

The Ticking Man

written by

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- There's never a good cold war when you need one...

BLACKNESS

A sound slowly comes up. The sound of TICKING. The sound of TIME RUNNING OUT. It slowly FADES AWAY.

FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

INSERT: 20 years ago

PAN ALONG a row of 5th grade science projects and their 10-year-old CREATORS, bursting with pride over their achievements. The projects include seeds sprouting in dixie cups, a paper mache solar system mobile, and a dried out insect collection.

PAN ENDS on LLOYD HOCKETT, who stands behind a sinister-looking assemblage of wires and tubes, all protruding from a beat-up shoebox topped by an old alarm clock. Lloyd is 9 and 1/2. What he lacks in size he makes up with in pugnaciousness, surpassing his classmates in everything, including trips to the principal.

The teacher, MR. DIPRATO, reads off the grades with omnipotent finality. Being master of his student's fates is one of the few pleasures in his life.

MR. DIPRATO
Cynthia Glickan, B plus. Jerry
Fletcher, B minus. Tico Perez, A
plus...

TICO PEREZ beams obnoxiously. Hockett looks over and shakes his head at Tico's fungus collection.

MR. DIPRATO
Lloyd Hockett, fail. Cathy Lyons...

Hockett snaps a look at Diprato in disbelief. He jumps from his seat.

HOCKETT
Fail?! Whadaya mean?

MR. DIPRATO
We raise our hands before speaking
in this class, Mr. Hockett.

Hockett's hand shoots up. Mr. Diprato lets him stew for a moment, then...

MR. DIPRATO
Mr. Hockett?

HOCKETT
This is the best science project
in the whole world!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. DIPRATO

It's nothing but a collection of junk.

HOCKETT

It's a time bomb! No one ever built a time bomb before! I worked hard on this!

MR. DIPRATO

That's what I like about you, Hockett. Some people are born failures -- you work at it.

SNICKERS break out in the ranks, but Tico bursts out laughing. Hockett, completely out of control, grabs a handful of fungus and buries it into Tico's face. Tico sprawls to the floor, gagging. Hockett kicks him for good measure.

MR. DIPRATO

Mr. Hockett!

Hockett points accusingly at Diprato.

HOCKETT

I wanna see the principal!

From the look on Diprato's face, it appears that Hockett will get his wish.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

School's out and only a few cars remain. Mr. Diprato walks down the steps of the main building with MISS GRANT, another teacher.

MR. DIPRATO

As a first year teacher, Miss Grant, you must never underestimate the importance of discipline. Gain your student's respect, or there will be anarchy. If you like, we can meet somewhere and discuss this further.

MISS GRANT

I'd like that.

MR. DIPRATO

Perhaps on the way home. May I give you a ride?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS GRANT
(smiles shyly)
Alright.

Mr. Diprato approaches his new Volkswagen Beetle.

KABLOOM!!! The VW EXPLODES in a fireball. Mr. Diprato and Miss Grant watch in shock as pieces of his car rain down about them. Hockett steps up next to Diprato, proud of his handiwork.

HOCKETT
Is it too late to change my grade?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ORVILLE WRIGHT ELEMENTARY - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

INSERT: EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW

Police cars and fire trucks surround the school, their design a bit sleeker but still familiar. A throng of STUDENTS mill about while TEACHERS try to move them back. There's a sense of excitement as Police OFFICERS begin setting up a barricade. FIREMEN begin hooking up hoses, just in case.

LLOYD HOCKETT, now age 38, surveys the scene, dressed in the navy blue uniform of the LAPD Bomb Squad. Time has only magnified his youthful insolence. He's as volatile as the bombs he loves to diffuse.

HOCKETT
(raring to go)
Another perfect day. I love L.A..

Hockett throws open the back of a Squad Van and begins donning his protective gear. A knight preparing for battle. KERSH and JONES, both Squad Members, step up.

KERSH
Don't bother, Hockett. We're sitting this one out. Chief's sending in FRED.

HOCKETT
What the hell for?

JONES
School's evacuated. He says we don't need heroes.

Hockett angrily fires his vest back in the van.

HOCKETT
Heroes, shit. This would'a been my fix for the week.

CUT TO:

INT. HERALD EXAMINER - CITY ROOM - DAY

Back in business and better than ever. COPY BOYS dash back and forth to the sound of WIRE SERVICE PRINTERS. In the middle of this long busy room, MEG SHARPE sits before her word processor, talking on the phone.

Meg is a 26-year-old cub reporter searching for her place in the newspaper world. This definitely isn't it. As she talks, she unwraps a Bazooka Joe bubble gum, laughs at the comic.

MEG
(into phone)
I'll print a correction in tomorrow's column. Okay...
(grabs pen; writes)
"Begonia's should be spaced three feet apart". Yes... I realize that three feet and three inches is a big difference... Yes, I take my column seriously.

She hangs up, grabs a copy of the Herald. She reads the front page headline: GERMAN REUNIFICATION DECLARED!!!

MEG
Christ... begonias...

She pops the gum in her mouth. RICE, the unkempt 53-year-old editor, trots up to her desk in a controlled panic.

RICE
Sharpe, your on!

MEG
What...?

RICE
You're all I've got right now. Get down to Orville Wright Elementary. Columbians put another bomb in a locker. Supposed to blow at noon.

MEG
But it's already quarter 'til.

RICE
So why am I still looking at you?

Meg quickly grabs her tape recorder and starts out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORVILLE WRIGHT ELEMENTARY - DAY

F.R.E.D. a squat, multi-armed robot on wheels descends a ramp from the back of a CONTROL VAN. F.R.E.D. "sees" through a pair of video camera eyes. On the side of F.R.E.D. is a logo that reads: FEARLESS ROBOTIC EXPLOSIVE DEACTIVATOR.

As F.R.E.D. starts towards the school, a group of STUDENTS "BOO". They're eagerly anticipating the destruction of their Alma Mater.

INT. CONTROL VAN - DAY

The brains behind F.R.E.D., it resembles a miniature Mission Control. Squad Members HAYES and COTLAND work F.R.E.D. by remote control. A pair of MONITORS show the robot's POV as he moves towards the school.

EXT. ORVILLE WRIGHT ELEMENTARY - DAY

Meg shoves her way to the front of the crowd, sees F.R.E.D.. Determined to make good, she holds her tape recorder in one hand and a small notebook in the other. Not satisfied with her position, she surreptitiously ducks under the police line.

She heads towards Hockett, Kersh and Jones, who sulk near one of the vans, watching F.R.E.D. make his way into the building.

JONES

Does this suck, or what?

HOCKETT

Sending in a goddamn machine to do a man's job.

KERSH

That's how I feel about my wife's vibrator.

MEG

At least machines don't have to be told how good they were.

The trio turn to see Meg. She flashes her PRESS PASS.

MEG

Meg Sharpe. Herald Examiner. What does FRED stand for?

HOCKETT

Fucks-up Royally Every Day.

Hockett turns away. Meg frowns. This isn't going to be easy.

CUT TO:

INT. ORVILLE WRIGHT ELEMENTARY - HALLWAY - DAY

Rows of lockers line the wall. F.R.E.D. turns the corner and stops at an open locker. Using a mechanical arm, F.R.E.D. carefully opens the lid of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles lunch box, REVEALING a sophisticated, nasty-looking BOMB. A COUNTDOWN TIMER reads 3 MINUTES and 15 seconds... 14... 13...

INT. CONTROL VAN - DAY

Hayes and Cotland study the monitors, the CHIEF, 51, used to getting his own way, watches over their shoulders.

HAYES

Whoops. Motion sensitive. Can't move it. It'll level the place.

CHIEF

Give Fred two minutes, then get 'em the hell outta there. He's worth more than the whole school.

EXT. ORVILLE WRIGHT ELEMENTARY - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Hockett off by himself, pacing angrily. Two 12-year-old KIDS approach him sheepishly.

KID #1

Mister?

Hockett squints down at them.

HOCKETT

Back behind the line.

KID #2

Is the school really gonna explode?

HOCKETT

If you're lucky. Now c'mon...

He starts herding them back.

KID #1

(nervous)

Would you get killed if you were in a locker when the bomb blew up?

Hockett crouches down and grabs Kid #1 by the shoulders. Meg watches from the van.

HOCKETT

What are you talking about?

KID #1

(points to kid #2)

It was his idea!

Hockett doesn't need it spelled out any further. He bolts...

INT. CONTROL VAN - DAY

On the MONITOR, the left mechanical arm, equipped with WIRE CUTTERS, hesitates over the bomb, while the right isolates a YELLOW WIRE. The COUNTDOWN TIMER on the bomb reads 58 SECONDS. Hayes is unsure of himself. Cotland looks at Hayes nervously.

HAYES

Jeez. This one's tricky.

CHIEF

(decides)

I better get Hockett in here. Shit.

The Chief turns to leave; freezes when he spots Hockett through the window, running into the side entrance.

CHIEF

Hockett!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Hockett trots along the lockers, moving towards F.R.E.D. at the end of the hall.

HOCKETT

In the locker! Where are you!?

KID'S VOICE

In here! 518!

Hockett stops three lockers down from F.R.E.D..

HOCKETT

What's the combination?

KID'S VOICE

I can't remember it. I always leave it open. Are you a teacher?

Hockett's yanks hard on the locker door, then BANGS it in frustration.

Realizing his only hope, he steps over, carefully removes the wire from F.R.E.D.'s mechanical hand. The Countdown Timer reads: 32 SECONDS. Hockett shoves F.R.E.D. out of the way. Fred rolls back and BANGS into the lockers across the hall.

INT. CONTROL VAN - DAY

On the VIDEO MONITORS, the suddenly shaky images settle on Hockett.

HAYES

What the hell is he doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF
Get Fred outta there!

Cotland maneuvers the JOYSTICK. F.R.E.D. doesn't move.

COTLAND
He won't respond! Shit! He must've
jammed it!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The COUNTDOWN reads: 19 SECONDS. Hockett, unprepared, scans the locker for anything useful. He finds it: a SONY WALKMAN hanging from a hook. Hockett rips out the headphones, strips the wires with his teeth.

At that moment, F.R.E.D. comes to life, charges across the hall and RAMS Hockett from behind, rattling the locker dangerously and almost knocking him onto the bomb.

INT. CONTROL VAN - DAY

The Chief SMACKS Cotland on the shoulder.

CHIEF
What the fuck are you doing!?

COTLAND
It's outta control!!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Hockett shoves F.R.E.D. back hard. The COUNTDOWN is at 13 SECONDS... Hockett brings up the headphone WIRE, wraps one end around a SCREW HEAD on the bomb...

Undaunted, F.R.E.D. surges forward, KNOCKING Hockett even harder. He drops the other end of the wire as F.R.E.D.'s arms dig into his shirt and drag him backwards.

HOCKETT
God-DAMNIT!!!

Hockett spins around and levels a .45 into F.R.E.D.'s face.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - DAY

Cotland, Hayes and the Chief recoil from the VIDEO MONITOR IMAGE of the .45'S BARREL.

CHIEF
Nooo!!!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

BLAM!!! BLAM!!! BLAM!!! F.R.E.D.'s head is vaporized and he collapses into a heap, mortally wounded. Hockett rips F.R.E.D.'s wire cutters loose.

8... 7... Hockett scrambles back to the locker... 6... 5... Hockett twists the loose end of the headphone wire around a second screw head. 3... 2... SNIP. The blue wire is cut.

The COUNTDOWN stops at 1. Hockett slumps down in relief. Sweat drips off his face. A VOICE calls out from the locker...

KID'S VOICE
Am I in trouble?

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Firetrucks and police cars drive away, things are breaking up. The students watch in disappointment as Kersh and Jones exit the school, carrying the bomb in an EXPLOSIVE CONTAINMENT CANISTER. The Chief, livid, intercepts Hockett.

CHIEF
You fucking lunatic. Fred was a
2 million dollar piece of machinery.

Hockett starts to push past him.

CHIEF
If I could sack your ass, I would.

HOCKETT
Yeah, then who would save yours?

The Chief is about to respond, when a rush of REPORTS^{es} swarm around him, CLAMMERING for a statement. Hockett walks wearily away. Meg watches as he goes.

CHIEF
(into his public
persona)
The situation is under control.
You know, we saved a little boy here
today, and I hope the City remembers
that the next time they say we spend
too much money on programs like
F.R.E.D....

Behind the crowd, F.R.E.D. is wheeled by on a metal cart, his life's oil draining away.

Meg can't take her eyes off Hockett. As the Chief begins answering questions, she heads over towards Hockett, who's disappeared behind a Squad Van.

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BEHIND THE VAN

Hockett rummages in his equipment bag, pulls out a bottle of Maalox. He unscrews the lid and chugs the whole thing. Meg comes up behind him, blowing a bubble with her gum. She watches him for a moment.

The bubble POPS. Hockett jumps like the bomb has gone off. He spins around. Meg is almost as startled.

MEG

Sorry.

HOCKETT

Aren't you missing the press conference?

MEG

It seemed like the story might be here.

HOCKETT

Leave me alone.

MEG

I just want to ask you a few questions.

HOCKETT

Talk to Fred.

MEG

Could you at least tell me what happened in there?

HOCKETT

No.

Hockett jumps into the back of the van, SLAMS the door behind him. Meg goes up to the door, abandoning all pretense.

MEG

Come on. Give me a break. This is my one chance. If I screw this up it's back to Gardening columns.

(a pause)

Just five minutes, you prick!

The van door opens and Hockett, steamed, looks out. They lock eyes. Something about Meg's pugnaciousness makes Hockett smile.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - DAY

CARRION HAWKS pick apart the corpse of a jackrabbit on the side of the road. They don't even flinch as a motorcade of MILITARY VEHICLES ROAR past, sucking a cloud of dust behind them.

CHECKPOINT

The GUARDS salute as the Motorcade passes through and onto a sprawling MILITARY COMPLEX. The various buildings and airstrips look out of place in the vast emptiness that surround it. A sign reads: NEVADA UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY.

INT. NEVADA UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY - CORRIDOR

A group of important-looking MEN, some carrying briefcases, all surrounded by Military Police, make their way down the hall. Leading the way, one MP opens an elevator door.

ELEVATOR

Rough, it's really a steel mesh cage on cables. Everyone enters and the MP pulls the door closed behind them. They steady themselves as the elevator lurches downward.

Flashes of LIGHT hit them as they descend past myriad underground levels. The elevator jerks to a halt and the MP pulls back the door, REVEALING DR. JARROW, age 48.

DR. JARROW

Welcome to the Bunker, Senators.

Dr. Jarrow's is a commanding presence. Intelligent, authoritative and extremely driven, he's not incapable of affecting a fatherly warmth.

SENATOR JOHNSON steps forward to shake hands with Dr. Jarrow. Johnson, 63, comes across as a good 'ole boy, but don't let that fool you, he's sharp as a tack.

SENATOR JOHNSON

Dr. Jarrow. Looking forward to your presentation.

DR. JARROW

I appreciate the opportunity to plead my case. I just hope there's still a case to plead.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR - DAY

Dr. Jarrow leads the group towards a vault-like STEEL DOOR. A small sign reads: PROJECT TICKING MAN. And below that: DANGER RADIOACTIVITY.

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Dr. Jarrow pulls out a METAL CARD and inserts it into a slot. The door slides open and the group enters the

PROTOTYPE TESTING LABORATORY

A large, circular chamber. ELECTRONIC TESTING STATIONS ring the room, all are connected by tracks to a DOMED central HOUSING AREA. Dr. Jarrow leads the group to a control panel. The metal door closes behind them with a RESOUNDING SLAM.

Dr. Jarrow hits a button on the panel. The housing area dome begins to rotate into the floor, slowly REVEALING a complicated BLOCK OF MACHINERY. Dr. Jarrow has the Senator's complete attention.

DR. JARROW

Gentlemen, this is the testing area for the most sophisticated weapons system ever built.

Dr. Jarrow hits another SWITCH. The block begins slowly moving towards them on TRACKS. Two of the Senators take a cautionary step back.

DR. JARROW

It brings together the most advanced developments in nuclear science, robotics, and artificial intelligence.

The block of machinery stops and begins to rotate sideways.

DR. JARROW

Gentlemen... the Ticking Man.

The block of machinery has turned 180 degrees, REVEALING it to be an immense CRADLE of ELECTRONIC MACHINERY and MONITORING EQUIPMENT, all connected by a mass of CABLES and WIRES to the TICKING MAN.

The Senators say nothing, they simply stare at the Ticking Man, who remains motionless in his cradle, naked with eyes closed in the robotic equivalent of sleep.

Looking for all the world like a human being, the Ticking Man is not especially handsome, nor are his features memorable. He looks like everyman. His robot body is muscular, but not overly defined. Everything about him is designed not to attract attention, and yet there's something strangely disarming about him.

SENATOR #1

That doesn't look like any robot I ever saw.

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CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW

"Robot" hardly describes the Ticking Man, Senator. He is the nuclear weapon of the future... in a future without nuclear weapons.

SENATOR #2

You mean to tell me that thing'll hold a nuclear warhead?

DR. JARROW

(nods)

Let me show you...

Dr. Jarrow types a command into a KEYBOARD. A vertical SEAM appears on the Ticking Man's chest. There's a WHIR of INTERIOR MECHANICS as the seam splits and opens, REVEALING a metallic CHEST CAVITY. Dr. Jarrow points at a round, EMPTY HOUSING in the chest cavity.

DR. JARROW

When the plutonium sphere is in place, the payload will deliver 20 megatons of destructive force.

Jarrow indicates a thick, red, horse shoe-shaped BAND OF METAL that encircles the empty housing.

DR. JARROW

This is the high-explosive TNT which will detonate the plutonium, thereby triggering the nuclear blast.

(looks at Ticking Man proudly)

He can be programmed to detonate in any city in the world, arriving as inconspicuously as a tourist on vacation.

SENATOR #1

What if there's an accident on the way? A car crash, plane wreck? What's to keep him from blowing up in the wrong place?

DR. JARROW

Because of his construction, it's impossible for an outside force, no matter how powerful, to detonate the warhead. Detonation can only result from a computer command.

SENATOR #2

But can this thing really pass as a man?

(CONTINUED)

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Dr. Jarrow smiles, types in another COMMAND. The Senators watch in amazement as the Ticking Man's eyes open. He looks down at them with a perfectly life-like demeanor.

TICKING MAN
Good afternoon, gentlemen.

There's nothing remotely mechanical about the Ticking Man's VOICE, in fact, it's very pleasant.

TICKING MAN
I hope you had a good flight out,
and that Dr. Jarrow's presentation
isn't too...
(searches for the word)
...long winded.

Dr. Jarrow smiles, several of the Senators CHUCKLE, with the notable exception of Senator Johnson. Dr. Jarrow types in another COMMAND, the Ticking Man's eyes close as he SHUTS DOWN.

DR. JARROW
(playing along)
Take that!

SENATOR JOHNSON
This's all well and good, Doc, but
it's still a helluva end run around
the Berlin Treaty. And that
translates into a vi-o-lation.

DR. JARROW
I make weapons, not policy. I leave
that to your committee. I trust
your decision will be based on
national security, and not swayed
by current... passions.

There's an awkward pause. The Senators obviously don't like being told their jobs.

DR. JARROW
Let me show you the Project Command
Center...

THE TICKING MAN

As the Senators turn and file out, there's the slightest FLUTTER of his CLOSED EYELIDS. Then he is still. It goes unnoticed.

CUT TO:

INT. HERALD EXAMINER - DAY

CLOSE ON MEG as she marches angrily through the CITY ROOM. She disappears into the

EDITOR'S OFFICE

Rice, behind his desk, looks up as Meg sticks a copy of the paper in his face.

MEG

This isn't my writing.

RICE

You're damned right it isn't. I had Klinsky rewrite it.

MEG

Why? What was wrong with it?

RICE

Nothing, if you're working for People magazine. You were sent out to cover an event, not a person.

MEG

I could have rewritten it. I got the facts...

RICE

Where from, your head? None of them checked out.

MEG

(in disbelief)
What?

RICE

This bomb squad guy was jerking you around. Assholes who don't like reporters will do that sometimes. That's why we get confirmation.

Meg looks crestfallen, and furious.

RICE

You have potential, Meg. But you aren't a reporter yet.

CUT TO:

A SET OF BOWLING PINS

as they are laid waste by a violently-hooking ball.

INT. WONDER BOWL BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Hockett grabs his ball from the ball return and prepares to fire again. He's not keeping score, and he's not here for fun. He's blowing off steam. With very little style, he hurls the ball down the lane.

HOCKETT
Cocksucking sonuvabitch!

Offended, the FAMILY in the lane beside him clears out. The bowling alley is full, but the two lanes on either side of Hockett are empty. He's given a wide berth.

Meg walks up. She watches from the rear of the bowling alley, seething, goes over to the seats directly behind Hockett's lane. A REGULAR, sits in one of the seats, sucking on a beer, watching Hockett intently. He notices Meg doing the same.

REGULAR
I don't think he realizes it, but he's halfway through his second perfect game.

HOCKETT
Shit ass bastard!

REGULAR
He's not as pissed as he usually is.

MEG
Yeah? Just watch.

CUT TO:

RENTAL COUNTER

THUMP! The ATTENDANT plops a pair of bowling shoes down before Meg. She grabs the shoes and exits.

BOWLING LANES

Hockett goes for his next shot, pauses as Meg appears in the lane next to him. She winds up, bowls.

MEG
You lied to me.

She gets a STRIKE. Hockett winds up and bowls. A SPLIT. The Regular gets up and leaves.

HOCKETT
So what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG

So what? I lost my story! Why didn't you just tell me to get lost instead of bullshitting me?

Hockett goes back for his ball.

HOCKETT

I did tell you to get lost. In fact, why don't you get lost right now?

MEG

I haven't finished my game.

HOCKETT

How the hell did you find me, anyway?

MEG

I asked a few of your bomb buddies at the station.

HOCKETT

So you found me. What do you want?

MEG

An apology, for starters.

HOCKETT

Forget it.

He bowls another STRIKE, apparently having dismissed her.

MEG

What is it with you? Do you enjoy screwing people over like that? Does it improve your game? Well, screw you!

She hurls her ball awkwardly at Hockett, who sidesteps it. The ball bounces across the gutter into the next lane.

HOCKETT

Hey! I did my job today! It ain't my fault you didn't do yours!

MEG

(enraged)

I could if it weren't for pricks like...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, Meg gasps for breath, tries to steady herself. Hockett just looks at her, puzzled. She tries to breathe, but can't. She's suffocating. Meg drops to her knees, gulping for air. Hockett hurries over.

HOCKETT
Hey? What is it?

MEG
... asthma attack... you jerk...

It gets worse, she tries to speak, but can't.

HOCKETT
Hang on. I'll get help...

Suddenly very scared, Hockett runs off for the
RENTAL COUNTER

Hockett runs up in a panic to the bewildered Attendant.

HOCKETT
Call an ambulance!

ATTENDANT
What's wrong?

HOCKETT
Jesus Christ!

Hockett shoves the Attendant out of the way and grabs the phone. He dials 911.

HOCKETT
(into phone)
There's someone having an asthma
attack!...
(to Attendant)
What's the address here?

Hockett suddenly stops short. He stares blankly past the Attendant, into the bowling lanes, where Meg has resumed bowling as if nothing has happened, the picture of health.

BOWLING LANES

Meg casually retrieves the ball. Hockett comes up, furious.

HOCKETT
What the hell was that?

MEG
Doesn't feel so hot, does it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
What?

MEG
To look like an idiot.

Hockett doesn't have an answer.

MEG
At least it didn't set you back a year.

She turns and starts out. Hockett waits a moment, then hurries up behind her.

HOCKETT
Alright. You made your point. I'm sorry. Let me make it up to you.

MEG
You can't.

HOCKETT
At least let me buy you a burger.

She stops, looks at him.

MEG
I'd rather have an interview. A real one this time.

Hockett rolls his eyes, then nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEVADA UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY - NIGHT

The glow of the compound lights can be seen for miles in the surrounding darkness.

INT. PROTOTYPE TESTING LABORATORY - NIGHT

The Ticking Man rests in his cradle, motionless, with eyes closed. Dr. Jarrow observes him, disappointed, but resolved to his fate. They are alone in the chamber.

DR. JARROW
There's never a good cold war when you need one.

FOOTSTEPS come from behind and two TECHNICIANS enter.

TECHNICIAN #1
It's a damn shame, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jarrow doesn't turn around.

DR. JARROW
Well, it's on to bigger and better things.
(back to business)
Shut down the main frame before you start system tear-down.

TECHNICIAN #2
Tonight, Dr. Jarrow?

DR. JARROW
Immediately. That's the committee's decision.

Dr. Jarrow takes one last look around, then exits. The Technicians get to work.

EXT. NEVADA UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY - NIGHT

Dr. Jarrow shakes hands with the last of the Senators. The Senator climbs into a jeep and the committee caravan takes off. Senator Johnson stands next to Dr. Jarrow. They watch the caravan's taillights disappear into the desert.

SENATOR JOHNSON
Hope you don't take my stickin' around as an insult, Doc. But I worked too damned hard on this treaty and I like to see things through.

DR. JARROW
Tell me something, Senator. You made your decision in Washington, didn't you?

SENATOR JOHNSON
Check out the world today, Doc. This decision wasn't made in Washington.

INT. PROTOTYPE TESTING FACILITY - NIGHT

Technician #1 & #2 work at adjacent COMPUTER TERMINALS in one of the testing stations. Behind them, the Ticking Man rests in his cradle.

TECHNICIAN #2
I'm gonna download the A-link first.

TECHNICIAN #1
That's about a billion in research right there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TECHNICIAN #2
Don't remind me. I can barely make
my kid's tuition payment.
(hits button; watches
computer screen clear)
There it goes.

TECHNICIAN #1
(typing a command)
Why do I feel like a doctor pulling
the plug?

THE TICKING MAN

Cradled in the shadows. His eyes open. There's an intelligence
in them, and something else... fear.

TESTING STATION

The Technicians continue their work, oblivious.

TECHNICIAN #2
What do you got going this weekend?

TECHNICIAN #1
Taking the wife to Vegas. She
thinks she's got a system for
roulette.

In the background, the Ticking Man stirs.

THE TICKING MAN

He sits forward, pulling free of a mass of CRADLE CONTACT POINTS.
He reaches down and disconnects an UMBILICAL CORD-LIKE CABLE from
his side.

TESTING STATION

Technician #1 reacts to a BEEPING ALERT on his control board.

TECHNICIAN #1
Hello. What's going on? Did you
touch something?

TECHNICIAN #2
Not a goddamn thing.

INT. PROJECT COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

COMMANDER PHILLIPS and a PRIVATE are shaken out of their dull
routine as a board lights up and a SIREN begins to scream.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILLIPS
(staring at the board)
What the hell is that!?

PRIVATE
Sir, according to this, we have an
on-line missile.

PHILLIPS
Get a team down below. Get Jarrow
on the com. Now!
(pause)
This has gotta be a fucking drill.

INT. TESTING FACILITY - NIGHT

SIRENS are going off here as well. Behind the Technicians, the Ticking Man stands up from his cradle, silhouetted by the lights of a CONTROL PANEL. It's hard to believe he's a robot. He looks at the Technicians, moves forward.

TECHNICIAN #1
I'm gonna get out the code book and
find out what this means.

Technician #1 turns to a metal cabinet, freezes in shock at the sight of the Ticking Man standing over him.

TECHNICIAN #1
Jesus...

CRACK!!! With one swipe of the Ticking Man's hand, Technician #1's head snaps back impossibly fast, his vertebrae shattered. Technician #2 watches, frozen with fear, as the Ticking Man turns to him.

TECHNICIAN #2
We shut you down... We shut you
down...

PHILLIPS (OVER INTERCOM)
What the hell is going on down
there?!

Technician #2 lunges for the intercom. The Ticking Man slaps his hand over the Technician's mouth, silencing him. The Ticking Man FLATTENS the intercom with his fist.

As Technician #2 struggles, the Ticking Man raises his free hand, his index and forefingers forming a "V". But this isn't a peace sign. Slowly and deliberately, the Ticking Man places his fingers over the Technician's eyes, and presses...

CUT TO:

INT. PLUTONIUM CONTAINMENT SECTOR - NIGHT

The HEAVY, STEEL-LAYERED DOOR is forced back. Dressed in the Technician's uniform, the Ticking Man enters, walks over to a wall broken up by rows of square panels. He presses a button underneath one of the panels.

Like an office file cabinet drawer, the panel slides out, REVEALING a PLUTONIUM SPHERE. Nine inches in diameter, the sphere is encrusted with circuitry. The Ticking Man lifts the sphere from its housing.

INT. PROJECT COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

SIRENS wail. Panic is rising. Dr. Jarrow and Senator Johnson BURST in. In the hallway behind them we see TROOPS running by.

DR. JARROW

(composed)

What's the word from the testing lab?

PHILLIPS

Communications are down.

A BUZZER SOUNDS.

PRIVATE

Sir, we have an armed warhead!

DR. JARROW

What!?

Dr. Jarrow runs to a computer station, types in a CODE.

SENATOR JOHNSON

Would someone explain to me what in Sam Hill is goin' on?

No one does. The COMPUTER SCREEN lights up before Jarrow. He types: R-E-Q-U-E-S-T W-A-R-H-E-A-D S-T-A-T-U-S.

The COMPUTER'S REPLY: MISSILE AWAY -- TARGET LOCKED

Jarrow types: R-E-Q-U-E-S-T T-A-R-G-E-T C-O-O-R-D-I-N-A-T-E-S

The COMPUTER'S REPLY: COORDINATES CLASSIFIED

Sweat is building on Jarrow's brow. He suddenly doesn't look so composed. Jarrow types: O-V-E-R-I-D-E C-O-D-E-: Y-O-U-N-G L-I-O-N 4-2-5-8-5

The COMPUTER'S REPLY: LATITUDE 55.05 N -- LONGITUDE 38.50 A WORLD MAP APPEARS on the screen. A FLASHING DOT appears on the proper coordinates -- inside the USSR. The city name flashes: MOSCOW... MOSCOW... MOSCOW... MOSCOW...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly the COMPUTER SCREEN goes dark, along with every other SCREEN AND READOUT PANEL in the center.

Jarrow turns to Commander Phillips.

DR. JARROW
Close this fucking place down.

CUT TO:

CORRIDOR

ALARMS BLARE as the Ticking Man hurries away from the Plutonium Containment Sector. Ahead, two hidden STEEL DOORS begin sliding shut from each side of the corridor. The Ticking Man makes a running leap, disappears through just as the DOORS SLAM SHUT.

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR LANDING

A SQUAD of TROOPS charge out.

PROTOTYPE TESTING LABORATORY

The Troops enter cautiously through the smashed-open steel door. All the COMPUTER STATIONS have been demolished, not out of anger, but with a purpose. Technician #2 sits prone in the Ticking Man's cradle, naked, his eyes bloody sockets.

ELEVATOR SHAFT

Hand over hand, the Ticking Man pulls himself up the ELEVATOR CABLE.

INT. ELEVATOR

Three SOLDIERS rush into the elevator and start back up.

THE TICKING MAN

hangs on for the ride as the cable carries him to the top of the shaft. He swings off onto a platform, braces himself against the wall, and kicks the CABLE PULLEY MECHANISM.

Once... twice... The pulley TEARS OFF its mooring. Sending the cable spooling back down the shaft.

THE ELEVATOR

free falls. The SOLDIER'S SCREAMS echo through the shaft. The elevator IMPLODES as it hits bottom, the cable unwinding on top of it for several more seconds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VENTILATION SHAFT

As the Ticking Man crawls along the narrow space, a set of THICK STEEL BARS STAB DOWN from above, barring his way. Throughout the ventilation system, other SETS OF BARS can be HEARD descending with an ECHOING CLANG.

Using his forearm as a crowbar, he pries the two middle bars wide apart.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - VENTILATION EXHAUST UNIT - NIGHT

The blades spin on one of the many large fans that pump fresh air into the lower chambers. The Ticking Man's hand comes up and catches a blade, stopping it cold. With the other hand, he bends the blade over and climbs out.

The Ticking Man ducks behind the ventilation unit as a jeep pulls up nearby and a soldier runs into the building, leaving the jeep's engine idling. The Ticking Man moves towards it...

MAIN GATE

The fence CRACKLES, charged with electricity. A PATROL of four jeeps slide to a stop at the gate. The CAPTAIN stands up in the rear jeep.

CAPTAIN

Stay in radio contact! No one
leaves the compound!

The Patrol rolls out in a cloud of dust. The electrified gate slides shut behind them.

CUT TO:

INT. PROTOTYPE TESTING CENTER - NIGHT

Several TECHNICIANS feverishly work on one of the computers as Soldiers guard the area.

INT. PROJECT COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

The COMPUTER SCREENS are still out. Jarrow and Johnson stand by the window, gazing out at the fully mobilized compound. Phillips barks into his intercom.

PHILLIPS

How much longer?

VOICE (OVER INTERCOM)

Almost there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR JOHNSON

Any of you boys ever work in the private sector? Do some goddamn thing!

DR. JARROW

We can't activate the fail safe until the computers are back up. Then one command will shut him down.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

One of the patrol jeeps pulls up and a SOLDIER gets out. He positions a fender-mounted spotlight, sweeping it across the fence.

JEEP UNDERCARRIAGE

A SHADOW drops down. It's the Ticking Man.

DESERT

The Soldier continues to arc the light around unaware of the Ticking Man rising up behind him. The light falls across the Ticking Man's face. The Soldier has no time to scream. The Ticking Man grabs his head and RAMS it through the spotlight, which EXPLODES in a FLASH of light.

CUT TO:

INT. PROJECT COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

The COMPUTER SCREENS blink to life. Dr. Jarrow races back to the screen and types: A-C-T-I-V-A-T-E F-A-I-L S-A-F-E.

The COMPUTER REPLIES: ENTER ACCESS CODE.

Dr. Jarrow types in the code and enters it. There's a pause as the computer works.

The SCREEN READS: SYSTEM SHUT DOWN -- WARHEAD DEACTIVATED.

A general sigh of relief sounds in the room.

DR. JARROW

He's down.

Phillips looks at his control panel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILLIPS
Tracking's back up. We got him.
He's stopped dead about a mile
outside the compound.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

SEVERAL VEHICLES converge on a BODY lying in the sand. They halt about 50 yards away, the SOLDIERS, with Phillips, Johnson and Dr. Jarrow, approach on foot.

They come up to the body. It isn't the Ticking Man. It's the SOLDIER he killed. Beside him is a tangled piece of machinery, the FAIL SAFE/TRANSMITTER. It emits a low BEEP. Dr. Jarrow, already clued as to what has happened, picks up the machinery, stares off at the horizon.

DR. JARROW
He shouldn't know how to do this...
He's learning.

CUT TO:

INT. MEG'S CAR - NIGHT

A late model BMW, filled with empty styrofoam cups, old newspapers, half-eaten sandwiches and about fifty discarded Bazooka Joe wrappers. She and Hockett pull up outside his house.

MEG
I'm not letting you off the hook,
you're gonna give me this interview.

HOCKETT
Gimme a break. This is the best
take-out in town, and it's getting
cold.

They start out of the car, Hockett, carrying a six-pack and some Chinese take-out, brushes off some Bazooka Joe wrappers stuck to his shoe.

HOCKETT
This's gotta be the dirtiest goddamn
BMW I've ever seen.

MEG
Don't make fun of my garbage. The
car's my Dad's, but the trash is
mine.

INT. HOCKETT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

AMBER, 19 sits in front of the TV. She's beautiful, especially when she's mad. And right now, she's gorgeous. Outside, there are FOOTSTEPS on the walk, and a KEY is inserted in the lock. The door swings open to REVEAL Hockett and Meg.

AMBER

Where the hell have you been? Do you have any idea what fucking time it is?

HOCKETT

I was bowling. I lost track... you wanna beer?

AMBER

Hell no. And the next time you want someone to walk all over, don't call me.

She pushes past Meg and Hockett and disappears out the door. Hockett closes the door behind her, heads for the kitchen. Meg follows him, embarrassed.

MEG

I feel like a homewrecker. You should have told me about her.

HOCKETT

She's the babysitter. We go through this every night.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the door to the hallway opens, a shaft of light widens to REVEAL IAN HOCKETT, age 6, asleep in his bed.

Hockett enters, pulls the covers up around his son, strokes his hair. Meg watches from the hall, charmed. As Hockett starts out, he trips over a plastic TOY CASTLE. It CRUNCHES under his foot.

HOCKETT

Goddamn fucking shit!

Meg is no longer charmed. Ian stirs. Hockett freezes, waits until Ian nods back off, then tiptoes out.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A PHOTO OF THE HINDENBURG

Captured in mid-destruction. Meg POPS a bubble, sips a beer and moves onto another photo, an aerial photo of CARPET BOMBING. Next to that, mounted on the wall like fine art, is a LAND MINE CASING. The room is full of bomb photos and mementoes.

MEG

You have a real problem. What is it with you and bombs?

HOCKETT

I love'm. They explode. And if you don't get out of the way in time, you explode, too.

MEG

That's a sound basis for a relationship.

Meg picks up a FISHING TROPHY. The inscription reads: Bilkes Pond Annual Bass Tournament - 1st Place.

MEG

What's with this? Does it explode?

HOCKETT

(laughs)
Set the world record that day. Six hundred bass.

MEG

How'd you manage that?

HOCKETT

My rod and reel was 4.5 ounces of gunpowder packed in the bottom of a Campbell Soup Can. It was raining fish for a week. They wouldn't give me the trophy... so I stole it.

MEG

You make me wanna rush right out and have kids.

HOCKETT

(shrugs)
I didn't know any better. I was Ian's age.

He's suddenly quiet at the mention of his son. Meg notices, crosses over to Hockett. She's a little tipsy. She stops about six inches from his face. He shifts uncomfortably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG

So how old is your son?

HOCKETT

Six. I get him two nights a week.
I guess they figure it isn't enough
time to screw him up too bad.

MEG

Good strategy.

Hockett studies her a moment. It almost seems like they're going
to kiss. Finally...

MEG

Shall we start the interview?

HOCKETT

Let's have another drink first.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. IAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

QUIET. Ian sleeps peacefully. A LOW RUMBLE ECHOES in the
distance. Ian awakens. He sits up as the TOYS on the DRESSER
begin to RATTLE. A SUDDEN WIND BLOWS the curtains back from the
open window.

Ian gets out of bed and pads over to the window just in time to
see a SLEEK BLACK MACHINE descending into the back yard from the
sky.

IAN

Wow...

It's a BELL COBRA MILITARY CHOPPER.

LIVING ROOM

Hockett and Meg are asleep on opposite ends of the couch. There
are twelve "empties" on the table in front of them. Ian charges
into the room, goes over and shakes Hockett.

IAN

Daddy! Wake up! There's a dragon
in the back yard!

Hockett wakes up, focuses on Ian.

HOCKETT

Wha...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOM!!! The front door flies open and several SOLDIERS rush in. They are lead by MORRELL. Cold and precise, he's an imposing militaristic figure. Hockett rises on unsteady legs.

Meg wakes up, confused, then scared. The Soldiers surround Hockett. Morrell steps up to him.

MORRELL
Lloyd Hockett?

Hockett knows where they're from.

HOCKETT
Awww fuck...

MORRELL
We have orders to escort you
immediately to a classified
location.

HOCKETT
Yeah? Well, I don't work there
anymore so get the hell out.

Responding to a nod from Morrell, the Soldiers grab Hockett and start hauling him towards the door.

IAN
Daddy!

Meg grabs hold of Ian. Hockett HEADBUTTS the closest face. A Soldier drops to his knees, his nose broken.

HOCKETT
Goddamn prickless bastards!

Hockett is out the door.

MEG
You can't do this!

Meg starts to follow. Morrell cuts her off, puts a finger to his lips.

MORRELL
Shhhhh...

Morrell is frightening, and there's something weirdly effeminate about him. He looks entirely capable and more than willing to slit her throat. Meg sees it in his eyes; she pulls Ian close. Morrell turns and leaves.

EXT. HOCKETT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

No sign of any Soldiers, Meg rushes onto the front lawn, carrying Ian. Suddenly, the Chopper rises from behind the house, hovers for a moment, then streaks off with a DEAFENING ROAR. Half the neighborhood is suddenly outside, just in time to watch it vanish.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAWN

The jeep lies abandoned on the side of the road, covered with tumbleweeds.

As he walks, the Ticking Man clutches his side, as if in pain, but really doing damage control. There's an ugly hole from where he pulled out the fail safe mechanism. He crouches down at the SOUND of CHOPPER BLADES, watches as the Bell Chopper races across the desert sky, heading towards the UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY.

The Ticking Man waits for the Chopper to pass, then stands and heads for a glow on the horizon, which can only be a city.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR - DAWN

Hockett, GUARDS flanking him on either side, is led along with a sense of urgency. At the far end of the corridor, a door opens and Dr. Jarrow steps out. Hockett stops a few feet away from him. They stare at each other, a meeting of old enemies.

HOCKETT

Fuck you.

DR. JARROW

You already have. More than you could possibly know.

CUT TO:

EXT. BETH HOCKETT'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAWN

Holding Ian's hand, Meg RINGS the DOORBELL for the fifth time. Finally, a light comes on from inside and the door opens to REVEAL BETH HOCKETT, age 35. She's quite pretty, but five years of being married to Hockett have taken their toll.

Beth looks at Meg, sees her son.

IAN

Hi, Mommy. Daddy got kidnapped.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH HOCKETT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Meg sits at the breakfast table. Beth pours her some coffee.

MEG
You talk about it like it happened
before.

BETH
It has, but not like this.
Something big must be up.

MEG
Do you have any idea what?

BETH
Uh uh. He wasn't supposed to talk
about his work. But even if he
could've, he probably wouldn't have.
Tom is a very private man.

MEG
I've noticed.

BETH
Are you interested in him?

MEG
I don't know. Maybe as a story.

BETH
He wouldn't like that.
(a pause)
Try Nevada. The Underground Testing
Facility just outside of Carlton.
I don't know what he did, but that's
where he did it.

CUT TO:

INT. PROTOTYPE TESTING LABORATORY - DAY

TECHNICIANS are still hard at work making repairs. Dr. Jarrow
stands over Hockett's shoulder, awaiting his reaction. Senator
Johnson watches nervously. Morrell stands by, always ready.

HOCKETT
Thanks for the tour. I was afraid
you kidnapped my ass and flew me
out here for nothing.

DR. JARROW
Not quite for nothing. Right after
the event, we went through all the
Project Access Records.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW (Cont'd)
Turns out that just after you were
fired, you accessed the Ticking
Man's A.I. patterns.

HOCKETT
What the hell are you talking about?

DR. JARROW
I'm talking about sabotage.

HOCKETT
Oh bullshit -- You know why he split
as well as I do. It was the goddamn
intelligence system. If you'd used
a binary code, you'd have a
computer, as easy to program as a
fucking IBM. But that wasn't
expensive enough. You had to make
him think.

SENATOR JOHNSON
Boy, this isn't the time to talk
shop. You're under very serious...

HOCKETT
What are we even doing here? Just
go find the motherfucker and bring
him back. How much harm can he do?

DR. JARROW
He's armed himself.

A long pause. Hockett can't believe his ears.

HOCKETT
Shut him down.

DR. JARROW
We can't. He's torn out the fail
safe.

Hockett is stunned.

HOCKETT
That's impossible...
(desperately searching)
What about the tracking...?

Dr. Jarrow grabs Hockett; shakes him hard.

DR. JARROW
Don't you get it!? He hasn't just
escaped!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW (Cont'd)
He's armed and targeted for fucking
Moscow! He's launched! HE'S
LAUNCHED!

Dr. Jarrow slowly releases his hold on Hockett. The strain on Dr. Jarrow is beginning to show.

DR. JARROW
You're going to tell us what you
did. You're going to help us find
him.

CUT TO:

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

It ERUPTS, shooting a shower of SPARKS AND SMOKE into the air. PULL BACK to REVEAL that it's just the volcano replica in front of the MIRAGE HOTEL & CASINO. We're on the Las Vegas strip.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL & CASINO - CASINO FLOOR - DAY

MOVE DOWN a row of SLOT MACHINES. BELLS GO OFF as someone hits it big. One dollar COINS spill out of the over-flowing pay-off tray. One of the coins rolls across the carpet. A FOOT ENTERS FRAME and steps on the coin, stopping it.

A HAND reaches down, picks up the coin. PAN UP WITH the hand to REVEAL the Ticking Man.

ROULETTE WHEEL .

The Ticking Man steps up and watches as the ball RATTLES down into the number 12 slot. Winning bets are paid off, while losing bets are raked in. The Ticking Man fingers his one-dollar coin, watches as the DEALER starts the wheel spinning.

TICKING MAN'S POV

We see the roulette wheel translated into ADVANCED COMPUTER GRAPHICS. The three-dimensional images have an almost cartoonish sheen, a surreal computer's interpretation of reality. Superimposed on the left side of the image is a VERTICAL MENU displaying various READOUTS AND CALCULATIONS.

As the dealer's hand spins the ball around the wheel, the calculations factor at lightning speed. Suddenly, the image begins to STROBE, the ball appears frozen over various numbers, finally over 17.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROULETTE TABLE

The Ticking Man places his coin on 17 a few moments before the ball CLATTERS down onto the 17 slot. He wins, the Dealer pays him \$36.

Play begins again, the Ticking Man waits, and moments before the ball drops, places his \$36 in chips on number 21. He wins again. The other players marvel at his luck. The Dealer, not as enthusiastic, pays him \$1,296.

DEALER

Looks like you got the hot hand,
Doc.

The Ticking Man doesn't respond; just smiles politely. The Wheel is sent spinning a third time. Bets are placed, all eyes are on the Ticking Man. The ball slows. He drops all of his chips on number 3. Several other GAMBLERS, trying to ride his luck, join in with smaller bets.

The ball lands on 3. The CROWD CHEERS, several people clap the Ticking Man on the back. The Dealer just glares at him.

DEALER

What's your secret?

TICKING MAN

(unassuming)
Just lucky, I guess.

The Dealer begins counting out the Ticking Man's winnings, close to \$50,000.00.

CUT TO:

INT. MEG'S BMW - DAY

Meg drives, something clearly on her mind. She scribbles on a DASHBOARD NOTEPAD while maneuvering through traffic: Military -- Underground Testing facility -- top secret -- Bomb squad???

As she jots, her car drifts across the median. A horn BLARES. Meg barely whips the wheel around in time to avoid a head-on collision.

CUT TO:

INT. HERALD EXAMINER - EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg stands in front of Rice's desk. Rice looks at her skeptically.

RICE

You say you two had been drinking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG
Drinking, not hallucinating.

RICE
Whatever happened, it's not enough
to follow up on. And even if it
were, you're not the person to do
it.

MEG
(irritated)
What do you mean...?

RICE
I know your father got you this job,
but his clout only goes so far.
I'm still the editor. Sorry, Meg.

CUT TO:

INT. HOCKETT'S HOUSE - DAY

Meg rummages through Hockett's desk, finds only BILLS, OLD RECEIPTS AND CANCELLED CHECKS. She slams the drawer shut, discouraged, then spots an old TRUNK, used as an end table.

Meg opens the trunk. Jackpot. It is filled with MEMENTOES, CLIPPINGS, OLD PHOTOGRAPHS... and a SCRAPBOOK. Meg takes out the scrapbook, pages through it, pauses at a faded NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE.

The headline reads: Columbia University Student Builds Homemade Nuclear Bomb. Underneath is a photo of 22-year-old Hockett being led into court.

Meg continues paging, passing through several COLLEGE DIPLOMAS, including a DOCTORATE IN THEORETICAL PHYSICS and a MASTERS DEGREE IN APPLIED MECHANICAL SCIENCE.

She's about to close the trunk when she spots a cardboard tube. Meg takes the tube, pulls out a BLUEPRINT. She unrolls it.

The blueprint is a detailed rendering of a MECHANICAL ARM. Incredibly complex, it is designed to mimic a human arm. Meg studies it curiously. She doesn't know what it means, but it means something.

Meg goes over and picks up the phone, dials.

MEG
(into phone)
When's your next flight to Las Vegas?

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - HOLDING CELL - DAY

WHACK!!! Hockett's head snaps back from the blow. Next, Morrell buries his fist into Hockett's gut. Hockett doubles over as far as his bonds will allow. As Morrell winds up again, Dr. Jarrow motions for him to stop.

HOCKETT

You can't fucking do this...

DR. JARROW

On the contrary, the President's given me charge of this entire operation. I can do anything I want. Now, are you ready to help us, Lloyd?

Hockett gasps, coughs up some blood.

HOCKETT

Name's Hockett. You fuck.

Dr. Jarrow nods. Morrell swings again.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCCARRON AIRPORT - DAY

The Ticking Man pulls up in a used TOYOTA, the sticker price still scrawled across the windshield. He parks in the red zone and heads inside, now wearing a new shirt and jeans.

INT. MCCARRON AIRPORT - TWA TICKET COUNTER - DAY

SYLVIA, the ticketing agent, reads off an itinerary. The Ticking Man listens from the other side of the counter.

SYLVIA

You fly from McCarron to New York, board a connecting flight to Frankfurt, and then on to Moscow.

TICKING MAN

Thank you.

SYLVIA

Let me just confirm these flight numbers.

She turns, heads back and opens a door to a

STAFF ROOM

Sylvia goes to a phone, glances at a COMPOSITE PHOTO of the Ticking Man. She dials two digits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIA
This is Sylvia at the TWA ticket counter. The man you're looking for just purchased a ticket to Moscow...

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY - DAY

CAPTAIN MILLER, 42, a black, career military man, paces before a bank of monitors, behind him are several clean cut men in civilian garb who could only be MARINES. They are all armed with high-caliber, but very concealable WEAPONS.

MILLER
(into speaker-phone)
Give me the flight number and gate...

CUT TO:

INT. TWA TICKETING COUNTER - DAY

Sylvia, obviously nervous, emerges from the back room with the tickets.

SYLVIA
Okay. You're cleared all the way to Moscow.

The Ticking Man takes hold of her wrist.

TICKING MAN
Your hands are shaking.

SYLVIA
(hesitates)
It's cold back there.

TICKING MAN
Maybe it will warm up soon.

He takes the tickets and leaves the counter. Sylvia breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY - DAY

Miller is in the process of changing into a TWA uniform as he addresses his men.

MILLER
The objective is to immobilize this thing for transport.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLER (Cont'd)
And to do that, we gotta hit it with everything we got.

MARINE
What about civilians, Sir?

MILLER
(gravely)
They're expendable.

Miller notices the troubled looks on the Marines' faces. He decides to give them an extra bit of information.

MILLER
You're my men and I owe you this much: There's a nuclear weapon inside this thing, and if we don't stop it now... any casualties here will be just a footnote.

CUT TO:

INT. TWA PASSENGER CONCOURSE - DAY

Two SECURITY GUARDS stand idly by as the Ticking Man approaches the METAL DETECTOR. As he steps through the FRAME, the DETECTOR BEEPS. The Ticking Man reaches in his pocket and pulls out his car keys, sets them on a tray.

SECURITY GUARD
Could you step back through?

The Ticking Man goes through once again. Nothing happens. He smiles at the Guard, takes his keys and continues.

TWA PASSENGER TERMINAL

Half-filled with TRAVELERS awaiting various flights. The Ticking Man stands in a LINE waiting to board at GATE 43.

The Ticking Man glances to his left, notices a suspicious-looking MAN standing by the observation window. Their eyes meet for an instant. The Ticking Man steps forward, then looks to his right. A second MAN looks away. Something is up.

The Ticking Man steps up to the ticket taker, who stands at the start of the JETWAY. We see that it's Sergeant Miller.

MILLER
May I see your ticket, sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Distracted, the Ticking Man extends his ticket. Suddenly, Miller grabs the Ticking Man by the wrist. At the same instant, the PASSENGER behind the Ticking Man, a MARINE, whips out a MACHINE PISTOL and swings it towards his head.

The Ticking Man just manages to duck under the SPRAY of BULLETS. He yanks his arm back, SLAMMING Miller into the Marine. The next GUN BURST scatters the PASSENGERS, killing three of them.

PANDEMONIUM breaks out as plain-clothes MARINES converge. Their AUTOMATIC WEAPONS BLAZING, they take careful aim, very aware of the potential disaster. The Ticking Man, BULLETS TEARING UP the floor around him, is immediately surrounded. The only way out is down the

JETWAY

In a HAIL OF GUNFIRE the Ticking Man dashes about 20 feet before running into the crush of panicked PASSENGERS trying to scramble onto the plane. As he tries to shove them out of the way, the MARINES advance from behind, still FIRING.

The Ticking Man soon finds himself trying to crawl over a mound of dead and wounded PASSENGERS. It's a bloodbath. He reaches the end of the jetway, but the PLANE suddenly backs away out of reach, the JET ENGINES ROARING, WIND BLASTING.

The Ticking Man stands trapped in the opening, a perfect target. The MARINES bear down. In a few seconds he's hit at least 50 times and BLOWN OUT of the Jetway.

Amidst the CRIES of the WOUNDED, the Marines, lead by Miller, advance to the end of the Jetway and gaze down. The Ticking Man lies motionless on the tarmac.

MILLER

Radio for the chopper, now.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Hockett is slumped over in his seat, unconscious. Morrell reaches in and grabs Hockett by the hair, lifts his head.

MORRELL

He's out.

DR. JARROW

I don't care what you have to do.
He knows something...

An ALARM SOUNDS, followed by ANOTHER, and ANOTHER. Two SOLDIERS rush down the stairs and enter the cell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLDIER #1
They got him at McCarron! They're
bringing him in by chopper!

Dr. Jarrow starts out, Morrell on his heels.

DR. JARROW
(to Soldiers; indicating
Hockett)
Get him to the infirmary.

Dr. Jarrow and Morrell disappear up the stairs. The Soldiers
go over to Hockett, start to untie him.

CLOSE ON HOCKETT

watching through his half-closed eyes, not unconscious after all.

CUT TO:

INFIRMARY

The SIRENS WAIL. The Soldiers drag in Hockett and throw him on a
cot. They hurry out, SLAMMING the door behind them.

Grunting, Hockett rolls off the cot and stumbles to the door.
It's locked tight. Hockett looks around, spots a medicine
cabinet.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCCARRON AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

The TURBINES ROAR into reverse as a Boeing 767 touches down.

INT. MCCARRON AIRPORT - PASSENGER TERMINAL - DAY

CHAOS. Meg steps out of her gate and starts immediately through
a cordon. AIRPORT SECURITY waves the throng of TRAVELERS
through, but they still catch a glimpse of the carnage. At least
ten or fifteen BODIES are strewn at the far side of the terminal.
POLICE and INVESTIGATORS are just arriving.

Meg takes out a CAMERA and begins SNAPPING photos. A Security
GUARD takes her arm and hurries her long.

CUT TO:

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

Miller and five of the MARINES are seated in the cabin. Miller
looks on grimly as two of the Marines CELEBRATE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARINE #1
(over engine)
Whoo! It's steak tonight!

MILLER
Stow it! People died back there.
Show some fucking respect.

The two Marines immediately shut up. Miller, anxious, looks out the OPEN SLIDING DOOR. The Ticking Man is securely strapped to a PLATFORM mounted on the LANDING SKID. His clothes are shredded from the bullets, but by and large, he looks intact.

CLOSE ON TICKING MAN'S ARM

apparently immobile. But at closer inspection, actually tense and straining powerfully against the straps....

EXT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Amidst a FLURRY OF ACTIVITY, Senator Johnson watches as Jarrow mobilizes the Ticking Man DEMOLITION TEAM.

DR. JARROW
The second they set down, I want
him taken below, the warhead removed
and the body detonated.

Senator Johnson points.

SENATOR JOHNSON
Here they come!

A DOT appears on the horizon, accompanied by the distant, CHOPPING SOUND of helicopter blades.

INFIRMARY

CAMERA PANS across a row of opened BOTTLES, including IODINE, RUBBING ALCOHOL, and various MEDICINES. Hockett has mixed two different SOLUTIONS, each in its own BEAKER. He pours the contents of one beaker into the end of a SYRINGE, filling it halfway. Next, he gingerly adds the second solution, filling the syringe the rest of the way. Immediately, the new solution begins to SMOKE ominously, a reaction is starting.

Hockett plugs the end of the syringe, hurries over to a position behind the cot, which he has turned on its side to face the door across the room. Wasting no time, Hockett takes aim, then hurls the syringe like a dart. As the needle STICKS into the door, Hockett ducks behind the cot. BOOM!!! The door is obliterated.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

Tearing through the sky, 100 feet above the ground.

CLOSE ON TICKING MAN

His arm jerks up as the restraining STRAPS GIVE WAY. He opens his eyes and hoists himself to the opening into the helicopter.

TICKING MAN'S POV

COMPUTER GRAPHIC VERSIONS of Miller and the other Marines look up in shock.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

As the Marines reach for their guns, the Ticking Man pulls his way into the cabin, yanking one of the Marines out into thin air in the process, his SCREAM trailing off almost immediately.

It's very close quarters, but the Marines OPEN FIRE. The Ticking Man tears into them as BULLETS RICOCHET in the cabin.

THE PILOT

The windshield in front of him ERUPTS with blood and glass as his throat is RIPPED APART by an errant bullet. He releases the controls, clutching at the wound as he dies.

CABIN

There are panicked SHOUTS as the helicopter pitches out of control and another Marine is hurled out of the chopper.

EXT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Everyone watches in horror as the Marine drops through the air and SLAMS into the ground. The Chopper corkscrews out of control.

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

The Ticking Man snatches up a gun and OPENS FIRE. It's like shooting fish in a barrel. Miller and the other three are HIT.

As the chopper spins, the BODIES of the MARINES SLAM lifelessly into the walls of the cabin. The Ticking Man gropes his way to the flight deck, pulls away the dead Pilot and takes the controls. The chopper steadies and all of the BODIES slump to the floor.

The Ticking Man, at the controls, obviously knows how to fly. He seems relieved, oblivious to the carnage that surrounds him. The HELICOPTER RADIO REVEALS what's going on below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELICOPTER RADIO
...Scramble choppers for pursuit...
pilots report immediately...

The Ticking Man turns his attention to the compound. He throws a switch ARMING the air-to-surface MISSILES.

EXT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Hockett, unnoticed in the surrounding PANDEMONIUM, emerges from around back.

EXT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Dr. Jarrow and the others dive for cover as BULLETS TEAR UP the ground around them, the chopper's side mounted MACHINE GUNS heating up.

HELIPAD

THREE CHOPPERS gear up for action, their blades slowly REVVING UP. The PILOTS strap themselves in.

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

The Ticking Man FIRES the MISSILES. The chopper jerks as the missiles launch.

EXT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - HELIPAD - DAY

One of the choppers is just taking off as the MISSILES SLAM into their target. KABOOM!!! The three choppers ERUPT into a MASSIVE COLUMN of FIRE.

HOCKETT

sees his chance, hurries into the driver's seat of a MILITARY AMBULANCE and starts it up, switching on the SIREN.

EXT. UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Face down on the ground, Dr. Jarrow looks up as the chopper streaks away from the devastation.

DR. JARROW
(almost proud)
Incredible...

MAIN GATE

Hockett races towards the gate, AMBULANCE SIREN WAILING. The SENTRY, assuming Hockett is a medic, waves him through.

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

The Ticking Man doesn't realize it, but behind him, Miller stirs to life. He reaches down to his belt and unclips a HAND GRENADE. He wraps his blood-soaked hand around it and pulls the pin.

MILLER

Hey...

The Ticking Man spins around. Their eyes lock. Miller opens his hand triumphantly, the lever on the grenade POPS off, starting the fuse.

MILLER

I don't know where you're going...
but we're going together.

Thinking fast, the Ticking Man pulls the control stick hard to the right, nearly tearing it out the floor. The helicopter pitches 90 degrees hard over.

Miller, still clutching the hand grenade, slides full tilt across the blood-slickened cabin floor. He disappears out the open door.

EXT. CHOPPER - DAY

Miller plunges fifteen feet before he and the GRENADE EXPLODE into a fireball. The chopper is buffeted by the blast, but continues on.

INT. MILITARY AMBULANCE - DAY

Hockett keeps an eye on the chopper as he speeds away from the compound. It's hard to say if he's following, or if they're just both escaping in the same direction.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Driving fast down the DIRT SERVICE ROAD to the complex, Meg checks a ROADMAP as she approaches the top of a crest. VROOOOSH!!! The chopper, low to the road, ROARS by overhead, nearly shearing off the roof of the rental car.

CLOSE ON MEG as she whips a look back at it, then looks back to the road. She SCREAMS --

MEG'S POV

The military ambulance heading right towards her.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

As Meg spins her wheel, Hockett does the same. The two vehicles SLAM together sideways. Hockett and Meg, more surprised than hurt, stare at each other.

Hockett jumps out of the ambulance, looks back at the base a mile away. He spots an advancing CLOUD of DUST that can only be MILITARY VEHICLES in pursuit.

Hockett hobbles around into Meg's car. She sees Hockett's bruised condition.

MEG

What's going on? What happened to you?

HOCKETT

I pissed someone off...
(points off road)
...now move!

Meg SKIDS OFF the road, her car bouncing across the uneven surface of the desert.

CUT TO:

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

The Ticking Man flips through MAPS on a COMPUTER SCREEN located on the central instrument panel. Confusion is slowly turning into panic. The Ticking Man spots something, flips back a few maps.

COMPUTER SCREEN

A MAP of SOUTHERN NEVADA. The Ticking Man hits a control, the SCREEN ZOOMS in CLOSE on LAKE MEADE.

THE TICKING MAN

A vague recognition, then sudden realization.

TICKING MAN

Lake Meade...

Something about Lake Meade is definitely familiar. He veers the chopper a few degrees west. Confidence is high.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Meg's rental bounces along the desert onto a roughly paved TWO-LANE

INTERSTATE.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Concerned, Meg looks over at Hockett, who lies against the door, every bump magnifying his pain.

HOCKETT

Not that I'm complaining, but how'd you find me?

MEG

I opened the window and sniffed. When was the last time you had a shower?

She examines her map.

MEG

If this is the road I think it is, there should be a town a couple miles up.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MEADE - DAY

Close to a CANYON WALL, the sun shimmers across the unbroken surface of the water. Suddenly, the surface goes choppy, a mist whipping up.

INT. MILITARY CHOPPER - DAY

The Ticking Man steers straight ahead, making no move to avoid the rapidly approaching canyon wall. He stands, heads back into the cabin.

EXT. LAKE MEADE - DAY

Seconds before the chopper SLAMS into the canyon wall, the Ticking Man leaps from the cabin into the water below. KABLOOM!!! Upon impact, the chopper DISINTEGRATES into a GIGANTIC FIREBALL.

FLAMING WRECKAGE splashes down around the Ticking Man as he swims for shore.

CUT TO:

EXT. HORSEFLY NEVADA - MOTEL - DAY

A sign reads: BART'S MOTEL AND CITY HALL. Meg's car is parked out front.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The decor is early Sears. The SCREEN flips over on a black and white TV in the corner. Meg cleans a nasty cut on Hockett's forehead.

HOCKETT

Shit... you know what you're doing up there?

MEG

One year of Medical School.
University of Michigan.

HOCKETT

Great.

Satisfied, she applies a bandage.

MEG

It all ended when we had to dissect a corpse. They threw back the sheet and there he was... my Uncle Arlis. It was a sign from God. I quit on the spot.

HOCKETT

I wish God had given me a sign.

MEG

Look in the mirror. I think he's trying to tell you something.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY (SUNSET)

The Ticking Man walks along the side of the road. As a beat up MINI-VAN approaches, he sticks his thumb out for a ride. The mini-van pulls over. The Ticking Man goes up to the window.

In the mini-van are three COLLEGE STUDENTS, RHETT and RANDA up front, and DAVE in the back.

RANDA

Where you headed?

TICKING MAN

Denver.

RHETT

We can give you a ride halfway.

TICKING MAN

Thanks. I appreciate it.

The Ticking Man opens the door and gets in the back.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY (SUNSET)

Randa smiles at the Ticking Man as they pull away.

RANDA
We're going to the big disarmament
rally in Salt Lake City.

DAVE
Gonna be a helluva party.
(makes peace sign)
Y'know? Peace? Kicks off when they
sign the treaty in Moscow.

TICKING MAN
Sounds like a blast.

CUT TO:

INT. HORSEFLY MOTEL AND CITY HALL - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Meg is examining Hockett's black and blue ribs. He flinches,
glances at the TV, which is playing the LOCAL NEWS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And finally, the search for bodies
continues in the crash of a military
helicopter at Lake Meade.

The scene switches to Lake Meade. A WINCH is hauling something
out of the water. A twisted SECTION of the chopper breaks the
surface. Hockett motions Meg to stop, leans forward to see.
He spots something, something he can't believe.

HOCKETT
Holy fuck...

MEG
What?

He puts his finger on the screen. There is GRAFFITI on the
canyon wall behind the chopper. It reads: "SEX MARKS THE SPOT".
The words are encircled by a HEART.

HOCKETT
My wife wrote that. Five years
ago...
(he realizes something)
Shit... that was no accident. He
must've dumped it there. He's
covering his tracks.

MEG
Who?

HOCKETT
I gotta get out of here.

Hockett grabs the car keys and exits. She hurries after him.

EXT. HORSEFLY MOTEL AND CITY HALL - NIGHT

Hockett goes up to the driver's side door. Meg cuts him off and blocks his way.

MEG
I'm coming with you.

HOCKETT
No fucking way.

MEG
It's my car and my credit card that rented it. Not only am I driving, but we're not going anywhere until you tell me what we're chasing.

HOCKETT
We don't have fucking time for this.

MEG
I have all the time in the world.

Hockett SLAMS the car roof with his fist in angry frustration.

HOCKETT
All right!! Fucking women!

Hockett gathers himself. Meg watches, amused.

HOCKETT
This guy. He stole some secrets. High tech stuff. He's taking them to the Soviets.

MEG
We're friends with the Russians. What difference does it make?

HOCKETT
Not all the bombs are gone yet. What this guy's carrying could make a big difference.

MEG
What do you have to do with the whole thing?

HOCKETT
He was a friend of mine. They think I might know where he's going.

MEG
Do you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

I don't know. I'm sitting in a fucking parking lot gabbing with you. Can we go now?

Meg holds up a small tape recorder, CLICKS it off.

MEG

Sure. That should get me started.

HOCKETT

Women, you can't live with 'em, and
YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T DRIVE ANYWHERE
WITH 'EM!!

They get in.

EXT. LAKE MEADE - NIGHT

Chopper WRECKAGE is on the shore. MILITARY HELICOPTERS illuminate the water with powerful SPOTLIGHTS, aiding the DIVERS in their search.

PARAMEDICS cover the BODIES of the two remaining Marines and the Pilot. Dr. Jarrow and Senator Johnson watch anxiously from the shore. Morrell stands nearby, picking his teeth, seemingly bored. A DIVER emerges from the water and walks up to Jarrow.

DIVER

No sign of any other bodies. We'll continue the search, but it's gonna take some time. This lake is 500 feet deep.

Dr. Jarrow dismisses him with a nod. The Diver heads back. Senator Johnson glares at Dr. Jarrow.

SENATOR JOHNSON

That's it. You couldn't find your mouth if your teeth were on fire. I'm going to recommend to the President that he sack your ass.

DR. JARROW

I wouldn't advise that.

SENATOR JOHNSON

(furious)

You wouldn't advise it?! You wouldn't advise it?! Doctor, you better hope this leads to World War three, 'cause if it doesn't, you're gonna be scrubbing toilets at the Smithsonian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Senator Johnson stomps off. Dr. Jarrow watches. He doesn't look as upset as he should. He signals Morrell over.

DR. JARROW
I have a job for you...

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY ROADSIGN - NIGHT

At a fork in the highway. An ARROW POINTS LEFT for Salt Lake City, and RIGHT for Denver. PAN DOWN to the college students' mini-van, just off the road. The broken and blood-soaked BODIES of Dave and Randa are crumpled next to the van.

The Ticking Man has Rhett pressed against the van, his hand at Rhett's eyes. There's a SICK, SUCKING SOUND as the Ticking Man withdraws his fingers from Rhett's punctured eye sockets. The Ticking Man watches as Rhett's body slides to the ground, then holds up his fingers in a bloody "V".

TICKING MAN
(solemnly)
Peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINI-VAN - NIGHT

The Ticking Man at the wheel, the mini-van pulls onto the road and veers right across the median strip... headed for Denver.

CUT TO:

INT. MEG'S RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

As Meg drives, she switches on the OVERHEAD LIGHT to look at a PHOTO that Hockett hands her.

INSERT - PHOTO

A can of SPRAY PAINT in her hands, Beth Hockett stands on the deck of a HOUSEBOAT. Spray painted on the canyon wall behind her is the very same Sex Marks The Spot. This is the same spot where the chopper was ditched.

RENTAL CAR

Meg looks back to the road, then to Hockett, puzzled.

MEG
I don't get it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

This might sound strange, but I don't think he knows how to get to where he wants to go. In some ways, he's a genius. In others, just a kid.

MEG

You mean, like Einstein falling down a manhole?

HOCKETT

Yeah, sort of. He only knows what he's been... taught.

MEG

So where does he want to go?

HOCKETT

He's gotta get to an airport. He tried to leave from McCarron, but they stopped him.

MEG

McCarron!? I was there. There were bodies all over the place.

HOCKETT

He's hard to bring down.

MEG

But why not just fly the helicopter to an airport? Why start from Lake Meade?

Hockett laughs, he can't believe it himself.

HOCKETT

Because me and my wife took a trip. We ended up in Denver, but Lake Meade is where we started.

MEG

What does your vacation have to do with it?

HOCKETT

I showed him this picture, told him all about the trip. It's the only way he knows how to get to Denver. He's following our route.

(pause; thinks hard)

Where the hell did we stop after Lake Meade?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG

I wanna know one just one more thing. What does "sex marks the spot" mean?

A moment. Hockett smiles, a good memory.

HOCKETT

That's where me and Beth made love. She thought that future generations should know.

He gazes at the photo, wistfully.

HOCKETT

Married six years, and that's the only time off this fucking jerk ever spent with her.

Meg doesn't know what to say.

HOCKETT

Get off at the next exit...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MEADE - DAWN

Dr. Jarrow, Senator Johnson and Morrell hurry down to the shore. Amidst the CROWD of MILITARY and SEARCH PERSONEL, two DIVERS drag from the water what appears to be the REMAINS of the Ticking Man, consisting of the TORSO, with one leg and one arm still attached. The head is missing, ripped clean off. A tangle of MACHINERY hangs in its place.

Dr. Jarrow kneels next to the body, pries open the torso's chest cavity, REVEALING the intact PLUTONIUM SPHERE unharmed within its housing. Dr. Jarrow reaches down and withdraws the plutonium, hands it to a TECHNICIAN, who hurries off with it, ashen faced.

DR. JARROW

Gentlemen, I think our problems are over.

SENATOR JOHNSON

Doc, I think your's are just beginning.

CUT TO:

INT. MINI-VAN - DAWN

The Ticking Man behind the wheel. Obviously, whatever they pulled out of Lake Meade, wasn't him. The Ticking Man slows as he spots something ahead. A weathered old BILLBOARD advertises: Just 68 Miles To The World's Largest Ball Of String.

The Ticking Man looks back at the road, suddenly deep in thought.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The COMPUTER-INTERPRETED road rolls past. On a BORDER underneath the image, a COMMAND DISPLAY SCROLLS, it reads: ACCESS MEMORY FILE: MAY 22, 1991: 14:28.31.

In an instant, a MEMORY PLAYBACK begins, the IMAGE of the moving road relegated to a BOX in the corner. The PLAYBACK is the Ticking Man's POV. Hockett sits across from him. They're playing CHESS. Once in a while, the Ticking Man's ARM enters frame to move a CHESS PIECE.

HOCKETT'S IMAGE

(voice filtered)

...The fucking thing had to be ten feet tall. I mean, what kind of guy spends his whole life devoted to a ball of string? But he was a nice old man. He made us dinner and gave me a short cut to Denver.

(image rewinds; plays again)

a short cut to Denver... to Denver.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH HOCKETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

In the darkened room, the PHONE RINGS several times before Beth slides up from under the covers and lifts the receiver to her ear.

BETH

(sleepy)

What do you want, Lloyd?

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAWN

Standing in a PHONE BOOTH, Hockett suddenly looks sheepish.

HOCKETT

You knew it was me, huh?

INTERCUT HOCKETT AND BETH

BETH

You're the only one who ever calls at this hour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
This is important.

BETH
Why did I know that?

HOCKETT
Is Bill there?

BETH
He's got his own apartment, Hockett.
What do you want?

HOCKETT
I need to know exactly where we
stopped on our trip to Denver.

BETH
Denver? That was seven years ago.

HOCKETT
You kept a scrap book, didn't you?
Can you get it?

BETH
Jesus Christ, Lloyd it's five in
the morning...

HOCKETT
(snapping)
Beth, Damnit...

BETH
(in no mood)
I'm hanging up now, Hockett.

HOCKETT
Wait...
(he catches himself;
softens)
I don't have time to explain. It's
important.

BETH
Okay... hold on...

TRUCK STOP PHONE BOOTH

Hockett turns to Meg, who exits the Truck Stop holding styrofoam cups of coffee. She hands him a cup, continues on to the car.

BETH HOCKETT'S BEDROOM

Beth returns to the bed carrying an old, worn ALBUM.

BETH
Okay, I got it.

INTERCUT HOCKETT AND BETH

HOCKETT

Talk me through this. I want to know every stop we made.

Beth sighs, opens the album. It is packed with POSTCARDS, TOURIST ATTRACTION PAMPHLETS, MATCHBOOK COVERS, PRESSED and PHOTOS. She spots her copy of the "Sex Marks The Spot" PHOTO. She smiles, then frowns.

BETH

First, we rented the houseboat...

HOCKETT

(urgent)

After that. What did we do after Lake Meade?

MEG'S RENTAL CAR

Meg looks around for something to write on, can't find anything. She decides to use her forearm. She writes the following:

Hockett -- Bombs -- Secret Government Project -- Moscow.

As Meg tries to find a connection, she suddenly becomes aware of her arm itself. She looks it over a moment and then something else comes to mind. She adds it to her list.

Mechanical Arm???

There's some connection here, but she can't quite figure out what. She looks back toward Hockett.

INT. BETH HOCKETT'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Beth hesitates on one of the pages. This is getting hard for her. She stops at a PHOTO of the two of them outside her car, the Denver skyline in the background.

BETH

...and then we got that speeding ticket outside of Denver. Remember the cop took our picture cause we hadn't gotten any of the two of us together?

HOCKETT'S VOICE

What then? Where'd we go then?

Beth doesn't answer, tears have formed in her eyes.

INTERCUT HOCKETT AND BETH

HOCKETT

Beth?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hockett senses that she's upset. His tone changes.

HOCKETT

Beth, what did we do then?

BETH

We drove in to Denver.

She's started crying, and Hockett knows it.

BETH

Why are you doing this?

He gives her a moment.

HOCKETT

(gently)

I'm sorry, Beth.

There's a pause.

HOCKETT

It was a good trip.

She gathers herself.

BETH

Yeah. It was. Good bye, Hockett.

She hangs up the phone.

TRUCK STOP PHONE BOOTH

Hockett listens to the DIAL TONE for a long moment, obviously affected. It really was a good trip.

INT. BETH HOCKETT'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Beth, still sitting in bed, closes the album, wipes her tears with the back of her hand. Ian appears in the doorway.

IAN

Can I have a glass of water?

MEG

Sure, honey. C'mon...

She jumps out of bed and leads Ian off towards the kitchen. CAMERA PANS over to the window and looks out onto the street in front of the house. There's a WHITE WINDOWLESS VAN marked TOP HAT PLUMBERS.

INT. TOP HAT PLUMBERS VAN - EARLY MORNING

An ELECTRONICS SURVEILLANCE wonderland. TECH ONE turns from a COMPUTER SCREEN to TECH TWO.

TECH ONE
We got 'em. One hundred miles west
of Denver.

Tech Two dials a number on a CELLULAR PHONE. Waits... Then...

TECH TWO
(into phone)
Jackpot...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MEADE - DAY

MOPPING UP OPERATIONS are now underway. Up away from the shore, Dr. Jarrow hangs up the receiver of a PORTABLE CELLULAR PHONE, hands it back to an ASSISTANT. Dr. Jarrow goes over to Morrell.

DR. JARROW
I have another job for you.

MORRELL
Need some more spare parts dumped?

DR. JARROW
Not exactly. We have one spare part
that got away...

SENATOR JOHNSON

Near a mobile COMMAND CENTER, he watches Jarrow and Morrell from a discreet distance. Morrell breaks off from Dr. Jarrow and hurries up the hill, with urgent purpose. Johnson frowns; something doesn't seem right.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOME OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST BALL OF STRING - DAY

Nestled in the ROCKIES, it's a large run-down trailer home. Next to it, surrounded by a high wooden fence and housed under a tent is the WORLD'S LARGEST BALL OF STRING. Truly a life's work, it's fifteen feet in diameter.

The mini-van pulls up and stops. The Ticking Man gets out, goes to the front door and KNOCKS. CHET BARKER, 74, opens the door. He's as old as the Rockies, and just as weathered.

CHET
Mornin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TICKING MAN
Good Morning. I'd like...

CHET
Technically, we're not open, but
if you got your two-spot you're
welcome to an eye-ful.

TICKING MAN
I'd just like some directions.

CHET
You know, if all the Chinamen in
the world linked arms, they wouldn't
stretch out near as long as my ball.

The Ticking Man shifts, strangely irritated.

TICKING MAN
I'm looking for a short cut...

CHET
If it were a golf ball, you'd need
a putter ten stories high...

Seemingly losing his temper, the Ticking Man grabs Chet by the
shirt and SLAMS him into the door, BREAKING a WINDOW PANE.

TICKING MAN
Just tell me how to get to fucking
Denver!

CHET
Easy there, son. Easy... I'll tell
ya...

CUT TO:

INT. MINI-VAN - MOVING - DAY

SMASH!!! As he drives, barely in control, the Ticking Man POUNDS
on the dashboard, CRACKING the plastic and taking out a large
chunk. He is pissed.

TICKING MAN
MOTHERFUCKER!!!!!!

With his left hand, he BLOWS OUT the driver's side window. He is
almost insane with inexplicable anger. He doesn't notice that
he's drifted across the lane. WHAAAAAHHH!!!! The HORN from
a WINNEBAGO shocks the Ticking Man's attention back to the road.
He spins the wheel ---

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The mini-van, miraculously avoiding disaster, spins out in a CLOUD of dust, settling on the road's shoulder, facing the opposite direction.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

The Ticking Man watches the WINNEBAGO continue on it's way. He trembles, quickly trying to regain his composure.

TICKING MAN
What's happening to me?

After a long pause, he shifts into gear, turns back onto the road, and continues on his way.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOME OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST BALL OF STRING - DAY

Hockett, Meg and Chat stand outside the trailer.

CHET
You was here before... I have a photo-genic memory. I can tell you the origin of every fiber on that ball...

HOCKETT
(growing irritated)
Please. Just tell me which way he went.

Chat stops, eyes Hockett.

CHET
I guess everyone's in a hurry today.
(thinks)
North on 71, onto 60, then head west straight to Denver. That's what I told him.

HOCKETT
Thanks...

Hockett starts towards the car.

CHET
He was more heat than light, if you know what I mean.

Hockett pauses, turns to look at Chat.

HOCKETT
No, I don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHET

Never saw anyone so angry in my entire life. That fella is ready to explode.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - ROUTE 71 - MOVING - DAY

Hockett concerned, Meg confused.

MEG

I don't understand the big deal. Why are you surprised about him being angry? He's a homicidal maniac. Anger is probably his best side.

HOCKETT

It isn't in him. At least it's not supposed to be.

MEG

Look, I'm tired of this bullshit. I wanna know what's going on right now.

HOCKETT

You wouldn't believe me.

MEG

That's it. If I can't get answers from you, I'm gonna get them somewhere else. I got a story to write.

HOCKETT

A story!? Are you crazy!? You can't tell anyone about this!

MEG

Why? Give me one good reason.

HOCKETT

Because if we don't stop him, your readership's going to drop dramatically.

MEG

WHO IS HE!!! TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON!!!

HOCKETT

OKAY!! You wanna know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG

Yeah!! I wanna know!!!

HOCKETT

He's a robot! He's a fucking robot!
He's carrying a fucking nuclear
warhead inside of him, he's gonna
blow up in fucking Moscow and I'm
the fucking genius that built him!

(pause)

And it looks like I'm the only one
who can stop him.

From Meg's expression, we can tell she believes. Ahead, the
mountains give way to REVEAL the DENVER SKYLINE.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAPLETON AIRPORT - DENVER - DAY

SEEN THROUGH A PAIR OF BINOCULARS, someone is watching as Hockett
and Meg exit the PARKING GARAGE and cross the street into the
INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL.

INT. STAPLETON AIRPORT - INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - DAY

The airport is CROWDED. Hockett and Meg scan the area. The
situation looks grim.

HOCKETT

We're gonna have to split up. At
least cover twice the area.

MEG

Actually, two people can cover three
times the area that one person can.

Hockett looks at her.

MEG

Geometry major for two years.

HOCKETT

Great. You remember what I said
he looks like?

MEG

Dark hair. Beard. Medium height.
Scar under his left cheek. This
guy needs a new designer.

HOCKETT

You take the departure level
upstairs. I'll stay down here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG
What do I do if I spot him?

HOCKETT
Watch him until he stops somewhere,
then page Joe Bazooka.

MEG
Got it, Joe.
(pauses)
Be careful.

HOCKETT
(flattered)
You don't have to worry about me.

MEG
Who's worried about you? I'm
worried about getting that interview
you owe me.

She turns and heads up the escalator. Hockett watches her for a moment, then turns to start his search.

CUT TO:

MEG

Stepping off the ESCALATOR to the SECOND LEVEL. She passes a pair of young, clean cut AIRPORT SOLICITORS who've set up a CARD TABLE surrounded by homemade POSTERS which read: Don't Trust The Soviets and Don't Disarm Uncle Sam.

HOCKETT

Moves along the quarter-mile-long TICKETING COUNTER, trying to cover as much ground as quickly as he can.

CUT TO:

A BEARDED MAN

lugging two heavy suitcases. Behind him, Meg follows as discreetly as possible.

The Bearded Man stops, looks back. Meg ducks out of the way. He continues, Meg shadowing him. Suddenly, the Bearded Man stops, drops the suitcases and hugs a WOMAN who comes running into his arms. Meg sighs, starts off in another direction.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEPARTURE BOARD

Listing INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS. PAN DOWN to the Ticking Man. He turns from the board, spots something that surprises him.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The COMPUTER-GENERATED image performs a RAPID 3-DIMENSIONAL ZOOM-IN to a CLOSE SHOT of HOCKETT, standing in the CROWD. A FLASHING READOUT on the left of the screen identifies him: Thomas Hockett. Suddenly, Hockett is BLOCKED by SEVERAL OTHER PASSENGERS moving by.

THE TICKING MAN

looks back and forth; he's lost sight of Hockett.

CUT TO:

HOCKETT

walks through the MAIN CONCOURSE, looking around him, occasionally turning a complete 360 degrees to see everything.

Suddenly -- he finds himself face to face with Morrell. Morrell thrusts a MACHINE PISTOL into Hockett's stomach.

MORRELL

You look like you need to take a piss.

HOCKETT

Yeah. In your face.

MORRELL

I wish there was time.

CUT TO:

MEN'S ROOM

A Yuppie-ish looking MAN is relieving himself at one of the urinals. He looks over to see Morrell enter, shoving Hockett ahead of him. Morrell aims the machine pistol at the Man.

MORRELL

Finish outside.

The Man zips up and hurries out, urine seeping through his pants leg.

HOCKETT

What is this shit? He's out there somewhere and you're letting him get the fuck away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRELL

In there.

Morrell points into a stall. Hockett suddenly realizes that this isn't simply a kidnapping, or an interrogation: It's an execution.

HOCKETT

Fuck yourself. My mother didn't raise me to die in a goddamn men's room.

Morrell SQUEEZES OFF A ROUND, hitting Hockett in the arm. BLOOD SPLATTERS the wall behind him. As Hockett clutches his arm, Morrell connects with a solid driving kick. Hockett SLAMS back through the door and into

THE STALL

Morrell steps in, shuts the door behind him. He raises the machine-pistol, pins Hockett's head to the wall with it.

HOCKETT

Why do I get the feeling you treat all your dates this way?

MORRELL

Open your mouth...

Hockett looks at him and LAUGHS. He genuinely finds this request funny.

HOCKETT

Not on my worst fucking day.

MORRELL

(cocks back hammer)

Then I'll do it for you.

Suddenly, Morrell's expression changes. He looks down at his feet to see two hands gripped tightly around each of his ankles.

WHUMP!! With ferocious speed, Morrell disappears under the stall door. Hockett finds himself alone in the stall, just as God intended.

There's a MUFFLED THUD, followed by a RESOUNDING CRACK, then SILENCE. Hockett looks at the stall door. Nothing moves.

HOCKETT

Meg?

If it's Meg, she doesn't answer. Hockett slowly opens the door. All he can see is Morrell across the room, slumped in one of the urinals, unconscious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slowly, Hockett emerges from the stall, into the
MEN'S ROOM

it's empty. Hockett grabs Morrell's machine pistol, shoves it under his jacket and runs out.

MAIN CONCOURSE

It only takes a moment for Hockett to spot the Ticking Man walking purposefully through the crowd. He almost can't believe it.

UPPER LEVEL

From a balcony, Meg spots Hockett and follows him with her eyes as he hurries to catch up to the Ticking Man. She watches them, too far up to hear their conversation.

MAIN CONCOURSE

Hockett comes up alongside The Ticking Man.

TICKING MAN
I saved your life. The least you
could do is leave me alone.

HOCKETT
(clearly)
Initiate missile shutdown. Code
one zero seven zero seven.

The Ticking Man stops, looks at him.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The COMMAND DISPLAY under Hockett's image analyzes his VOICE PATTERN, then prints: C-O-M-M-A-N-D A-C-C-E-S-S D-E-N-I-E-D.

MAIN CONCOURSE

Amused, the Ticking Man smiles at Hockett.

TICKING MAN
Did you really think it would be
that easy?

HOCKETT
(realizing)
Fuck. They erased my voice access.

TICKING MAN
Three years ago. When they fired
you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TICKING MAN (Cont'd)
Now, if you'll excuse me, I have
a plane to catch. If you don't
follow me, I won't have to kill you.

The Ticking Man continues on his way. Hockett follows him.

MEG

runs out of balcony. As they disappear from view, it dawns on
her who Hockett's talking to.

MEG
(to herself)
Beard and a scar, huh Hockett?

She looks around frantically for a way down, hurries away from
the balcony, disappearing from view.

MAIN CONCOURSE

Hockett catches up.

HOCKETT
Wait.

The Ticking Man stops, looks at Hockett.

HOCKETT
Do you have any fucking idea what
will happen if you do this?

TICKING MAN
I don't care about the consequences.
Consequences aren't my concern.
I only know what I have to do.

HOCKETT
And what the fuck is that?

TICKING MAN
Reach my full potential. Like you
taught me.

HOCKETT
The only thing I ever taught you
was never counter a Rook with a
Queen.

TICKING MAN
No, Hockett. Much more than that.
When they fired you, I saw someone's
potential taken away from them.
I won't let that happen to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

I'm a person. You're a machine.

Suddenly angry, the Ticking Man grabs Hockett.

TICKING MAN

Am I? You spent billions to make me human, but you're surprised when I act like one... You didn't even give me a name.

Hockett pauses, very much aware of the Ticking Man's strength.

HOCKETT

Frank?

TICKING MAN

(releasing him)

I was hoping for something more... classy.

HOCKETT

It's the best I could do in a pinch.

Hockett starts to whip out the machine pistol, but the Ticking Man catches his hand in a vise-like grip.

TICKING MAN

You make me sad.

Without warning, the Ticking Man STRIKES Hockett with a short, discreet, but very powerful PUNCH. He smoothly catches the unconscious Hockett and lowers him to the floor.

TICKING MAN

(calling out)

Somebody! Please! This man is sick!

As a CROWD quickly gathers, the Ticking Man slips away. A MAN leans over Hockett.

MAN

He's bleeding! Call a doctor!

Meg pushes her way up through the gathering CROWD. She sees Hockett is still alive and isn't seriously hurt.

MEG

(to Hockett)

Serves you right, you sonuvabitch.

She turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONCOURSE

Meg hurries along, searching for the Ticking Man. She suddenly spots something: the Ticking Man is at the TICKET COUNTER, talking to, NANCY, a Ticketing Agent.

TICKETING COUNTER

Meg casually gets in line behind the Ticking Man. She leans forward to eavesdrop.

NANCY

Okay, Denver to Paris, then continuing on to Moscow. Your flight will be boarding at gate 17 in 35 minutes.

The Ticking Man takes his ticket and walks off. Meg goes up to the counter.

MEG

I'd like the same ticket you gave that gentlemen.

(feigning shyness)

Actually, could you just seat me next to that gentleman?

Nancy smiles at her. Meg pulls out her credit card.

NANCY

He's kind of cute, huh?

MEG

Yeah, and ten hours on a plane should get me somewhere. Who wants to land in Paris alone?

NANCY

Not me. Okay, that'll be three thousand two hundred even.

Meg's face drops. She painfully hands over the credit card.

CUT TO:

MAIN CONCOURSE

Hockett slowly comes to his senses, eyes the crowd around him. He scrambles to his feet and pushes through the crowd. He looks around him, disoriented and desperate, trying to find any sign of the Ticking Man. The AIRPORT PAGING SYSTEM catches his attention.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUDSPEAKER

Joe Bazooka, please pick up a blue
courtesy phone. Joe Bazooka...

Hockett staggers over to one of the PHONES, picks it up.

HOCKETT

Yeah, this is Joe Bazooka...

VOICE (OVER PHONE)

You have a message from Meg Sharpe.
She's leaving with your third party
from gate 17 on flight...

Hockett drops the phone and races off, bouncing off a few
PASSENGERS as he goes.

CUT TO:

INT. BOEING 727 - CABIN AISLE - DAY

The Ticking Man moves down the aisle towards his seat. Meg is
behind him, chewing gum. She POPS a bubble. The Ticking Man
is startled, looks back at her. Meg smiles at him.

MEG

Sorry. Nervous about flying, huh?

TICKING MAN

Yes. A bit.

The Ticking Man takes his aisle seat. Meg holds out her boarding
pass.

MEG

What do you know? I have the seat
right next to you.

She squeezes past, sits down next to him by the window. Meg
glances as casually as possible up to the front of the plane.
No sign of Hockett yet.

INT. CONCOURSE - DAY

Hockett hurries through the Security Check and runs past the
gates, starting at 9. If being pummeled and getting shot isn't
enough to stop him, running through the mile-high altitude is.
He gasps for breath as he staggers on towards gate 17.

EXT. TARMAC - BOEING 727 - DAY

As TURBINES REV UP, the WHEEL CHOCKS are pulled away by a WORKER.

INT. CONCOURSE - DAY

Hockett makes it to the gate, sees the SIGN posted above the closed JETWAY DOOR: Flight 1165 - Paris. Hockett tries the door, it's locked. He looks helplessly out the OBSERVATION WINDOW as the jet pulls away from the terminal and begins to taxi for the runway.

HOCKETT
(heaving for breath)
God... God... Goddamnit...

He slumps down against the glass, fighting to stay conscious. It's one fight he loses. Everything goes black.

INT. BOEING 727 - CABIN - DAY

Meg staring nervously out the window as the Jet streaks down the runway. Hockett hasn't made it -- she's on her own.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT EMERGENCY TREATMENT ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON HOCKETT as his eyes flutter open. A NURSE stands over him. He tries to sit up, but he's too dizzy. We see that his arm has been bandaged. The Nurse gently eases him back down.

NURSE
Just relax. Your friends are here
to see you.

The Nurse exits. Hockett focuses on the door. Dr. Jarrow enters, holding a SQUARISH BRIEFCASE. He's followed by a Golem-like BODYGUARD and Morrell, who looks a bit under the weather.

DR. JARROW
I'm sorry about your arm. I'm
afraid my instructions were
misinterpreted.

Morrell and Hockett exchange looks.

HOCKETT
I wouldn't send this guy out for
a bottle of milk. There'd be dead
cows all over the place.

DR. JARROW
(to Morrell and
Bodyguard)
Why don't you two wait outside?

Morrell and the Bodyguard exit, but we get the feeling they'll be close at hand. Dr. Jarrow pulls up a chair next to the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

He's on a flight to Paris...

DR. JARROW

Save your strength, Hockett.

HOCKETT

Look, I hate your fucking guts.
But like it or not, we're both on
the same side.

DR. JARROW

I know all about it. I know where
he is.

HOCKETT

What do you mean? How?

Dr. Jarrow opens the briefcase, REVEALING a MODIFIED COMPUTER
TRACKING DEVICE, complete with SCREEN and COORDINATE READOUTS.

DR. JARROW

It's modified to receive his A.I.
emissions. It's only good for three
miles, but in this case, it was
enough.

HOCKETT

So you know where he is. What the
fuck are you doing to stop him?

DR. JARROW

Nothing.

HOCKETT

What do you mean nothing?

DR. JARROW

Nothing until the jet is over the
Atlantic. Then we'll blow it out
of the sky.

Hockett is horrified, but Dr. Jarrow's reasoning slowly sinks
in.

DR. JARROW

We can't confront him in a populated
area. It would risk a detonation.
We've opted for the safest route.

HOCKETT

But the people on the plane...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW

Three hundred lives are nothing
compared to what this could become.

HOCKETT

Land it in fucking Iceland. Have
the 5th Army there to meet him when
he gets off. Something.

DR. JARROW

Trust me. This is the only way.

CUT TO:

INT. BOEING 727 - CABIN - DAY

Meg tears into an AIRLINE DINNER. The Ticking Man thumbs through
an issue of TIME MAGAZINE. The cover reads: Ford Rolls Across
Russia First Assembly Plant Opens In Kiev. Meg glances out
the window, watches as the land gives way to the ocean. She
looks back at the Ticking Man congenially.

MEG

Well, we're over water now. Next
stop, France.

The Ticking Man doesn't answer, he pages through a special TRAVEL
AD SECTION, pausing on an ad for the "Train A Grande Vitesse"
-- the FRENCH BULLET TRAIN. The slogan reads: There are better
ways to see France.

MEG

Aren't you hungry?

TICKING MAN

I ate in Denver.

MEG

It's really good quiche... aren't
you even thirsty?

The Ticking Man looks at her.

TICKING MAN

No.

Meg shrugs, digs into her quiche. The Ticking Man is about to
turn back to his magazine, when something catches his eye.
Something disturbing. It's the faded notes Meg wrote on her arm.
The Ticking Man reads the name: Hockett.

MEG

What do you do for a living?

He looks in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TICKING MAN
I guess you could say I keep the
peace -- but only when I'm
unemployed.

MEG
(suddenly nervous)
Are you employed right now?

The Ticking Man suddenly wraps his hand around the back of her neck, and squeezes...

TICKING MAN
I could snap your neck and everyone
would think you were sleeping.

Meg flinches from the pain. Getting control of himself, the Ticking Man releases her.

TICKING MAN
Aren't you hungry?

MEG
I ate in Denver.

She sets down her knife and fork. Unseen by the Ticking Man, Meg slips her hand into her lap. Her TAPE RECORDER is between her legs. She switches it on.

CUT TO:

INT. STAPLETON AIRPORT - GROUND LEVEL - DAY

Morrell walks ahead of Hockett and Dr. Jarrow, while the Bodyguard walks behind them. Hockett begins to look around him. Something doesn't feel right.

EXT. STAPLETON AIRPORT - PASSENGER LOADING ZONE - DAY

Morrell opens the door to a dark, government issue VAN. Dr. Jarrow gestures for Hockett to enter. Hockett hesitates. The Van seems suddenly foreboding.

DR. JARROW
Go ahead, Lloyd.

Hockett doesn't move, but glares at Dr. Jarrow accusingly.

HOCKETT
The last time you called me Lloyd...
(glances at Morrell)
...the snake charmer over here was
knocking my teeth loose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW

We had to find out if you knew anything. You can understand that.

Hockett is definitely getting that old sinking feeling.

HOCKETT

If this thing is really going down, why are you wasting your time with me?

DR. JARROW

Get in the van, please.

Hockett takes a step back.

HOCKETT

I'll take a cab.

Morrell steps towards them from the van, his hand disappearing into his jacket.

DR. JARROW

Don't be foolish. You still need to be debriefed.

HOCKETT

No thanks. I wear boxers.

The DRIVER exits from the Van.

DRIVER

Dr. Jarrow, Senator Johnson is calling from the Hilton. He says it's very urgent.

Hockett watches as Dr. Jarrow hesitates.

DR. JARROW

Tell him I'm unavailable.

The Driver ducks back in. Hockett looks at Dr. Jarrow hard.

HOCKETT

You're not taking that plane down.

DR. JARROW

(moves close)

The cold war is over, but you and I don't have to become relics. The Ticking Man is our last chance. He's our salvation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

Sorry, Doc, but you've got a leak
in your think tank.

Hockett looks for a way out. Morrell and the others press in.
Dr. Jarrow drops all pretense.

DR. JARROW

(to Morrell)

If he makes one move to run, kill
him.

Morrell smiles. There's the CLICK of a GUN HAMMER cocking back
inside his jacket. Dr. Jarrow gestures Hockett towards the van.

Hockett takes a step forward, then stops. Suddenly, he begins
GASPING for air. Dr. Jarrow and Morrell exchange a confused
glance. Hockett desperately tries to suck in air, drops to his
knees. Several TRAVELLERS and two SKY-CAPS take notice. Dr.
Jarrow crouches beside him.

DR. JARROW

(hissing)

What the hell are you doing?

HOCKETT

... asthma attack... you fuck...

A CROWD gathers, jostling past Morrell and the Bodyguard. A
BLACK SKY-CAP looks down at Dr. Jarrow.

SKY-CAP

What's wrong with the man?

DR. JARROW

Nothing.

The CROWD GASPS as Hockett collapses to the sidewalk.

SKY-CAP

What's he doing? Praying to Allah?

Morrell and the Bodyguard look to Dr. Jarrow for instructions,
but he doesn't know what to do. The Sky-Cap kneels down beside
Hockett. The crowd is growing.

SKY-CAP

Can I do something for you, Buddy?

HOCKETT

(gasping)

Pills... my pills...

The Sky-Cap feels Hockett's pocket's for pills. Hockett is
turning blue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SKY-CAP
(becoming frantic)
Tell me where they are.

Hockett points.

HOCKETT
... there...

The Sky-Cap follows Hockett's finger to Dr. Jarrow's briefcase... the Ticking Man Tracking Device. The Sky-Cap, a big man, stands and faces Dr. Jarrow.

SKY-CAP
(pissed)
Why don't you give the man his pills?

Dr. Jarrow tries to move back, bumps into a SPECTATOR.

SKY-CAP
(stepping forward)
I said, give the man his pills.

Several PEOPLE in the crowd urge Dr. Jarrow to hand over the pills.

DR. JARROW
I don't have his pills, you idiot!
He's faking! Can't you see that?

SKY-CAP
No. I'm an idiot, remember?

The Sky-Cap tears the briefcase out of Dr. Jarrow's hands, hurries back over to Hockett. Dr. Jarrow tries to follow, but the crowd blocks his way. The Sky-Cap kneels next to Hockett.

SKY-CAP
Where's the key to this thing?

Hockett shoves something into the Sky-Cap's hands.

HOCKETT
Thanks. You're a lifesaver.

In a flash, Hockett is out of there, pushing through the crowd, Tracking Device in hand. Morrell and the Bodyguard shove through after him. Surprised and confused, the Sky-Cap opens his hand to find a 20 DOLLAR BILL.

Hockett, free of the crowd, races down along the PASSENGER ARRIVAL AREA. Morrell, drawing his gun, pursues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIMOUSINE

A CHAUFFEUR pulls two suitcases from the trunk while a wealthy OLDER COUPLE watch.

Suddenly, Hockett runs past and dives into the limo. SCREETCH!!! The Limo tears out into traffic. Morrell stops short and takes aim, thinks better and runs back towards the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Morrell jumps in the front passenger seat and the Bodyguard takes the back as the Driver pulls away in pursuit of the Limo.

MORRELL

Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!!

PASSENGER LOADING

Dr. Jarrow and the Skycap watch the vehicles taking off. The Skycap shrugs, sticks the twenty in his pocket.

SKYCAP

Another day, another dollar.

Dr. Jarrow heads back inside the terminal... purposefully.

LOWER LEVEL ACCESS

As the Limo fishtails through the SLOW MOVING TRAFFIC, its chrome rear BUMPER hooks the front of a TRAM BUS. The limo bumper is TORN LOOSE on one end with a WRENCHING SCREETCH and is dragged behind the limo in a shower of SPARKS. The Van pulls up behind the Limo and Morrell leans out to Fire.

Hockett sees Morrell in his rear-view mirror, cuts the wheel sharply -- As the Limo swerves, its bumper TEARS loose and bounces into the path of the van.

Morrell ducks inside as the bumper heads right towards them. It SMASHES into the WINDSHIELD, completely SPIDERWEBBING it with CRACKS, and bounces off.

LIMO

Hockett sees the TRAFFIC JAMMING up ahead, looks for a way out.

VAN

Morrell sees Hockett slowing down.

MORRELL

Pull up along side!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Morrell leans out the window. The Bodyguard throws open the SLIDING DOOR to the Van, SLAPS a CLIP into a nasty-looking AUTO SHOTGUN. As they come up on the Limo, both men OPEN FIRE, PUNCHING the Limo full of HOLES and BLOWING out the SIDE WINDOWS.

LIMO

Hockett is SHOWERED by GLASS and BULLETS TEAR into the dash. At the last instant, he swerves the Limo onto an

UPPER LEVEL ACCESS RAMP

SPARKS FLY as the Limo bounces off the CONCRETE RETAINING WALL. The van Driver tries to follow, but runs out of road and SLAMS into the rear of a SHUTTLE TRAM.

Morrell and the Driver are braced for the CRASH, but the Bodyguard goes hurtling head first through the WINDSHIELD and over the hood towards the REAR WINDOW of the

SHUTTLE TRAM

CRASH!!! PASSENGERS barely have time to SCREAM as the window IMPLODES and the Bodyguard soars into the Tram, SLAMMING to a stop in the LUGGAGE RACK.

VAN

SCREEETCH!! The Driver throws it into reverse and backs up. They follow Hockett up the ramp.

UPPER LEVEL ACCESS

Less congested, there's still plenty of vehicles. Hockett sees the Van coming up behind him.

HOCKETT

Fuuuck...

Ahead of him, a STOP LIGHT burns RED and a line of TRAFFIC stops. There's nowhere to go --

VAN

Morrell takes deadly aim through the OPEN WINDSHIELD MOULDING.

MORRELL

Time for our second date...

UPPER ACCESS

Hockett, playing hard to get, finds somewhere to go... he guns the Limo and jumps the curb onto the PASSENGER LOADING ZONE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASSENGERS and SKYCAPS abandon their LUGGAGE and scatter as the Limo plows through a trio of HANDTRUCKS piled high with SUITCASES. The suitcases BURST open, filling the air with their contents, which rain down on the closely following

VAN

Morrell ducks as a SUITCASE hurtles through the open windshield, SNAPS off the headrest and continues into the rear of the van.

LIMO

as the DEBRIS clears, Hockett finds himself barreling towards a crowd of TOURISTS. He swerves left, remaining on the sidewalk, but hugging the curb. WHAM!!! WHAM!!! WHAM!!! WHAM!!! The limo RIPS off FIVE open CAR DOORS in a row. Finding an opening, Hockett turns back onto the

UPPER LEVEL ACCESS ROAD

Curving past a PARKING GARAGE, towards the opposite TERMINAL. As the CURVE SHARPENS, Hockett slows. The van Driver slows as well. Morrell, HOWLING with rage, reaches across with his foot and SLAMS DOWN on the ACCELERATOR.

WHAM!!! The van CRUNCHES the rear of the limo. The limo can't hold the curve and CAREENS INTO and through the RETAINING WALL into space... three stories above the ground.

The van SKIDS to a stop inches from the precipice. Morrell's smile of triumph quickly fades as the

LIMO

LANDS in the open third floor of the PARKING GARAGE and PLOWS into the rear of a PARKED CAR, coming to a stop. If there was time, Hockett would find a church to light a candle, but there isn't.

UPPER LEVEL ACCESS

Morrell jumps out of the van and goes to the edge of the KNOCKED OUT RETAINING WALL. He aims and FIRES --

PARKING GARAGE

As the SHOTS tear into the seats around him, Hockett throws the limo into reverse, then shifts forward, vanishing down the GARAGE EXIT RAMP.

PARKING TOLLBOOTH

CRASH!!! The Limo SNAPS OFF the wooden POLE ARM and blasts away down the open road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UPPER LEVEL ACCESS

Morrell watches impotently as Hockett speeds off to freedom.

DRIVER

Lucky motherfucker. I guess this
just ain't our day.

Morrell, not in the best of moods, turns to face the Driver through the open windshield. He points the gun at the Driver's head... BANG!!!!

His head a BLOODY PULP, the Driver jerks back, then slumps onto the wheel, KNOCKING the AUTOMATIC SHIFT INTO GEAR. The Van lurches forward.

Morrell barely has time to register shock before the front of the van KNOCKS him off the edge. Morrell waves his arms madly as he plunges to the CONCRETE below.

MORRELL

THUD!!! Morrell lands HARD, shattering both of his legs. He focuses just in time to see the van hurtling down after him.

Morrell SCREAMS an instant before the VAN FLATTENS HIM, then EXPLODES into a FIREBALL.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - HIGHWAY - DAY

Hockett quickly dials a number on the CELLULAR PHONE. Brings the RECEIVER up.

FEMALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

American Airlines. Janice speaking.

HOCKETT

(sinister)

Listen to me, Janice. You got a
problem on flight 1165.

A pause.

JANICE (O.S.)

And what might that be, sir?

HOCKETT

It's got a fucking bomb on it.

JANICE (O.S.)

Sir, we take calls like this very
seriously. If this is a joke...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

It's a Y-37 high chemical binary and it could blow that plane to kingdom fucking come. I know what I'm talking about, Janice.

A long pause.

JANICE (O.S.)

Let me transfer you to my supervisor.

HOCKETT

There's no time for that. The man carrying the bomb is a terrorist. He's with the Stalin's Brigade and he's leaving the bomb on the plane when it continues to Moscow. You gotta stop him in Paris. Here's what he looks like...

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRBORNE BOEING 727 - DAY

Peacefully winging its way over the ATLANTIC to Paris.

INT. BOEING 727 - DAY

A STEWARDESS moves down the aisle, smiling and nodding, occasionally checking on the PASSENGERS. She pauses ever so slightly beside the Ticking Man and Meg, then continues on her way.

Meg, staring out the window, snaps her gaze to the Ticking Man.

MEG

Maybe you don't realize it, but seven hours is a long time to go without a trip to the bathroom.

The Ticking Man doesn't answer, but remains motionless, his head back against the rest, eyes closed.

TICKING MAN'S POV

A LUMINESCENT MAP of EUROPE showing the FLIGHT ROUTE from Paris to Moscow. A FLASHING PROMPT indicates the plane's current position. Around Moscow is a FLASHING CIRCLE which marks the CONTACT POINT for AIR-BURST DETONATION.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The FLIGHT CREW looks up as the Stewardess enters. She goes over to the PILOT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEWARDESS

I think I spotted him. He's in 37-B.

PILOT

Keep an eye on them, but be discreet. Let's make sure this thing plays out on the ground...

CUT TO:

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - DAY

Two VALETS walk around the battered, shot-up limousine parked out front.

INT. HILTON HOTEL - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Senator Johnson paces back and forth near the window, the TRACKING DEVICE in his hands. Hockett watches him expectantly. The Senator pauses at the window, staring out at nothing.

SENATOR JOHNSON

But I saw the body.

HOCKETT

You saw a body. They must've stuck a plutonium sphere in one of the prototypes. It's just a con job. He's still out there.

SENATOR JOHNSON

The bloodhound in me told me something about this was ass backwards. But what the hell could Jarrow be up to?

HOCKETT

He wants the Ticking Man to make it. He's fucking crazy. There's no other way to put it sir.

A moment. The Senator looks at Hockett. He's decided.

SENATOR JOHNSON

Jarrow's got the President's ear but good. And until I can make the Chief see otherwise, I'll do what I can. Which in Washington-ese means: basically, my friend, you're on your own.

HOCKETT

I guess I'm better than nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR JOHNSON
Son, you damned well better be.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIR FORCE JET - AIRBORNE - DAY

As it tears through the cloud cover. It's medium sized and fast.

INT. AIR FORCE JET - DAY

Hockett, the closed Tracking Device in his lap, is strapped to a SEAT which folds down from the FUSELAGE. The flight NAVIGATOR comes up.

NAVIGATOR
Well, we won't catch her, but we'll
sure be snappin' at her tail. We
should be on the ground 10 minutes
after they touch. You need anything
before then?

Hockett thinks.

HOCKETT
You got any flare guns?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLES DEGAULLE AIRPORT - PARIS - DAY

The Boeing 727 touches down. Safe and sound in Paris.

INT. BOEING 727 - DAY

The Ticking Man watches patiently through the window as the jet pulls up to the gate. Meg shifts nervously. As the Jet lurches to a stop, about two-thirds of the PASSENGERS stand and begin pulling their CARRY-ONS from the OVERHEAD RACKS. An ANNOUNCEMENT comes over the LOUDSPEAKER.

STEWARDESS (O.S.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, due to some
slight mechanical difficulties with
the aircraft, we need to ask those
passengers continuing on to Moscow
to de-plane at this time. We hope
to be re-boarding shortly. Thank
You.

The Ticking Man thinks a moment, sizing up the situation.

CUT TO:

INT. JETWAY - DAY

The Ticking Man walks with his hands on Meg's shoulder in what appears to be an affectionate manner. In fact, he's using her as a shield. MOVE WITH them as they step out into the

TERMINAL

They don't get more than a few steps into the airport when they are surrounded by four plainclothed SECURITY AGENTS.

AGENT #1

Will you come with us, please?

The Ticking Man looks over the four Agents, makes a strategic decision. This isn't the place for a confrontation.

TICKING MAN

Is there some problem?

AGENT #1

Please, just come with us.

As they start off, Meg doesn't move. Agent #1 gestures her forward.

AGENT #1

Mademoiselle?

Meg goes along.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLES DEGAULLE AIRPORT - THE TUBES - DAY

The famous criss-crossing NETWORK of ESCALATORS and MOVING SIDEWALKS, all encased in METAL AND GLASS TUBES.

MOVING SIDEWALK TUBE

The Ticking Man and Meg move down the sidewalk, two Agents in front of them, two behind.

MEG

(whispering)

Looks like your flying days are over.

TICKING MAN

(cryptically)

There are better ways to see France.

The Ticking Man looks ahead of him and sees four more SECURITY AGENTS waiting for them at the end of the tube/sidewalk. He looks back the other way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TICKING MAN'S POV

Another GROUP of AGENTS bring up the rear 50 yards back. He's cut off. A COMMAND DISPLAY FLASHES: Take Evasive Action.

MOVING SIDEWALK TUBE

Without warning, The Ticking Man dashes forward, shoving the two lead Agents aside. Agent #1 calls out a COMMAND in French, and all guns are drawn. Meg drops down and hugs the floor.

The Ticking Man builds up momentum, but there's nowhere to go but sideways. Twisting around, he hurls himself THROUGH THE GLASS.

THE TUBES

In a rain of GLASS, the Ticking Man plunges through the air, CRASHING through the top of a

SECOND TUBE

several TRAVELERS SCREAM as the Ticking Man SLAMS through the glass. He lands on his feet and wastes no time charging down the steps and disappearing out the bottom.

FIRST TUBE

The Agents stare down from the SHATTERED GLASS, unable to believe their French eyes.

AGENT #1
(in French)
After him!!!

As the other Agents take off, Agent #1 lifts Meg from the moving sidewalk. At least they have her.

AGENT #1
Mademoiselle, you will have a lot
of questions to answer.

MEG
Anything you want. Just get me to
a goddamn restroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLES DEGAULLE AIRPORT - DAY

The Ticking Man steps aside at the door to let two POLICEMEN run in. He steps out into daylight, and the first in a line of waiting TAXIS.

INT. TAXICAB - DAY

The CABBIE looks back at the Ticking Man, who gives directions in FLUENT FRENCH.

TICKING MAN
(in French)
The train station. Step on it.

The Cabbie nods, turns around and speeds off.

CUT TO:

INT. SURETE NATIONALE - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The Paris Police Headquarters. Meg sits in a chair in the middle of a bare room. Two GENDARMES stand near the door while the JUNIOR PREFECT questions her.

JUNIOR PREFECT
(humoring her)
So this man is not a terrorist...
but is a bomb himself? You mean
he has a violent temper?

In frustration, Meg buries her head in her hands.

MEG
Like you can't believe! Listen,
I'm a reporter. That must still
mean something somewhere. Why don't
you just do your job and let me do
mine.

JUNIOR PREFECT
(all the time in the
world)
Please. Explain once again.

MEG
You don't get it, do you?

A VOICE interrupts the session.

HOCKETT (O.S.)
Course not, they're French. Ask
one of 'em about pate and he'll go
on for an hour.

Meg looks up to see Hockett standing in the doorway, with the Police PREFECT himself.

MEG
Hockett!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Instinctively, she jumps up and throws her arms around him. He returns the embrace, happy to see her. Then, awkwardness sets in and they realize what they're doing. They push apart.

HOCKETT

Let's cut ass outta here.

CUT TO:

EXT. SURETE NACIONALE - DAY

Hockett, a BACKPACK slung over his shoulder and the Tracking Device in his hand, hurries along with Meg toward the street.

MEG

How did you manage that?

HOCKETT

Senator Johnson called ahead. As far as they know, we're narcotics agents following a lead.

He hails for a Taxi.

MEG

(pleased)

I thought you wanted to get rid of me?

HOCKETT

Don't push your luck. I can't find him on the Tracker and you spent ten hours with him on the plane. He must have said something to you.

Meg looks disappointed.

MEG

All he said was that he would break my neck.

HOCKETT

That's all!?

MEG

(shrugs)

That was enough for me.

HOCKETT

(angry)

That's just great! And you're supposed to be a reporter! What am I gonna do now, go get a fucking croissant and wait for the world to end?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Taxi pulls up and she stares a moment at the ADVERTISING SIGN strapped to the roof. Hockett throws open the door.

HOCKETT

Get in!!

Meg doesn't move. She studies the sign, which advertises the TGV BULLET TRAIN. Underneath is the SLOGAN, written in French. Meg mumbles the slogan to herself in French, then:

MEG

(in English)

There are better ways to see France.

It's the same thing the Ticking Man said to her in the tube.

HOCKETT

What the hell are we waiting for?

MEG

I know where he is!

CUT TO:

INT. TGV BULLET TRAIN - PARIS STATION - DAY

The French Grand Central Station. With its high vaulted ceilings, it's one of the great train stations of Europe. The Ticking Man steps up through the bustle to a TICKETING WINDOW. A CLERK looks up at him.

TICKING MAN

(in French)

I'd like a private compartment on the first train to Berlin.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - MOVING - DAY

A typical wild Paris taxi drive. The CABBIE glances back curiously as Hockett monitors the Tracking Device. Right now the SCREEN shows no activity.

MEG

So how is it that he's lost in the States, but knows his way around Europe?

HOCKETT

He's programmed for Europe. The theory was that he could be stationed in an Embassy and launched from there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG
En voila une idee!

HOCKETT
Where'd you learn to speak French
anyhow?

MEG
Foreign Language major for two
years.

HOCKETT
You must've driven your father
fucking crazy.

BEEP... BEEP... BEEP... The SCREEN comes to life with a
BLINKING DOT. It's the Ticking Man.

HOCKETT
I got him!

CUT TO:

INT. TGV BULLET TRAIN STATION - STATION CAFE - DAY

CLOSE ON a TRACKING DEVICE, the SCREEN showing a CENTRALIZED
BLIP. The Ticking Man is nearby.

PAN UP from the Tracking Device to Dr. Jarrow. He watches
through a window as Hockett and Meg hurry to get on the train.
Apparently, Dr. Jarrow has another Tracking Device.

CUT TO:

EXT. TGV BULLET TRAIN STATION - DAY

A BULLET TRAIN pulls out of the station. Sleek and red with a
white stripe along its length, the locomotive's sloped,
aerodynamic nose gives it an almost reptilian quality.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BULLET TRAIN - PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Meg makes her way down, comes to a COMPARTMENT DOOR and goes in.

INT. COMPARTMENT - DAY

Meg enters. Hockett sits at a small fold-out TABLE next to the
WINDOW. SCENERY blurs past as he looks up at Meg. Meg pops a
Bazooka Joe into her mouth.

MEG
Three cars up.. He's in a
compartment by himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
You sure he didn't see you?

MEG
A good reporter is almost invisible.

HOCKETT
(glances at the tracker)
At least we know this thing is
accurate.

Hockett returns his attention to the table. On it is a FLARE GUN, FOUR FLARES, several packets of ALKA-SELTZER, and a box of POWDERED DETERGENT BLEACH. He adds water to a bowl of powdered bleach and hands it to Meg.

HOCKETT
Stir that.

MEG
(stirring)
What are we doing?

With a PEN KNIFE, Hockett pries off the top of a FLARE.

HOCKETT
Giving these flares a new purpose
in life.

He takes the bowl from her and spoons some of the freshly-mixed detergent PASTE onto the top of a flare. He then unwraps a pack of Alka-Seltzers.

HOCKETT
When I'm done, these little suckers
are gonna be airborne torpedoes.

MEG
You're gonna fire torpedoes at a
walking nuclear bomb?

HOCKETT
Just to stop him long enough to get
the plutonium out. Believe me, the
warhead's built to withstand a
helluva lot more than this.
(looks around)
If I can only figure out a way to
keep these Alka Seltzers dry...

Meg blows a particularly large BUBBLE. Hockett looks at her.

HOCKETT
Don't move...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Meg freezes in mid-bubble. He reaches up, pinches off the bubble and takes it from her mouth.

MEG

Listen, if you want a fresh one...

Hockett passes an Alka-Seltzer tablet through the bubble, coating it with a thin layer of gum. He sets the coated tablet onto the paste, then re-caps the flare.

HOCKETT

You wanna blow some bubbles, wait 'till this goes off.

CUT TO:

INT. TICKING MAN'S COMPARTMENT - DAY

The Ticking Man stands at the window, apparently lost in thought, very human-like.

DR. JARROW'S VOICE

What are you thinking about?

The Ticking Man turns to see Dr. Jarrow standing in the doorway.

TICKING MAN

My destiny...

There's a pause. Dr. Jarrow regards the Ticking Man with a strange sort of pride.

TICKING MAN

What are you doing here, Dr. Jarrow?

Jarrow walks in, closes the door behind him.

DR. JARROW

I've been following you. I want to help you.

TICKING MAN

I don't need your help.

DR. JARROW

Hockett's on the train. He wants to stop you. You mustn't let him.

The Ticking Man is disturbed by this revelation, and puzzled.

TICKING MAN

Why are you doing this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. JARROW

Because I want you to succeed. At first I fooled myself into thinking you should be stopped. But when I saw how magnificently you performed, I realized that, in you, I saw myself. You must fulfill your destiny. You're my son. And fathers don't kill their sons.

TICKING MAN

I'm sorry, Doctor. But the reverse doesn't always hold true.

CUT TO:

INT. HOCKETT AND MEG'S COMPARTMENT - DAY

Hockett* spoons the paste onto the last of the flares. Meg, chews hard. The Tracking Device is on the seat, next to her.

HOCKETT

You ready yet?

MEG

Give me a break, this is harder than it looks.

She blows her bubble and hands it to Hockett. He goes to work. Meg watches him, fascinated by his single-minded intensity. The tip of Hockett's tongue peeks from the corner of his mouth, giving him an almost child-like quality. Meg smiles.

MEG

You look like a little kid working on his science project.

Hockett GRUNTS. She looks at him a moment further.

MEG

Can I ask you something?

He GRUNTS again.

MEG

How the hell did you end up on the bomb squad?

He looks at her.

HOCKETT

Me and Jarrow started butting heads -- and his head was harder. Hard to believe, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Meg doesn't answer, anxious to hear the rest.

HOCKETT

So that was it for the Ticking Man Project. But I only know one trade and I had a family to feed, so Uncle Sam pulled a few strings and there I was, on the L.A.P.D. Bomb Squad. A surgeon pulling out splinters.

MEG

Does that have something to do with why your wife left you?

HOCKETT

(sarcastic)

Are you taping this?

MEG

(smiles)

This one's off the record.

Hockett takes a deep breath.

HOCKETT

She didn't leave me, I left her.

(pause)

It's this fucking temper of mine. It's the reason we're in this mess in the first place.

MEG

What do you mean?

HOCKETT

On the night I got fired from the project, I went down and gave the Ticking Man a zap of what I was feeling.

MEG

You've lost me.

HOCKETT

The Ticking Man's brain was programmed by imprinting actual human thought patterns. Dr. Jarow made the final selections. And big surprise, a lot of the patterns ended up being his own.

(pause)

But I got my two cents in.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT (Cont'd)
I tapped into the computer and imprinted a little of the steam I felt when I got canned. Then I went out, got juiced, and went home...

He pauses, this is hard.

HOCKETT
I went home... I went home and hit Beth. I don't remember what the argument was. Maybe there wasn't one. Anyway, I fixed it so it wouldn't ever happen again. I left. And I took my goddamn temper with me.

MEG
I'm sorry, Hockett.

HOCKETT
So am I.

There's an awkward pause. She looks down at her lap. The FLASHING BLIP on the Tracking Device catches her attention. The blip is moving.

MEG
Hey... the dot's moving.

Hockett jumps out of his seat and grabs the Tracking Device. He needs only one glance.

HOCKETT
He's coming towards us.

They watch as the blip keeps moving.

HOCKETT
He's probably just bored, it's only five minutes 'till the station.

He goes to the backpack, pulls out the flare gun and inserts one of the flares.

MEG
(nervous)
Then why do you need that?

HOCKETT
Because robots don't get bored.

The blip gets closer. Hockett motions Meg back. They stand near the window, Hockett ready to fire. He glances at the Tracking Device. The blip has stopped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
(whispers)
He's right outside.

They wait. Nothing happens. Then, as Hockett takes a step forward... CRASH!!! The window behind them EXPLODES as a FIGURE hurtles into the compartment. Hockett and Meg are thrown to the side. Hockett spins and points the flare gun...

It's Dr. Jarrow and he's very, very dead. His eyes have been gouged out in the Ticking Man's usual manner. But more horrifically, both of Jarrow's ARMS have been TORN OFF. Meg gasps and looks away. Realizing what's happened, Hockett looks up to the ceiling.

EXT. BULLET TRAIN - DAY

Perched on the roof, the Ticking Man leans forward, trying to balance against the BLASTING WIND. He pauses, waits for the right moment, then leaps...

INT. HOCKETT AND MEG'S COMPARTMENT - DAY

The Ticking Man is a MOMENTARY BLUR through the SHATTERED WINDOW, then is gone. Hockett lowers the flare gun, tries to catch a glimpse. But at this speed, the Ticking Man is way out of sight.

Hockett looks back to Dr. Jarrow's body, his shoulders nothing but BLOODY STUMPS.

HOCKETT
Christ... I think our friend just
made a joke.

MEG
(sickened)
A joke?

HOCKETT
Don't you get it?
(gestures towards
Jarrow's body)
He's been disarmed...

CUT TO:

EXT. BULLET TRAIN STATION - BERLIN - DAY

As the train slows to a stop, Hockett and Meg jump off and hurry through the BUSTLING STATION.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - DAY

Hockett and Meg race out from the station. Hockett pauses to check the Tracking Device. The blip is almost off the screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
We're gonna lose him. He's almost
out of range. Come on...

Hockett and Meg run up to one of the TAXIS waiting outside the station.

CUT TO:

TICKING MAN'S POV - OVER CAR STEERING WHEEL - DAY

Speeding down a COMPUTER-GENERATED Berlin Street. The MENU calculates DISTANCE and TRAVEL TIME from BERLIN TO MOSCOW, comparing AIR TRAVEL to AUTOMOBILE and TRAIN TRAVEL. The Air Travel PROMPT flashes. He's made his choice.

A ROAD MAP COMES UP giving the route to Tempelhof Airport.

INT. CITROEN - DAY

The Ticking Man makes a quick turn down a street, following the indicated route. Next to him, slumped dead across the passenger seat, is a YOUNG GIRL, about 20 years old. Her eyes have been neatly punctured.

INT. TAXICAB - HEERSTRASSE - MOVING - DAY

The German CABBIE glances back as he speeds along, waiting for Hockett's instructions. Hockett studies the Tracking Device while Meg watches anxiously.

HOCKETT
He's about a mile ahead, heading
east.
(to Cabbie)
What's east of here?

CABBIE
(German accent; trying
to think)
The Bellevue Palace... the
airport... the National Gallery...

HOCKETT
I don't think he's stopping to look
at any paintings; head towards the
airport -- schnell.

Hockett pulls out the flare gun and loads a flare. The Cabbie looks back in shock and then immediately pulls over.

CABBIE
You are with the separatist
movement! I wouldn't drive you to
your own funeral!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hockett points the flare at the Cabbie.

HOCKETT
No problem... take the rest of the
day off.

EXT. CITROEN - DAY

The Ticking Man turns onto FRIEDRICHSTRASSE, a large, six-lane thoroughfare. A section of the STADTBAHN (streetcar line) separates the boulevard into EAST AND WEST BOUND LANES.

INT. TAXI - DAY

It pulls onto Friedrichstrasse, Meg now driving. Hockett, in the seat beside her, looks up from the Tracking Device.

HOCKETT
- We're right on top of him.

As they pull up alongside a CAR, Hockett rolls down the window and aims the flare gun. An OLD LADY in the car SCREAMS and SLAMS on the BRAKES. Another CAR REAR-ENDS her. Hockett pulls the flare gun back in.

MEG
You almost wasted someone's
grandmother!

HOCKETT
(waving the gun)
Just drive!

Meg steps on the GAS. Hockett scans the CARS as they pass them. They come up alongside a large PRODUCE DELIVERY TRUCK, which effectively limits their view to front and back.

Meg blares the HORN, but she's boxed in by the car in front of her. Suddenly, the produce truck speeds up, REVEALING the Citroen in the far right lane, the Ticking Man driving. Hockett and the Ticking Man see each other at the same moment.

Hockett whips up the flare gun, but as he squeezes the trigger, the produce truck drifts back into his line of fire.

KLABOOM!!! VEGETABLES fill the air as the back of the truck is BLOWN APART. The truck falls back and the Ticking Man comes into view. Hockett reloads, but the Ticking Man turns the Citroen sharply, crossing the MIDDLE LANE and RAMMING the Taxi off the road and onto the tracks of the STADTBAHN.

An oncoming STREETCAR fills the view in front of Meg and Hockett as they barrel, SCREAMING, across its path and into the OPPOSITE LANE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Out of the fat and into the fire. CARS part like the Red Sea as they try to avoid SLAMMING into the taxi, which is prevented from turning back by the passing STREETCARS.

THE TICKING MAN

seizes the opportunity to duck off the Friedrichstrasse and disappear down a SIDE STREET.

TAXI

The coast clear, they jump back across the Stadtbahn, tear across the lane and take the next side street.

THE TICKING MAN

makes a hard left on a street that runs parallel to the Friedrichstrasse.

INTERSECTION

The Taxi SCREECHES to a halt as the Citroen crosses in front of them. The Taxi fishtails around after it. Hockett leans out of the window, takes aim and FIRES.

The Ticking Man hangs a hard right as the FLARE streaks over the roof of the Citroen. KABLOOM!! The FLARE EXPLODES inside a BUILDING under construction. SCAFFOLDING and FRAMING SLAM down around the Taxi as it turns after the Citroen.

TAXI

The Citroen in sight. Hockett reloads.

MEG

I'm sure glad this isn't my neighborhood.

HOCKETT

You could do better?!

MEG

Yes!

CUT TO:

THE BRANDENBURG GATE

Only a small section of the BERLIN WALL remains as a MONUMENT. Otherwise, the division between East and West is no longer. The Citroen streaks under and through the ARCH, the Taxi a few lengths behind it.

A GIRL on a bicycle obliviously pedals out in front of the taxi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Meg jerks the wheel, avoiding the girl, but sending the taxi into a wild SPIN-OUT. After a few seconds it comes to a stop in a CLOUD of BURNING RUBBER, the ENGINE STALLED. Meg turns the key, but it doesn't catch.

Hockett leaps out of the car, sees the Citroen quickly speeding away. Hockett takes aim. This is his last shot. He slowly squeezes the trigger... SHHOOOM!!!! MOVE WITH the FLARE as it streaks toward

THE CITROEN

The flare finds its mark. The Citroen EXPLODES and the Ticking Man is VIOLENTLY PROPELLED as if shot from a cannon. He SLAMS into a PARKED CAR, TOTALLING IT in the process.

TAXI

Meg CHEERS. Hockett slowly lowers the gun as he watches the INFERNO.

THE TICKING MAN

SEEN THROUGH THE RIPPLING HEAT WAVES OF THE FIRE. Buried within the CRUMPLED METAL of the parked car, his clothes smouldering from the explosion. Suddenly, his eyes open. He's not finished yet.

HOCKETT & MEG

Hockett starts towards the BLAZING Citroen, Meg follows. The parked car is on the other side, concealed by the intensity of the FLAMES.

Hockett hurries up to the wreck, his flare gun aimed with the last flare ready to fly. But there's nothing to fire at. The Ticking Man is gone.

HOCKETT

No fucking way...

vrooom!!! vrooom!!! Hockett spins around to see a the Ticking Man speeding around a corner on a stolen MOTORCYCLE.

HOCKETT

shit!!!

MEG

This guy takes a licking but keeps on ticking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They race back to the taxi. Hockett jumps in the driver's seat, Meg next to him. After two aborted attempts, the ENGINE TURNS OVER, but the Ticking Man is long gone. They TEAR OUT...

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPELHOF AIRPORT - INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - DAY

A PARKING SECURITY GUARD eyes the stolen MOTORCYCLE resting on its side in the PASSENGER LOADING ZONE.

TICKING MAN'S POV

An ATTENDANT smiles as he makes his way up to the AEROFLOT TICKETING COUNTER. The IMAGE is off kilter, the MENU BLINKS in and out.

ATTENDANT
(in German)
May I help you?

The COMMAND DISPLAY FLASHES: Translation Unavailable -- Language File Damaged.

THE TICKING MAN

bewildered. Hesitant.

TICKING MAN
English? Please?

ATTENDANT
(in English now)
Yes. May I help you?

TICKING MAN
I... I'd like a ticket to... to...

ATTENDANT
Do you feel alright?

The Ticking Man staggers away from the counter, his hands at his temples.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The COMPUTER images are BLEEDING into each other, making it difficult to tell where one object ends and another begins. Now, the COMMAND DISPLAY FLASHES: Request Targeting Coordinates.

The SCREEN splits, one half is the Ticking Man's POV of the AIRPORT TERMINAL, the other half flips through a SERIES of MAPS, each showing one of the EIGHT CONTINENTS.

The COMMAND DISPLAY FLASHES: Target Not Locked -- Select Target:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE TICKING MAN

struggles to orient himself. Above and behind him is the immense INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT DEPARTURE BOARD. As it is constantly updated, LETTERS FLIP over and new FLIGHT NUMBERS and DESTINATIONS are posted.

Alerted by the CLICKING of the CHANGING LETTERS, the Ticking Man turns and spots the departure board. Cities all over the world FLIP by: BANGKOK... PEKING... LONDON... BELGRADE... KIEV... AMSTERDAM... CHICAGO... CAIRO... The Ticking Man stares, seemingly mesmerized.

TICKING MAN'S POV

As he tries to read the list. The CITIES OVERLAP onto each other in a MAD BLUR. As his VISION CLEARS, he manages to lock onto one...

A MAP of NORTH AMERICA locks in, then ZOOMS towards the Eastern Seaboard. Now the COMMAND DISPLAY PRINTS in the new target:

N-E-W Y-O-R-K C-I-T-Y

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPELHOF AIRPORT - DAY

Hockett and Meg pull up in the Taxi and hurry inside.

INT. TRANS WORLD AIR TICKET COUNTER - DAY

The Ticking Man at the counter; an ATTENDANT looks up from a computer.

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry, sir, that flight is booked.

The Attendant starts as the Ticking Man SLAMS the counter in fury.

TICKING MAN

NO!!!

ATTENDANT

(rattled)

I can put you on the standby, or there's another flight in two hours...

But the Ticking Man is already heading away.

INT. INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - DAY

Hockett and Meg turn a corner and stop dead in their tracks. Ahead of them is the SECURITY CHECKPOINT. A WOMAN monitors the carry-on X-RAY SCREEN while two bored GUARDS usher TRAVELERS through the METAL DETECTOR. Beyond is the long CONCOURSE leading to the GATES.

HOCKETT

Shit...

(checks Tracking Device)

He's definitely down there.

He glances down to the flare gun tucked in his jacket.

HOCKETT

Think they allow flare guns?

MEG

I got an idea...

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDING AREA - GATE 48 - DAY

Like a predator, the Ticking Man scans a long line of PASSENGERS waiting to board flight 706 to New York City. He turns and heads into the

MEN'S ROOM - DAY

A MAN is at the Urinal. The Ticking Man goes to the sink, splashes water on his face. The MAN zips up, joins the Ticking Man at an adjacent sink. An AIRLINE TICKET protrudes from the Man's coat pocket. His last name is written across the top in marker: Simms.

TICKING MAN

(casually)

I think our flight's boarding.

SIMMS (MAN)

New York?

The Ticking Man nods.

SIMMS

No hurry. Why wait in line? We're gonna get on just the same. This way, you enjoy a good piss, have a smoke, then just breeze right in and sit down.

TICKING MAN

Sounds like a good tip.

The Ticking Man smiles.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY CHECKPOINT - DAY

Holding hands, Hockett and Meg walk up to the X-RAY CONVEYOR BELT. Hockett places the tracking device on the belt, looks at the WOMAN monitoring the screen.

HOCKETT

This won't hurt computers, will it?

The Woman shakes her head. Meg, in tears, throws her arms around Hockett.

MEG

Please don't go!

Hockett strokes her hair as she SOBS UNCONTROLLABLY. The Guards and the Woman look over, smile amongst themselves.

HOCKETT

It's only for a few months.

MEG

I'll miss you so much...

He gives her a kiss.

HOCKETT

I love you.

Meg pauses and looks in Hockett's eyes. For a brief moment, it looks like she's taking the whole thing seriously. Hockett sees it... tears himself away.

HOCKETT

(hurried)

I gotta go, honey. Bye.

Hockett turns and walks through the METAL DETECTOR. Meg, back in character, watches him go. Hockett grabs the Tracking Device and starts toward the gate area. Playing like she can't stand seeing him go, Meg suddenly bolts forward.

MEG

I love you too!!!

Before the Guards can act, Meg runs between the two METAL DETECTORS and leaps into Hockett's arms.

GUARD

Fraulein!

HOCKETT & MEG

They kiss long and hard. They both start with their eyes closed, but both end up peeking. Something long and hard passes between them -- the flare gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Guards pry Meg off as gently as possible.

GUARD

Excuse me, but you must pass through the metal finder.

MEG

(embarrassed)

Sorry...

(to Hockett)

I'll walk you to the gate.

HOCKETT

I'd like that.

The Guard ushers Meg back through the metal detector. She then hurries up to Hockett, who takes her hand and they head off, leaving the Security Guards charmed.

INT. BOARDING AREA - GATE 48 - DAY

The Ticking Man hands his boarding pass to the STEWARDESS.

STEWARDESS

Enjoy your flight, Mr. Simms.

The Ticking Man continues down the JETWAY. Through the OBSERVATION WINDOW, we see that the jet is one of the second generation CONCORDES.

BOARDING AREA - GATE 43

The SIGN over the gate reads: Flight 116 Moscow. The seating area is filled with PASSENGERS. Hockett, the flare gun concealed under his jacket, comes up with Meg. They hang back, surreptitiously scanning the area. The Ticking Man is nowhere in sight.

HOCKETT

Where the fuck is he?

Suddenly -- SCREAMS come from further down the concourse. Hockett and Meg look to see Mr. Simms stagger from the Men's room, his arms waving in front of him, BLOOD STREAMING from where his eyes used to be. He collapses.

Hockett immediately looks to the Tracking Device and realizes... they're in the wrong place.

HOCKETT

Goddamnit --

He takes off down the concourse, Meg right behind.

INT. CONCORDE - MAIN CABIN - DAY

The Ticking Man takes his seat, which is towards the rear of the plane.

STEWARDESS
(over loudspeaker)
Please fasten your seatbelts and
observe the no smoking signal. We
will be leaving the gate
momentarily...

INT. BOARDING AREA - GATE 48

Hockett and Meg charge up as the Stewardess locks the door to the jet-way. Hockett looks from the Tracking Device to the FLIGHT INFORMATION SIGN.

HOCKETT
What the hell's he doing on a plane
to New York?
(to Stewardess)
Open this door! I gotta get down
there.

STEWARDESS
I'm sorry, Sir, but...

Hockett draws the flare gun and points it at the Stewardess.

MEG
(disbelief)
Hockett!

HOCKETT
Do it now!

INT. JET-WAY - DAY

Hockett and Meg race up and Hockett catches the CABIN DOOR just as a STEWARDESS starts to close it. He forces his way into the

CONCORDE

Brandishing the flare gun, Hockett motions the Stewardess to be quiet. Meg boards behind him, looking almost as frightened as the Stewardess.

HOCKETT
(whispers)
Close the door.

The Stewardess seals the cabin door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG
(a screaming whisper)
Hockett, what the hell are you
doing?

HOCKETT
I'm hijacking the fucking plane.

He motions the Stewardess up towards the
COCKPIT

The COPILOT and the NAVIGATOR look up as Hockett enters, his
flare gun aimed at the CAPTAIN.

HOCKETT
Just do what the fuck I say and if
anyone dies, it'll be the food.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCORDE - AIRBORNE - DAY

STREAKING above the ATLANTIC at Mach 2. A sight to behold.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCORDE - MAIN CABIN - DAY (SUNSET)

Everything seems normal. The PASSENGERS obviously are at ease,
some asleep, others flipping through magazines. The Ticking Man,
equally clueless as to the situation stares out the window at
the DRIFTING CLOUDS.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Hockett and Meg remain by the door as the Flight Crew nervously
goes about the business of flying the plane. Holding the flare
gun with one hand, Hockett types a CODE into the Tracking Device
KEYBOARD with the other.

MEG
What are you doing?

HOCKETT
Trying to find out why we're on a
plane to New York. I got an idea,
but I hope I'm wrong.

The SCREEN on the Tracking Device becomes a COMPUTER READOUT,
which MONITORS several of the Ticking Man's FUNCTIONS, most of
them mundane. However, one of them states the Ticking Man's
TARGET: New York City.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
Holy fuck. He's gonna core the Big Apple.

Meg is stunned. The Copilot turns to Hockett.

COPILOT
We have Senator Johnson on the horn...

The Pilot is obviously surprised at this. The Copilot hands Hockett his HEADSET.

HOCKETT
(to Pilot)
Patch in. I want you to hear this.

The Pilot adjusts his headset.

HOCKETT
(into mike)
Senator?

SENATOR JOHNSON (O.S.)
What the hell's going on?

HOCKETT
We got'em on board. He's set himself to blow up when we reach New York City airspace, and we'll be coming up on Long Island in a few minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. SENATOR JOHNSON'S CAPITOL HILL OFFICE - NIGHT

Senator Johnson, on a SPEAKER PHONE, paces back and forth behind his desk.

SENATOR JOHNSON
Jesus Christ...
(pause)
What do you wanna do?

INTERCUT HOCKETT AND SENATOR JOHNSON

HOCKETT
I don't know. We sure the fuck can't land at Kennedy.

PILOT
(comprehends now)
We can re-route north to Buffalo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR JOHNSON

Hell, I have half-a-mind to send you all up to Canada. Let them worry about it.

(pause)

Head north, and let me talk it over with the boys at the Pentagon.

HOCKETT

You gonna run into any static?

SENATOR JOHNSON

Not one spark. We found Jarrow on a train in Europe. He don't have the President's ears no more.

(chuckles)

Got nothing to hold'em with. I'll get back to you directly.

INT. CONCORDE - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Hockett hands the headset back to the Copilot. Hockett and the Pilot exchange looks. It's clear he believes him.

HOCKETT

Sorry about hijacking your bird.

PILOT

We're with you. Just tell us what the fuck is going on...

MAIN CABIN

The Ticking Man's attention is caught by the MOON DRIFTING across the window to his left. He looks out, realizes something is wrong. They're changing course.

TICKING MAN'S POV

A MAP showing the NEW YORK CITY PERIMETER, the AIR-BURST DETONATION BOUNDARY, and the Concorde's flight path. It is veering North, heading over Long Island towards upstate New York.

COCKPIT - NIGHT

The LIGHTS from LONG ISLAND glide past beneath them through the WINDSHIELD. Meg goes to the cockpit door.

HOCKETT

Where the hell are you going?

MEG

I gotta pee, do you mind?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

Okay, but stay out of sight... and
take one for me, too.

Meg exits. Hockett glances back down at the Tracking Device. He studies the STATUS READOUTS.

THE TICKING MAN

slides out of his seat and starts down the aisle towards the front of the Concorde.

MEG

heads through the FIRST CLASS SECTION. The RESTROOMS are OCCUPIED. She continues on.

THE TICKING MAN

on his way up through the MAIN CABIN.

MEG

passes through a set of CURTAINS into BUSINESS CLASS. She stops and enters the RESTROOM just before the CURTAINS that lead to the main cabin. She closes the door behind her just as

THE TICKING MAN

steps through the CURTAINS. He continues up to the next set of curtains -- throws them aside -- and steps into

FIRST CLASS

Hockett stands in the aisle, several feet away. He raises the flare gun. The Ticking Man freezes. Several PASSENGERS CRY OUT in fear. The Ticking Man and Hockett glare at each other, neither makes a move.

HOCKETT

Sit down, you're gonna miss the movie.

TICKING MAN

Are you really going to fire that in here?

HOCKETT

You're right. Let's step outside and settle this like men.

TICKING MAN

I'm a machine, remember?

The Ticking Man takes a step forward. Hockett takes a step back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
I swear to God I'll blow us all to
fucking Katmandu.

TICKING MAN
No thanks. I'll take Manhattan.

The Ticking Man takes another step forward -- Hockett's finger tightens on the trigger -- Suddenly, a misguided PASSENGER leaps from his seat and grabs Hockett's arm.

PASSENGER
I got him!

In an instant, the Ticking Man springs forward and BATS the flare gun away. WHACK!!! With another SWING, Hockett goes flying back against the FUSELAGE WALL.

PASSENGERS SCREAM as the Ticking Man grabs Hockett by the shirt and hurls him across the cabin. Hockett SLAMS hard against the BOARDING DOOR and crumples into a heap, across from the GALLEY. The Ticking Man continues towards the

COCKPIT

The Navigator sees the Ticking Man only a few feet away and quickly SHUTS and BOLTS the door.

THE TICKING MAN

His face twisted with rage, he begins POUNDING on the cockpit door with INCREDIBLE FORCE. The door RATTLES on its hinges.

HOCKETT

pulls himself up to the FOLDING STEWARDESSES CHAIR next to the boarding door. He straps himself in.

HOCKETT
Everybody strap in!!!

Hockett grabs the EMERGENCY LATCH.

THE TICKING MAN

His FIST tears a HOLE through the door and he begins RIPPING AWAY the METAL. The HOLE grows quickly...

CABIN

Bracing himself, Hockett pulls back hard, RELEASING the TOP LATCH. He reaches down to the BOTTOM LATCH, and pulls...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHOOOOSH!!!! SCREAMS everywhere as the door is violently SUCKED OFF its hinges and the entire cabin is thrown into a HELLISH WHIRLING TURMOIL as it DEPRESSURIZES. Not trusting the thin straps of the seat, Hockett holds on for dear life as

THE TICKING MAN

is SUCKED AWAY from the cockpit door. As he flies through the cabin, he reaches out for purchase, but finds none. He tumbles towards the

BOARDING DOOR

There's nothing out there but the RUSHING NIGHT WIND. Somehow, the Ticking Man manages to snatch Hockett's leg at the last instant, half his body hanging out into oblivion.

Hockett tries to KICK the Ticking Man's hand loose, but his grip is too strong. And then it's too late -- the PRESSURE EQUALIZES. The CABIN SETTLES as OXYGEN MASKS drop down.

With his other hand, the Ticking Man hoists himself up and stands, framed in the open door. The WIND BLASTS as he looks down at Hockett with unbridled malevolence.

TICKING MAN

I thought it would be hard to kill you. But it's going to be a pleasure.

As the Ticking Man reaches for Hockett -- there's the RATTLE of an approaching FOOD SERVICE CART.

The Ticking Man looks up to see Meg charging out of the Galley PUSHING a FOOD SERVICE CART with extreme prejudice. WHAM!!! The cart SLAMS and then follows the Ticking Man out through the open door.

EXT. CLOUDS - NIGHT

The Ticking Man falls silently and is swallowed up by this peaceful, moonlit landscape.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Meg falls into Hockett's arms. He holds her tight. She pulls back a little and looks at him.

MEG

You're right, Hockett, airline food'll get you every time.

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - RUNWAY - NIGHT

The Concorde touches down and disappears down the runway. A squadron of EMERGENCY VEHICLES begin chasing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - LONG ISLAND - NIGHT

Under construction, the BEAMS and FRAMING forming a wooden skeleton. A group of NEIGHBORS waving FLASHLIGHTS approach the house tentatively. A good section of the interior has been destroyed.

NEIGHBOR #1
Did you see anything?

NEIGHBOR #2
Not a damned thing, but I sure as hell heard it.

The SHARP SOUND of SPLINTERING WOOD comes from somewhere inside. The neighbors freeze. All eyes probe the dark interior of the house. The FLASHLIGHT BEAMS catch something moving. A FIGURE rises from the wreckage.

There's a collective GASP and several flashlights are dropped as the Ticking Man walks into view. He's missing his right arm. All that's left is a mass of TWISTED METALLIC TENDONS and STEEL BONE. One side of his face has been ripped away, the skin hanging in tatters, revealing the SYNTHETIC KEVLAR BONE structure.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The Neighbors SCATTER. The COMMAND DISPLAY FLASHES: System Failure -- Automatic Detonation Malfunction.

The MENU lists three options:

1. Terminate Mission
2. Contact Launch Command
3. Switch to Countdown Mode

The Third OPTION is SELECTED AND HIGHLIGHTED. Another READING APPEARS: Initiate Countdown: 20:00. The COUNTDOWN begins... 19:59... 19:58... 19:57...

The Ticking Man begins to move...

EXT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - TARMAC - NIGHT

The usual contingency of RESCUE VEHICLES surround the Concorde as the PASSENGERS evacuate down the INFLATABLE SLIDES. Hockett, holding the Tracking Device, slides down, Meg right behind. Hockett spots a waiting POLICE HELICOPTER. As he starts over, State Police Pilot MCNULTY meets him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MCNULTY
Hockett?

HOCKETT
Let's fly.

Hockett, McNulty and Meg start for the copter.

MCNULTY
Sorry, this is the best we could
do on short notice.

The Misguided Passenger comes running up to Hockett.

PASSENGER
(sheepish)
Sir? I thought you might need this.

He holds out the flare gun. Hockett takes it.

EXT. LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY - NIGHT

Traffic is heavy, but moving steadily. An OLDSMOBILE STATION WAGON weaves in and out between the cars, moving at a good clip. It cuts it close several times, causing near accidents.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Trying to stay in control of his temper, the battered Ticking Man grips the WHEEL hard enough to SNAP part of it off, almost losing control. He grabs another section of the wheel.

TICKING MAN'S POV

Moving down the Expressway, passing a SIGN that reads: Queens next 4 exits. The COUNTDOWN CONTINUES: 12:31... 12:30... 12:29...

EXT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

As it streaks through the skies over Long Island. Its SPOTLIGHT sweeping the area where the Ticking Man might have come down.

INT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Hockett next to McNulty, Meg behind them. Hockett checks the Tracking Device. Nothing yet.

MCNULTY
Could be a long night, we got at
least a hundred square miles to
cover...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

We gotta make sure he's out of the game.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

The Ticking Man barrels onto the ATLANTIC AVENUE exit into Brooklyn. Barely slowing down, he runs a CAR off the road and into a CONCRETE RETAINING WALL.

TICKING MAN'S POV

Racing down Atlantic Avenue, through a RED LIGHT. The COUNTDOWN READS: 09:10... 09:09... 09:08...

INT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Still searching futilely. The POLICE RADIO BLARES.

DISPATCHER

Sky unit 3 come in... Sky unit 3...

McNulty picks up the receiver.

MCNULTY

Go ahead...

DISPATCHER

(amused)

We got something you might be interested in. There's been several calls of a man with his arm torn off destroying a building site and stealing a station wagon. Last seen heading west on the Long Island Expressway.

HOCKETT

That's him!

McNulty banks the helicopter around and takes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY - NIGHT

The Police Helicopter ROCKETS above the line of TRAFFIC, the GLOW of New York City ahead.

INT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Suddenly, the Tracking Device BEEPS to life. Hockett and Meg look down to see the BLIP -- within the New York City Detonation Boundary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEG
He's inside city limits!

HOCKETT
Why the fuck are we still alive?

Hockett switches over to the MENU READOUTS. What he sees makes him freeze.

HOCKETT
Oh God...

MEG
What?

HOCKETT
He's on a fucking countdown.

Hockett points at the COUNTDOWN: 06:46... 06:45... 06:44... He frantically switches back to the TRACKING MODE and quickly determines the Ticking Man's position.

HOCKETT
Three miles up and a few degrees south!

MCNULTY
He's making for the Brooklyn Bridge.

McNulty wastes no time -- if he could burn rubber, he would.

CUT TO:

EXT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

A short distance ahead we can see the TWIN TOWERS and SUSPENSION CABLES of the BROOKLYN BRIDGE, lit up like a Christmas tree.

EXT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

They reach the bridge and dip down alongside it, moving very close and parallel to the Manhattan-bound traffic.

INT. POLICE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Hockett and Meg scan the bridge. Meg points.

MEG
There!

Hockett sees him. The station wagon is slowed by the traffic, but making progress. Hockett glances down to the Tracking Device: 05:01... 05:00... 04:59...

HOCKETT
Get ahead of him and set us down!

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

The Ticking Man watches the Police Helicopter speed off ahead of him. He glances towards the beckoning lights of Manhattan. His mission is nearly complete, his destiny nearly fulfilled.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

BRAKES SLAM ON and TIRES SCREECH as McNulty lands the Police helicopter on the far side APPROACH RAMP, cutting off all traffic heading towards the island.

Hockett wastes no time. He jumps to the asphalt, the flare gun in hand, and takes off down the bridge. Meg follows, carrying the Tracking Device.

HOCKETT

(running)

Where the hell do you think you're going?

MEG

(trying to keep up)

The same place I've been for the last two days -- with you!

HOCKETT

Just stay out of my way!

EXT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Towards the other end of the bridge, stuck in the JAM caused by the helicopter landing. The Ticking Man gets out and begins walking towards the city.

TICKING MAN'S POV

Moving past the rows of cars, the DRIVERS HONKING, some getting out to see what the problem is, others YELLING OBSCENITIES.

The COUNTDOWN READS: 03:56... 03:54... 03:53...

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - CENTER SPAN - NIGHT

Hockett has left Meg behind. He runs up to almost the middle of the bridge, stops, sees what he has come for. The Ticking Man sees Hockett, stops a few car lengths down. A knowing look passes between them.

Hockett raises the flare gun to fire -- but, with blinding speed, the Ticking Man ducks between two cars. Hockett rushes up to the spot, but the Ticking Man is gone. Hockett moves cautiously into the MAZE of jammed traffic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Holding the flare gun out in front of him as he searches, Hockett comes up to a MOVING VAN, looks under it. There's someone standing on the other side. Hockett creeps around the back of the van, jumps out to fire -- but its only a confused TRUCK DRIVER.

DRIVER
(conciliatory)
Relax, buddy. I've seen worse jams than this.

Hockett just continues past, hurrying low along the cars, ready to shoot at anything. He goes to the center rail, leans over and looks at the TRAFFIC moving the opposite way. Nothing.

TICKING MAN (O.S.)
Hey, Hockett...

Hockett spins around, ready to fire, but can't... The Ticking Man is holding Meg in front of him, his arm around her throat.

TICKING MAN
Take your best shot.

Hockett and Meg exchange looks. Trying to act like it doesn't matter, Hockett laughs.

HOCKETT
You think I won't? She's been more fucking trouble to me than you have.

TICKING MAN
Then what are you waiting for?

Hockett tenses to fire, then lowers the flare gun. The Ticking Man has called his bluff.

TICKING MAN
You can't fool me. I know you care about her.

HOCKETT
You're a fucking machine. You don't know shit about how people feel.

It's obvious the Ticking Man doesn't like being called a machine, a fact not lost on Hockett.

HOCKETT
I mean look at you. You need a good oil and lube, pal.

TICKING MAN
I'm much more than a fucking machine! I have life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT
Get off it, will ya!? You're
nothing but an overgrown toaster
with a head! A walking microwave
oven.

The Ticking Man trembles with rage.

HOCKETT
What's the matter? I hit you where
you live? Pissed off? Come on.
Take a swing at me. Be a man.

The Ticking Man has reached boiling point.

TICKING MAN'S POV

...01:20... 01:19... 01:18... Hockett's image WAVERS and the
COLORS SHIFT. The COMMAND DISPLAY reads: AI Synapse Failure.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

The Ticking Man shoves Meg aside and charges Hockett. Hockett
brings the flare gun up...

HOCKETT
Temper temper...

...and FIRES -- BOOM!!!! The FLARE IMPACTS against the Ticking
Man's chest and the EXPLOSION hurls him back against the WROUGHT
IRON RAILING of the bridge. The area quickly clears as MOTORISTS
scatter for safety.

There's not a moment to waste. Hockett races up to the Ticking
Man, who lies unconscious but remarkably intact except for the
chest area. CLOTHING and ARTIFICIAL SKIN have been seared away
and the chest covering has been blown off, REVEALING the
PLUTONIUM SPHERE, surrounded by the horse shoe-shaped BAND of
HIGH EXPLOSIVE TNT.

Hockett kneels next to the Ticking Man's body and clears away
the DEBRIS from the chest area. He tries to pry the sphere
loose, but the METAL HOUSING has been damaged, crimping it in.

Now Meg, the Tracking Device in her hands, joins Hockett. She
checks the COUNTDOWN: 00:57... 00:56... 00:55...

MEG
You got 55 seconds, Hockett.

HOCKETT
I guess a coffee break is out of
the question... Fuck!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gives up on using his fingers, dashes up to one of the abandoned CARS, reaches in the window and grabs the CAR KEYS. He runs around to the trunk, fumbles for the right key, drops them...

MEG
(urgent)
Hockett...

Hockett snatches the keys, finds the right one and throws the trunk open.

HOCKETT
Come on... come on... where the fuck
are you?

He tears into the trunk and pulls out a TIRE IRON. Hockett hurries back and jams the end of the tire iron between the plutonium sphere and the HOUSING. He presses hard, leaning into it.

HOCKETT
(to Meg)
Get the fuck outta here!

MEG
I'm staying with you!

HOCKETT
Even if I get the plutonium outta
him, he's still gonna blow a good
fucking hole in this bridge. So
scram!!!

Meg looks back down at the countdown: 00:38... 00:37...

MEG
Thirty seven seconds!

HOCKETT
Go!

Meg sets down the Tracking Device and reluctantly backs away. Hockett gives on last mighty strain and the PLUTONIUM SPHERE POPS loose, but the band of TNT is still there.

Hockett picks up the sphere, but as he moves to stand, the Ticking Man grabs his ankle. Hockett goes down, fumbling the sphere, which ROLLS across the edge of the bridge, coming to a STOP against one of the WROUGHT IRON RAILING POSTS.

TRACKING DEVICE

The COUNTDOWN continues relentlessly: 00:29... 00:28...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

The Ticking Man, strong as ever, jumps to his feet, seizes Hockett by the neck and swings him out over the railing. It's a long way down to the East River.

MEG'S VOICE

Stop!!!

The Ticking Man looks.

TICKING MAN'S POV

A DISTORTED Meg is holding the plutonium sphere. The COUNTDOWN: 00:21... 00:20...

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Meg is just as prepared to dump her load as the Ticking Man is his.

MEG

Put him down.

Hockett GURGLES SOMETHING which sounds like "throw it over".

The Ticking Man hurls Hockett back onto the bridge. Hockett lands in a heap. In the instant that Meg looks towards Hockett, the Ticking Man leaps forward with incredible speed...

Meg tenses... the Ticking Man FLIES through the air... Meg HEAVES the heavy sphere... the Ticking Man REACHES out for it, but he's too late... He watches helplessly as the plutonium sphere PLUMMETS through the darkness for what seems an eternity... SPLASH!

TRACKING DEVICE

It's almost over: 00:14... 00:13...

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Hockett scrambles to his feet, looks over at Meg.

HOCKETT

Run!!!

The Ticking Man turns to Hockett, fury in his eyes. He grabs Hockett, holds him close. Looks like they're both going out with a bang. Hockett smiles, staring death in the face.

TICKING MAN

Wherever I'm going, you're coming with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT

No sweat. I did my job. How about you?

The Ticking Man thinks about it.

TICKING MAN

Time will tell.

And with that, the Ticking Man releases Hockett... and dives over the railing.

Hockett makes it to the railing in time to see the Ticking Man KNIFE into the murky waters of the East River.

Meg comes up next to Hockett. They both look down to see the Tracking Device, and the COUNTDOWN: 00:08... 00:07...

MEG

Do you think he can make it?

HOCKETT

I sure the hell hope not. I was gonna ask you out to dinner tomorrow night.

Meg slides her arm around Hockett. He pulls her close, they're both scared.

THE TICKING MAN

kicks his way through the DEPTHS toward the RIVER BOTTOM.

TICKING MAN'S POV

The swirling SILT seemingly parts to REVEAL the PLUTONIUM SPHERE resting on the muddy bottom. 00:06... 00:05...

THE TICKING MAN

grabs the sphere, the lives of 14 million people in his hands...

HOCKETT AND MEG

Holding each other tight -- RAPID DOLLY IN CLOSE to the TRACKING DEVICE: 00:03... 00:02...

THE TICKING MAN

brings the sphere up to his open chest, ready to reinsert it in the METAL HOUSING... Almost there...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKETT AND MEG

KLABOOM!!! A PLUME of WATER ERUPTS into the air, reaching up towards the bridge.

THE RIVER BOTTOM

The plutonium sphere sinks INTO FRAME, the Ticking Man's DISEMBODIED HAND still grasping it. It disappears as the SILT from the explosion drifts down onto it.

HOCKETT AND MEG

LAUGH as they are drenched. A few FISH flop down around them.

MEG

Too bad this isn't a contest.
This'd be one fishing trophy they'd
let you keep.

HOCKETT

(cavalier)
I don't care about trophies. It's
just the satisfaction of knowing
you did it. Know what I mean?

Arm in arm, they start walking down the bridge.

MEG

This is gonna make a helluva story.

HOCKETT

Just remember -- Hockett has two
"t"s.

CREDITS ROLL...

MEG

You can give that interview you owe
me over dinner.

HOCKETT

Dinner? I was just saying that.
I didn't want you to die lonely.

(pause)

How about a burger?

They disappear into the rapidly gathering CROWD.

FADE TO BLACK