their quiet street.

We begin to hear HOWLING in the distance...

*...MADDENING WAILS that ECHO from unseen corners of the
DINGY SUBURB...*

...god only knows what the night will bring.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.