

THE STUFF

Original Screenplay

by

Larry Cohen

"Are you eating it--
or is it eating you?"

FADE IN:

A TELEVISION COMMERCIAL (simulated)

A barrage of tricky camera work and razzle-dazzle cutting all played directly to the audience.

A bevy of beautiful GIRLS romping around the beach in swimsuits. ONE GIRL sits up into MEDIUM CLOSEUP. In her hand a package of a fast-food dessert which she is devouring gleefully with a plastic spoon.

GIRL

(sings)

It keeps you slim, trim, perfect
for "him." The Stuff.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

And you never feel stuffed with
The Stuff.

MORE ANGLES

GIRLS cavort in the surf with handsome, well-muscled YOUNG MEN. It appears everybody is competing for the best-tan-of-the-year contest. And over and over again that jingle is heard, now sung by a chorus of FEMALE VOICES--"slim, trim, perfect for him, The Stuff."

CAMERA WHIP PANS to a BEAUTIFUL GIRL in the arms of a HANDSOME MUSCLE MAN looking at one another as if they are good enough to eat and superimposed on this, the product--something that looks very much like a package of yogurt only brightly labeled "The Stuff."

CUT TO:

ANOTHER COMMERCIAL

An actual well-known personality like an Angie Dickenson or Eva Gabor--playing herself in this cameo as a spokeswoman for the product.

SPOKESWOMAN

(to camera)

It's wonderful to have a dessert that tops off the meal and yet lets you feel light and comfortable. And doesn't add those extra pounds either. That's why I always serve "The Stuff." It's good stuff. It's good for you and it keeps you looking good. So here's looking at you, baby.

Over this, the beginning of another song.

DISSOLVE TO:

A CITY STREET

A DOZEN ATTRACTIVE LOOKING PEOPLE, the girls in summer dresses, the guys in sportcoats and suits, everybody clean, all-American, as close to perfection as possible. As they parade down the street TOWARD CAMERA, each of them carrying either a Dixie cup or an icecream cone of the beautiful, fresh, creamy-looking dessert delight known as The Stuff.

SINGER

Here's lookin' at you, baby,
Here's to feelin' good.
It's not too sweet,
Have all you can eat.
Because The Stuff is light,
The new taste delight.
We can't get enough of that Stuff
That wonderful Stuff
Here's lookin' at you, baby.

WHIP PAN TO a television screen.

MED. CLOSE SHOT

NAME ANNOUNCER like Ed McMahon holding a package of The Stuff in his hand and making a direct audience pitch.

MCMAHON

And it doesn't melt in hot weather.
It only melts in your mouth. It's
something new under the sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAMILY ON PICNIC

On a bright sunny day. Spread out in front of them, a large gallon package of The Stuff, as the beautiful MOTHER spoons it out for the KIDS who wait excitedly for this tempting treat, McMahon walks into the shot--announcing away!

MCMAHON

And you don't have to worry about
the kids liking it too much.

CUT TO

WIDER SHOT

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

As the huge projection television is switched off. McMahon disappears and becomes a tiny white dot on the projection screen. The lights slowly come up revealing a passel of well-dressed EXECUTIVES. Most of them look like they have just returned from a three-martini lunch.

CONROY

It's shit.

GULLIVER

But it's good shit. Too fucking good. They're gonna put us out of business.

FENTON

Nothing is ever going to replace ice cream.

CONROY

Have you looked at the charts? They are murdering us in every major market and that's without going into flavors.

GULLIVER

It's just about buried Jello. We're next.

FENTON

Okay, it's new, but the public will get used to it and come back to us.

A WOMAN EXECUTIVE steps forward with a report in her hand. This is CATHY MURCH.

CATHY

They've resisted every effort we've made to discuss acquisition or even a reasonable distribution arrangement. They don't need us. Their marketing is being very shrewdly handled. If the demand remains greater than the supply, that's all to their advantage and they've made some very smart media buys. Saturating and then pulling out all the advertising and letting the product speak for itself. But I'm afraid, gentlemen, it's an extremely fine product.

CONROY

I wish the hell we knew what it was. Then we could copy it. What I mean to say is--improve upon it.

CATHY

Apparently, we've had no luck in analyzing the ingredients and no luck in getting close to anybody inside the company.

CONROY

That's why I've asked David Whitman to come here today.

FENTON

Are you sure you want to get mixed up with him?

CONROY

I need results. He's the best there is.

FENTON

Sure. An ex-FBI man, kicked out by Hoover and blackballed in the Federal Government--and we need him? It's obscene!

CONROY

The best companies have used him.
(pushes the intercom)

Will you ask Mr. Whitman to step in?

The door opens and DAVID WHITMAN enters, a man about 6'2", a strikingly handsome man. He is in his middle thirties and has kept himself in magnificent shape despite the fact that he's a chain smoker and a heavy drinker.

CONROY

I hope we haven't kept you waiting too long.

DAVID

That's all right, the meter's been running.

CONROY

You've been briefed on our problem.

DAVID

Offhand, I'd say that in six months you'll all be on your ass.

CATHY

You managed to cut right to the heart of the matter, Mr. Whitman.

DAVID

The surgery is going to be expensive. I assume you've tried to contact the officials in the Food and Drug Administration who investigated and approved the product?

CONROY

All of them resigned for one reason or another since the approval. They're on vacations or out of the company.

GULLIVER

Maybe they were paid off on the other end.

DAVID

I see a list of the various packaging plants but there's no indication of where the food is originally processed.

GULLIVER

I've never had so much trouble getting information out of a company before. Nobody wants to talk.

DAVID

There's always a weak spot in any wall. We'll penetrate the company--do as much damage as possible.

CONROY

We don't want to know how you do it--just do it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN COMMUNITY, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK - NIGHT

The moon shines brightly over a series of tract homes, all very similar with small lawns and even smaller back yards. CAMERA FOCUSES on one such house.

TIGHTER ANGLE OF THE HOUSE

CAMERA MOVING IN on an upper window. The blinds stand partially raised. CAMERA RISES peering in the window.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Little JASON, about 8 years old, in his darkened room surrounded by toys and playthings, the usual Star Wars collection, as well as familiar horror movie posters and recent movie-related toys.

Jason's eyes pop open. He's restless, he can't sleep, he rolls around in his bed fighting with his covers.

ANGLE ON JASON'S FEET

As they pop out from under the covers. The sheet has been pulled out from under the mattress.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON JASON

trying to tuck everything in and getting further wrapped up in his own bedclothes. He switches on the light next to the bed, looks at the clock--it's 4:37 in the morning.

Jason silently slides out of bed, walks barefooted to the door leading to the hall, opens it a crack. It's dark out there. Everybody's asleep. He opens the door further, it creaks a bit. He starts outside, still barefooted and in his pajamas.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jason crosses to the stairs looking the direction of his mom and dad's room which is closed. Without turning on the hall light, he descends to the first floor.

INT. MAIN FLOOR - TRACT HOUSE - NIGHT

Jason reaches the foot of the stairs, crosses to a lamp in the hall, flips it on carefully. CAMERA FOLLOWS HIM TRUCKING FORWARD as he crosses from the hallway through the dining area into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A small nightlight burns in the kitchen which is also illuminated by the moon.

Jason crosses, of course, to the refrigerator.

This is to be a middle-of-the-night snack.

ANGLE ON JASON'S HAND

as he reaches for the refrigerator door and swings it open quickly.

The light in the refrigerator comes on to reveal a fairly crowded refrigerator. Up on the top shelf (not in the freezer)

stands a large half gallon container of "The Stuff." It is tipped over on its side and the plastic top lies a few inches away.

What is most evident is that the half gallon container seems to be empty. Then all at once, moving from behind several bottles of acidophilus milk we see movement. What appears for a moment like a large clump of white protoplasm in motion slithers out into view and moves as fast as light into the tipped over half gallon container--slithering into the large cup and uprighting in an instant.

The Stuff was out of its container and moving around in the refrigerator, now it has moved back to its original place and has frozen its position, once again becoming inanimate.

CLOSE UP - JASON'S FACE

The boy has seen all of this. He saw The Stuff move. He takes one terrified step backwards.

Something grabs him and pulls him out of the frame as he SCREAMS.

WIDER SHOT

HIS FATHER grabbing him by the arm.

FATHER

What are you doing down here at this time of night?

JASON

I was hungry.

FATHER

You shouldn't walk around like that. I thought it was a burglar or something. You scared me.

JASON

Did you see?

He points toward the refrigerator.

FATHER

Did I see what? What's the matter with you?

JASON

It was moving.

FATHER

Get your fanny upstairs to bed and don't pull this again. Hurry up.

Jason hurries out of the kitchen. We hear him running up the stairs and we remain with the father in the kitchen. The refrigerator door still stands open, casting its strange light on the rest of the room. The father crosses to the refrigerator and is about to close the door then realizes that he himself might like a middle-of-the-night taste of something. He reaches in, picks up a piece of fruit, then changes his mind. His hand wanders over to where the uncapped container of The Stuff is waiting, takes it out, carries it in his hand over to the sink where he gets a spoon out of a drawer. He eats right out of the half gallon container, tasting and swallowing some of the mellow and refreshingly delicious new dessert delight. He starts to put it back in the refrigerator then has a taste for some more. He devours two more spoonfuls before finding the plastic top and securing it on the package and replacing it in the refrigerator.

INT. REFRIGERATOR - NIGHT

ANGLE ON THE PACKAGE as the refrigerator door slowly closes and the light goes off. Once again in the dark The Stuff may come to life. We hear something moving around in the dark--slithering over the grill work, clinking against milk bottles. Something definitely alive.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jason is sitting up in bed wide-eyes, staring into the darkness. He has seen something that terrifies him. His room looks different now. It seems to be all weird angles and every shadow could be a threat. Outside, the wind blowing against the branch of a tree causes it to scratch on the window pane. More danger! What moments ago was a place of security and comfort is now a fearsome prison for young Jason has seen something he was not meant to see. He has seen it move.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMPANY LABORATORY

David standing with a GROUP OF SCIENTIFIC AND LEGAL EXPERTS in front of a spectrograph.

FIRST SCIENTIST

We've tried spectrographic analysis on samples taken from key distribution points across the country. The product never varies. It's always identical... and unidentifiable.

David is reading their written report, he tosses it aside.

DAVID

You say "new enzymes."

SECOND SCIENTIST

Clearly artificial. Nothing like it... around.

DAVID

Coupled with a benign bacteria?

FIRST SCIENTIST

Also artificially cultured. Probably just a lucky accident that tasted good.

DAVID

Well, they seem able to reproduce this accident in great quantities.

FIRST SCIENTIST

I don't understand. Doesn't the government require them to reveal the content?

ATTORNEY

No, they're protected by the FDA Standard of Identity rule.

DAVID

The same law that protects the formula for Coca Cola syrup, namely the secret ingredient they call "Merchandise 7X". Only ten people know what it is. They keep the formula locked up in a vault at the Trust Company of Georgia--and it can only be opened by a vote of Coke's Board of Directors.

ATTORNEY

It's true. The government took them to court in 1909 but Coke fought them to a standstill.

DAVID

Coke voluntarily shut down 22 bottling plants in India rather than reveal the formula to the Indian government. So folks--if we want to find out what "The Stuff" is made of, we'll have to steal it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOUSE, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK - MORNING

JASON'S MOTHER preparing breakfast. His father reading the morning paper at the kitchen table while he has his morning coffee. JASON'S OLDER BROTHER is already downstairs packing a lunch pail.

MOTHER

Will you go up and tell your brother to get on down here.

BROTHER

Maybe his alarm didn't go off.

FATHER

He was up in the middle of the night running around. No wonder he's exhausted. Tell him he's not missing school today. I don't care what the excuse is.

At that moment, young Jason rounds the corner of the hall.

MOTHER

There he is. Well, what do you want for breakfast?

JASON

Nothing.

He looks in the direction of that refrigerator.

JASON'S POV OF REFRIGERATOR

harmless enough, but what if something is moving around in there.

ANGLE ON JASON'S MOTHER

as she crosses the kitchen, opens the refrigerator door, takes out a couple of eggs.

MOTHER

I'll scramble a few over easy for you.

JASON

My stomach doesn't feel good.

FATHER

Well, it felt good at four o'clock in the morning. Listen, young man, you've missed three days of school this month already and...

Jason's brother crosses to the refrigerator and reaches in taking out the half gallon container of The Stuff.

BROTHER

Can I have some, after I finish my... cereal?

MOTHER

Sure, it's good for you.

JASON

No!

He yells this out with such fierceness that everyone looks up--mother from her cooking, dad from his newspaper, and his brother stopped short, container in his hand.

JASON

Don't eat that.

FATHER

There's nothing wrong with it. I had some last night.

JASON

I'm telling you. It isn't good. It's spoiled.

Mother reaches over and dips her finger into the container, tasting it.

MOTHER

It doesn't taste spoiled to me.

She gets a spoon, dips it into the container.

MOTHER

Here, you taste it and tell me if it's spoiled.

JASON

I don't want any.

MOTHER

What is this? I only started buying this in the first place because you made such a big fuss because of those ads on TV. Why you practically threw a tantrum in the A & P.

FATHER

Now, young man, you made your mother buy that and you're gonna eat it.

JASON

I hate it!

She approaches him, spoon in hand.

ANGLE ON JASON

as he backs away, fearful. He's being threatened by his own mother with a deadly weapon, an ordinary teaspoon and on it the white gleaming substance...

CLOSE UP - THE SPOON

MOVING CLOSER AND CLOSER. The white, creamy, fluffy, dessert dream, The Stuff, coming at him.

CLOSE UP - JASON

His eyes widening, he shakes his head vehemently.

ANGLE ON HIS BROTHER

BROTHER

Hey freak! What are you on, anyway?

CLOSE UP - FATHER

FATHER

Who's been giving you drugs? I want an answer!

CLOSE UP - JASON

blurting everything out.

JASON

It moves around by itself. It moves. I saw it moving in the refrigerator.

Pause; he realizes what he's saying and the way people are looking at him; he changes his tactics.

JASON (cont'd)
I'm late already. I got to get to
school early so I'm not late for gym.

CLOSE UP - MOTHER

blocking his way--the spoon outstretched.

MOTHER

Eat it.

CLOSE UP - THE SPOON

rising slowly to Jason's lips. His mouth opens almost imperceptibly as if he cannot bear to open it wide, hoping that at any last moment something will happen that will prevent his having to devour this "living material." In a moment The Stuff is gone. It has melted away, evaporated inside him.

WIDE SHOT - KITCHEN

MOTHER

You know you love it.

FATHER

I don't like to admit it, but it's
better than ice cream.

MOTHER

Just like the ad says, the more you
eat the more you want.

ANGLE ON JASON

as suddenly he lashes out, knocking the container out of his mother's hand.

ANGLE ON THE WALL

as it splatters against it, The Stuff running down the wall.

ANGLE ON JASON

dashing out the kitchen door.

FATHER

(shouts)

You come right back here and
clean up that mess!

(to his other son)

Now you tell me--who's been
supplying him with drugs?

ANGLE ON MOTHER

wiping up the mess, scraping it off the wall.

MOTHER

I hope these stains come out. Look at that, not a spot. Low in calories, good tasting, and it doesn't even spot. And he doesn't like it.

DIRECT CUT:

INT. FILM STUDIO, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

An elaborate set has been constructed for a commercial. It's an advertisement for "The Stuff." It's a winter setting: North Pole, igloo, glaciers, and a number of ACTORS sweating under the hot lights dressed as Eskimos and of course an actor in a POLAR BEAR COSTUME. The set is chaos and the only one calm and in control seems to be an attractive young woman with an aura of self-confidence. A beautiful, no-nonsense woman who is very much in charge. In fact nobody else seems to know what's happening except NICOLE KENDALL.

NICOLE

Cut these lines from the copy. Eighty-six the wind machine. This isn't the North Pole as it really is. It's the North Pole of our fantasies. Where are the reindeer?

ASSISTANT

There was foul up on that. How about somebody in a reindeer costume?

NICOLE

We're spending a quarter of a million dollars on this spot and I want to see some fucking reindeer.

A SECRETARY approaches rapidly.

SECRETARY

I talked with Streisand's agent. It's completely out of the question. The numbers don't matter. She's not interested.

NICOLE

Everybody's interested in "The Stuff." I didn't ask you to talk to her agent. I asked you to talk to her.

SECRETARY

But she doesn't take calls.

NICOLE

Then get on a plane and fly out to Malibu and wait by the main gate. Have a truck out there giving away The Stuff, free cones, half pint containers--Stuff T-shirts, balloons. I want them all seen in front of her house. She won't get in or get out of the place.

SECRETARY

What's the point?

NICOLE

I want to prove to her that The Stuff is bigger than she is. Then I want to tell her that we're willing to give her a percentage of gross sales increases for six months following the play of the first commercial. We'll be cutting her in. A precedent for any star to get a piece of the action on the sale of a product. It could add up to a couple of million, but that's not the point. It's the fact that she'll be the first.

SECRETARY

I'll get on the plane.

NICOLE

And you'll come back with her name on the bottom of that contract.

SECRETARY

Or I'll drown myself in the blue Pacific. Death before dishonor.

The Secretary is gone. Nicole returns her attention to the production at hand. As ASSISTANT DIRECTOR crosses up to her carrying a business card.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

This gentlemen wants to see you.

Nicole glances at the business card. Reads:

INSERT SHOT: THE BUSINESS CARD

It reads: DAVID LIEBER
President
Consolidated Oil

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

As she scrutinizes the card, looks up.

HER POV PAST THE SHOULDER OF THE A.D.

On the corner of the set watching is the very well-dressed figure of a man we recognize to be David Whitman (industrial saboteur). He nods conservatively, and flashes a smile.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

As she hands the card back to the A.D.

NICOLE

I thought this was a closed set.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Do you want me to throw him off?

NICOLE

Do you think you could handle it?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

I never threw a president off the set before.

Nicole turns her attention back to the production staff of the show, ignoring David.

NICOLE

Let's have a playback of the song.

TECHNICIAN

Playback, please.

In a moment the studio is filled with the recorded music and the chorus singing the jingle to go with this commercial.

"It doesn't have to be the summer
To enjoy the cool refreshing taste
of The Stuff.
It's never too cold to enjoy good taste
It's never too cold to keep cool."

The director organizes his actors.

DIRECTOR

Okay. Let's run through it.

The actors take their places on the set, mouthing the words that the singers can be heard doing on the playback and going through the movements as the Eskimos run into the igloo bring-

ing out an ample supply of "The Stuff" in quart containers and begin lapping it up as if it's the best food in the world. The kid eskimos even feed it to their pet polar bear. It's just as ridiculous as any commercial can be and yet it's a good sales pitch for the product, the winter-months sell. Nicole watches them going through the routine with a critical glance. She realizes David has crossed the set and is standing beside her. She looks up at him.

NICOLE

Well? What do you think?

DAVID

It'll sell.

NICOLE

Did you come to ask for your card back?

DAVID

I suppose you would have been more impressed if I was dressed as a sheik.

NICOLE

I thought Consolidated Oil was controlled from the Persian Gulf.

DAVID

Wrong again. My father and I have always kept the controlling interest right here at home.

NICOLE

What do you want?

DAVID

I want you to take on our public relations campaign. Create a new image for us. Prove to the public that we have their interests at heart.

NICOLE

Why me?

DAVID

Look what you did for "The Stuff". I understand you named it--conceived the whole sales pitch--put it on the map.

NICOLE

That's why I haven't the time for your account.

DAVID

Miss, I'm not trying to hire your agency to work for me. I'm interested in buying your agency and putting you in charge.

NICOLE

Well...I'm glad you clarified the matter. I don't think I'll have you thrown out just yet.

DAVID

Why don't you call a wrap and come to lunch with me? You don't really want to shoot this thing, do you?

NICOLE

Do you know what it will cost the client to shut down?

DAVID

They can afford it. Besides, it's going to be a terrible commercial.

Nicole looks at him amused, then waves to the Director.

DIRECTOR

Yes, Nicole.

NICOLE

Let's wrap this up and do it tomorrow with the reindeer and with the proper set. I'll take full responsibility.

DIRECTOR

You're not going to lay this on me, are you?

NICOLE

Have I ever? Send everybody home except the set designer and the prop people and let's try and do a little better tomorrow.

She crosses back to David.

NICOLE

Now, what about that lunch, Mr. President?

DAVID

I knew you were the kind of person who could make a decision. Now why don't you pick your favorite restaurant.

NICOLE

What about your hotel?

DAVID

My limo is outside.

NICOLE

So is my limousine. The agency always supplies me with one while we're shooting.

DAVID

I'll bet mine is bigger than yours.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - FIFTH AVENUE

A huge stretch limousine moving in traffic, weaving in and out.

EXT. REGENCY HOTEL ON FIFTH AVE.

The car pulling up in front of the hotel, the elegant Regency Hotel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HUGE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

A candlelight dinner being served by WAITERS to Nicole and David.

DAVID

Well, what shall we have for dessert?

NICOLE

Not that. I never touch "The Stuff." I'm proud to say I never use the product I'm representing. I feel it would be incestuous.

There is a pregnant pause as they both sip their wine and look at each other.

DAVID.

Well, what's it to be? Can I count on you?

NICOLE

I'm going to turn you down.

DAVID

It's a pity because after I buy the agency and take over, I'll have to put you out to pasture.

NICOLE

I can find another job.

DAVID

I'm not talking about dismissing you. I'd honor your contract, but I'm afraid I'd have you out doing local spots for Charlie's Pizza Hut. After a couple of years of that, the famous reputation would fade. Then of course you wouldn't be as young as you are and quite as desirable. You might even start drinking a little more than is good for you.

NICOLE

You are a bastard. You would do it.

DAVID

You know I would, so don't give me the wrong answer.

(a pause)

I guess you better be going.

NICOLE

What?

DAVID

I've got a date. She'll be coming up soon. It might be embarrassing if you were here. I mean, she might not believe we were talking business.

NICOLE

Is that what we were doing?

DAVID

My driver will take you home.

David picks up her coat and holds it for her. She stares at him, angry and disappointed.

DAVID

Start getting used to calling me boss.

NICOLE

I don't think I ever called anyone that, even at the beginning.

DAVID

Well then it will be a novelty.

Nicole walks from the door back into the suite, crossing to the telephone. She picks it up and dials 'operator'.

NICOLE

If anyone inquires for Mr. Leiber,
please tell them he had to step
out on business. No calls.

She hangs up the telephone, takes off her coat and tosses it on the sofa.

NICOLE

Is that all right with you, boss?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

He smiles. He knows she's staying. He crosses to the door and puts on the latch.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHOPPING MALL, LONG ISLAND - THAT SAME NIGHT

Lots of kids and teen agers hanging out. Among them young Jason. The other kids want to see a movie. Jason declines.

JASON'S POV

The supermarket, open 24 hours. Evening shoppers still coming by to pick up their groceries.

ANGLE ON JASON

On the other side of the mall some of his friends wave at Jason, call out his name but to no avail, his mind is elsewhere.

KID

Hey, Jason. You ma's been looking
for you. She called up my house
looking...

JASON'S POV

moving through the parking lot and toward the entrance of the 24 hour supermarket.

ANGLE ON JASON

as he arrives at the automatic doors which spring open allowing him to enter the market.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Not particularly crowded at this late hour. David moves past the string of shopping carts--walks down the aisle heading in the direction of the dairy section.

JASON'S POV

FACES ignoring him, mostly housewives, some with their little kids perched in the shopping carts.

A WOMAN is pushing her cart forward, a LITTLE BOY perhaps a year old in the cart already opening some of the groceries, most evidently a pint container of "The Stuff." As many kids do in the market, they eat the merchandise before their mother even gets it to the counter. This little boy is licking the underside of the cap which he has pulled off of the package. It tastes good. His mother ignores him. She's too busy looking around for the proper breakfast cereal.

ANGLE ON JASON

seeing the little boy go past in the shopping cart. Jason turns, goes after him, grabs the package out of the little boy's hand tossing it on the floor and crushing it under his feet. The child begins to cry. The mother springs to the infant's defense.

MOTHER

What did you do?

Jason runs away from the irate parent, heading toward the back of the store.

ANGLE ON DAIRY SECTION OF THE STORE - NIGHT

In the distance we can hear the commotion, the mother screaming, the infant still wailing. Jason reaches the back of the store and the huge display proclaiming "The Stuff - take some home for the entire family."

CLOSE UP - JASON'S FACE

his eyes widened, he seems driven by some insurmountable force. There is something evil here, something terribly evil under the bright fluorescent lights of a typical American supermarket.

WIDER ANGLE ON JASON

as he lunges forward knocking the sign down. He reaches into the freezer section, picking up dozens of packages of "The Stuff" tossing it in all directions. Then he goes back for more. He throws it on the floor, against the walls, knocking over the displays. There is another stack of packages,

quarts, half gallons, gallons. Jason knocks that off and the boxes go rolling up the aisle. An ELDERLY WOMAN steps back and begins to scream in alarm.

JASON'S POV

A huge glass case behind which more packages stand waiting. Jason turns and sees a number of gardening tools in the hardware section. He picks up a rake, runs back swinging it, smashing the glass.

Just then a number of STORE EMPLOYEES converge upon him. They are about to reach out and grab the boy when he turns and swings the rake at them. His eyes wild like an animal, cornered.

JASON

Get away from me. It's gonna kill you. It's gonna kill you all!!

STORE MANAGER

Stay back. The kid's nuts.

Jason returns to the glass case swinging madly, smashing the rest of the glass, using the rake to knock over the stacks of product inside. Then he begins to stomp it, crushing it beneath his feet. Packages splatter open, the white foamy substance oozing around the floor of the store.

STORE MANAGER

Get him from that side.

The store manager reaches out grabbing the rake out of Jason's hands, struggling with him then sliding and slipping in goo and falling on his ass, but it gives the other store employees a chance to jump forward into the fray. It takes two or three of them to subdue the boy.

CASHIER

He bit me. I'm gonna have to get shots. The goddamn kid bit me.

JASON

Let go of me. It'll kill you.

The other employees grab Jason's arms and legs and veritabily lift him off the ground, his shoes covered with a white slush now. The employees sliding and slipping in the vast ocean of "The Stuff." Outside we can hear the sound of a police car coming through the night.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE, ST. REGIS HOTEL, NEW YORK - DAY

Pitch dark. Then the lights pop back on...to reveal David and Nicole propped up in bed, staring at one another in admiration. It's about 5 a.m. and they haven't done any sleeping yet.

NICOLE

Now you're going to wonder if I sleep with all my prospective clients.

(laughs)

Only the men.

DAVID

I happen to know different. You've shot down the best of them in flames.

NICOLE

Then you've had me "looked up."

DAVID

I had to be careful. I can't just bed down with any old executive.

Nicole gets out of bed and walks to the bathroom without the slightest show of self-consciousness. She knows she has a sensational body and she doesn't mind him looking her over in great detail, even with the bedside lamp left on, even at her brushing her teeth at the sink.

David gets up and crosses after her.

DAVID

Did I say you could use my toothbrush?

NICOLE

If you can't trust a woman you sleep with, at least you can trust one who shares your toothbrush.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Very large and mirrored, as Nicole washes her face, brushes her hair back out of her eyes. David comes up behind her, lifts her hair and kisses the nape of her neck.

DAVID

My father--I mean the conglomerate he controls--wishes to acquire "The Stuff."

NICOLE

It's not up for sale. Privately held, you know.

DAVID

Very privately. That's why I
need an insider.

NICOLE

So that's what you're really after?

DAVID

They don't make a merchandising
move without you. You came up
with the initial design, the
packaging, promoted the fucking
thing into an overnight sensation.

NICOLE

Not overnight. Eleven months
before the product hit the market.

DAVID

So you ought to know the people
better than anyone.

She walks out of the bathroom.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

She crosses to where her clothes have been nearly folded
from the night before, and begins to get dressed.

DAVID

Aren't we even going to take a
shower?

NICOLE

I can do that when I get home.

DAVID

I've struck a raw nerve. What's
the matter?

NICOLE

Maybe you're asking me for something
I can't deliver. The people are
pathologically secretive.

DAVID

But you've met them.

NICOLE

Most of the business is taken care of
with conference calls or by video tapes
sent back and forth. We make our
presentations, they give us their
input on tape.

DAVID

Isn't that a bit unusual?

NICOLE

At first we thought it was the Reverend Moon or somebody behind it. Somebody who couldn't afford to have their name publicly revealed. Maybe they're so fucking rich by now they just don't want to be bothered by anybody.

DAVID

Anybody like me.

Nicole is dressing now. David crosses and buttons up the back of her blouse for her.

NICOLE

Anybody who might try to raid the company. Anonymity is protection.

DAVID

Well, if you could pierce that veil of secrecy for us, I'd be willing to cut you in for a piece of the action. Let's say a ten percent finder's fee payable in preferred stock when the company goes public.

NICOLE

I'm dazzled by your footwork.

DAVID

Sleep on it.

NICOLE

Exactly what I intended to spend the morning doing since I didn't get any last night.

Nicole slips into her skirt, zips it up, goes looking for her shoes. David finds one of them and tosses it to her. She fields it like a second baseman.

NICOLE

Check with my office about six o'clock.

She exits into the hall.

INT. CORRIDOR, ST. REGIS HOTEL - DAY

As Nicole walks toward the elevator. She's surprised to see that David is walking beside her although he's still stark naked.

NICOLE

Get back inside. What if someone comes out?

DAVID

I'll scream.

NICOLE

(smiles)

Just another wealthy eccentric, I guess.

She leans over and kisses him lightly on the lips as she presses for the elevator.

ANGLE ON THE ELEVATOR DOORS as they slide open. The elevator is full of people, MIDDLE-AGE MEN, WOMEN, as well as a couple of ATTRACTIVE MODEL TYPES.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

She's shocked, thinking that they've seen her and the naked man. Then she turns and realizes that David is gone.

HER POV - THE CORRIDOR

Empty now. In the instant that the elevator door opened, David vanished.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

as she laughs at her own embarrassment and her hesitation at getting into the elevator.

NICOLE

I'm sorry. Going down?

She steps into the elevator as the door slides shut.

INT. DAVID'S SUITE, ST. REGIS HOTEL - DAY

David crosses to the telephone, still naked, dials an outside line and then a number.

DAVID

(into telephone)

Everything's in motion. Make sure the taps are in on her private line as well as her office.

VOICE ON PHONE

We've located Edward Vickers of the Pure Food and Drug Administration at his home near Baltimore. He just got back from some vacation.

DAVID

I'll see him personally. Book
me a flight and a rental car.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARYLAND COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

David's car pulls into the front circular drive of a fashionable colonial house. David emerges, crosses to the door and rings the bell.

INT. THE HOUSE

A tall, wiry, very RESPECTABLE GENTLEMAN, graying at the temple, crosses to the door followed by his huge GREAT DANE. He opens the door to find David waiting with some impatience.

DAVID

Mr. Vickers. I called about
an appointment.

VICKERS

Sure. The man from the consumer
magazine? Well come on in.

David looks at the dog.

DAVID

Is he all right?

VICKERS

Ben is absolutely harmless.

DAVID

I haven't seen one quite so large.

VICKERS

I've been feeding him well. Can
I get you a drink?

DAVID

I'm off of that for a while.

VICKERS

Glad to hear that. Liquor will
kill you. It ought to be outlawed.
But, of course, that couldn't
be possible in an alcoholic country
like this.

DAVID

Are we any different from anybody
else? The French? The Italians?
Call it an alcoholic world.

VICKERS

Well, we're trapped on this drunken planet. What can we do?

DAVID

(taking out notsbook and pencil)

How many years have you been with the Food and Drug Administration?

VICKERS

Oh, almost nineteen. Pretty soon they'll retire me.

DAVID

I'm told you were in charge of the initial testing on the product called "The Stuff."

VICKERS

It didn't have any name at the time. They certainly have merchandised the hell out of it. But we all knew it was a good product.

DAVID

You were unanimous?

VICKERS

It's not very often nowadays that you find a product that gives people their money's worth.

DAVID

And how long was it tested before you gave it your approval?

VICKERS

Well, you've got to understand this was a dessert not a prescription medicine. Not any different than yogurt or ice cream I should think.

DAVID

But it is different, you know that. It doesn't melt in hot weather. Did you ever wonder why?

VICKERS

An ice cream that doesn't melt. A minor miracle of modern technology. You sound unhappy that it doesn't melt.

DAVID

Did you actually find out how it was made. What went into it?

VICKERS

Our principal concern is for harmful side effects. After three months of testing, we saw no reason not to give the product our approval. I hope you're not going to tell me now that there's been some trouble--somebody allergic to it.

DAVID

That would make you feel terrible.

VICKERS

All we can look for is something common to most people. And if there is no reason to forbid the use of a product, then we have to okay it. In this case, it was a pleasure, because I like the taste of it myself. I even give it to the dog.

CLOSE UP THE DOG

staring rather ferociously at David

TWO SHOT

DAVID

Then you are not actually a chemist, Mr. Vickers?

VICKERS

I'm an administrator but I could give you the names of the others on the panel.

DAVID

I've already tried that. They're all out of the country...or deceased.

VICKERS

What a shame.

DAVID

The town you used to "test" the product...that was...

VICKERS

Stader. Nice little town. Out of the way...in Virginia.

DAVID

I'm sure.

VICKERS

Come to think, I may still have some old preliminary work sheets here in my office upstairs. If you want to look at them. Nothing confidential.

MED. SHOT - THE DEN

David gets to his feet.

DAVID

Let me Xerox them and mail them back to you...it'd help.

VICKERS

You're lucky I'm one of those people that never throws anything out. Ben can keep you company. Behave yourself, Ben.

Vickers gets up and crosses to the stairs. We see him rise to the upper floor. David is alone in the den. He looks around the place, gets up and walks only to have Ben walk directly beside him. David walks quickly to the swinging doors which lead from the den into the country kitchen.

INT. COUNTRY STYLE KITCHEN

David entering, the dog exactly beside him. As an after-thought, David crosses to the refrigerator, he pulls it open.

DAVID'S POV

A rather large refrigerator stocked full of containers of "The Stuff". There is not a single other food item in the refrigerator. Nothing but "The Stuff." This man is existing totally on a diet of what was originally devised to be a frozen dessert. David quickly closes the refrigerator. Reacts. Looks down at the dog.

DAVID'S POV

The dog glaring up at him, growling lowly, threateningly.

DAVID

You wouldn't like taking a bite out of me. I'm not nearly as tasty as your favorite dessert.

The swinging doors to the country kitchen open and Mr. Vickers comes in, carrying some sheafs of documents.

VICKERS

I'm sorry. I should have offered you some coffee or a soft drink.

DAVID

I was just looking for a glass of water but I'm not thirsty anymore.

VICKERS

These are my old rough copies... just a lot of names.

David briefly examines the papers and folds them into his side pocket.

DAVID

I'll send you back the originals.

VICKERS

Take your time.

DAVID

I'd better be going. Goodbye Ben.

Ben does not respond. Only that same low growl.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

As David exits and crosses down the circular walk to his car. Mr. Vickers stands on the porch with Ben beside him.

VICKERS

You've been a good boy, Ben. I have a treat for you. In fact, let's both have a treat. We deserve it.

As David's car pulls out of the driveway, Vickers and the dog head back inside. We know what they're going to do-- they're going to each have a huge serving of the new miracle food, they are hooked on it, they can't live without it.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVID DRIVING ON THE OPEN HIGHWAY - DAY

HIS POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

Up ahead a McDonalds.

ANGLE ON DAVID

as he continues to drive.

DAVID'S POV

A Jack-in-the-Box followed by another chain restaurant, a Kentucky Colonel Chicken franchise.

ANGLE ON DAVID

examining the road map, then looking back at the road.

DAVID'S POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

Up ahead another franchise, "The Stuff", Frozen Dessert, A Meal in Itself. Whereas all the other roadside franchises had only a few cars, "The Stuff" franchise has a full parking lot with other cars parked on both sides of the road and people lined up inside waiting to be served. In fact, the place is mobbed.

ANGLE ON DAVID'S CAR

as it pulls into the parking lot. There's no room so he must block a few other cars. David gets out and crosses toward the beautiful white castle which is the symbol of all of "The Stuff" franchises. There are too many people inside so David goes around to the back to the service entrance. The door is open and he pops his head in.

INT. REAR SERVICE ENTRANCE STUFF FRANCHISE - DAY

A girl is working in here amongst the other SIX EMPLOYEES, whose name is JANET, struggling to keep up with the demand. She sees David come into the service entrance.

JANET

Sorry, sir, but you're not permitted back here.

DAVID

I don't want food. Just a question.
How do you get one of these franchises?
I'd like to invest.

JANET

I suppose you write to the main office.

DAVID

And where is that?

JANET

Search me. I just come here in the morning and work my eight hours.

DAVID

How about your paycheck, where does that come from?

JANET

I don't remember. Let me look.

She reaches into her top pocket, takes out a check and a payroll voucher.

JANET

Out of state check. First National Bank of Georgia. Well, they cash them for us if we want and the checks have always been good, so we got no complaints. Not with the fringes.

DAVID

Fringes?

JANET

Sure. All we can eat.

DAVID

A lot of places aren't that generous.

JANET

Don't I know it. Jack-in-the-Box used to give us yesterday's burgers and the left over fries, but these people, they let us chow down often as we like.

DAVID

And how often do you like?

JANET

You wouldn't believe it but I've knocked off eighteen pounds since I came here. I was a monster. Now I'm okay.

DAVID

Don't you get tired of it? I mean, how much of it can you eat?

JANET

You'd be surprised.

DAVID

Well, it's not a balanced diet.

JANET

Haven't you heard? It's the perfect food.

COUNTER MAN

(shouts)

Hey, Janet, come on get back up here, we need some help.

JANET

I'm sorry.

(to David)

See, I told you you weren't supposed to be back here. I guess I couldn't answer any of your questions anyhow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

David driving again, driving through the night.

DAVID'S POV

The highway up ahead. A toll bridge.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MORE OPEN ROAD - NIGHT

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER SECTION OF THE ROAD

CAMERA GOING AROUND THE CORNER. Still another Stuff franchise. An entirely different building in entirely different surroundings, and open, wide open. A sign blinks: "Open 24 hours, we never close." It is strange to see there are as many cars here in the parking lot and as many people lined up as there were earlier during the day, hundreds of miles back on another stretch of highway.

ANGLE ON DAVID

as he pulls up on the other side of the road and sits there staring out the window.

DAVID'S POV

PEOPLE lined up at that counter.

ANGLE ON THE MACHINES

dispensing the white, frozen custard-like substance into large containers. People waiting patiently but urgently. They seem so pleased. Everybody going home with a smile on their faces and a large package in their arms.

ANGLE ON DAVID

DAVID

Jesus, it's 2:35 in the morning
and they still keep coming.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK AT MR. VICKERS' COLONIAL HOUSE, MARYLAND - NIGHT

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vickers is curled up on the sofa, his stomach writhing in pain. He walks and crawls to the telephone, reaching for the receiver and picking it up. Watching him, immobile, is his huge dog Ben. Ben never moves, never comes close, never responds--despite the fact that his master is apparently in agony.

VICKERS

(into telephone)

Hell...I'm in pain. I need...
Help me, please.

There is a VOICE on the other end of the line, obviously the OPERATOR.

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Who is this, please? I can't
understand you. Could you speak
up?

VICKERS

(into phone)

Help. I need help.

ANGLE ON THE DOG

For the first time, Ben begins to move. The animal crosses over to the wall on which the telephone wire reaches. The dog bends over, takes the telephone wire in his teeth and pulls hard, ripping the telephone cord out of the wall.

ANGLE ON VICKERS

The phone goes dead. Vickers drops the phone and stares over at the animal wondering why the dog did that when the dog knows how much pain he's in. He must.

VICKERS

Ben. Ben I'm in...

Vickers begins to crawl now through the swinging door that leads into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

We can see that the sink is filled with empty containers that formerly contained "The Stuff." The trash bag turned over also displays quite a number of crushed and empty quart containers. Obviously, poor Vickers has been o.d.'ing on the miracle food.

Vickers is crawling on hands and knees across the floor, trying to reach the kitchen door that leads out to the yard. Following behind Vickers is the huge dog.

ANGLE ON VICKERS

reaching up to the doorknob. A terrible growl comes from behind him. Vickers turns and looks back.

VICKERS' POV - LOW ANGLE

The dog looking absolutely ferocious, and something more--something totally unnatural. The Great Dane seems to have swollen up from inside. Then the dog opens its mouth to growl again but no sound comes out. CAMERA MOVES CLOSER. MOVING IN ON the Great Dane's wide open jaws. From inside, we see something moving, something white and formless, like a giant protoplasm. As it begins to rise out of the inside of the dog and come crawling out, the dog seems frozen, immobile, and from inside the dog comes "The Stuff", the living, writhing, frothing, solid entity rising out of the inside of the animal which hosted it--which stored it until it could reach its critical mass and take over completely. Now the dog is nothing but a hollow shell--and now "The Stuff" is ready to emerge.

CLOSE UP - VICKERS

HIS REACTION: Total horror, total fear.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN OF STADER, VIRGINIA - DAY

A whistle stop town of not more than 400 or 500 people. Hardly more than a post office, general store and gas station. A dust-covered pickup truck driven by David pulls into the filling station. David climbs out from behind the wheel as the ATTENDANT approaches.

ATTENDANT

Fill 'er up? There are clean restrooms right in there.

DAVID

I guess I made the wrong turnoff.
What's the name of this town?

ATTENDANT

Stader. Guess you never heard of it.

David turns when he hears another car coming, emerging from the same dirt road that he just drove out of.

DAVID'S POV

New car--a Dodge. The windshield caked with dust so that we cannot see who's inside.

Indeed the car has a very spooky look to it--almost masked. You know there's a driver in there, but we can't make him out.

ANGLE ON DAVID

Watching that other car nervously. Then he glances at the list that Vickers gave him and turns back to the attendant.

DAVID

I think I once knew somebody that lives here. Met him at a convention or something. What the hell was his name? Melville. Harold Melville.

ATTENDANT

Old Harold. He lived right up the street.

DAVID

Lived? Don't tell me something happened to him.

ATTENDANT

He got lucky. Got a job someplace. Moved on. How about that after forty-seven years--gettin' a big job like that?

DAVID

What kind of job?

ATTENDANT

Damned if I know. Just said he got a job, boarded up the house, didn't even try to sell it. Hell, who'd buy any property out here? Less than worthless.

DAVID

Didn't he tell me they did some kind of test down here on some new kind of food?

ATTENDANT

Oh, that! Fed us all of that good stuff that we could eat. Personally, I didn't like it. But then I don't eat much. I drink my dinner and my breakfast.

The attendant takes a whiskey bottle out of his back pocket and takes a few solid gulps before wiping David's windshield-- leaving it much the worse than it was when he arrived.

DAVID

How about a Hilda Rollins? She still here?

ATTENDANT

I thought you were just passing through.

The attendant wipes the lip of the bottle, hands it to David offering him a swig. David shakes his head declining.

ATTENDANT

Not a drinkin' man?

DAVID

Afraid of germs.

ATTENDANT

Hell, I ain't got nothin' wrong with me.

He shrugs and takes another swallow himself.

DAVID

Where does this Hilda Rollins live?

ATTENDANT

Straight down that road. First left. But she ain't there no more either. Just about everybody's moved out.

DAVID

How about Jerome Hansen or Ludy Blake?

ATTENDANT

Hey, what the fuck is this? You takin' a census or somethin'? First you come in here pretendin' you're lost out of your way and then you're reciting the goddamn telephone directory. Well they're all gone. They all got the fuck outta here and if I didn't have brain damage a long time ago, I woulda been gone too.

DAVID
Nobody around but you?

ATTENDANT
Well, some. Otis Beecher, he's still got his horses. You sure you don't want to use the restroom? It's real clean. It oughta be, nobody else uses it but me.

DAVID
I'll bet it's spotless but I don't have to go. Sorry.

ATTENDANT
You could at least wash your hands. I put in a new towel.

DAVID
On my way back. What do I owe you?

ATTENDANT
Twenty-seven dollars and thirty cents.

David pays the bill. The attendant makes the change.

DAVID
Recognize that car over there that just pulled in?

ATTENDANT
Two strangers in one afternoon. That's some novelty.

DAVID
Give me directions to Otis's ranch.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

David leaving the town behind, heading out to Otis's horse ranch.

INT. VEHICLE

David looks in the rear view mirror.

HIS POV REAR VIEW MIRROR

He's being trailed by the old Dodge with the caked-over windows.

EXT. OTIS'S HORSE RANCH

The main gate is partially knocked down. David doesn't even have to get out to open the fence; he just drives through a break in it.

EXT. RAMSHACKLE BUILDINGS - DAY

A few horses in the corral looking much the worse for wear.

ANGLE ON DAVID'S PICKUP TRUCK

as he pulls to a stop. He ambles out, looks around, calls out a few times--"Anybody here?", before crossing up to the porch. A step collapses under his weight so he moves more carefully. The door is slightly ajar. He pushes it open and enters.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Across from the door is a bed in which an OLD MAN sits crouched. The bed is wrinkled and disheveled as is its occupant.

DAVID

Otis?

OTIS

Come on closer. I can't see you good.

DAVID

You don't know me. I used to have a few friends hereabouts.

OTIS

Nobody lives here anymore. They all got successful.

DAVID

So I heard. American industry reached down here and plucked them all up and carried them off.

David sits down beside the old man.

DAVID

What really happened here, mister? What scared you?

OTIS

Everybody changed.

DAVID

I believe they did. Yeah.

OTIS

Something got into them.

DAVID

You said it.

OTIS

People who were satisfied all their lives...they got itchy to move on.... didn't care about their animals... went off and left their chickens and their horses. They might of all starved if old Otis hadn't done some- thin'. And afterward never a note or a phone call, or nothin'.

DAVID

A whole town just gets up and leaves.

(beat)

You didn't eat any of it, did you? When they had that marketing test here.

OTIS

The government was back of it, wasn't they? Now they want to hush it all up like they did that town near Vegas after that nuclear test when the wind blew the radioactive shit all over them people, and they told them all they wasn't in no danger, yet twenty years later, they're dropping like flies. Yeah, the government...well it didn't take no twenty years. Twenty days is more like it.

DAVID

But you didn't touch any of that shit?

OTIS

I don't eat nothin' but my steamed vegetables. My mama and my papa ate healthy--lived to be in their nineties.

DAVID

You're gonna live a good long time too. Come on, Otis, get up and I'll take you out for a plate of carrots.

OTIS

I don't wantta get up. No reason to. Ain't nobody to see, ain't nobody to talk to.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

He hears the sound of a CREAK outside on the porch. Someone is out there.

DAVID'S POV

A crack at the door, a shadow flitting across the porch.

David leans close to Otis.

DAVID

Keep on talking to me. I'll be right back.

OTIS

You're gonna go off too. Nobody stays here. Nobody comes here. This used to be a town, there was people, there was kids...

CAMERA FOLLOWS DAVID as he moves across the room, slides open a window and goes out.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

David is edging his way around the side of the building, coming up behind the porch, jumping the rail and grabbing a SHORT STOCKY MAN who is listening outside the door of the ranch house. David grabs him but, in a second, finds himself flying through the air as the man flips him. David crashes through the rail of the ranch house, landing in the dust.

The short man in the dark suit makes a dash back towards the Dodge which has been parked at the fringe of the property. David is after him. Dives and catches him in a tackle. The two of them go sprawling at the edge of the corral. A few punches are thrown.

CLOSER ANGLE

As David whirls the man around, we get the first clear view of the man's face. He's a stocky Japanese, MITSUBU.

MITSUBU

Excuse. I mean no harm. I stop for ask directions.

DAVID

Yeah, everybody seems to be lost today. You're Mitsubu, aren't you?

MITSUBU

I assure you you are mistaken. We all look alike.

DAVID

I thought the Bureau nabbed you in one of the sting operations. What was it you were trying to cop? A computer chip design. Well, you got nailed.

DAVID

All we sought was early information.

DAVID

Sometimes known as technology theft.

DAVID

The Americans seek our trade secrets as we lust after theirs. It is a defect of the times in which we live.

DAVID

And also good business.

David brushes himself off. He and Mitsubu begin to walk back toward the ranch house.

DAVID

I wouldn't be crude enough to ask who sent you.

DAVID

This delicious dessert product is to be introduced in Japan early next year. My employers wish proprietary information on the product so that we may successfully compete. We do not wish to share the fate of your employers--to be left, so to speak, out in the cold.

DAVID

How long have you been hanging around down here?

DAVID

One week with nothing to report. A town that has dried up and blown away. Maybe a side effect of eating too much dessert, an urge to migrate.

DAVID

An uncontrollable urge.

DAVID

Please allow me to brush off the back of your jacket. My apology for forcing you into physical combat.

DAVID

I needed the exercise.

DAVID

I could have, of course, killed you quite easily but such action was not indicated. A man does not kill other man over ice cream.

DAVID

Well, maybe this isn't ice cream.
Let's go in and talk to the old man.

INT. RANCH HOUSE

Old Otis is seated at the foot of his bed, applauding as they enter.

OTIS

Hey, I ain't seen a good fight like that in nearly eighteen years.

DAVID

I'm afraid we broke your bannister.

OTIS

Think nothin' of it. It was worth it for the entertainment value. You want to smash some furniture over each others heads, feel free. None of this stuff is antique. Most of it was bought by the missus and she knew I always hated it.

MITSUBU

One fight satisfactory for one day.

DAVID

I'd like you to write down your recollections of what happened here right after the testing started.

OTIS

Nobody'll believe it. I don't know that I believe it myself.

MITSUBU

Nobody die?

OTIS

Worse than dyin' if you ask me. You know, there are some animals like hogs that you can feed 'em all day and the'll never stop. They'll eat until it kills them.

MITSUBU

But you say no one die. No one became overweight? Obese?

OTIS

Nope. They ate that Stuff but they all stayed slim. Let me put it this way: they didn't laugh
(more)

OTIS (cont'd)

at my jokes no more and when I couldn't get my laughs, I just came back here and told the jokes to my horses and got better results. And when there wasn't nobody in town and nobody to go in to see, well, I just took to my bed and pulled the covers up like it was all some bad dream that I'd wake up from. But it wasn't no dream now, was it?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POST OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

A one-story building in need of a whitewash job. David's car and Mitsubu's car are parked outside.

INT. POST OFFICE

One lone MAN doing all the work, but then there isn't much mail coming through--virtually none, in fact.

POSTMAN

If it wasn't for these infernal circulars, I wouldn't have nothin' to keep me busy.

DAVID

What about forwarding mail?

POSTMAN

That's what they left me here to do.

MITSUBU

Who left you?

POSTMAN

What I mean to say is, that's all there really is to do.

DAVID

And where does all this mail get forwarded to?

POSTMAN

To the addresses the people left. But that isn't your business.

DAVID

Isn't it about dinner time? Aren't you gonna close up?

(beat)

Can we treat you to a bite?

POSTMAN
I've already eaten.

David crosses to the other side of the desk, looks into the trash can.

DAVID'S POV

A half dozen empty containers that formerly held "The Stuff". Each one of them a quart. The man has obviously put away four or five quarts very recently.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID
They went but you stayed.

CLOSE UP - POSTMAN

POSTMAN
(suddenly hostile)
Go away. Leave us alone.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID
What do you mean, us? We're talkin' to you.

CLOSE UP - POSTMAN

POSTMAN
We're not hurting anybody.

ANGLE ON POSTMAN

as he gets up calmly.

POSTMAN (cont'd)
I'll be right back.

He crosses to the small bathroom just behind the desk and closes the door. In a moment, we hear it lock.

David turns to Mitsubu.

DAVID
What do you think?

MITSUBU
Sick man. Get to hospital--order X-rays, check-up.

DAVID
And if he doesn't want to go with us?

MITSUBU

We kidnap.

DAVID

You high-tech spies really come up with some innovative ideas. Kidnap an American citizen right out of his own postoffice and X-ray the poor bastard.

MITSUBU

New technological advances! We hit on head, throw in backseat of car, take off, okay?

At that moment there is a thud from within the bathroom. David crosses to the door and knocks on it.

DAVID

Are you all right in there?

There's no answer. David tries the door again.

DAVID

Hello!

MITSUBU

Please stand aside. Watch out for splinters.

David steps out of the way. Mitsubu thrusts a karate chop directly through the wood of the door making quite a large hole in it. Mitsubu reaches through the hole and unlocks the door.

MITSUBU

Regret having to destroy U.S. government property.

Mitsubu opens the bathroom door revealing the postman lying on the floor next to the toilet curled up in a fetal position, his mouth is wide open. In fact, further open than any mouth we have ever seen.

CLOSE UP - POSTMAN'S HEAD

The mouth, a giant yawning hole taking up most of the face. The gums and teeth seem to have been pushed back making a giant cavity, some kind of tunnel into the body of the now deceased unfortunate. CAMERA TILTS UP to the window just above the toilet. It is open. There's a sticky, gleaming, moist substance clinging to the windowsill. It shimmers.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND MITSUBU

as they step over the body.

DAVID

Jesus, what happened to him?

MITSUBU

Substance wet and sticky on window.

Mitsubu puts his finger on the windowsill, takes them away rolling the fingers together, feeling the slimy wetness. They both look out the window, nothing to be seen out there.

MITSUBU

Also on chin and chest of dead man.

DAVID

Like something climbed out of him and then up the wall and out the window. Yeah, terrific. I'm in the right place because all of a sudden I feel like throwing up.

MITSUBU

I will be glad to hold you while you retch and then it is your turn to hold me.

DAVID

This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship, Mitsubu. I hope you've got a gun on you.

MITSUBU

Oh no. These hands are sufficient weapons.

DAVID

I hope you're right, Mitsubu. I think we ought to move on. What do you think?

MITSUBU

Like bat out of hell!

EXT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

As the Oriental and David exit from the post office walking very slowly and carefully toward their two cars parked outside. They each get behind the wheel of their respective vehicle.

It only takes them a moment to realize that these cars are not going to work. The engines won't turn over.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

Struggling, then crossing over to the hood of the car and lifting it and looking under. He can't figure out what's

wrong. CAMERA PANNING to Mitsubu getting out of his car and shrugging. Then he looks to his right.

MITSUBU'S POV

Across the street, dimly lit, the figure of the gas station attendant is seen disappearing behind one of the old boarded up buildings.

Now we know what has happened to these cars. They have been disabled on purpose.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND MITSUBU

DAVID

I noticed you didn't mention phoning for help.

MITSUBU

My instinct say phones no longer in operation.

THEIR POV

The other end of the street. Some FIGURES moving out into view, silhouettes of men and a couple of women--maybe a half dozen in number, coming down the street, carrying objects in their hands, long, sharp, dangerous objects--farm implements, hoes and shears and shovels.

CAMERA PANNING to the other end of the street. FIVE MORE FIGURES backlit silhouettes against the desert night sky carrying objects that one might find in a blacksmith shop, all heavy and long and deadly.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND MITSUBU

DAVID

Well, seems there were a few locals hanging around as a rear guard.

MITSUBU

Time has come to haul ass.

DAVID

What about the Japanese not wanting to lose face?

MITSUBU

Only thing Mitsubu does better than fighting is running.

DAVID

Pick a direction.

Mitsubu points back inside the post office. They dash back inside closing the door after them.

INT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Mitsubu and David jump the counter and head for the back door. They open the back door just as a FIGURE lunges through swinging a sharp-bladed object at them. David ducks but Mitsubu connects with a kick to the stomach and a chop to the back of the neck. The figure which has been attacking them crumples to the floor.

ANGLE ON THE BODY

A gaping hole in the side of the neck where Mitsubu has struck his attacker.

ANGLE ON DAVID

looking down.

DAVID

I bet you never punched a hole
in anybody before.

MITSUBU

Man hollow inside. Very unique.
Very scary.

DAVID

We're talking when we should be
running.

CUT TO:

EXT. REAR OF THE POST OFFICE - NIGHT

David and Mitsubu taking off in a mad dash, heading across the field which is now very cold.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Mitsubu and David running through the darkness. No stars. No moon. Just blackness all around, and a mean whipping wind.

DAVID

Stand still and listen.

There's the sound of the wind blowing and then distant footsteps walking, not running.

DAVID

They don't seem to be in any hurry
to catch up with us.

MITSUBU

They are persistent. They believe we will stop to sleep and then they will overtake us.

DAVID

Jesus, I'm not at all sleepy. Things like this have a habit of keeping me awake.

MITSUBU

Yes. I feel how you say "Hyper"? Perhaps we do better to separate. Divide them. Each have better chance.

DAVID

I would miss you, Mitsubu. Besides when it comes to a fight, I'm gonna need you to protect me.

MITSUBU

Pleased to feel wanted.

DAVID

I've got my breath. Let's go again. Like "bats out of hell".

The two of them jog on together.

VARIOUS TRUCKING SHOTS - NIGHT

Mitsubu and David jogging across the field.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Truck lanes. Big trailer trucks lumbering by every few minutes as David and Mitsubu reach the edge of the highway. There is no other illumination on the road except the occasional truck headlights. When a truck vanishes over the horizon, everything reverts to pitch black again.

DAVID

Even if somebody stops, I have my doubts about getting in. We might have to punch a hole in the driver if he gets funny.

Mitsubu holds up his fist, looks at it.

MITSUBU

Strange feeling in hand ever since I strike that blow. Abnormal feeling. Very unpleasant.

DAVID

It'll be getting light soon. I think
we'll be safer then.

MITSUBU

I think I will not feel safe until
I leave your country for home.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAWN

Mitsubu and David walking down the edge of the highway. A
truck comes up, passes them, then pulls to a halt.
The DRIVER sticks his head out the window.

DRIVER

Lookin' for a lift?

ANGLE ON DAVID AND MITSUBU

MITSUBU

No thank you.

DAVID

Naw. We're just working up a good
sweat.

ANGLE ON THE DRIVER

He shrugs. Thought he was doing a good deed but has been
rejected. He drives on.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND MITSUBU

as they continue to move along on foot. Not trusting anybody.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - DAY

David and Mitsubu are at the counter having donuts and coffee.
The place is full of TRUCK DRIVERS. It seems like a very
normal place to be.

DAVID

(to Mitsubu)

You're acquainted with my friend
Frank Herbert, at the FBI

MITSUBU

Very same gentleman who bust me.
They call it Japscam. Very unfair.
Very sneaky. Big embarrassment to
everyone.

DAVID

If you know the man, why don't you give him a call and tell him what you found out.

MITSUBU

Why you don't call?

DAVID

Frank'll put more trust in anything you tell him.

MITSUBU

But you colleague of his, me, crook.

DAVID

Believe me, you're higher in his esteem.

MITSUBU

I try to call.

DAVID

In that case I'll pick up the breakfast check. Here's where we part company Mitsubu.

MITSUBU

Sure you no longer need my iron fist?

DAVID

I love the way you punch holes in people but it wouldn't be ethical.

MITSUBU

Yes, ethics very important in our profession.

DAVID

Honor among thieves, you know.

MITSUBU

I call FBI, wait here, see if they show up. Very doubtful. You go on.

David looks around the diner.

DAVID'S POV

Scanning the various truckdrivers, some of them are eating bacon and eggs, others devouring ham and eggs, others sausages, various glazed and sugar-coated donuts, cruellers, all men with big, hearty appetites. Not a one of them is having a dose of "The Stuff."

ANGLE ON DAVID

Turning to the WAITRESS

DAVID

Hey, honey. Got any of "The Stuff"
for dessert?

WAITRESS

Can't get it. But it's on order.

DAVID

Well, I'll just have to come back
soon.

David crosses over to the truckdrivers who are hearty big eaters.

DAVID

Any of you guys heading on toward
Washington, can you give a guy a
lift?

TRUCKIE

Be taking off in a few minutes.
Your friend too?

DAVID

No. He's got other plans. He
likes it here.

ANGLE ON MITSUBU

at the pay telephone dropping in coins.

MITSUBU

Person to person to Washington,
D.C. To Special Agent Frank
Herbert at the FBI building.

EXT. TRUCK STOP DINER

Various trucks parked. The vehicle which is giving David
a ride pulls away, moving off down the highway.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER

Mitsubu on the telephone.

MITSUBU

(into phone)

Yes. Remember we take long ride
last July? Me in handcuffs. You
very proud to make big bust. Well,
(more)

MITSUBU (cont'd)

Mitsubu in trouble again. A few dead bodies this time. You come down, take a look. Send local FBI boys. No joke, Frank. Least I can do for man who entrapped me in such high style. Remember, nice dinners, pretty girls.

CUT TO:

INT. FBI OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

Special Agent FRANK HERBERT, about 33, short, wirey with close-cropped hair and the look of a man who does at least 100 push-ups each morning.

FRANK

(into phone)

How could I ever forget you, Mitsubu?
We had fun.

CLOSE UP - MITSUBU

MITSUBU

(on phone)

Well Mitsubu have one hell of a good time too, thanks to big FBI expense account. Look for some way to repay favor. Get your ass down here. Don't say not federal case. Shipping poison across state line is federal, right? Then get ass down.

CAMERA PANS AWAY from Mitsubu on the telephone to the truck-drivers chewing away on their apple pie with cheese, and their chocolate layer cake. PANNING TO the waitress, who crosses back into the kitchen, CAMERA TRUCKING with her as she moves toward the freezer. She opens the freezer door and enters.

INT. FREEZER

One entire wall is stocked with nothing but "The Stuff."

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. LA CIRQUE RESTAURANT, BACK IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

One of New York's most attractive and well-frequented bistros. Every table packed with stars of the ballet, the world of theater and music, as well as some elegantly attired CALL-GIRLS seated opposite evidently WEALTHY GENTLEMEN.

CAMERA DOLLYING FORWARD past the diners to reveal David entering and crossing to table where Nicole awaits him.

DAVID

Well, are we "in" or "out"?

NICOLE

It took some dancing but finally I got them to agree to let me visit the factory. The one and only.

DAVID

Where?

NICOLE

That's confidential too, but it's just outside of Midland, Georgia. I told them I'd arrive for a Monday afternoon tour with the idea of filming a spot there.

DAVID

Then you'll take me along as your male secretary.

NICOLE

I don't feel much like ordering. Could we go?

DAVID

Look, somebody has to carry the luggage. Then I can walk swishy and talk with a lisp and if you're good I'll let you chase me around the desk. What's the matter--you look on the verge of tears!

WAITER

Something from the bar?

DAVID

Give us a minute.

The waiter leaves, only a bit impatient at them.

NICOLE

Sorry for being such a downer. Didn't you see the paper today? The expo Toy Company is facing a twenty million dollar suit over one of the toys that I promoted. It blinded a couple of kids. I may even be called to testify.

DAVID

Why blame yourself?

NICOLE

It's happened before. I was a junior executive on the Norton Chemicals account when that scandal came out four years ago. They warned pregnant women to stop taking it but there were three dozen law suits they settled for a fortune.

DAVID

And you felt guilty then too.

NICOLE

Why shouldn't I? I worked on the thirty second that was credited with dominating the marketplace. It was all over the tube. And then the damn product ends up being dangerous.

DAVID

I guess I read you wrong. You're not so tough.

NICOLE

(looks at menu)

No wonder I've lost my appetite. The fish is probably filled with lead or mercury or some other shit. And the steak is packed with hormones and will probably kill you in a few years.

DAVID

It's dangerous to be alive nowadays. Even your food is trying to kill you.

NICOLE

From our toys to our cars. How do you think I feel when I've worked on an automobile campaign for a year and then they recall the damn model because the gas tank blows up and burns old ladies to death?

DAVID

We've got to have a talk, you and I, but not here!

They both get up from the table.

MITSUBU (cont'd)

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DAVID

We've got to have a talk, you and I, but not here!

They both get up from the table.

DAVID

(to the waiter)

We're dieting. This is for you.
Thanks.

(to her)

Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

David and Nicole on the crowded thoroughfare.

THEIR POV

A corner shop open late, about a DOZEN OR MORE PEOPLE lined up to buy "The Stuff" served in cones or in cups at a price of \$1.00 each. Adults and children, their money out, waiting rather impatiently for the new delicious food craze.

TRUCKING SHOT ON DAVID AND NICOLE, WALKING

DAVID

I guess I can level with you. I don't run a petroleum company. Don't interrupt. I'm an industrial spy...and millions of people are going to die if you don't help me.

NICOLE

Rule number one. You've got my attention. So keep selling.

They continue on through the city streets. We don't hear what David is telling her. We don't have to.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

AN ELECTRIC SIGN over the city street, blinking on and off, "The Stuff: You Like It, It Likes You" FLASHING NEON, always selling.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT

looking town on David and Nicole as they look up at the sign. She knows the whole story now--as much as David understands.

DAVID

It's everywhere, isn't it?

NICOLE

That's only the beginning. Next year they're coming out with flavors. Jesus!

DAVID

Not if I can help it.

NICOLE

Are you going to go public with your findings now?

DAVID

Not me. I need somebody with a better reputation than I've got. That's almost anybody.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - TELEVISION SCREEN

Figure of JAMES FOSTER, bright, intelligent, goodlooking, about forty being interviewed on a network news and talk show, the kind of series that plays on Sunday afternoon.

FOSTER

Forget warranties completely. The public ought to be able to bring back defective items and say: you sold me a piece of junk, don't fix it, give me my money back. I want a full refund. That's the only way we're going to get these industries to produce a satisfactory product.

NEWSMAN

Thank you. But our time is up. We've been talking with consumer advocate James J. Foster. Next Sunday our guest will be Senator John Streeter. Thanks and good afternoon.

INT. TV STUDIO

The program is just going off the air.

ANNOUNCER

For a transcript of today's program send \$2.00 to NBC Box 224 New York.

The program rolls its credits as the newsmen and the guest both begin to unhook the lavalier microphones that they have clipped to their jackets. The cameramen abandon their equipment as the lights in the studio come up full and Foster crosses to where his STAFF MEMBERS are awaiting him. Bright young college men and women, all idealists, working for short pay and long hours in order to provide the consumer with an advocate to stand up for his rights.

ANGLE WIDENS TO REVEAL

David and Nicole crossing to intercept Foster before he can reach his associates.

NICOLE

I'm Nicole Kendall and this is my friend Mr. David...

FOSTER

I know your friend.

And without another word, Foster slugs David--a nice sharp one to the jaw. David goes down on one knee. The members on Foster's staff run over, as does several of the camera crew.

DAVID

It's all right. Give me a minute.

FOSTER

I'd stay down there if I were you.

DAVID

Okay. You were entitled to that.

FOSTER

And a helluva lot more. Now if you want to file charges, I'm sure there are plenty of witnesses. Or do you need an instant replay?

NICOLE

You have a very nice left hook, Mr. Foster.

FOSTER

Don't bullshit me ma'am. If you're with him, you're poison. Did he tell you about the call girl he sent up to my hotel room in Chicago? The room the aircraft manufacturers paid him to bug!

DAVID

Well I only work for the best people.

NICOLE

What happened?

FOSTER

Nothing. After that, he went to great lengths to prove I was a faggot. But when he couldn't, he leaked some
(more)

FOSTER (cont'd)

rather vicious stories to the press anyway. It's pretty hard for man to prove he isn't queer when somebody starts those whispers. So I told him that next time I saw him I'd break his jaw.

NICOLE

I don't think anybody could mistake you for queer.

FOSTER

(to David)

Oh, you've trained her well.

DAVID

Don't walk away. We need your help. It's this dessert called "The Stuff." It's poison. Slow insidious poison.

FOSTER

Is it really?

NICOLE

I'm their agency executive. I wouldn't make this up. Promise me you'll at least investigate.

FOSTER

I go one step at a time. First, I might assign a couple of staff people to research "The Stuff." But for the record, write me a letter and send any documentation you may have.

DAVID

There isn't time for that.

FOSTER

You'd rather I jumped and started slinging accusations without any backup. By the way, who hired you? Answer me! Who's paying you to undermine public trust in this product.

NICOLE

Tell him, David. You can't hold anything back.

DAVID

The Amalgamated Dairy people hired me to make the world safe for ice cream, but...

FOSTER

Please don't bother me about this again.

He brushes past David and Nicole and is gone.

DAVID

That's what I get for telling the truth.

NICOLE

I can persuade him to give us a fair shot. You saw how he was looking at me.

DAVID

Not him. Not Foster.

NICOLE

You don't mind if I try?

DAVID

Why should I?

He takes out a small address book.

DAVID (cont'd)

I even happen to have his new home number.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAMES FOSTER'S MODEST BROWNSTONE APARTMENT, NEW YORK - NIGHT
CLOSE UP DRINKS BEING POURED.

PULL BACK to reveal Foster is alone with Nicole. He hands her a drink.

NICOLE

I didn't think you had any rotten habits.

FOSTER

I have to do something about that public image.

NICOLE

You could hire us to rework it for you.

FOSTER

Give me some balls, huh?

NICOLE

Well, I must admit I have wondered about you.

FOSTER

Too good, huh?

NICOLE

Too good to be true.

Foster grabs her and pulls her to him and kisses her fiercely on the mouth. His hands envelop her, begin to explore every inch of her body.

In a moment, Nicole responds to his touch. They are kissing each other with a great amount of heat being generated. Then all at once he stops.

FOSTER

Okay. I just wanted you to see I could do it.

NICOLE

I'll give you a nine plus on that.

FOSTER

As good a performance as you gave.

He picks up her purse, searches it for a "bug", then returns it.

NICOLE

Is this any way to treat a lady?

FOSTER

We're both good actors, but your friend tried this with some of the finest hookers in the business and it didn't work.

NICOLE

Exactly who do you sleep with, Mr. Foster?

FOSTER

I'm usually alone when I lower my lamp.

NICOLE

That sounds like a lyric.

FOSTER

It is a lyric.

NICOLE
I like you.

FOSTER
You like David too.

NICOLE
Jealous?

FOSTER
Skeptical.

He crosses and opens the apartment door for her to leave.

FOSTER
Well, surprise, no photographers
outside.

NICOLE
Help us, Mr. Foster. Run some
emergency tests on "The Stuff."
Find out what it is. Get it
recalled.

FOSTER
You're serious. All right. If
that's all you want--it can't do
any harm.

NICOLE
And I'll be in close touch.
What, no kiss goodnight?

Foster looks both ways to make sure that there's nobody out
there. It's a comical move, an exaggeration. He knows that
there isn't anybody there.

FOSTER
It isn't necessary. I'll order
the tests.

NICOLE
I still want it.

He kisses her a long goodnight before she walks down the narrow
stairs of the old brownstone and out of sight.

FOSTER
(aloud)
If anybody's listening...I like
her. That's for the record.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESEARCH LAB - NIGHT

DR. FOLEY, a handsome black gentleman about 50 with a head of almost totally gray hair, looks up from his electron microscope.

DR. FOLEY

Royal jelly. That's what this reminds me of. Royal jelly.

FOSTER

That sounds like something you'd have for breakfast.

Foster tastes a drop of the white substance on the tip of his finger.

DR. FOLEY

The queen bee manufactures royal jelly. It's ingested by the male bees and turns them into drones. After that, they work themselves to death.

FOSTER

Something like marriage in our society.

DR. FOLEY

Biologists have always been curious about how the queen bee controls her drones. We've always been convinced it's the royal jelly that makes them susceptible to her willpower.

FOSTER

Then it might not be such a good thing for people to be eating.

DR. FOLEY

I wouldn't eat it.

FOSTER

Can you give us something in writing?

DR. FOLEY

Hell no. We're talking about a nationally known product. I haven't got the money to go into court and defend a lawsuit. Who's going to protect me?

FOSTER

You just indicated it's dangerous.

DR. FOLEY

What I think and what I sign my
name to can be two different things.

FOSTER

Fine. I'll find someone else, Doc.
With some guts.

DR. FOLEY

Take my advice. Get yourself a
whole panel of experts. And some
expensive lawyers.

Foster exits from the laboratory. The doctor turns his
attention back toward the electron microscope. He looks
through it.

DR. FOLEY'S POV THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE

The movement of the cell-like structures constantly in motion,
obviously very much alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ALL NIGHT COFFEE SHOP, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Nicole and David having O.D.'d on black coffee. She's just
come back from the pay phone.

NICOLE

Foster still won't take my calls.

DAVID

You thought you had him wrapped
around your finger. Just what did
you have to do?

NICOLE

You have a dirty mind. I appealed
to his better nature.

DAVID

I wish I had one.

Nicole is scanning the early edition of tomorrow's Daily News.
She finds an article of interest on an inside page.

NICOLE

Get this? Some kid on Long Island
sure as hell doesn't like "The
Stuff" for breakfast. He went
bonkers in the local shopping
center.

DAVID

Let me see that.

NICOLE

Important?

DAVID

Catch yourself a taxi home and make those flight arrangements. I've got to see this kid. By the way--I love ya..

EXT. THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

David jumps in a taxi. The cab pulls off with Nicole staring after it--rather surprised--then obviously pleased.

NICOLE

"I love you." Now that's one very catchy line.

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE HALL - NIGHT

A series of detention rooms, a rather modified jail for juvenile offenders some of whom are rougher and meaner than their adult counterparts. David is being led down the corridor by the TURNKEY.

TURNKEY

Take it from me, I'd rather be handling anybody than these little bastards. Give me rapists and murderers. At least they don't have these little baby faces staring up at you. At least you know enough not to turn your back.

DAVID

How long you been here?

TURNKEY

Eight months and it feels like forever. I think this is the kid you want in here.

The turnkey looks over the form which he carries in his hand on a clipboard. Obviously David has been given permission to visit one of the juvenile offenders. The door is unlocked and David enters. CAMERA FOLLOWS. Seated in a corner in a hard-backed chair staring at the doorway is young Jason.

DAVID

Come on now. I know, I know all about it. I believe you.

JASON

I'm crazy. I know I'm crazy.

DAVID

No, you're not. There are others who have seen it too.

CLOSE UP - THE BOY

as he steps back, wiping the tears out of his eyes. A sudden look of hope welling up inside of him. The knowledge that he's not insane and all of this is real.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

David enters. Nicole waiting for him with romantic ideas as he surprisingly walks in with a kid.

NICOLE

Who's that?

DAVID

Just one of us. Say hello to Jason.

NICOLE

The celebrated destroyer of the A & P?

DAVID

He's a witness and he's a fighter.

(to the boy)

I've got a couple of boys just about your age. My wife doesn't let me see them but every once in a while they manage to slip me a postcard.

JASON

How come she doesn't want you to see them?

DAVID

Oh, she's mad at me. I deserve it. I was a louse.

NICOLE

Why do you put that in the past tense?

DAVID

Come on. The kid thinks I'm terrific. I busted him out of the slammer.

JASON

We didn't actually escape. I mean he got them to let me go.

DAVID

Then I rented him from his parents for \$2500.

JASON

Yeah, I'm supposed to be research on juvenile crime.

DAVID

Okay incorrigible, look at the menu. You can order anything you want from room service.

JASON

Anything?

DAVID

Anything but you-know-what.

Jason throws down the menu.

JASON

All of a sudden I'm not hungry.

Nicole takes David by the arm and leads him over by the window.

NICOLE

Don't you think we better get him his own room?

DAVID

He can sleep on the couch.

NICOLE

I really don't feel like any more roommates.

DAVID

The kid's had a bad shock. It's a wonder he can sleep at all. He needs to have somebody nearby.

NICOLE

I hope you don't see me as playing the nursemaid role. That would be bad casting.

DAVID

Nobody's asking you to do anything. He saw "The Stuff" move. His parents made him eat some, he flipped out.

NICOLE

He saw it--do "what"?

WHIP PAN TO CLOSE UP - JASON ON THE TELEPHONE

looking at the menu and ordering Room Service.

JASON

(on phone)

I don't like breakfast. I'll have a prime rib of beef with a bone in it and a shrimp cocktail and lamb chops. No dessert. The lamb chops are dessert.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

As a limousine pulls up in front of the terminal, David and Nicole emerge. Following is young Jason staring curiously at his benefactors.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LANDING STRIP - DAY

The pilot of a private Lear Jet awaits as his passengers arrive on a tram. The plane belongs to the ad agency and is clearly marked as such.

DAVID

All aboard for Georgia! Watch the kid--he's an incorrigible.

PILOT

Any other passengers or are we ready to go?

Jason climbs into the passenger section.

JASON

I've never been on a plane this little.

PILOT

Come on, son, I'll show you the cockpit.

NICOLE

Taking him on the company plane
could involve us in litigation if...
all right--I'll shut up.

She gets on board the plane. David climbs in after her and closes the sliding panel.

DISSOLVE TO:

MED. SHOT - DAY

The ad agency plane taking off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEAR JET - DAY

David and Nicole in the passenger section. They are the only ones aboard except for the CREW. David is looking over several large blow-ups of aerial photographs and drinking scotch from the amply supplied bar.

DAVID

Based on your info we located
the plant from the air. Not much
we can tell except that the staff
wear these yellow uniforms and
caps.

NICOLE

Why are you really doing all
this? Your love of humanity?

David doesn't reply. He gestures with the bottle as if inquiring if she'd like a shot of scotch. She declines.

DAVID

It's the quality of the enemy.

NICOLE

Quality?

DAVID

Absolute evil. I thought for a
while that I was born in the wrong
generation. That all of that went
out with Mr. Hitler.

NICOLE

Leaving us a world in which the
heroes and villains have gotten
all mixed up?

David crosses over and sits down beside her, sitting too
close, perhaps.

DAVID

Well haven't they? After all,
what am I? The hero of all of
this. Then why haven't you got
your arms around me? Why aren't
you behaving like a typical heroine?

NICOLE

Maybe I want to be the hero too.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE PLANE IN FLIGHT

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LANDING FIELD - DAY

A private strip in the State of Georgia as the plane comes
in for a perfect landing, pulling to the end of the runway
where several limousines await its arrival.

INT. THE PLANE

Young Jason, spread across a row of seats fast asleep. David
talks to the pilot.

DAVID

Keep him entertained when he
wakes up--but don't leave the
plane. We may need a quick
takeoff.

PILOT

Whatever you're up to, good luck.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLANE - DAY

Now parked, with David and Nicole alone disembark to be greeted by representatives of the company.

MR. HOWARD

(to Nicole)

We didn't realize you were bringing anyone with you.

NICOLE

Oh, this is Roger Lawford, my slightly male secretary.

DAVID

Her boy friday.

MR. HOWARD

How do you do? Well, everyone's waiting for you at the plant.

NICOLE

Isn't it a little late in the day?

MR. HOWARD

We thought we'd get this over and done with and get you back on your plane. I know you must have a very busy schedule.

Mr. Howard opens the back door to one of the limos. Nicole and David get in, with Mr. Howard following.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY

The two limousines in motion, heading toward the plant.

INT. LIMO - LATE AFTERNOON

MR. HOWARD

There really isn't very much to see. It's a very simple process. Nothing very photogenic or theatrical about it.

DAVID

You're Elliot Howard?

Mr. Howard

Yes. I'm chief of public relations down here. That's Michael Grimsby in the front seat.

DAVID
Grimsby and Howard.

David takes out a small notebook, checks a piece of data in it and then puts the book away.

DAVID
Didn't you both live in the town of Stader at one time?

MR. HOWARD
How did you know that?

DAVID
That's where the product was first tested by the Food and Drug Administration.

MR. HOWARD
Yes, that's how we heard about it. I had my own business down there but I gave it up to join the firm.
(pause)
We were both convinced that this was a product of tomorrow.

VIEW THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW OF LIMO

The gates of the factory up ahead.

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

The silence inside the vehicle is almost shattering. CAMERA PANS TO

CLOSE UP - DAVID

Continuing to needle Mr. Howard.

DAVID
From gas station operator to corporate vice president in one jump. That's a first in American industry.

MR. HOWARD
People are always leaving small towns to go where the opportunities are more promising. What brought you to our home town? You ask so many pertinent questions.

DAVID
Oh, the agency had an idea about doing a campaign using the first people who ever tasted "The Stuff."

MR. HOWARD

Oh, yes. Weren't they the lucky ones.

NICOLE

Imagine our disappointment when we found out that...nobody lived there anymore.

MR. HOWARD

It's only a town of six hundred people.

NICOLE

More like fifty now.

EXT. FACTORY GATES

as the lone GATEMAN swings the gate open admitting the two limousines.

INT. COURTYARD OF FACTORY

as the limos pull in. David and Nicole get out. They are greeted by an elderly gentleman, JAMES CASSIDY.

CASSIDY

Call me Cassidy. I'm the company foreman. I want to compliment you on the wonderful job you folks on Madison Avenue have been doing.

NICOLE

It's easy to sell something when people like it.

CASSIDY

Yes. We like it ourselves. Some days it's tough to keep the workmen from eating up all the profits.

DAVID

I'll bet.

CASSIDY

Well, it's late in the day so I might as well start showing you through. Watch your step.

INT. FACTORY

Several dozen giant vats which contain thousands of gallons each, the vats connected by huge pipes and an elaborate pumping system.

CASSIDY

These are storage vats. And just down beyond is the bottling and packing section of the plant.

DISSOLVE TO:

VARIOUS POINTS ON THE TOUR

David and Nicole are shown around. We see the machines which dispense "The Stuff" into bottles, jars, cardboard containers and plastic boxes. Each of these operates on its own separate assembly line.

CASSIDY

What makes our job so much easier is that "The Stuff" doesn't require refrigeration and it doesn't spoil.

NICOLE

You don't seem overstocked.

CASSIDY

Naw, there's so much demand we can barely keep up with it.

DISSOLVE TO:

LABELING SECTION OF THE FACTORY

All the various sized packages are labeled with the brightly colored red and blue that Nicole herself initiated. Cassidy takes David and Nicole through this section of the plant.

NICOLE

Where are all the ingredients put together? Where does the mix take place?

CASSIDY

Ah, that's a state secret, ma'am. We're pretty tight on that subject.

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

as she looks around.

HER POV

The FACES of the various WORKMEN at their jobs. Nobody looks up. Nobody smiles.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

NICOLE

You know what puzzles me is nobody here has given me a second look? Maybe I'm getting old, or this dress isn't flattering.

DAVID

Nobody winked at me either.

CASSIDY

These are all fine family men. Maybe you're used to a different kind of people back east.

NICOLE

I've been all over the world and had passes thrown my way.

CASSIDY

Well, you're safe with us.

NICOLE

And that's all you're going to tell us?

CASSIDY

It's all I'm allowed to tell.

NICOLE

My concept was to film a commercial down here with the people who actually manufacture "The Stuff." A kind of behind the scene look. You know, show them how clean the factory is, how well kept.

DAVID

How antiseptic.

NICOLE

That isn't a good word in advertising but clean is a nice word. I notice nobody even smokes.

CASSIDY

Oh, we don't permit that.

NICOLE

But getting back to the actual making of...

CASSIDY

Come with me.

He leads them up a narrow staircase to a catwalk and across the catwalk through some metal doors.

INT. COMPUTER STATION

A computerized center with a large multi-colored machine, a monstrously large one, and it is in constant operation.. Computer tapes are rolling and figures are appearing on the various television screens, undecipherably figures and numbers and codes.

CASSIDY

This is master control. The place is totally automated. As to the manufacture, we don't have to do a thing and we don't have to know anything either.

NICOLE

The computer does it all?

CASSIDY

And it doesn't tell any tales out of school either.

DAVID

Who set all of this up?

CASSIDY

That happened long before I came with the company.

David crosses over and touches the side of the apparatus with his hand.

MR. HOWARD

Please don't touch.

DAVID

Oh, Mr. Howard, I didn't see you there.

MR. HOWARD

Why don't you come back in the morning and take the tour over again? Maybe I can have some better answers for you by then.

DAVID

If it wouldn't be a bother.

CASSIDY

Why should it be? It's been a long flight and all. You must be tired.

MR. HOWARD

We've taken the liberty of booking motel rooms, close by. It's not much but they're not set up for tourism.

NICOLE

I hope mine's got a tub. I feel so grimey.

CASSIDY

We'll have you picked up in time for a nice breakfast and then bring you on back. You might even want to take some photographs in the daylight.

NICOLE

Yes. I brought my Nikon.

EXT. COURTYARD OF PLANT

The light is beginning to fail as David and Nicole get back in the limousine. It pulls away.

CLOSE UP - CASSIDY

Waving them a farewell.

CASSIDY

Good bye.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Darkness creeping in as the limousine carries David and Nicole away from the plant.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

David and Nicole are brought to the place by Mr. Howard.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - NIGHT

The MOTEL MANAGER handing keys to David and Nicole from behind the desk.

MANAGER

We only keep a couple of rooms
cleaned up this time of year. Not
too many people come off the highway.

MR. HOWARD

We got you two the presidential
suite and the vice presidential
suite. Sleep well.

DAVID

I'm going to collapse as soon as
I hit the pillow.

MR. HOWARD

Don't forget that nice bath.

DAVID

I wish there was someone to scrub
my back.

He winks at Mr. Howard who exits with embarrassment. Nicole
looks at David.

NICOLE

You're nothing but a flirt.

DAVID

Well, you can't blame a guy for
trying.

They smile at the Manager who points.

MANAGER

The two end rooms. There's an
ice machine down the hall...and
oil lamps on the dresser in case
of a power failure.

NICOLE

Could you wake us up at seven
o'clock in the morning?

MANAGER

No trouble.

David and Nicole exit.

EXT. THE MOTEL - NIGHT

As David and Nicole head down toward the two rooms. They
open both doors, put on the lights and look in.

NICOLE

Well, your room or mine?

DAVID

Let's try yours.

He turns off the light in the other room and both he and Nicole enter the farthest room--her room. They close the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT MOTEL - NIGHT

A sign: VACANCY blinks on and off. All at once it changes as the word: NO pops on, so that the sign now reads: NO VACANCY.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Two beds. In one of them Nicole is asleep. CAMERA PROWLING ACROSS the room to the other bed where David also lies motionless, twisting and turning as if in some terrible dream. Finally he gets comfortable or else the bad part of the dream has passed. David lies quite still and with the pillow pushed over beside him, his head flat on the mattress. CAMERA MOVING IN. Suddenly the pillow begins to move, to pulsate, almost as if it is alive. And then, before our eyes, the pillow starts to split open. The pillowcase slowly tears and within it we can see the striped fabric of the pillow also splitting open a bit at a time. Silently opening as something inside it begins to squirm out--a white protoplasm. The pillow which we thought was stuffed with foam was indeed filled with "The Stuff" which now continues to squirm forth like a giant amoeba crawling across the covers over David's chest, crawling slowly up to cover his chin and his face.

The entire contents of the pillow seems to have come out and taken form and slithered up over David's nose and mouth to cut off all air. David cannot breathe and in an instant he awakens, his eyes clearly visible just above the mass which has covered his face. He realizes what is happening to himself. He reaches up and tries to dislodge "The Stuff" by pulling away at it but it is clamped down tight. He panics, rolls off of the bed onto the floor.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

She's awakened by the noise. She switches on the lamp by the bed, sees what's happening. She screams.

HER POV

Looking over her shoulder down at the floor. David is writhing on the floor. "The Stuff" covering his face, holding on tight. He is unable to breathe. He is being suffocated. He kicks and writhes and rolls over and claws at it but there is no getting loose.

LOW ANGLE - NICOLE

backing away, almost paralyzed by fear. She looks over at her bed.

HER POV

Her pillow, beginning to move around too, and now to split open and the foam contents to come forward. The killer foam. The living, breathing monster that human beings have been eating for the past month, making it part of themselves.

The ultimate nightmare come true. The contents of the pillow slithering out onto the checkered blanket. Nicole reaches over and covers it with the bedspread. She can't bear to look at it. She can't imagine what to do to save David. But she must act quickly, he can't survive much longer without air.

ANGLE ON DAVID

trying to get to his feet. He reaches his knees but cannot get his balance. He's overcome with weakness. He falls back again on the threadbare carpet of the motel room, helpless to struggle any further.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

She has to try something. She sees something on the dresser that gives her an idea. An old fashioned oil lamp.

CLOSE UP THE OIL LAMP

as Nicole removes the top. It's full of inflammable oil.

Nicole drops to her knees beside David. "The Stuff" is all over his face. She pours the oil all over the surface of "The Stuff." Then she grabs the lighter from her purse and ignites the oil. It erupts in flames.

ANGLE ON "THE STUFF"

covering David's face. It begins to recoil, to shrivel, to pull away from David--as it roasts. David's nostrils are now freed from under the suffocating grasp of the protoplasm. "The Stuff" has lifted up sufficiently that David can get his hand under it and pull it away from his face, burning his hand badly on its still flaming surface. David picks particles of "The Stuff" off of his chin and out of the corners of his mouth. He's still gasping, coughing.

Nicole rushes to David as he pulls himself up on the other bed--and in doing so pulls away the bedspread coming face-to-face

with another cluster of "The Stuff" on Nicole's bed. He screams for the first time in his life, as Nicole grasps his hand and pulls him toward the door.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

As stumbling, they both fall out onto the porch and crawl towards the car. Then they pause. Looking in the direction of the office. The manager's office.

LOW ANGLE THEIR POV

Illuminated by the moon and by the flashing orange light as the elderly MANAGER of the motel comes out, smiling with many missing teeth, shaking his head slowly from side to side as if amused, for surely if "The Stuff" hasn't gotten them now, it will get them very shortly.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND NICOLE

They reach their car and get inside.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

As David and Nicole get in, pushing down the buttons, locking themselves in.

NICOLE

Wait. Look in the back. Look under the seats.

David gets out of the car, opens the back door and checks the floor. Nothing there.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

He runs around to the trunk. Opens the trunk.

HIS POV INSIDE THE TRUNK

A huge cluster of "The Stuff" is pulsating in there, just waiting. The spare tire is partially dissolved by it. David recoils, runs back, grabs Nicole.

DAVID

Get out of the car. Get on out!

There's no use worrying about the luggage in the trunk--it too has been dissolved.

TRUCKING SHOT: David and Nicole running across the parking lot outside the motel. The manager's pickup truck is there, much the worse for wear. David looks in the window.

DAVID'S POV

The keys are in the ignition

VARIOUS SHOTS

David opens the doors, searches the pickup, finds nothing dangerous, nothing threatening. The manager still stands there by the office, backlit by the orange flashing light, making no effort to stop them.

DAVID

We're making an even trade, mister.

He opens the door for Nicole who climbs in. A moment later the pickup has started after a few tries of the ignition and it pulls away from the motel leaving dust in its wake. The motel manager simply stares after it, almost like something out of a wax museum only with a slight palsy to prove that he still has some life.

INT. THE PICKUP--IN MOTION - NIGHT

NICOLE

What if he reports the car stolen--
and we're arrested?

DAVID

Oh, we'll just explain to them that
our pillow tried to kill us.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE FACTORY - NIGHT

CAMERA PANNING to the right to some brush behind which David and Nicole are watching. Not far away the pickup truck is parked.

ANGLE ON THE GATES OF THE FACTORY

as they're opened by the SECURITY GUARDS and a PARADE OF TRUCKS begins to emerge, eight of the elongated vehicles that look like the kind of transports that carry highly inflammable oil.

VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE TRUCKS

rumbling down the ramp outside the factory and onto the highway.

ANGLE ON DAVID AND NICOLE

NICOLE

They keep on coming.

DAVID

They're using the entire fleet. I figured with only that many trucks they'd have to make several trips a week.

NICOLE

To where?

DAVID

I don't know. I'm almost afraid
to think about it. Let's go.

TRUCKING SHOT as David and Nicole climb into pickup and start the engine without turning on the headlights.

VARIOUS SHOTS

The convoy of trucks moving along the highway.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON DAVID AND NICOLE

In pickup, following at a distance.

THEIR POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

Far away, the lights of the convoy rounding the curve of the highway. They keep well back. There are very few other vehicles on the road tonight. Other cars pass them but they maintain their distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER PORTION OF THE HIGHWAY

The convoy continually in motion. The convoy turns off now onto a paved road.

VARIOUS SHOTS

as the convoy moves into more heavily vegetated areas, the trees closing in over the road just over the tops of the huge trucks. The paved road ends. They are now on a gravel road.

ANGLE ON GRAVEL ROAD

leading up to huge gates. SECURITY MEN at the gates unlock them and pull them open. The convoy enters. The gates are then closed.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON DAVID AND NICOLE'S PICKUP

ending the paved road, moving onto the gravel.

INT. PICKUP.

DAVID

We're making too damn much noise.
I'm gonna pull off the road and
park.

NICOLE

They could be miles up ahead.

DAVID

I'd rather get sore feet than a
bullet in the back.

DISSOLVE TO:

NICOLE'S HIGH HEELED SHOES

held in her hand as she walks barefoot on the gravel road.
Beside her is David walking slowly, softly.

NICOLE

If you're a gentlemen you'd offer
to carry me.

DAVID

I've never carried the vice president of
a corporation who earns triple what I do.
Come on Nicole, have you ever carried
anybody in your life? You run over guys
like a steamroller.

NICOLE

Didn't I just save your life?

DAVID

By setting fire to my face. The
best I can offer you is a piggy
back ride. Hop on.

NICOLE

I'd call that rather undignified
and unladylike, but I'll take it.

DISSOLVE TO:

LOW ANGLE SHOT - THE FENCE

as David with Nicole on his back cut through the underbrush
finding their way to the edge of a fence.

NICOLE

Now, I guess you expect me to climb
it.

DAVID

You can always wait here, stand
guard.

NICOLE

Thanks, but give me a boost.

She pulls her skirt up around her hips. David gives her a boost in a most ungentlemanly way and up and over she goes, landing hard on the other side.

DAVID

Well, don't just lie there, get up and catch me!

David vaults the fence. His burned hand is giving him pain and trouble.

NICOLE

That poor hand.

DAVID

Just kiss it and make it better.

NICOLE

I always make it better when I kiss it.

Together they disappear into the brush on the far side of the fence.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HUGE CLEARING - NIGHT

Big transport trucks are lined up. Huge vacuum hoses running from the back of the trucks and down amongst the rocks in the center of the clearing.

OVERHEAD SHOT (AS FILMED FROM A HELICOPTER) - NIGHT

The view is straight down. The trucks circled around the rocks in what looks like an empty riverbed. The hose emanating from the truck being operated by an engine providing the vacuuming power to syphon up huge quantities of liquid. We can't as yet see what it is that is coming out of the bottom of that riverbed and into the truck.

ANGLE A FEW HUNDRED YARDS FROM CLEARING

David and Nicole reaching the end of their cover, looking out at the convoy which is parked not too far off.

DAVID

I have to try and get closer.

NICOLE

You'll get spotted.

He takes the black jacket that he is wearing and turns it inside out. It's orange on the other side--the same color of orange as the jackets being worn by the truck drivers and the maintenance crews who are now at this very moment operating the syphoning process. The same color jacket worn by all those in the plant which David and Nicole visited.

NICOLE

Brought along your own wardrobe?

DAVID

Had it made up special to match the uniforms in our aerial photos.

He pulls a cap of the same color out of one of the pockets, puts it on, pulls it down over his eyes. He might very well be just another one of the maintenance crew. Perhaps he will not be identified as an intruder. He has to take that chance.

NICOLE

And what happens if they "make" you?

DAVID

I've still got this.

NICOLE

You'd shoot somebody?

DAVID

I have a hunch that they'd start shooting first. Let's see. If anything happens, see if you can make it back over that fence by yourself. The keys to the pickup are on the floorboard.

He starts to go. Nicole stops him.

NICOLE

Hold on. Let me "make it better" again.

She goes for his lips this time, holding him by the nape of the neck. She breaks the kiss, pulls the hat down hard over his eyes.

DAVID

I love encouragement.

He leaves the position of cover and walks with long strides out toward the convoy of trucks making no effort whatsoever to hide his approach.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

watching him nervously.

TRUCKING SHOT HAND HELD moving with David as he crosses toward the convoy, circles the trucks, coming within yards of other workmen who are all busily waiting for their vehicles to be backed up in position to proceed with the syphoning process.

David moves around the hood of one of the trucks, steps down the incline into the dried up riverbed filled with strange looking rocks.

HIS POV

The rocks in the riverbed are weird, almost luminous in the moonlight, unlike any rocks we've ever seen before. They have almost a feeling of being made of flesh and blood; strange shapes like creatures from some other galaxy. Although they are inanimate objects, they have a feeling of life. David kneels down and touches one of the stones, his hand comes away sticky and feeling quite strange. David continues through the riverbed closer to the area where the huge tubes are syphoning something out of the earth.

DAVID'S POV DRAWING CLOSER AND CLOSER

he sees like some underground spring bubbling forth its water, the bottom of the bed seems to culminate in a great fissure in the earth, a huge crack from which emanates a bubbling white substance. "The Stuff" itself.

As it bubbles up out of the earth, the syphon captures it and draws it forth to the tubes and then into the back of the storage trucks. When one truck is full, the next truck will move into position and continue to pick up "The Stuff."

CLOSE UP DAVID

watching

CLOSE UP "THE STUFF"

bubbling up out of the crack in the earth. The Lord only knows how deep in the earth this Stuff originates, but it seems forced to the surface by some tremendous pressure. It bursts forth and exists only a few seconds on the surface before it is sucked up and swallowed by the tube and taken into the storage truck for transportation to the huge vats at the factory and from there to be packaged and distributed in its unadulterated state to stores, shops and franchises all across America.

ANGLE ON DAVID

watching. Some of the white substance splatters and lands on the rocks of the surrounding riverbed. David reaches over, picks a speck up on his finger, examines it, brings it to his lips and tastes.

DAVID

Fresh to your local dairy counter,
direct from the center of the
earth.

David doesn't see the figure coming up behind him in a similar orange jacket and hat. It is Cassidy, the plant foreman.

CASSIDY

How about getting busy? Which
vehicle are you assigned to?

David simply nods, crosses and starts to climb up the embankment to where the trucks are parked, stepping over the huge suction tube which must be at least four feet in diameter.

ANGLE ON CASSIDY

looking suspicious, wondering why there was no answer to his question. He begins to follow.

ANGLE ON DAVID

clambering to the top of the incline, finding himself facing a number of trucks, their DRIVERS and CREWS all standing around waiting with extreme patience.

CASSIDY

(behind him)

Hey, you. Turn around.

David knows his time is running out. He has to act quickly. He turns, throwing a left hook to the jaw of the foreman, sending him catapulting back down the incline into the riverbed.

ANGLE ON THE FALLING MAN

as he hits the huge syphon tube knocking it out of position and the white, bubbling substance begins to spit and spurt in all directions.

ANGLE ON DAVID

Running past the other drivers and crew members toward the cab of one of the vehicles.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK

David jumps in, seeing the keys, starts the engine.

This is the truck from which the syphon tube is now dangling. As David starts the vehicle up and pulls out of position, dragging the syphon tube after it.

ANGLE ON TRUCK

pulling away from the edge of the riverbed, dragging the syphon tube, leaving a trail of thick, white liquid oozing out of the hose. The truck pursued by workmen in their orange jackets.

ANGLE ON DAVID AT THE WHEEL

as one of the WORKMEN leaps onto the running board, grabbing the wheel and twisting it. David loses control of the truck momentarily.

DAVID'S POV FROM INSIDE THE CAB OF THE TRUCK

headed right toward the riverbed. In a moment it will go over the incline and go crashing downward some 20 or 30 feet into the bottom of the riverbed.

ANGLE ON DAVID

as he elbows the crewman in the face.

ANGLE ON THE MAN

falling off the truck as David gets control and swerves just in time. The truck turns again, heading back in the direction of the road which leads to the gate. Behind it, the truck is still dragging the syphon tube, leaving a white trail. The truck pursued on foot by the workmen. One of whom now seems to have a high powered rifle in his hands. He takes a crouching position and fires, trying to hit the tires of the truck.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

as she hears the gunshot and realizes David is in danger. She wants to go forward but takes her instructions literally. She's been told to head back to the fence and the car.

ANGLE ON DAVID

Driving up the gravel road toward the gate. The gateman is blocking the way. He has some kind of shotgun but David isn't about to stop for anybody. He drops down low enough so that when the windshield shatters he won't be hit and he keeps his foot on the gas and the vehicle steers straight ahead. He crashes through the gate.

LOW ANGLE

The truck crashing through the gate and barreling along.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

jumping the fence, tearing her skirt and stockings, tumbling to the ground on the other side, and then running, falling and running again, heading back in the direction of the vehicle.

TRUCKING SHOT: Nicole running through the brush, branches tear at her clothing and at her flesh.

ANGLE ON DAVID AT THE WHEEL OF THE TRUCK

Heading up the gravel road. One of the tires has been hit.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

taking a shortcut through the wooded area and reaching the parked pickup. She jumps in.

INT. THE PICKUP

Nicole searching around the floorboards for the keys. She can't find them in the dark.

CLOSE UP - NICOLE'S HAND

feeling about on the floorboards.

MED. SHOT - NICOLE

as she sits up. Suddenly a FIGURE lurches through the window. Someone wearing an orange jacket. One of the work crew and definitely not David. She tries to break loose. She struggles, attempting to scratch the face of the man who has her held helpless!

Desperate for survival, Nicole makes one last effort by pointing her forefinger, she thrusts it into the eye of her attacker. The long artificial fingernail comes loose. Nicole pulls her hand away leaving the red-painted artificial nail protruding from the eye of her attacker who screams in pain. Nicole hits her door. It springs open and she rolls out onto the ground.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

The enraged attacker, half blinded, is out there trying to dislodge the false nail from his eye socket. Nicole crawls quickly towards the main road. Around the bend coming the huge truck with David at the helm.

Her attacker jumps on her. They both roll onto the gravel road. Nicole gets out of the way but the attacker doesn't and David's vehicle with its huge tires goes completely over him. He seems to cave in--collapse as if hollow when the truck crushes him.

David flips open the door to the truck.

DAVID

We're in the fast food distribution business now.

Nicole clambers into the other side of the cab, slams the door. David takes off down the gravel road.

HIGH ANGLE ON THE TRUCK

moving through the night down the gravel road. The huge tube hanging out the back of the vehicle making a horrible racket as it goes over the gravel.

ANGLE ON THE MAIN HIGHWAY

as the truck careens around the corner of the gravel road and onto the main highway. The tube striking the concrete causes sparks to fly as the huge truck lumbers along on its three tires and its rapidly flattening left rear tire.

INT. CAB OF VEHICLE

DAVID

"The Stuff" bubbles up out of a hole in the earth's surface, like toothpaste being squeezed out of a tube by the devil's hand.

NICOLE

You mean it just exists? They don't process it or do anything to it?

DAVID

They wouldn't dare.

NICOLE

And all those people in the plant?

DAVID

They've eaten so much of it its become part of them, or they've become part of it.

NICOLE

And we're driving around with a truckload of that. I think I'd feel safer if it was nuclear waste back there.

There is a police SIREN in the distance. The Highway Patrol.

ANGLE ON THE PARKWAY

as a POLICE VEHICLE pulls up alongside, its siren going, forcing the truck off onto the blacktop.

ANGLE ON THE VEHICLE PULLING OVER

INT. THE CAB

David taking out the gun.

NICOLE

What are you doing that for?

DAVID

If they control the factory and the surrounding area, don't you think they control the police?

NICOLE

You can't go shooting any cops. I won't be part of that.

In a moment the figure of a STATE POLICEMAN appears by David's side window.

TROOPER

Your hose is hanging loose. It looks like you've got a flat back there.

DAVID

There's an accident back in the riverbed, quite a few people injured. I was going for help.

TROOPER

Why didn't you radio us?

DAVID

I'm only following orders. Maybe you better get down there, lend a hand. You know how to find the place.

TROOPER

What about the gate?

DAVID

The gate's been left open.

TROOPER

You're going the wrong direction for the factory.

DAVID

You're right. I got turned around.

TROOPER

Who's she? What's she doing in
your truck?

DAVID

She's a company employee, an
executive, out here on an inspection
tour.

TROOPER

Maybe you better climb down. Both
of you.

The Trooper has his gun out and points it at David's head.

TROOPER (cont'd)

Just raise your hands where I can
see them, and start climbing down.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK

David slides the gun across the seat to Nicole. Then he
raises his hands.

DAVID

(whispers)

It's all yours.

David opens the door to the truck and slides out. While he's
doing it, Nicole picks up the gun and holds it under her hand-
bag.

EXT. THE VEHICLE, SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

David is standing by the truck, hands raised, as Nicole comes
out. Her clothes torn, much the worse for wear. The Trooper
keeping his gun trained on David.

TROOPER

I thought I knew all the drivers.
Let me see your I.D.

DAVID

In the glove compartment.

TROOPER

Lady, give me that handbag.

Nicole makes no effort to surrender her bag. The absence of it
would reveal the gun that she's holding, clutched close to her-
self and shielded by the purse. Does she have the guts to use it?

TROOPER

I said...

David looks toward the back of the truck.

DAVID'S POV

A large jagged hole in the side of the truck, like some powerful acid has eaten through the metal allowing the contents of the vehicle to drain out. The thick, creamy white substance still escaping, pouring out onto the highway, just a few gallons are left now of the precious and oddly delicious substance.

DAVID

Look it's all going to waste.
I need some. I need some very
badly.

David crosses to the back of the truck, hands still raised, lowers himself to his knees and bends over, scooping handfuls of the creamy, white substance off the road as if ready to devour it.

ANGLE ON THE TROOPER

His eyes dilated, he licks his lips, he wants some too. It's as if he's starved for the substance. It has become essential to his being--as it is to all the others who have been hooked, totally dominated and controlled. The Trooper lowers his gun and follows David.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON THE REAR OF THE TRUCK

as the Trooper kneels down beside David. He scoops up a handful of the precious and exquisitely delicious Stuff. He brings it to his lips just as Nicole brings the barrel of the gun down on the back of his head. The State Trooper topples forward unconscious, as David retrieves his gun. Nicole stands over the kneeling figure of David and the sprawled figure of the Trooper. Suddenly, only a few yards away, headlights are turned on. Like huge searchlights. The other trucks have come up without their lights on and have now flashed them on at once, capturing and silhouetting David and Nicole in their path. David opens fire with his revolver, shattering the headlights. Nicole tries a few shots herself. There is the crash of glass and another set of lights goes out.

DAVID

Get in that truck. Go.

The two of them scamper back to the truck and in a moment they are rolling again as fast as David can get the vehicle to go.

INT. THE TRUCK

NICOLE

That hole in the back of the truck--
it wasn't there before.

DAVID

It ate its way through solid steel.
And we're putting that inside of us,
Jesus!

THEIR POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

The lights of a town.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK

NICOLE

There's a town up ahead

DAVID

I'm bypassing it. It's full of
them. We'd never get out of
there.

NICOLE

Then where?

DAVID

The nearest large city. Any place
where they couldn't be taken over
completely, where there's still
a chance.

Nicole looks in the rearview mirror.

NICOLE

The other trucks are back there
following us with their lights off.

She fishes through the glove compartment.

NICOLE

I wish there was a road map or
something.

ANGLE ON THE DASHBOARD

There is a CB transmitter/receiver built into the vehicle.
Nicole flips it on. It lights up with a flashing red signal.
She tunes it and suddenly the cab of the truck is filled with
a VOICE--a very pleasant, warm voice, much like the one we
would hear on a television commercial.

VOICE

Please don't be afraid. As you see, we have made no attempt to harm you, only to disable the vehicle. You'll be free to go. We want only the truck.

NICOLE

The soft sell.

DAVID

They'd kill us without thinking twice.

NICOLE

I'm not so sure. Whatever these people are--whatever it is that controls them, I can't be sure that they're violent or harmful or even evil. You said that the substance comes from the earth, that it's natural.

DAVID

That's right. No preservatives, no artificial colors or sweeteners.

NICOLE

Then, why should it be harmful? Maybe all of this is meant to be. Maybe this is a step forward, not backward.

DAVID

How much of that stuff did you say you ate?

NICOLE

(explodes with anger)

You've the same mentality you had when you were an FBI man, everything's black or white to you.

DAVID

When you're an FBI man, everything's "white"! What about the guy that tried to strangle you back in the car? You did a pretty good job of putting him away.

NICOLE

He was just trying to hold me. Maybe I panicked.

Nicole picks up the microphone and speaks into it.

NICOLE

Hello. Hello, I've received your message but we don't believe you. How can we be sure that we won't be harmed?

VOICE

"You've worked for us for years. You probably more than any other single person are responsible for our success. We want you to go on doing the same job, only doing it better. Reassuring the public, assuaging their fears. Not only here but all over the world. Famine and disease are ended. The earth is giving forth a substance capable of feeding us all, of nourishing our souls as well as our bodies."

DAVID

And taking us over completely so we're not human anymore.

VOICE

"Have we ever been human? When one nation grows fat while the other starves. Is this humanity? Is this worth preserving?"

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

Affected by the words.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

He reaches over and switches off the radio.

DAVID

I think you're listening too good.

NICOLE

Maybe he has a lot more credibility than a con artist like you.

DAVID

They're poisoning the world and I'm the villain. But of course, I don't understand corporate thinking, Miss Vice President.

TWO SHOT - NICOLE & DAVID

riding in the vehicle. Nicole looking out the back.

NICOLE

They could overtake us, they could run us off the road, they could kill us.

DAVID

Not without one hell of an accident. Maybe they wouldn't want this truck examined too carefully, or any of them that might be killed--if they can be killed.

NICOLE

Or else we're being unreasonably afraid.

DAVID

Sure. How could anything that tastes so good be so bad? Where have I heard that before?

NICOLE

David, shut up.

DAVID

Honey, I'm not one of your employees.

NICOLE

Stop the vehicle, David.

She switches the C.B. radio back on. David notices that she still has the gun.

DAVID

I guess I should have taken that back.

NICOLE

(into microphone)

I'm going to make him pull over. Notify the others that I've got his weapon, that there's no threat to their safety. There mustn't be any violence.

VOICE

You needn't worry. You'll be treated with love.

DAVID

Sure. You've all had the love potion.

He steps on the gas.

NICOLE

Slow down. I'm warning you, this could go off.

She's pointing the gun at him. David continues to pick up speed.

DAVID

Remember, we've got one bad tire. I could lose control at any time. I'm more scared of them than I am of you. I hope this doesn't ruin our relationship.

NICOLE

You're being a fool. You can trust these people.

DAVID

For a professional bullshitter, you let yourself get bullshitted easily. You could have written that spiel yourself. How many presidents did your agency put in the White House with that kind of soft sell?

POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD - UP AHEAD

The main turnpike. Beyond is the lights of a big city. David makes the turn.

ANGLE ON THE MAIN TURNPIKE

as the truck changes direction, heading now toward the city lights.

INT. CAB OF THE TRUCK

DAVID

I think they're dropping off behind us. In fifteen minutes we'll be in the city. Remember, we can always surrender ourselves to the sweet life. We always have that choice. Now lay the gun down on the seat before it accidentally goes off.

INSERT SHOT: THE GUN

ANGLE WIDENING

as she puts it down on the seat. David picks it up and snaps the safety back on.

NICOLE

I lied to you. I've eaten "some."
While you were away, I got curious
--just tasted a little...and then
I wanted more.

DAVID

But not enough. Evidently it has
to reach a critical mass inside
you before it can start to grow on
it's own. You weren't an enthusiastic
enough host. Neither was I. And I
suppose it depends on the person.
Some people are more susceptible
than others.

NICOLE

Like with liquor and drugs. Some
people get hooked sooner.

DAVID

But children and babies, they have
a much lower resistance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET, CITY OF WILKENSBURGH - MORNING

The sun is just rising as the large transport vehicle driven
by David rumbles down the main street.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - MORNING

David at the wheel, Nicole asleep, her head rested on his
shoulder. The truck bounces over a pothole awakening her.

NICOLE

Where are we?

DAVID

There's somebody I know in this
town. He doesn't know me but I
know him.

POV STREET AHEAD - DAY

Leading up to a magnificent plantation-like building just
above the edge of the business section of town. Obviously
the city grew up around this structure.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK

NICOLE

What is that? Tara?

DAVID
The Brotherhood of America. Wait
here for me.

He parks the vehicle and climbs out.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

As David crosses toward the great white steps leading up to the mansion.

He has gotten halfway when a pair of GERMAN SHEPHERD DOGS lunge out of nowhere, growling ferociously, followed by a half dozen THICKLY BUILT MEN in a strange uniform. It is a uniform out of the 1940s--boots, balloon-like pants, military shirts and garrison caps. There is something very Fascistic about the uniform and about the rifles they carry. The Sergeant-in-Charge of the men is named STAPLES.

DAVID
I'm reporting to Colonel Spears.

STAPLES
You write him a letter?

DAVID
Get him on the horn and tell him
somebody wants to talk to him
about a lady.

STAPLES
What lady?

DAVID
A lady named Josephine Lansing.
L-A-N-S-I-N-G. Try and get it
straight.

STAPLES
You hold on right here.

David turns and looks at the guards surrounding him with rifles and the ferocious guard dogs and shrugs.

DAVID
I wasn't going anyplace.

Staples starts up the lawn toward the main building.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GROUNDS BEHIND MANSION - DAY

Surrounded by high wire fences, this is much like a military installation. YOUNG MEN in khaki fatigues are training with automatic weapons. There is a target range and an obstacle course as well as a maintenance shed where the weapons are stored. Colonel Spears has his own private army here.

David is seen now being escorted across the property toward the firing range.

TRUCKING SHOT: David surrounded by guards, his eyes flicking in all directions, taking all of this in. He's heard about it but he's never seen it.

DAVID'S POV

TRUCKING SHOT drawing closer to the firing range, a particularly huge man, swaggering around the firing line looking very much like he's in charge. He has a big ruddy face and a very good toupee which almost blends in perfectly with his hair which he keeps dyed a dark brown. From his looks, he's a man who does a great deal of drinking but knows how to hold his booze well. This is COLONEL MALCOLM SPEARS. As David is brought to him, Spears motions the other men away. In the background, men are still firing at the targets.

SPEARS

You mentioned something about a gal named Josephine? The name doesn't ring a bell.

DAVID

She was very pretty...for a colored girl.

SPEARS

Who are you?

DAVID

I once worked for a man named Hoover. He ordered me to plant bugs in an apartment you rented for a 17-year-old black chick. I wish I'd brought the logs of those tapes...

SPEARS

You're not with the Bureau anymore?

DAVID

I was canned before they mailed some of those tapes to your wife.

SPEARS

I could blow you away where you stand. You're a fuckin' trespasser.

DAVID

I only used this information to get to see you. I need you. The country needs you.

CLOSE UP - COLONEL SPEARS

His eyes narrow in suspicion. They are pretty tiny eyes to begin with but they almost disappear from view completely when he squints.

SPEARS

You wouldn't be puttin' me on, young man?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID

You were one of the great opponents of the commies putting floride in our water. But this is a helluva lot worse. The American people are being poisoned quicker and faster than you ever imagined possible.

CLOSE UP - COLONEL SPEARS

SPEARS

Poisoned?

TRUCKING SHOT

David and Colonel Spears walking down the firing line. CAMERA DRAWING BACK keeping them in a TIGHT TWO SHOT.

DAVID

We always feared that the Soviets would place deep cover agents in important positions within American industry. That they would acquire a corporation and establish themselves and work against us from within.

SPEARS

Sounds like one of my own radio speeches a year ago Thanksgiving.

DAVID

You were a prophet. There's a food being sold nationally--being consumed
(more)

DAVID (cont'd)
by tens of millions of people every-
day that contains a mind-affecting
drug. And you know as well as I do
who's behind it.

SPEARS
You mean, they've done it.

DAVID
And headquarters for it all is
less than eighty miles away from
here.

SPEARS
Those sons-a-bitches. Flaunting
it at me.

DAVID
Maybe they didn't think about you.
Maybe they forgot that Colonel
Malcolm Spears is still alive and
has the wherewithall to fight back.

SPEARS
How'd you like a tall cool drink,
young feller?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE MANSION - DAY

The huge transport truck is parked in front of the mansion
under heavy guard. Nicole sits behind the wheel chain smok-
ing, till the guards escort her out and up to the mansion.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLONEL SPEARS STUDY - DAY

Adorned with American flags, eagles and other trophies of
Americanism. Honorary plaques from organizations abound.
The furniture is Early Colonial antique and, of course, a
rack of guns covers one entire wall.

Spears faces David and Nicole who looks at him in absolute
wonderment. He's a bigger-than-life character.

NICOLE
It's going to be your finest hour,
Colonel. You're going to get the
cover of Time magazine.

SPEARS
That lousy commie rag. I wouldn't
let them put me on the cover.

NICOLE

Sorry, Colonel. I meant to say
U.S. News and World Report

SPEARS

The little lady's coming along
with us. She's been inside the
plant, she knows her way around.
She can ride up next to me!

NICOLE

Now, that would be a privilege,
Colonel.

SPEARS

Yes, I know. That's why I'm invitin'
you. And after this mission, you
may show your appreciation in a
suitable manner.

DAVID

Hey, Colonel, I think you're moving
in on my girl.

SPEARS

Now don't feel threatened, David,
but should something happen to you...---

DAVID

Yeah. Those "tapes" might not get
back to you.

NICOLE

What tapes is that?

SPEARS

Oh, David has promised me some early
Waylon Jennings recordings. He knows
I have a weakness for oldies but goodies.

DAVID

And sometimes an occasional "youngie."

SPEARS

Shall we adjourn to the vehicles?

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

A half-a-dozen military vehicles being loaded up with combat
troops, YOUNG MEN in khakies and helmets with automatic
weapons slung over their shoulders and a string of grenades
at their belt--the Colonel's army is going into action.

ANGLE ON THE COLONEL

At the lead vehicle, helping Nicole up in a very fatherly fashion. David fends for himself.

ANGLE ON THE TRUCKS - DAY

As they begin to move down toward the side gate leading to the road. Approximately 10 vehicles each jammed with troopers in combat gear. The men holding the curtains closed at the back of each vehicle for security purposes. The gate opens.

EXT. MAIN HIGHWAY - DAY

A new kind of convoy. The transport truck surrounded by the military vehicles. D-Day has arrived and the invasion is about to commence.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE FACTORY - DAY

All things are as they were before. The main gates are shut, a solitary GATEMAN on duty. The gateman sees something in the distance, picks up the telephone.

GATEMAN

That missing truck...is coming up the road.

GATEMAN'S POV

The truck approaches. The military vehicles are nowhere in sight.

GATEMAN'S VOICE

I can't see who's at the wheel.

ANGLE ON THE TRANSPORT TRUCK

Drawing up, two of the Colonel's men in the cab. One of them is Staples, the sergeant. He's wearing civilian clothes now.

STAPLES

Hey, this here truck was abandoned out by Highway 12. We kinda figured you might give us some kinda cash reward for bringin' it back.

The gateman circles the vehicle making sure that there's nothing wrong. Everything seems to be in order.

GATEMAN

Okay, bring the truck through and we'll talk about..it.

CLOSE UP CONTROL MECHANISM

as the gateman goes back inside and pushes the button to let the truck through. Staples stops the vehicle halfway in so that the cab of the truck is inside the gate but the body of the vehicle still stands outside, AND THE GATE CANNOT BE CLOSED.

CLOSE UP - STAPLES' HAND

as he turns off the ignition and pockets the keys.

WIDER ANGLE

The gateman is furious.

GATEMAN

Move that thing on in.

STAPLES

Not until we discuss money.

Staples lights up a cigarette and leans up against the cab of the vehicle.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE FACTORY - DAY

HIGH ANGLE giving us a wider view. The military vehicles led by Colonel Spears are parked 100 yards away from the walls of the factory. The men now are disembarking from their vehicles and moving to the wall of the factory, edging around toward the main gate on both sides.

Moving beside the Colonel is David and behind them, Nicole.

ANGLE ON THE GATEMAN

as he returns to the telephone.

GATEMAN

They blocked up the main gate.
Well, nobody told me what to do
in a case like this.

(pause)

Oh, I see. Thank you.

The gateman hangs up, smiles. Returns to where Staples and his associate are standing by the side of the truck.

STAPLES

Well?

GATEMAN

It's all settled.

With that, the gateman pulls his revolver and shoots Staples pointblank. The other militia man tries to get to the cab of the truck to get his weapon but is also shot down.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Colonel Spears coming around the side of the wall blasting his M-14. The gateman is riddled with bullets, but instead of blood--a white creamy substance oozes out of his wounds. It's "The Stuff." The Colonel keeps on shooting until the gateman collapses. Col. Spears steps over the body as a chill runs through him. He looks into the factory courtyard.

SPEARS' POV

The courtyard seems deserted.

SPEARS

All right. Spread out. Inside and spread out. Put this "outhouse" out of commission.

VARIOUS ANGLES

as the Colonel's men move by the truck, through the opening, into the courtyard, clearing the walls, finding places of cover, maneuvering themselves toward the factory buildings in trained military fashion.

ANGLE ON THE COLONEL

Looking down at the gateman's body which still oozes white foam.

SPEARS

Sight of blood never bothered me, but this gives me the creeps.

The Colonel then rushes into the courtyard to join his troops.

VARIOUS SHOTS

The troopers raring for a kill, swarming into the courtyard.

All of the other transport vehicles are parked. The men take cover behind the vehicles and on the roofs of some of them. Each squad has its own designated area of attack.

The Colonel signals and one squad after another comes out of cover and makes a dash toward the factory building, bursting through the doors after shooting the locks away with their automatic weapons.

MORE ANGLES

More squads of men gain entry to the factory buildings.

SPEARS

No show of resistance.

DAVID

Who knows, they may not be armed.

SPEARS

Armed or not, they're outclassed.
There's no soldier in the world
like the American boy. We have
never lost a war.

NICOLE

I hate to mention..."Nam."?

SPEARS

We were betrayed from within that
time around. We lost that war
here at home.

The Colonel's Aide comes out of the factory building looking
rather dismayed.

SPEARS

Have they run out on us?

AIDE

They're in there, Colonel, but
they're all dead.

SPEARS

Those yellow bellies have taken
their own lives. They cheated me.
Those little commie bastards have
cheated me.

EXT. FACTORY BUILDING - DAY

Everyone's gun still at ready expecting some kind of surprise.

INT. FACTORY BUILDING - DAY

The huge vats in which "The Stuff" is stored and surrounding
it on all the platforms--bodies, lying limp, corpses of the
workers in the packaging plant. Among the corpses are Grimsby
and Howard, and Cassidy, the plant foreman.

ANGLE ON DAVID

as he leans over Howard's body.

DAVID

Still warm. This must have just
happened.

SPEARS

They must have made provisions
for this. Issued suicide capsules.
It's standard N.V.D. procedure.

The Colonel leans over one of the corpses and pokes it with his gun barrel. The body seems to crumble as if it is some very thin shell, the head and face, chest, arms, etc., all cave in at the Colonel's touch.

SPEARS

No white stuff inside this
sonofabitch!

ANGLE ON THE COLONEL'S MEN

as they cross to the other bodies. Using the butts of their rifles, they strike the various corpses to see what will happen.

VARIOUS ANGLES

One after the other, the bodies seem to collapse completely under the slightest pressure. What seem like human beings, turn out to be hollow shells. The skin cracks immediately as if totally dry. The human forms collapse inward with a slight mist of dust arising.

CLOSE UP - COLONEL SPEARS' MEN

Their reaction. These are big, brawny bully types, but they have never seen anything like this before and it frightens the hell out of them.

ANGLE ON DAVID & NICOLE

DAVID

Whatever was inside of them took
off!

NICOLE

(dizzy)

I need to go outside.

DAVID

Go ahead. We've got work to do
in here.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Nicole as she exits from the plant.

INT. COURTYARD OF THE FACTORY - DAY

Nicole emerges, tries to catch her breath and keep from retching. It's a supreme effort. The place seems totally deserted. Nothing in sight. No sign of human life. From inside, she hears the sound of machine gun fire.

INT. PLANT - DAY

As the militiamen open fire, puncturing the various vats, destroying the machinery--wrecking the plant with complete abandon.

ANGLE ON THE COLONEL

Firing his share of bullets.

David borrows a machine gun from one of the militiamen and opens fire himself.

As the huge vats are punctured, the foamy white material oozes out of the holes onto the floor.

ANGLE ON "THE STUFF"

as it comes out of the vats, enveloping the bodies of the people, the shells of bodies, and dissolving what is left before our very eyes.

SPEARS

Back up, back up everybody.
Don't let it touch you.

The men continue to fire as they back away toward the doors. They have destroyed the storage vats sufficiently but they fear what is slithering at them, swarming across the floor like some terrible deadly foam.

EXT. THE PLANT - DAY

Nicole wandering amongst the trucks that are parked there. Alone in the courtyard of the factory. She sees a doorway to another building that is open. It looks like the offices of the plant. She steps through.

INT. PLANT OFFICE - DAY

Various charts on the wall designating the transportation of the Stuff to various outlets around the country for packaging, labeling and distribution. A gigantic map with pins in it and a chart showing the quantities shipped to each point.

This will be important information to have. Nicole begins removing the charts from the walls and folding them up.

She hears something behind her. A strange slithering sound.

HER POV

A hallway just beyond the office. Nicole sets the charts down on the desk and proceeds down the hallway, CAMERA MOVING behind her.

HER POV STRAIGHT AHEAD

A large metal door leading Lord-only-knows where.

ANGLE ON NICOLE

Hearing that sound inside, she hesitates, is prepared to go back and call for help, then feeling more self-reliant than she should, she reaches out and opens that door.

As she opens it, everything seems to come out at her at once.

In an instant the entire hallway is flooded with an onrush of the white Stuff. The corridor, seven feet in height and about four feet in width is filled from top to bottom by the onrush of The Stuff.

Nicole runs backwards towards the office as The Stuff comes at her like a flood. Since it is thick in mass, it does not move as quickly as a flood of water, but quick enough so that it's almost on top of her.

ANGLE ON OFFICE

as Nicole dives across the desk, grabbing up the maps and charts and then out the door, as The Stuff fills up the office, dissolving everything in its path--desks, chairs, everything disintegrates upon the touch of what once was a food and now is living death.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

As Nicole stumbles, falls, cries out. In a moment, one of the Colonel's men appears in the courtyard. He runs to her side.

CORPORAL

What is it, lady? Answer me.
What the hell's wrong with you.

Nicole points toward the office. By that time other militia-men have reached the yard and then finally David and the Colonel.

NICOLE

It was in there. So much of it.

ANGLE ON COLONEL SPEARS AND DAVID

followed by the other men as they proceed toward the office. The door is open.

THEIR POV

Whatever passed through this office a moment ago has slithered off again leaving in its wake total destruction, only splinters remain of the desk and the furnishings of the office. Every-

things seems to have been dissolved, even the paint and plaster has been eaten off of the walls, leaving huge hunks and holes. And once again the substance has retreated up the hallway, through those metal doors and to some area beyond.

CORPORAL

If it can eat up people and eat up furniture, I don't feel like messin' with it, colonel. I'm not yellow, but I don't feel like messin' with it 'til we know better.

OFFICER

I think that goes of all of us, sir.

SPEARS

I own two radio stations in Atlanta. We're going there to broadcast a warning. We're going to tell the public.

NICOLE

Who's going to believe you?

SPEARS

The people who always believe me will believe me again, the rest will think I'm crazier than ever. Okay boys, let's get to those vehicles. We've done all we can here.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

The corporate aircraft belonging to the ad agency still waits on the runway. A convoy suddenly appears onto the airstrip, military vehicles carrying a platoon of armed men.

Jumping off the first vehicle and running to the plane are David and Nicole. Col. Spears remains on the landing field directing his men.

INT. AIRCRAFT - DAY

The pilot playing backgammon with young Jason who jumps up and runs into David's arms.

JASON

I wouldn't let them leave you.

PILOT

Yeah, if it wasn't for the kid, we probably would have split for home last night.

Nicole embraces Jason.

NICOLE

Good boy.

DAVID

(to the pilot)

How many passengers can this hold?

PILOT

Fourteen, counting crew.

EXT. THE PLANE - DAY

As David climbs out, crosses back to Colonel Spears.

DAVID

We can bring along eight of your best men.

SPEARS

All right, sergeant, assemble your best squad and board them. The balance of you secure the factory. Don't attempt to move any of the corpses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLANE-IN-FLIGHT - DAY

INT. THE PLANE

Every seat filled now with a number of Col. Spears' crack storm-trooper unit. David, Nicole and Jason seated toward the front of the passenger section. The door to the cockpit open.

Jason looks curiously back at the rather harsh looking men who have joined them. Mean, squinty-eyed, piggish men who give off bad vibes.

JASON

I don't like those guys.

NICOLE

They're the best we could do. This isn't a beauty contest.

Jason grins affectionately up at her.

NICOLE

...and stop being so damn adorable.

INT. COCKPIT OF THE PLANE - DAY

David leaning over the pilot, talking into the radio transmitter.

DAVID

It's an emergency. I need to be patched into FBI communications central code number B429J. I want to speak to special agent in charge, Frank Herbert.

CUT TO:

INT. J. EDGAR HOOVER BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

The office of special agent in charge, FRANK HERBERT. His telephone intercom buzzes. There's an urgent call being relayed in from a plane-in-flight. It's David Whitman.

FRANK

Whitman? Whatever that bastard wants, I'm not interested.

FBI MAN

Didn't he used to be an agent?

FRANK

Kicked out for insubordination. He wouldn't put in taps on the civil rights workers. A highly "moral" individual, so now he's an industrial spy.

He turns away, then has a second thought, goes back to the desk.

FRANK (cont'd)

It's all right. Put him through.

VOICE ON PHONE

Your call will be coming through on your private line.

FRANK

Monitor the call. I want a recording of this.

VOICE ON PHONE

Yes, sir.

CLOSE UP - THE TELEPHONE

As a button lights up on the special agent's private line. In an instant Frank Herbert picks up the phone.

FRANK

This is Herbert.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE COCKPIT

David on the other end of the transmission.

DAVID

I can hear you. How fast can you
get your sanctimonious ass down
to Atlanta?

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S OFFICE.

FRANK

Why would I want to do a thing
like that?

DAVID'S VOICE OVER PHONE

Well...I'll tell you...We've just
killed a couple of people down here.
At least they used to be "people."

FRANK

I got a call similar to this a
few days ago...from a Jap--

DAVID'S VOICE OVER PHONE

I should be at radio station KWK
in Atlanta by noon today. Get there
--I'm gonna restore the FBI's good
name.

There is a click as David disengages the transmission.

FRANK

Hello. Hello. Whitman. You son
of a bitch. You smeared the Bureau
once but you won't get that chance
again.

(he slams down the phone)

Why did I have to take his fucking
call?

Voice on the intercom interrupts.

VOICE ON INTERCOM

Shall I stop recording now?

FRANK

Yes. And erase those last few
comments and get me on the next
flight to Atlanta.

DISSOLVE TO:

AERIAL SHOT - ATLANTA, GEORGIA - DAY

CAMERA PANS to private aircraft just dropping down into landing position.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - DAY

A line of taxicabs.

Imagine the surprise of the cab drivers, most black guys, when they are besieged by a small army in full regalia--backpacks, automatic weapons, helmets, etc. exiting from the air terminal and heading right for their cabs.

What with all their equipment, only two militia men can fit into each cab.

And with David, Nicole, the Colonel, etc. the group takes up just about every taxi available. A convoy now of taxis, 8 of them pull away from the curb.

INT. FIRST TAXI - DAY

David, Nicole and Jason in the back seat, Col. Spears in front seated next to the DRIVER and very uncomfortable being next to a black man. The Colonel squirms in his seat.

CABBY

What is this? World War Three?

DAVID

Close.

SPEARS

Just get us to the corner of Fourth and Main with no more smartass remarks.

POV THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE TAXI

moving through the streets of Atlanta. At one corner we see another of those fast food franchises selling "The Stuff" and, as always, there's a line out front.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Colonel Spears shouts.

SPEARS

Hold on. Pull to a stop. That's fine.

He rolls down his window, points his automatic weapon out the window. The cab driver's eyes widen.

CABBY

Not out of my cab.

But it's too late. Even David and Nicole can't stop him.

ANGLE ON THE TAXI

as a quick volley of fire bursts from the Colonel's weapon.

ANGLE ON FAST FOOD FRANCHISE

as the glass windows shatter under the quick barrage. All the potential customers flee. Nobody is hurt but huge bullet holes are visible in the windows. Even the employees rush out into the street vacating the premises.

ANGLE ON THE TAXI

SPEARS

You may drive on.

CABBY

You may get out of my fuckin' taxi.

The Colonel turns and points the gun at the driver.

SPEARS

Get me there while I'm still in a good mood.

CABBY

Consider yourself there! Sir!

He salutes the colonel in a paramilitary fashion and then steps on the gas. David leans over and pats the colonel on the shoulder.

DAVID

Colonel, you have a remarkable way of expediting things.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT

The convoy of taxicabs.

INT. VARIOUS CABS, MULTIPLE SHOTS - DAY

The colonel's squinty-eyed militiamen peering out the windows, their jaws tightly set, some of them oiling their weapons, others loading their clips. A few others just staring blankly ahead. It's as if they are moving into combat.

EXT. RADIO STATION KWK, ATLANTA, GEORGIA - DAY

As the convoy of taxicabs pull to a stop, the Colonel jumps out. All of the cabs have lined up behind one another and the men are disembarking. Some of them getting their excess weapons and packs out of the trunks.

SPEARS

(shouts)

Pay all the taxi fares, get a cash receipt. Issue the drivers a ten percent tip. Proceed to the main lobby and reassemble.

INT. RADIO STATION KWK VESTIBULE - DAY

The BLEACHED BLOND RECEPTIONIST, in country western cowboy garb, is quite startled to look up and see the fully uniformed combat soldiers marching in, wearing some kind of indeterminate uniform that is halfway between a marine and a stormtrooper. Then she looks up behind her desk at the huge color portrait of Colonel Spears in full assault uniform and realizes what is happening. The men form up an entire squad and await the entrance of their leader.

David, Nicole, and Jason enter followed by the Colonel himself.

SPEARS

Inform the management I'm taking full control of the station! Fall in!

JASON

Can I be on the radio, Colonel?

NICOLE

Before you make your debut, you're going to call your mother and tell her you're not kidnapped.

RECEPTIONIST

Use any phone in there, sweetie.

NICOLE

Come on, kiddo. I've also got to talk to my boyfriend.

She makes sure that David hears the remark.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STATION OFFICE - DAY

Nicole on a long distance call.

NICOLE

(into phone)

We disabled the factory, located the source. Now we have to alert the public. The colonel wants to wait until prime time to do it. That's eight o'clock tonight.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON FOSTER IN WASHINGTON

Listening on the other end of the line.

FOSTER

Using a mad Fascist as your spokesman is poor salesmanship.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

NICOLE

That's why I need you down here.
For credibility.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - FOSTER

FOSTER

I had some tests done--but nobody
in the scientific community is
willing to risk liability in
coming out against the product.

NICOLE'S VOICE ON PHONE

Then you have to do it without them.
You and the colonel both appeal to
rival factions in the country but
when you both get on the same side,
who the hell's going to be able to
not believe?

FOSTER

You're terrific. You really are
fantastic.

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

NICOLE

My grandfather sold hair straightener
all through the South. I'm descended
from a long line of carnival pitchmen.
Get here by 8 p.m.

She hangs up, turns and sees Jason watching her.

JASON

Is that really your actual boyfriend?

NICOLE

Yeah, actual.

JASON

What about David?

NICOLE

Sometimes when people have to get things done they...well, they make friends with people they ordinarily wouldn't have much to do with.

JASON

Like me being along on this. I mean you don't like kids much.

NICOLE

Well, I could just about tolerate you.

She grabs him and gives him a kiss.

JASON

Hey, stop it.

(pulls away)

I don't like being kissed. Not unless you ask first.

NICOLE

Well then, how about one?

JASON

Not on the lips.

NICOLE

Of course not on the lips. Are cheeks okay?

JASON

Have you got on lipstick?

Nicole takes out a piece of Kleenex and blots her lipstick.

NICOLE

Presentable now?

JASON

Okay, if it'll make you feel any better.

He allows Nicole to give him a kiss on the cheek, then he reaches up and wipes it off.

NICOLE

You're mad at me because you think I'm disloyal.

JASON

I don't know. Don't forget, David said I could talk on the radio. I want everybody in my class to know I'm not crazy.

NICOLE

They've got a surprise coming. You'll be a hero.

JASON

I don't care about that. I just want them to know I'm not crazy. It's hard going to school when everybody thinks you're crazy. They all say so, all the time. We had a kid in our school once that was crazy, at least we all thought he was. Finally his folks took him and put him someplace else. One of those schools where they only visit them on holidays.

(beat)

I think that kid was crazy, but if I heard him on the radio and he said he wasn't, I'd believe him.

NICOLE

Yeah, we believe whatever we hear as long as it comes out of a box.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STUDIO - DAY

TECHNICIANS are setting up the microphones in the largest studio in the building in anticipation of tonight's broadcast. The colonel has stationed four of his armed troopers in the studio at the four corners and one trooper inside the control booth. The colonel himself is standing at the lectern going over his speech for the evening. An American flag has been brought in and placed next to the lectern. An EXECUTIVE of the station in cowboy hat and boots crosses to speak to the colonel and is shooed away until the colonel has finished studying that particular paragraph. Only then is he allowed to speak.

STATION EXEC

Our affiliates in Daytona Beach, Florida, in Macon, and in Portsmouth, have all agreed to carry your remarks. Of course we're going to have to compensate them for lost revenues due to cancellation of the regularly scheduled barn dance program.

SPEARS

I'm not worried about that, not one little bit.

STATION EXEC

I hope you know what you're doing, sir. I'd hate to get our license revoked by the FCC.

SPEARS

Buy clearances on as many stations as you can. Try network affiliates. Make it worth their while.

(pause)

By the way, what's on our station right now?

STATION EXEC

Just the local sports, followed by a Salute to Elvis.

SPEARS

I hope you're announcing promos regarding my address this evening.

STATION EXEC

Every fifteen minutes, sir.

SPEARS

Well, do it every ten minutes from now on. How do I get to hear what's on the air now?

The Exec presses a few buttons. A RADIO BROADCAST booms over the amplifier.

RADIO BROADCAST

Well, that winds up today's sports news. I'll be back with the weather in a moment but first...

(a commercial comes on;
a jingle)

"Makes you look good/Just like you should/that Stuff/that wonderful Stuff."

It is a commercial for the very product that the colonel has come here to expose as being poisonous, insidious, monstrous.

SPEARS

Jesus! Get that shit off my station!!!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

Colonel Spears' men are still on duty in the vestibule as Frank Herbert, FBI agent, arrives at the station, flashes his identification card and makes his entrance.

INT. RADIO STATION CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As one of the Militiamen guides FBI Agent Herbert through a maze of corridors to the studio where David and Nicole await

him, Frank Herbert looks with great puzzlement at the uniform and the varying Fascistic emblems on the armband of the young fellow who is his escort. He wonders what he's doing here. How did he get mixed up with these kinds of lunatic fringe people.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

As the FBI man is ushered in.

FRANK

Get these storm troopers away from me?

DAVID

Would you wait outside. Mach Schnell!

The militiamen exit.

FRANK

The only thing that brought me here was a fellow named Mitsubu. He called me from Virginia with some crazy science fiction story. By the time I got to him, he was dead.

DAVID

I bet he took a few of them with him.

FRANK

I don't know what was done to him, but...he was all eaten up inside. He was a shell. I mean, hollow. When they tried to move the body, he just fell apart. And then your nutsy call...from an airplane!

The door to the studio opens up and this time James Foster is escorted in by Nicole.

DAVID

Well. My entire enemies' list seems to be gathering.

FOSTER

I was worried about her.

He kisses Nicole gently, lovingly, on the cheek.

CLOSE UP DAVID

His reaction. All of a sudden he sees her with another man and despite the fact that his mind is on more important things, he is somehow jealous. CAMERA PANS to young Jason, watching the triangle curiously.

WIDER ANGLE

DAVID

Okay, let's cut the romance and stick to the melodrama.

FOSTER

All right, asshole, we're all here. So this better be good.

DAVID

We're all going on the radio together. Sorry it couldn't be network TV but--I'm still small time.

NICOLE

Please read the copy I've prepared.

She distributes the script to them all.

FOSTER

The public won't believe it.

NICOLE

Why is it always so easy to sell lies and so hard to get anybody to buy the truth? Well, you're looking at the ex-queen of the liars.

FRANK

I believe it.

The door of the studio opens and the colonel comes back in with two of his armed men.

DAVID

Here's our beloved colonel now.

SPEARS

Hello, everybody. Now don't go name calling, boys. Eight minutes to air time.

CAMERA PANS to the control booth. Two engineers take their positions behind the glass and begin fiddling with some controls.

FOSTER

If you don't mind, put away the tommy guns.

The colonel motions for the troopers to set their weapons down and they instantly comply.

Foster keeps reading over the copy with a furrowed brow. Nicole comes up beside him, placing her hand on his shoulder affectionately.

NICOLE

Want some revisions?

FOSTER

I don't know if I can say any of this in good faith. I never saw this factory first hand--

NICOLE

You don't think I'd con you into something.

FOSTER

I have a reputation for...

NICOLE

All these lives at stake and you're worried about your precious reputation.

FOSTER

I don't particularly like being used.

NICOLE

Is that what you think I'm trying to do?

Foster looks around, realizes Colonel Spears is watching him as are David, the boy, and F.B.I. Agent Frank Herbert. He is momentarily embarrassed.

FOSTER

Can we find someplace to talk in private?

NICOLE

We'll be right back.

She takes Foster by the arm and leads him out of the studio into a small auxiliary studio located directly next door, through the soundproof doors into the privacy of the small padded room.

INT. AUXILIARY STUDIO

As she switches on the light. They're quite alone.

FOSTER

You know I'd do anything for you.

NICOLE

Except believe me.

FOSTER

Come here.

Nicole hesitates.

FOSTER (cont'd)

I said, come here.

She slowly walks towards him with arms outstretched to encircle him.

FOSTER (cont'd)

You haven't even given me a proper kiss.

She smiles at him, leans forward, opens her mouth slightly as his lips draw close to hers.

EXTREME CLOSE UP

Foster's lips pursing forward for the kiss, his mouth opening wide--wider--still wider.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SPECIAL EFFECT HORROR SHOT

Nicole waits, her eyes closed, expecting a kiss, Foster's lips only inches away from her mouth--his jaws opening wide--wider than any human being could possibly open. The mouth becomes a huge gaping hole in his face, it seems to swallow up his entire head and then, from out of that hole comes the white substance, the thick, pulsating "Stuff"...

...leaping forward from his mouth onto her face. Spurting forth to cover her eyes, nose, mouth in a fraction of an instant.

Before Nicole realizes what has happened and can scream, "The Stuff" is all over her, blinding her, choking off her gasps, more of it pouring out of what was once Foster's head but which is now opened up into a giant funnel to release the substance which has taken command of his entire body.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE RADIO STUDIO - NIGHT

The technicians ready to begin the broadcast. The microphones, stands and lecterns carefully set up with Special Agency Frank Herbert, Colonel Spears going over their copy, making pencil changes in the margins.

Only Jason seems restless and curious, staring at David pointedly. David knows exactly what's going on in the kid's mind.

Jason looks back at the script pages, then at the door leading to the adjacent studio. He wonders what's going on in their between Nicole and Foster. Finally, realizing that he's being ignored by all the adults in the studio, he edges toward the padded door, leans against it and pushes forward inching into the next room.

INT. AUXILLIARY STUDIO

Dark. Illuminated only by some light from the control booth of this small announcers' studio as Jason backs in and turns. CAMERA MOVES IN TIGHT ON him as the terror flashes in his eyes.

JASON'S POV - WHAT HE SEES

Sprawled out on the floor, struggling beneath a huge mass of white, squirming substance is Nicole.

"The Stuff" has enveloped her head and shoulders, her hands are flailing against it to no avail. At her feet lies the former body of James Foster half cracked open like a cocoon that has been abandoned--a skin that has been shed. "The Stuff" is out and attempting to devour the girl.

CLOSE ON JASON

backing against the door which swings inward to open. The boy is pushing against the door trying to get out but of course it will not budge. He's afraid to step forward because "The Stuff" is changing direction now, coming after him.

MED. SHOT - AUXILLIARY STUDIO

Dimly illuminated, as a portion of the white protoplasmic material seems to spread, crawling across the floor now in the direction of the boy while still not abandoning its female victim.

Jason begins to scream at the top of his lungs but can't be heard outside the soundproof studio.

INT. MAIN STUDIO - NIGHT

All of the participants in the broadcast getting ready.

TECHNICIAN

Five minutes to air time. Can I have a voice level, please, starting with you, Colonel?

SPEARS

How's this? Where's the young lady gone to? Can we get her back in here, please?

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DAVID
Frank. You make a living peeping
through keyholes, why don't you go
in there and tell the lovers that
they're wanted?

Frank crosses to the padded door, pushes on it. It won't
budge. He pushes harder.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

Jason, flattened against the padded door, feeling it pushing
against his back and shoving back as hard as he can--the very
act of pushing the door open will thrust him into the clutches
of the white, throbbing substance at his feet.

JASON
No, no! Don't open the door!

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

Agent Frank Herbert shoving on the door.

FRANK
Something's blocking it.

As he pushes again, the door opens a crack, enough to hear
the screams of the boy on the other side.

JASON'S VOICE (O.C.)
No, no! Don't!

ANGLE ON FRANK

CAMERA ANGLE WIDENING to include the others who crowd around
the door.

FRANK
He's jammed up against the door.
The kid.

DAVID
Is there any other way in there?

TECHNICIAN
Through Control Room C.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STATION CORRIDOR - NIGHT

David and the Technician leading the mad dash down the narrow passageway and around the corner into Control Room C. David, F.B.I. Agent Herbert, and Colonel Spears, and behind them some of the armed militiamen.

INT. CONTROL ROOM C - NIGHT

David bursting through the door, peering through the glass into the small announcers' studio.

DAVID'S POV - WHAT HE SEES

The boy spread-eagled against the door, terrified, a huge mound of the "Stuff" rising up knee-high as if ready to spring at the youngster. In the center of the carpet, the figure of Nicole still writhing in agony--her head and shoulders covered by the living white substance.

REACTION SHOT - DAVID AND THE OTHERS IN THE CONTROL BOOTH

David reaching for a chair, smashing it through the glass.

SLOW MOTION EFFECT: The glass in the control booth shattering into a thousand pieces as David goes through into the studio.

ANGLE ON THE BOY

As the white glob of death springs forward--going for his head. Then, a swish of movement as David leaps into the room, slapping at the substance with such force that he knocks it aside, away from the boy who runs into David's arms, hugging him.

DAVID

Get the kid out of here.

The militiamen in the control booth aim their automatic weapons but David blocks their line of fire.

DAVID

You'll kill her. Stay back.

F.B.I. Agent Frank Herbert jumps into the studio, drops to his knees beside Nicole's writhing figure. He tries to pull the "Stuff" away from her face with his bare hands. He recoils as if shocked--as if stung by some jelly fish in the ocean. He rolls back on the floor amid the broken glass and debris.

ANGLE ON COLONEL SPEARS

His mouth hanging open in disbelief. He crosses himself and says a silent prayer. This is something worse than "the commies," something completely beyond his control.

ANGLE ON DAVID

Yelling at the Technician.

DAVID

Are those wires live?

TECHNICIAN

No.

DAVID

When I tell you to, turn on the juice.

David grabs one of the cables coming out of the wall. . . Flipping open his pocketknife, he strips the cable down to the bare wire.

DAVID

We cooked it once before in a motel room. Now, turn on the power.

ANGLE ON THE TECHNICIAN

He freezes.

SPEARS

I'll do it.

TIGHTER SHOT - COLONEL SPEARS

As he reaches for the controls in the booth and flips them to the 'ON' position.

ANGLE ON DAVID

Leaning down beside Nicole, pressing both wires separately into the moving white substance that is suffocating her. SPARKS FLY, the "Stuff" writhes and disengages itself from Nicole. It turns in a snakelike fashion to spring at David who gives it another dose of electricity. The huge mass is now at least 8 feet in circumference slides away like a fleeing amoeba, slithering to the far corner of the tiny studio. David goes after it handing out still another set of shocks.

A TERRIBLE, HIGH, SHRIEKING SOUND is heard, almost a scream unlike any we have ever heard before. The "Stuff" seem to sizzle and smolder around the edges, and huddles into a small corner and remains there.

ANGLE ON FRANK HERBERT

Crawling over to Nicole and giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. CAMERA PANS TO Jason gripping Colonel Spears by the arm.

JASON

Is she alive?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID

I told you to get the kid out of here.

ANGLE ON NICOLE AND F.B.I. AGENT HERBERT

FRANK

She's breathing by herself now.

DAVID

Everybody outside, and seal up this room.

They exit from the studio through the door leading into the larger studio.

INT. MAIN RADIO STUDIO - NIGHT

Frank Herbert carries Nicole in, followed by Colonel Spears, his men, and David, entering last and closing the door.

TECHNICIAN

We're due on the air in thirty seconds. Shall we delay?

FRANK

Why? I'm ready to speak my piece as soon as I get my breath.

SPEARS

Now's as good a time as any.

David crosses over to Nicole, lifts her head up and smiles down at her. Her cheeks and forehead are totally discolored from contact with "The Stuff."

NICOLE

My face--it stings so bad. Do I look terrible?

DAVID

Splotchy, but beautiful. Lie still and listen. We're going to do the lines just the way you wrote them.

CLOSE UP - THE ON THE AIR LIGHT COMING ON bright and red.

VOICE OF THE ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen. The program usually heard at this time will not be broadcast due to the presentation of a special program. From Atlanta, Georgia, this is a broadcast of warning. We repeat, this is a broadcast of warning. This is not fiction, this is not a dramatization.

CLOSE UP - THE LIPS OF THE VARIOUS PARTICIPANTS
speaking into the microphone.

SPEARS
The American people are being poisoned by a popular dessert product known as "The Stuff." If you have this food in your possession, do not eat it. We repeat, do not eat it. If you are a merchant and you carry this product on your shelves, do not sell it. If you operate a franchise distributing this product, close your doors immediately, make no further sales.

CLOSE UP - FRANK HERBERT'S LIPS.

FRANK
This is Special Agent Frank Herbert of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We have excellent reason to believe that the product known as "The Stuff" has caused hundreds of fatalities and that millions more have been infected. If you have been regularly using this product, you must report to the nearest hospital emergency area.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
We repeat. This is not a dramatization. This is not a fiction program.

CLOSE UP - NICOLE

Lying on the floor of the studio with David kneeling beside her holding her in his arms. Normal color is returning to her face.

DAVID
How are we doing?

NICOLE
I believe every word of it.

DAVID

Let's hope somebody out there believes.

CLOSE UP - JASON

Talking into the microphone.

JASON

What I saw, I guess some other people saw but didn't believe their eyes. I saw it move. It's a parasite, so if you've got any, don't eat it, don't touch it. If anybody in your family has been eating a lot of it, get them to your doctor. If they act strange, keep away from them. Get the rest of your family away from them.

CLOSE UP - FRANK HERBERT

FRANK

What the young man says is correct. In the next few hours, emergency numbers should be broadcast on your local station. Listen to these numbers and report abnormal behavior...

MONTAGE SHOTS

Multiple overlapping shots showing packages of "The Stuff" being dumped into incinerators and into large trash receptacles. The contents of the cardboard containers is being dumped into a toilet and flushed into nonexistence, down disposals.

A night shot depicting a huge bonfire with mounds of "The Stuff" in its attractive cardboard containers being burned at a city street corner.

A sanitation truck laden down with sealed containers of "The Stuff" and a large "DANGER" sign painted on the side in yellow letters.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRANCHISE ON THE OPEN HIGHWAY

Where "The Stuff" was formerly sold to constantly demanding patrons. The place is empty now. A huge sign: CLOSED, and the inside of the franchise has been gutted. The machines are gone.

Over all of this, we hear the voice of Nicole.

NICOLE'S VOICE

(narration)

And the people did believe. In the weeks that followed, "The Stuff" was withdrawn from distribution and the nation mobilized to collect it and destroy it.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOME, LONG ISLAND - DAY

Jason and his entire family in front of the television set watching Nicole. The boy looks healthy and relaxed and reunited with his parents and siblings.

He's something of a hero. His older brother reaches across and hits him a shot in the arm playfully--their only form of communication. Jason points to Nicole on the TV screen.

JASON

She's my girl friend.

BROTHER

Oh yeah, that's for sure.

JASON

Remember the last time you didn't believe me? I never lie.

His brother looks at the gorgeous Nicole, and then back at Jason who gives him a knowing wink.

NICOLE'S VOICE ON TV

Your local merchants and supermarkets that unwittingly carried "The Stuff" believing it to be thoroughly screened and tested, have voluntarily agreed to refund either the purchase price or to give the customer credit for merchandise on their shelves. Proof of purchase will be required. And, by a special act of Congress, the Internal Revenue Service will give a tax credit for all medical costs incurred by illnesses or deaths relating to this product. All that can be done is being done, and American industry is leading the way.

AERIAL SHOTS

Strategic Air Command bombers in flight.

VARIOUS SHOTS

SAC bombers dropping payloads.

VARIOUS ANGLES

The riverbed in Georgia. The huge crack in the earth from which "The Stuff" emanated as bombs go off. Tens of thousands of tons of TNT forever closing that fissure, shutting off the source, hopefully forever.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - TELEVISION SCREEN

Nicole facing the American audience. We realize this is a television commercial. American industry has acted in concert with the United States government to "clean up its own act." Americans can once again have faith in the brand names of the products they buy.

NICOLE

The casualties may have been in the thousands but millions of us have been saved.

A HAND comes into FRAME and turns down the sound. Nicole keeps talking but cannot be heard. CAMERA FOLLOWS A PAIR OF FEET from a living room into a kitchen. A freezer is opened. Inside the freezer a large stack of "The Stuff" in its original contains. Someone has hoarded it.

A telephone RINGS. The MAN picks up the phone and we hear his voice.

MAN'S VOICE

Yes. I can let you have two pints at five hundred dollars. What do you mean? It's going for seven fifty in some states. If you can do better, then don't bother me.

(a pause)

All right. Then come by in about an hour and bring the cash.

CUT TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, MANHATTAN - DAY

Nicole has just come off camera. David is waiting for her.

DAVID

So now you're the spokeswoman for the purity of American industry.

NICOLE

Twelve thirty-second spots with an option for a dozen more.

DAVID

Lose one account, gain another.

NICOLE

Look, who deserves to make some bucks out of this better than we do?

DAVID

We?

NICOLE

I'd like you to appear in a couple of spots. I think I can get you twenty five thousand per, plus residuals.

DAVID

Is that what we did this for?

NICOLE

You can't walk away from money. You're not going to turn out to be more sanctimonious than Foster, are you?

DAVID

Why not? I know all the dirty tricks. All the scams. I might make one helluva consumer advocate.

NICOLE

You're going to be a lot of trouble, I can see that.

DAVID

Oh boy, am I ever. Shall I pick you up about nine o'clock?

NICOLE

Fine. What are we going to do?

DAVID

We'll eat vegetarian.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

A billboard on a highway proclaiming: "THE STUFF" YOU LIKE IT, IT LIKES YOU, as it is painted over, obliterated forever and a cigarette advertisement replaces it.

FADE OUT

THE END

of

"The Stuff"