

"THE ULTIMATUM"

Written by

Laurence Dwores & Robert Roy Pool

THE ULTIMATOM

BY
LAURENCE DURET & BOB POOL

3/1/90

SUNDAY

The SCREEN is BLACK. Fragments of SPANISH break the silence. The IMAGE FADES TO a haze of brown. A SWITCH CLICKS ON. A CONVEYOR BELT HUMS. A shimmering silver object bursts through the flaps and FILLS the SCREEN. It is a large HALLIBURTON suitcase. The SOUNDS of the BAGGAGE HANDLING area GROW LOUDER.

CUT TO:

A SMALL DARK ROOM

Where the CLICK... CLICK... CLICKS of a GEIGER COUNTER grow more frenetic as it passes over the seam of the suitcase. A gloved hand flips the tumblers of the combination lock. It reads 5--9-- 4.

The case is opened. Inside, we SEE only numbers on a digital clock counting down in hours and minutes: 47:15... 47:14.

The case is carefully resealed with latex caulk, then closed. The lock is reset. The Geiger counter again passes over the suitcase... *silently*. The suitcase is removed from the darkened room.

SCOTT (V.O.)

It's going to be different this time, Joyce...

INT. J. ROBERT SCOTT'S GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE - 6 P.M.

J. ROBERT SCOTT, 48, tall and angular, finishes labeling a shipping carton as he continues talking on the phone. He wears dungarees and a tattered orange sweatshirt with Texas printed on the front. Streaks of sweat run down his face and chest. In the bg a portable TV is tuned to a news program but the sound is off.

SCOTT (into phone)

I promise.

INT. BEDROOM, JOYCE SCOTT'S APARTMENT - SAME

Scott's wife, JOYCE, 45, is curled up in the bed in her nightgown. She's petite and attractive and elegant. But there's also a toughness, a weariness, due in part to years of living through a troubled marriage. On the bureau nearby is a photograph of a young, handsome naval ensign -- Scott in 1964, along with other photos of the two of them with their son and daughter. We see the kids are now at least nineteen or twenty.

Through the window behind Joyce we can see the lights of a large city on a brilliant clear fall night.

JOYCE

(into phone)

You should at least think of some new lines before you start sweet-talking me, Robert.

INTERCUT JOYCE AND SCOTT.

SCOTT

Once we get out of Washington...

JOYCE

I want to believe that.

SCOTT

My flight gets into Austin at six-thirty.
American. Will you be there?

JOYCE

Yes. My flight arrives at six. I'll meet you at
the gate.

(beat)

I love you, Robert, I feel like maybe this is our
last chance.

SCOTT

We'll make it work. I promise.

HOLD ON SCOTT as he hangs up: troubled, not so sure it is going to work. He grabs the remote, turns up the TV which is tuned to the World News Network, a 24-hour-a-day cable news service. The **ANCHORMAN**, mid-fifties, is smooth and urbane

ANCHORMAN (V.O.)

-- How much of a role --will tonight's
Presidential debate play in Wednesday's
election?

ANCHORMAN (V.O.)

-- Ben Fein in Washington has an exclusive
WNN analysis.

The television image cuts to a young man standing in front of the White House. The name "Ben Fein" is **SUPERIMPOSED** over the image. **FEIN**, 34, has an F. Scott Fitzgerald face on top of a lean, athletic body, but his chief attribute is his smile --warm, ingratiating, camera perfect.

FEIN (V.O.)

(on TV)

Thanks, Chuck. Although there's no question that
the final debate tomorrow on Election Eve will be
the most important, tonight's debate is critical for
Senator Hayes...

As Fein continues in the bg, Scott lugs the shipping carton to the corner of the room where a cluster of ten others have been neatly stacked. All the boxes bear the label:

**J. ROBERT SCOTT
RANCHO VAQUERO
SEGUIN, TEXAS 78155**

Everything's been packed, the room completely empty except for a dining table with a large frosted cake on top and two bottles of champagne. We **SEE** the words "Happy Birthday" embossed on the cake's surface. Scott sticks his finger into the cake, licks off the frosting like a kid, then molds the frosting back into a continuous swirl -- hiding all clues.

INT. KENNEDY CENTER AUDITORIUM - 10:30 P.M.

Packed with the elite of the nation's capital. On the stage behind opposing podiums are the Presidential contenders. Across from them is the table where the panelists sit. TWO of them are MEN, early to late forties. The other is a vibrant and attractive 33-year-old woman. She wears a soft gray woolen suit and a pearl necklace. A nameplate on the desk identifies her as GINNY HOPKINS, NEW YORK TIMES.

GINNY

(leaning in; Virginia accent)

President Taylor, four years ago you promised that, if elected President, you would strongly consider nominating more women both to the Supreme Court and the Cabinet. Yet, although you've made two appointments to the Court, neither of them has been a woman. And the only woman member of your cabinet, Katherine Ulestaad, resigned six months ago as head of Health and Welfare.

The crowd stirs. So does THEODORE "BEAR" TAYLOR, 62, from Texas, the President of the United States. He's a shrewd, backslapping, Lyndon B. Johnson-style politician. He knows what's coming next and he doesn't like it.

GINNY

How do you explain the inconsistency between your campaign promises and your performance?

As Ginny speaks, Taylor glances off-stage past the banks of television monitors and knots of Secret Service agents to a plumpish, 35-year-old man standing by himself in the corner. CHRISTOPHER "KIT" CARSON is Taylor's press secretary and a first lieutenant in the Texas Mafia which dominates the upper echelons of the Taylor administration. Right now, Carson is more anxious than Taylor.

GINNY

— Clearly, there are plenty of qualified women in this country?

TAYLOR

(holding her eye; smiling)

As you so well demonstrate, Ms. Hopkins.

LAUGHTER from the audience. Ginny smiles. Carson exhales a lungful of smoke. Taylor glances at his opponent, SENATOR HAMILTON HAYES from Illinois, 55, silver haired, satin voiced, the Republican nominee.

TAYLOR

I have made sincere efforts to bring qualified women to this administration in every capacity...

OFFSTAGE

Taylor's VOICE CONTINUES in the background as Carson exchanges words with two dark-suited men. One of them is a small, quick, intense Lebanese-American about 45 years old with a stars-and-stripes pin on his lapel. His name is NICHOLAS "NICK" YARED and he's the anti-terrorist chief of the FBI. The other man is his assistant, BILLINGS, 52. They lead Carson through the maze of cameras and technicians and out of sight.

INT. NARROW CORRIDOR - KENNEDY CENTER BASEMENT

Carson and the two FBI agents moving quickly down the stairs.

CARSON

(Texas accent)

When did you get it?

YARED

Forty-five minutes ago. State got one, too.

CARSON

And the media?

YARED

I don't know.

They turn down another corridor. Straight ahead is a fire exit with a POLICEMAN standing guard. A large alarm system looms over the doorway.

Yared nods to the policeman. He pushes the door open. The red "FIRE EXIT ONLY" light begins flashing over the door, but the alarm stays quiet. Yared, Carson, and Billings exit into the night. A TELEPHONE BEGINS RINGING O.S.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, SCOTT'S TOWNHOUSE - 11:20 P.M.

Scott sorts books into a Goodwill box and a packing carton. Answers the phone, continues sorting while he talks.

SCOTT

Hello?

Through the receiver, we HEAR a Texas-accented VOICE barely recognizable as Kit Carson's. We CATCH ONLY SNATCHES of Carson's phrases.

SCOTT

(cutting him off)

-- Kit, I'm leaving for Austin in the morning and nothing's gonna change that.

Suddenly, CARSON'S VOICE GROWS STRAINED and FRANTIC.

Scott stops sorting, freezes, listens.

SCOTT

Who knows about it?

We HEAR A SHORT, MUFFLED REPLY.

SCOTT

Give me twenty minutes.

EXT. DECONCINI BROS. WRECKING YARD - WASHINGTON - 11:50 P.M.

A Cadillac limousine with American flags mounted on the hood SCREECHES to a halt in a passageway between two walls of wrecked cars. Flashing red and blue lights reflect off the shiny surfaces of battered chrome.

Scott gets out of the limousine and moves past the silent hulks toward an area cordoned off by Billings and a half-dozen other FBI agents. The emergency lights on their security cars flash and whirl.

In the distance, FOUR MEN in white plutonium safety suits search the trunk of a wrecked Oldsmobile.

Scott lifts a plutonium suit from the pile, steps into it, pulls the NASA breathing helmet down over his face. He moves off toward--

THE WRECKED OLDSMOBILE

--where one of the plutonium suited men looks up toward Scott, then nudges the man beside him. The two of them move toward Scott and meet him--

MIDWAY

CARSON

(pulling up his visor)

Scotty, this is Nick Yared of the FBI. He's in charge of Group 13. Nick, this is Robert Scott.

Yared pulls up his visor. He and Scott nod acknowledgements. Coolly.

YARED

They're not amateurs; they lined the box with lead. We'd never have found it without their map.

Scott pulls his visor down and heads for the two men still working in the Oldsmobile trunk. Geiger counters CLICK wildly. Oscilloscopes WHINE. Digital monitors flash Roentgen units -- 5... 37... 85...

One of the suited men looks over his shoulder, then turns toward Scott. In the suited man's hand is a small wood jewelry box lined with lead plating. Inside the box is a tiny gray-black pearl.

Scott takes the sensing rod of a Geiger counter and moves it toward the gray pearl. The CLICK... CLICK... CLICKING GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

The Washington Monument gleams in the background.

EXT. GEORGETOWN STREET - 12:30 A.M. (THICK FOG)

Scott races up the long stairwell to his house. There is a "For Sale" sign in the window. Carson waits in the government Cadillac with the engine running.

Scott enters --

HIS TOWNHOUSE

The maze of shipping cartons stretches in all directions.

He glances at the dining table. The birthday cake hasn't been touched, but one of the champagne bottles has been opened and is now only a third full. On the bar a cigarette smolders in an ashtray.

Scott climbs the stairs to the

SECOND FLOOR LANDING

and moves down the hallway past open doorways to a closed one at the end. He nudges it open.

SCOTT'S POV

A WOMAN lit only by moonlight filtering through the tall French windows lies asleep on the double bed with her clothes on. Her face is hidden in shadow.

Scott ENTERS --

HIS BEDROOM

--and crosses to the bathroom door. The Woman in bed stirs but does not awaken. Scott enters --

THE BATHROOM

--and closes the door. He flicks on the light and pulls open the medicine cabinet above the sink. He reaches inside toward the hinge supporting the top shelf and turns the screw mount with a dime.

He pulls out the cabinet: it's a false front for the wall safe behind. He quickly fingers the combination. The safe CLICKS open. He reaches inside and pulls out four white-bound documents labeled NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, TOP SECRET.

He leafs through the first two folders, then places them back in the safe.

CLOSE ON the title page of the third document: "PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON NUCLEAR THEFT: RISKS AND SAFEGUARDS, JUNE, 1988. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR J. ROBERT SCOTT, J.D." The names of the twelve other members of the commission are listed below Scott's. He flips through the report, then slips it into his attache' case. He leafs quickly through the last document, puts this in his case also.

He carefully closes the safe and cabinet, then switches off the light. He opens the door to the bedroom, suddenly stops.

Ginny Hopkins, still half-asleep, watches him from the bed. On the night-table beside her is an almost empty glass of champagne.

GINNY

Hello.

Scott slips the briefcase down onto the bathroom floor without her seeing it, then moves

INTO THE BEDROOM

SCOTT

I'm sorry I wasn't here before.
(sitting beside her)
Happy Birthday.

He kisses her gently. Their heads part. She looks at him, sees he wants her as much as she wants him.

GINNY

I decided I'm not going to let you go.

She pulls him down to her and kisses him strong and slow. He responds -- with hunger.

Then he pulls back.

GINNY

(hurt)
The only thing that matters is we love each other.

SCOTT

That's not the only thing that matters and you know it.

She moves to him, cradles his head in her hands, kisses him. He turns his head, but offers no other resistance.

SCOTT

Why make it harder?

GINNY

I want to make it hard. I want to make it impossible.

He moves away, picks up the briefcase.

GINNY

Where are you going?

Scott doesn't answer.

GINNY

(angrily)

What difference can you make *now*? The die is cast.

For an instant he wants to tell her the truth.

GINNY

It's our last night together. And it's my birthday. Goddamn you.

He begins to say something but stops. Starts moving toward the door.

SCOTT

I'll be back as soon as I can.

GINNY

(fighting back tears)

You'll never be back.

Scott pauses by the door.

GINNY

Bastard.

SCOTT

I'm not.

They hold each other's eye. The love and fondness between them greater than the pain.

Scott exits, pulling the door shut.

CLOSE ON GINNY'S FACE, then

CUT TO:

WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - 1 A.M.

Carson and Scott flash their security badges to the TWO SECRET SERVICE AGENTS standing guard and enter --

THE SITUATION ROOM

--the crisis center of the White House. It's a cramped, wood-panelled room now filled with President Taylor, the National Security Council, and other top-level White House staffers seated around a long mahogany table.

Along one wall is an array of computers and teletypes spewing forth the latest vicissitudes in world affairs. All present wear suits except Taylor, who wears a blue bathrobe over his pajamas. He looks much older without the TV makeup. On the wall above him is a giant electronic map of the United States. Nick Yared of the FBI stands at the podium in front of a large screen built into the wall. Scott has entered the room in the middle of Yared's presentation.

YARED

Two days ago, the White House received a letter which threatened this country with nuclear blackmail...

Carson and Scott emerge from the crowded doorway.

Taylor glances at Scott, who regards him coldly.

Scott threads his way toward a corner of the room while Carson confers privately with Taylor.

YARED

This letter was immediately brought to my attention at the FBI. These things are pretty routine now. We've handled over a hundred of them in the past five years. It's always some crackpot who wants attention. Forty-eight hours ago, there was no reason to believe this one was any different.

CLOSE ON SCOTT as he takes a position along the wall beside ART NOVICK, 64, squat, bespectacled, and intense, the Secretary of the Treasury and the best dirty-joke teller in the administration. The briefcase under his arm is embossed with the Treasury insignia. He nods at Scott.

NOVICK

(whispering)

One nuclear bomb can ruin your whole evening.

Scott smiles and they shake hands, obviously close friends.

AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, Yared's hitting his stride.

YARED

At 9:47 this evening, during the Presidential debate, we got a phone call telling us where to get confirmation of the threat. Two hours later we recovered a sample of Plutonium 239. It was weapons grade -- 98 percent pure.

(moving toward stereo console)

We also recovered this tape.

He pushes the PLAY BUTTON. A CASSETTE TAPE engages. It's a MAN SPEAKING ENGLISH with a Middle-Eastern accent. His voice is cold and detached.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

For too long we have endured shameful abuse at the hands of the Zionist Jews and their American henchmen. They have barred the worshippers of Islam from the gates of the Holy City. Now, Allah has commanded his faithful servant, the Black Crescent, to bring a

(MORE)

MALE VOICE (con't)

chastisement of fire on the American infidels. It will scourge America on the fifth day of November at exactly five hours past noon. The unbelievers will be roasted in the fire, drowned by the flood, and tortured by the wrath of Allah. Their skin will be seared from their faces and their eyes will be blinded forever. This is Allah's will. A Messenger waits in North America to stay the chastisement. His hand will be lifted if the Zionist Jews abandon the Holy City to the warriors of Al Assam, a nation of righteous believers. The Messenger will know if these things have been done. Allah is great. Allah is compassionate. Only his Messenger can stay the chastisement of fire.

YARED

(punching "stop" button)

The rest of the tape is filled with surrahs from the Koran.

Taylor surveys the grim, silent faces of his staff.

Halfway down the conference table, DORIAN FABER, 47, from Idaho, the Attorney General, leans forward, enraged.

FABER

Just who the hell are these people?

YARED

We're not certain yet. The only information we've got suggests they're Moslem fundamentalists and Al Assam is probably their base.

Faber's not satisfied. He turns to LESLIE HAMMOND, 48, the gray-suited Boston Brahmin director of the CIA.

FABER

The CIA knows nothing else about these maniacs?

HAMMOND

No. Not even the PLO knows who they are.

FABER

And you believe them?

HAMMOND

Yes.

The room buzzes. Yared looks to the President; Taylor nods.

YARED

(silencing the din)

Two years ago the Scott Commission on Nuclear Theft generated a list of those areas in this country most susceptible to terrorist blackmail.

(dimming the lights)

The results are pretty much what you'd expect.

He punches the computer keyboard on the podium. The skylines of America's great cities flash on the screen: Washington, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans, Houston, Dallas, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle. After each skyline is a population density map with an evacuation plan superimposed on it. Listed on the corner of each frame is the minimum evacuation time (12-48 hours), the expected casualties (375,000-5,000,000), and the state of emergency preparedness (1-10). All of the maps are labeled 'National Security Council. Top Secret.'

YARED

(punching the computer keyboard)

This diagram was wrapped around the tape.

It is a pencil drawing of three concentric spheres -- an atomic bomb. The sphere in the center is labeled "Pu-239", the next, "Beryllium Tamper," and the last, which is studded with detonator wires, "Triamino Trinitro Benzene." Mathematical formulas for calculating weapon yield and efficiency fill the edges of the slide. Much of the writing is in Arabic.

YARED

D.O.D. weapons people have studied this picture. There's a good chance the device will not be as efficient as this diagram predicts. However, we believe the bomb will go off and that the yield could be anywhere from twenty to a hundred and fifty kilotons.

He flashes to the next slide: a faded photograph of a once-large city now totally devastated. There are no people, no cars, no signs of life -- just black, flat, smoldering ruins.

YARED

Hiroshima was only twelve kilotons.

Yared turns the projector off. The lights come on.

YARED

Mr. President, if a 100-kiloton device goes off in any unevacuated city, any one of those cities, we're going to lose between five hundred thousand and four million people.

CARSON

(to Yared and the President)

We've got to stall 'em. Tell 'em we're going to meet their demands but we need more time.

YARED

There's no one to negotiate with. They've left no way of contacting them.

A gloomy silence pervades the room. Then

YARED

Their plan is extremely shrewd. They've maximized our uncertainty, they've made one simple demand which cannot be negotiated, and they've chosen our most vulnerable moment.

TAYLOR

Do we know if they've gone to the media?

YARED

So far they haven't. And I don't think they're going to; if they were, they would have already done it. By keeping it out of the press, I think they're trying to give you the greatest flexibility to meet their demands.

NOVICK

Just tell the Israelis to tie a ribbon around Jerusalem and hand it over to these lunatics. What's the problem?

A few snickers.

FABER

(leaning in)

Mr. President, there is no way in hell you're going to get the Israelis to yield an inch of Jerusalem. I think we'd all better get that straight right now, and we'd better plan accordingly.

WARREN WILSON, 67, the urbane Secretary of State, exchanges worried looks with Taylor.

WILSON

Dorian's right, Mr. President. The Israelis aren't going to budge on Jerusalem. No matter what.

TAYLOR

(to Yared)

Can the bomb be found in forty hours?

YARED

If you give us a free hand, it could be done...
Yes, I think so.

Taylor looks at Scott for confirmation. Scott's face remains impassive.

TAYLOR

What if we choose to postpone the elections
and evacuate all the cities?

YARED

Then I don't know --
(fumbling)
-- it would depend -- on a number of things --

SCOTT

(moving forward)
-- Mr. President, the answer is, if you do that,
you'll never find the bomb. You just can't go
both ways on this one. Leads are going to have
to be followed --and quickly -- from all over the
country. You can't do that in the middle of the
panic and chaos of trying to evacuate millions
of people. And as soon as the terrorists see
you're emptying the cities, they could move the
bomb to where you're gathering the evacuees.

Faces turn to Scott; heads nod.

SCOTT

First, you've got to find out what city the bomb's
in. But say you're lucky, and you know the city.
You still might not find it. The plutonium
sample was in a lead-lined container. If they've
sealed it in a water shell, even the most
sophisticated equipment will never pick it up.
All you can do is hope they've made a mistake
somewhere along the line.

CLEMENT JOHNSON, 47, the ex-Governor of Georgia and the present Secretary of the
Interior, is getting more and more rattled.

JOHNSON

(Georgia accent)
The truth is, Mr. President, the odds aren't
good you'll find the bomb - even if you had a
month. We've got to find a way of meeting
their demands. My family's in Atlanta, my
people are from Atlanta, and Atlanta's on that
list. I say to hell with Israel and Jerusalem. We
can't have innocent Americans roasted alive
like horses in a burning barn.

SCOTT

My family's in a city on that list, too, and I don't
want to see them or anyone else get hurt. But
if you give in to the Black Crescent now, who
says they're going to give up the bomb? Why
should they when they can just move it to

(MORE)

SCOTT (con't)
 another city and issue a whole new set of
 demands? There's nothing to decide, Mr.
 President.

Pause.

Taylor gets up, his shoulders sag. He moves to the huge wall map of the U.S. and studies it
 -- *dismayed by the scope of his responsibilities.*

TAYLOR
 I was a successful businessman. I was a
 successful Governor. I was a successful
 Senator. *Why couldn't I leave well enough
 alone?*

(beat)
 I want it clearly understood that every detail of
 this is top secret. Don't tell your aides. Don't
 tell your wives. Don't tell anybody outside this
 room. If this leaks, whoever is responsible will
 be tried for treason. Is that clear?

He looks at each of them in turn, then returns to his chair and sits down.

TAYLOR
 (to Yared)
 O.K., find the goddamn bomb.

CUT TO:

THE OVAL OFFICE - 1:30 A.M.

Scott stands by the burning fireplace, his back to the door, alone in the room. On the
 mantelpiece is a Remington bronze of a cowboy riding a bucking bronco. Scott's
discomfort is palpable.

The DOOR CLICKS OPEN O.S. and Taylor enters, carrying the Scott Commission report
 and other confidential documents under his arm. He drops the reports on his desk, sits
 down, swivels around towards Scott.

TAYLOR
 When you told me you wouldn't manage the
 campaign, I was worried. But I understood the
 strain you were under with Joyce and I knew I
 could find a dozen other people to do the job.
 So what happens? I lose ten points in three
 weeks. It would never've happened if you'd
 been there.

(beat)
 Then you resign as Counsel to the President. I
 understood it. I didn't accept it but I
 understood it. A man has to put his family first.
But this is worse than my worst nightmare.

SCOTT

You've got the people you need to do the job.

TAYLOR

I don't trust Yared or any of those pricks at the FBI.

SCOTT

Then keep them on a short leash.

TAYLOR

You think they can keep it out of the media? Come on! If this leaks, there'll be a panic across the country. Thirty, forty, fifty million people will be running from their homes with nowhere to go, nothing to eat, no one to keep order. Thousands are going to get sick, hundreds will die. You don't want to see that.

SCOTT

John Link can handle the press and the NEST people can handle the technical stuff.

(gathering his things)

There's nothing I can add.

Scott moves toward the door.

TAYLOR

Scotty, you don't have to do it for my sake. But you have to do it.

Scott stops at the doorway.

SCOTT

No. I don't.
(he exits)

Taylor bolts to the doorway, screams down the corridor:

TAYLOR

If that bomb goes off in Dallas and there's a Norther blowin' through, all of Texas is going to be unlivable. You can't run far enough. Scott! You hear me?!

But Scott's gone.

HOLD ON TAYLOR -- desperately alone.

EXT. SCOTT'S GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE - 2 A.M.

Scott enters as the lights of a government limousine disappear in the darkness.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HIS BEDROOM

Scott opens the door. The bed is empty.

INT. DINING ROOM

An envelope marked "Robert" lies on top of the dining table. Scott picks it up, pulls out the note.

CLOSE ON THE NOTE:

Dearest Robert,

I know I'm a coward, but I can't face seeing you again. I want to remember things as they were. Sorry about the cake.

Ginny

Scott looks up. The birthday cake is splattered against the wall mirror.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - 3:45 A.M.

Scott emerges from the townhouse wearing an overcoat and carrying the two carry-on bags. He looks back inside at the twenty years of memories he's leaving for the last time. It's an emotional moment.

He shuts the door firmly, locks it, and moves down the stairs to the brick sidewalk. The night sky is clear, beautiful, and silent. He takes a deep breath.

The headlights of an oncoming car pierce the stillness and a taxicab pulls up. Scott opens the door, climbs in.

INT./EXT. TAXI

On the front seat a PORTABLE RADIO BLASTS OUT LL COOL J. The young black DRIVER pulls down the flag, turns to Scott.

SCOTT

National Airport.

The Driver puts the car into gear, takes off. Scott sinks back, emotionally exhausted.

INT./EXT. TAXI - 3:50 A.M.

Moving along the empty streets of Georgetown. The flicker of the gas street lamps is the only sign of life. The city sleeps, unaware of the danger. The RAP MUSIC PLAYS ON as the cab pulls past

THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

aglow in light -- beautiful, immense, imposing, flooding the windows of the cab, enveloping Scott in its majesty.

In the distance, the Washington Monument looms high above West Potomac Park.

The cab moves onto

THE ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE

Scott turns, looks out the back window. The city is so beautiful... so fragile. The Driver glances at his rearview mirror, sees Scott looking back.

DRIVER

Outta sight, huh?

SCOTT

Yup.

The SOUL MUSIC PLAYS ON as the city gets smaller and smaller.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATIONAL AIRPORT

Scott gets out of the cab, hands the Driver a \$50 bill.

SCOTT

Keep it.

DRIVER

Thanks.

Scott enters through the automatic doors into

THE VAST LOBBY

Now empty except for a few members of the graveyard shift. All the ticket counters are closed and dark.

Nearby, a video screen announces the next morning's arrivals and departures: Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, DFW-Austin, Seattle, Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco.

HOLD ON THE HIT LIST, THEN

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT CORRIDOR

Outside the glass-panelled walls, 747s and DC-10s sit silently at their berths -- vast symbols of America's might and vulnerability.

These are the first images of what will become a visual leitmotif throughout the film: man dwarfed by the technology he created.

Scott moves on, past a string of posters advertising the cities American flies to: Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle. **IT'S THE HIT LIST AGAIN.**

Further on is a row of newspaper racks. Scott looks -- the headlines focus only on the election. He's relieved. So far there's been no leak.

Up ahead are the

AMERICAN GATES

Sixty to seventy people sit outside the gate marked "Dallas-Fort Worth-Austin #387 Departing 5:05"; all the other gates are closed. Even at this early hour the room buzzes with excitement.

It all seems so normal -- people eat, talk, laugh, sleep, snore. Only Scott seems out of place. And he's sweating now.

He moves to the ticket counter. The ATTENDANT is mid-twenties, pretty. She takes his ticket.

SCOTT

Nonsmoking, please.

ATTENDANT

Window or aisle?

SCOTT

Aisle.

He takes his boarding pass, carries his suitcase to the waiting area and sits down. Across from him is a young white family with a daughter about five and a son about four. They watch Scott closely. Scott looks away -- at the black minister and his wife diagonally across, then the two Army privates beside them. He feels like they're watching him.

Scott wipes his brow with his coat sleeve, then slowly looks back. Other people watch him now, not directly, not staring, but they *do* watch him. And he can *feel* it. And the feeling is growing stronger.

Pause. His fingers drum nervously on the ashtray.

Suddenly --

The five-year-old girl from the young family crawls under Scott's chair and positions herself between Scott's two carry-on bags.

YOUNG GIRL

(Texas accent)

Sssshhh! He'll see me.

He starts, then looks to the side. The four-year-old boy is looking for his sister; they're playing hide-and-go-seek. The boy comes close, but she's too well-hidden. He goes around the corner.

YOUNG GIRL

(whispering)

My name's Emily. Who are you?

SCOTT
 (whispers back)
 Robert.

EMILY
 Do you know where I'm going?

SCOTT
 Let's see... You're going home.

EMILY
 How'd you know?
 (then)
 I'm going to Dallas. It's in Texas.

SCOTT
 Uh huh.

EMILY
 Where are you going?

SCOTT
 Austin.

EMILY
 Where's that?

SCOTT
 That's by Dallas. Sort of.

HOLD ON THE GIRL'S FACE: pleased as punch.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT LOBBY

Scott strides across the lobby, suitcases in hand. He pushes through the revolving doors and goes

OUTSIDE THE TERMINAL

and stops short. Straight ahead is the Presidential limousine. The driver reaches over, opens the back door. Scott glares at him. The driver remains stone-faced. Scott climbs in the back and flings his suitcases against the door.

SCOTT
 Goddamn Taylor.

Then he smiles(he should have known) The limousine SQUEALS OUT.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BASEMENT - 5:20 A.M.

Scott, Taylor, and Carson, followed by two Secret Service agents, stride down the dark tunnel connecting the White House to the old Executive Office Building. Scott is in his

milieu now, confident, determined, poised. In complete control. Both Taylor and Carson have to struggle to keep pace.

CARSON

(jotting down names)

And when did you want to see that Koranic scholar?

SCOTT

(sharply)

Yesterday. Where's the NEST team?

CARSON

Airborne.

SCOTT

(turning to Taylor)

I want a pardon for all the laws I break.

TAYLOR

You've got it.

SCOTT

And I want you out of Washington.

A look of surprise crosses Taylor's face and he falls another half step behind.

SCOTT

There's too good a chance the bomb's somewhere close.

They reach an elevator. Carson disappears down a side corridor as Taylor pushes the "up" button. The DOORS CLANK OPEN.

TAYLOR

(getting in)

I'm not leaving. I'm sixty-two years old and I'm not running from terrorists.

SCOTT

You said you'd do it my way.

TAYLOR

And I will.

(he smiles)

From now on.

The elevator DOORS CLANK SHUT.

CUT TO:

THE CAFETERIA IN THE OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - 5:30 A.M.

Secret Service agents stand guard at the entrance. All the tables in this huge dining room are empty except for one in the center where three men sit: Scott, Taylor, and Leslie Hammond, Director of the CIA.

A figure in silhouette approaches from the edge of the room. He is HUSAF HUSSEINI, 51, the Cardin-suited Ambassador from Al Assam. He's just been roused from bed and he's angry.

TAYLOR

Ambassador Hussein, I believe you know my advisor, Robert Scott, and this is Leslie Hammond, Director of the CIA.

Husseini looks at each, then fixes his gaze back on Taylor.

HUSSEINI

(British accent)

Why have you brought me here?

TAYLOR

Ambassador, a group called the Black Crescent, composed of individuals from your country, has threatened to destroy an American city with an atomic bomb.

CLOSE ON HUSSEINI'S FACE: utter shock.

TAYLOR

We believe they can and will do it.

HUSSEINI

Neither I nor my government is in any way involved.

HAMMOND

We have reason to believe the plutonium used in the device came from your reactor at Beheshti --

HUSSEINI

-- That's a lie --

HAMMOND

-- with the full and covert cooperation of your government --

HUSSEINI

A lie! That reactor generates electricity. Nothing else.

Husseini glares at Taylor and Scott. Their faces remain impassive.

SCOTT

Ambassador, we need to know if either you or President Husad has any idea who these people are and how we might reach them.

HUSSEINI

I don't know. And I'm sure the same can be said for President Husad.

Scott eyes Taylor. Neither one of them believes Hussein.

TAYLOR

If you're lying, the consequences to your country will be devastating.

HUSSEINI

President Husad is not afraid of the United States. He would welcome an opportunity to martyr himself.

CUT TO:

A DARK CORRIDOR IN THE EAST WING OF THE WHITE HOUSE - 6 A.M.

where a weary Secret Service AGENT stands guard outside the East Room. He stiffens to attention as the ECHO of approaching FOOTSTEPS GROWS LOUDER.

Taylor and Scott emerge from the shadows, stop outside the closed door.

SCOTT

It's best if you do this alone.

Taylor nods; Scott exits down the corridor. The Secret Service Agent lets Taylor into --

THE EAST ROOM

-- the chandeliered hall often used for press conferences.

Hidden in darkness by the stage at the other end of the room is a man. His attention is on the stage -- on the pomp and splendor of the moonlit flags and the podium bearing the Presidential Seal.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

I appreciate --

The man turns and takes off his hat.

TAYLOR

-- your coming, Senator.

It's Hamilton Hayes, the Republican nominee.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CABINET ROOM - 6:01 A.M.

Scott enters.

Usually a formal chamber, the Cabinet Room has been transformed into the command center for the bomb search: COMPUTER TERMINALS line one wall of the room, RACHETING forth information at an awesome rate. Along another wall is a bank of TELEPHONES, BUZZING continually. A dozen FBI agents and Department of Defense weapons experts staff the equipment already set up. Others sweat and GROAN as they move more equipment in and connect it.

A bank of television monitors lights up, then a row of video computer terminals. Cables run everywhere.

Against one wall is a HUGE ELECTRONIC MAP OF THE UNITED STATES linked to a computer. At the touch of a button it can be made to display a detailed map of any city or any region in the country.

Beside the map is a giant digital clock which flips back and forth every few seconds between real time and the countdown. Right now, the countdown clock changes from 34:59 to 34:58 as the regular clock advances from 6:01 to 6:02. We will SEE the map and clock again and again as the search goes on.

Yared is over in a corner of the room scanning the output from a computer terminal. His assistant, Billings, is beside hm.

We SEE Scott cross to Yared, talk to him briefly. Then Yared follows Scott into the small adjoining room that will become

SCOTT'S OFFICE

The room looks like it hasn't been used for years and, indeed, it hasn't. The chairs and desk are old and dusty. On one wall is a photograph of FDR, on another a map of the world. Scott places his attache case on the desk. Yared watches his every move.

SCOTT

There's been a change in plans.

Yared knows what's coming next but can't mask his disappointment.

SCOTT

The President has asked me to take over. It's nothing personal. Both of us are aware of your extraordinary record. It's just... it's just there are other factors we have to consider and I think you know what I'm talking about.

Yared nods, still stunned.

SCOTT

There's one other thing I want to get straight. I'm going to -- and this country's going to -- need all the help we can get.

Pause, then

YARED

We'll do whatever's needed.

SCOTT

Good. Now bring me up to date.

YARED

We've run a computer check on the Assami nationals living in the U.S. There are about twenty-seven hundred of them, mostly students in the Northeast and California. We've got a rough idea what kinds of people tend to get involved in terrorist groups -- young, male, single, well-educated and, in this case, probably a science background. Unfortunately, that profile fits 1,800 of the Assamis.

SCOTT

How can you cut it down?

YARED

You can't. They all have to be picked up and interrogated.

SCOTT

You pick up 1,800 people and every reporter in this country is going to know what we're looking for. We might as well go on the evening news and ask people to call the White House if they've seen the bomb.

YARED

Scott, my men are professionals. If you want to nail these bastards, you've got to let us do what we're trained to do and what we do best.

Silence.

SCOTT

What if we could be sure the bomb was assembled in the United States?

YARED

Why not put it together in Al Assam and smuggle it in whole?

SCOTT

I don't think they did that.

(crossing to world map and circling Al Assam)

If I were the leader of the Black Crescent, all I'd take out of Al Assam would be their

(MORE)

SCOTT (con't)

plutonium. It would be much easier to smuggle in the plutonium than a fully assembled bomb. All the tools I'd need I could get from a construction company or laboratory supply house. Once I got hold of the plutonium, there'd be almost no risk of getting caught. I think we've got to hope they built it here, and I think we've got to hope that they got the most experienced people they could find.

YARED

Almost anyone could build a bomb if they had the plutonium and enough time.

SCOTT

But if I were the Black Crescent, I'd want the best. One mistake and the bomb could detonate prematurely - or not at all. I'd want someone with a strong background in metallurgy or chemical and electrical engineering. There can't be more than a couple hundred Assami nationals with those qualifications. Those are the ones we should go after.

YARED

We could find them if we could tap into university computers and get transcript files. But it'd all have to be done --
(checking Scott's reaction)
-- illegally.

SCOTT

But it can be done?

YARED

Yes.

SCOTT

Do it.

Pause. Scott crosses to the window through which the lights of the Washington Monument and the city gleam in the darkness.

SCOTT

Where would you put it?

YARED

Right here.

SCOTT

So would I.

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN TERMINAL, AUSTIN AIRPORT - 6:30 AM - JOYCE

waiting at the gate as the passengers on flight 387 start to disembark. She looks great new dress and new haircut. Undaunted - even excited - at the prospect of starting again. She thinks she sees Scott. Stands on her tip toes. It's not him. She wishes she weren't so nervous.

CUT TO:

LATER

The last passengers coming out of the plane. No sign of Scott.

ON GINNY: disappointed. She goes

INTO THE PLANE -- a 727 -- and looks

DOWN THE AISLE: completely empty. She leans against an armrest. Utterly devastated.

EXT. RANCHO VAQUERO - EARLY MORNING

Joyce getting out of her car, hears O.S. the PHONE RINGING inside the RANCH HOUSE, a long, low, brick building with bare wood gables. She hurries inside to pick up the phone.

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE

Scott's on the phone.

SCOTT

No, Joyce, I'm not coming. I need a few more days... No, I can't tell you why... It's something... Look, it's something so important...

INT. LIVING ROOM, RANCHO VAQUERO

Stunningly furnished in Early American. Joyce is trembling as she holds the phone.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Joyce?... Joyce?

She pushes down the dial knob, terminates the call. Tears run down her cheeks.

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE

SCOTT

(into phone)

Joyce?!

He hangs up, sits back in his chair -- devastated.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - GINNY'S APARTMENT - 8 A.M.

A woman's bedroom -- bright and colorful with flowers on top of the bookshelves. An alarm CLOCK RINGS O.S. and SAM, an elderly Siamese cat curled up at the bottom of the double bed, wakes up and stretches. He moves over to Ginny, sits on top of her, begins kneading and purring loudly. She stirs and gently pushes him off. It's obviously a morning ritual and in a moment he's back again. This time she awakens and sits up. She's hardly slept and it shows on her face.

She reaches for a cigarette out of the Gitane box sitting in the nightstand. It's empty. She rolls over, digs into her purse, pulls out another box, lights up.

The PHONE by the bed RINGS.

Ginny grabs it.

GINNY
(expectantly)
Hello?

BEN FEIN (V.O.)
Happy birthday, sweetheart.

She pauses -- startled.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - WORLD NEWS NETWORK - 8 A.M.

Ben Fein sits at his dressing table. He's already been made up for his 8:30 call.

FEIN
Ginny?

INTERCUT FEIN WITH GINNY.

GINNY
Ben?... Hi, Ben! It's sweet of you to call.

FEIN
Actually, I tried to reach you last night, but all I got was your machine.

She senses the edge of suspicion in his voice.

GINNY
I was real tired.

He doesn't believe her, but he's afraid to challenge her.

FEIN
I've got a great present for you. Can we meet for lunch?

GINNY
I've got a meeting.

FEIN
How about dinner?

GINNY
I don't know, Ben. It's the day before an
election --

FEIN
It's your birthday!

Ginny smiles.

GINNY
6:30.

FEIN
You're on.

CUT TO:

EXT. CATHEDRAL AVENUE, WASHINGTON - 8:30 A.M.

Bumper-to-bumper with cars, **BLASTING HORNS** and *frazzled drivers*. Ginny, carrying her satchel, walks briskly along the sidewalk. It's a cold, gray day and everyone's dressed for it. She passes the Swiss Embassy, then disappears into the throng of people at the crosswalk waiting for the light. She does not notice a **MAN** wearing an overcoat and carrying an elegant leather briefcase who emerges from an alleyway alongside the Embassy.

CLOSE ON THE MAN: AGENT C4 of the Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST).

In his ear is what looks like a hearing aid: it's a remote receiver for the Geiger counter hidden in the briefcase. He checks the digital Roentgen counter on his watch face -- 0.3. Suddenly --

The SOUND of HELICOPTERS CHOPPING GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

Agent C4 looks up as three helicopters swoop overhead, flying in formation. Ginny and the other pedestrians look up. C4 pulls out a radio transmitter the size of a cigarette pack.

AGENT C4
(into transmitter)
Nest 7, this is C4.

INT./EXT. LEAD HELICOPTER

Equipped with ultrasophisticated airborne radiation detectors.

PILOT
(into mike)
Go ahead C4.

AGENT C4'S VOICE
(through speaker)
Nothing in area A-100. Repeat --

INT. CABINET ROOM - COMMAND CENTER

The computer map of the U.S. has been replaced by a grid map of Washington. Agent C4's TRANSMISSION is HEARD on an overhead SPEAKER.

AGENT C4 (V.O.)
Nothing in Area A-100. Will proceed to A-101.

PILOT (V.O.)
Roger, C4.

The YOUNG MAN staffing the computer terminal that controls the wall map punches "A-100" into the keyboard. Suddenly, Area A-100 is blocked out on the map by green cross-hatching. Scott, standing nearby, glances at the map. One-third of Washington is similarly blocked out.

O.S., the CHATTERING OF TELETYPES GROWS LOUDER as we:

CUT TO:

THE NEWSROOM OF THE NEW YORK TIMES WASHINGTON BUREAU - 8:35

Bustling with reporters and office workers. Ginny weaves her way through the rows of metal-topped desks and past the CHATTERING PRINTER TERMINALS toward a series of offices along one wall.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM TO BUREAU CHIEF'S OFFICE

The secretary has stepped out. The door to the Bureau Chief's office is ajar. On it we SEE the nameplate: "JACK WEBSTER, BUREAU CHIEF." GINNY'S VOICE (ON the TELEVISION) is HEARD from within.
Ginny knocks, then enters --

WEBSTER'S OFFICE

JACK WEBSTER, 53, a quick, wiry man, has been the Washington Bureau Chief for the past ten years. With his back to Ginny, he watches clips from the previous night's debate on the TV. His office is austere, his only vice a penchant for electronic gadgets -- the TV, a VCR, barometer with a digital readout of the percent chance of rain. It vacillates: 46.3... 46.6... 47.1.

Ginny's on the television now, asking Senator Hamilton Hayes a question.

GINNY
(approaching Webster)
Are you still mad 'cause they picked me.

WEBSTER
(fixed on TV)
No comment.

GINNY

I told you to join the League of Women Voters.

WEBSTER

(turns the VOLUME OFF)

I can't.

(spins around to face her)

I'm not a voter.

Ginny doesn't smile.

WEBSTER

What's wrong, Sunshine?

She doesn't answer.

WEBSTER

Want to talk about it?

She shakes her head "no." Webster glances at the TV screen: Taylor's on now -- angry as hell.

WEBSTER

Did Taylor look sick last night?

GINNY

No. Just tired and edgy. Why?

WEBSTER

Because twenty minutes ago, this hit the air.

He hits the VCR play button. Ben Fein comes INTO FOCUS.

FEIN (ON VCR)

The President's Press Secretary announced this morning that Mr. Taylor would be unable to meet his challenger in tonight's fifth and final debate.

The TV IMAGE CUTS TO THE WEST WING OF THE WHITE HOUSE where a press conference is in session. Press Secretary Kit Carson is on the stage with the President's personal physician, DR. KARL ROZINSKI, 62.

CARSON

The President has come down with respiratory flu. His condition is excellent, but at Dr. Rozinski's orders, he will be confined to strict bed rest.

We HEAR the East Wing erupt with SHOUTED QUESTIONS from the surprised reporters.

THE TV CUTS BACK TO FEIN AT THE WNN NEWS DESK.

FEIN (V.O.)

(on TV)

Seventy-three percent of those surveyed in WNN's Insta-Poll this morning think Hamilton Hayes won last night's debate. Hayes now trails the President by only one point.

(figures flash on screen)

This represents a shift of three points from last week's poll. We asked the challenger whether he thought the President's illness was related to his decline in the polls.

THE TV CUTS TO HAMILTON HAYES.

HAYES (V.O.)

(on TV)

I spoke to Mr. Taylor this morning. I have no reason to believe he's not ill.

(warm smile)

I'm going to win tomorrow with or without tonight's debate.

Webster flicks the TV OFF.

GINNY

Taylor's a fighter; he wouldn't shuck a debate because he's afraid of the polls.

WEBSTER

I agree. But in '68, he checked into Bethesda Naval Hospital with what his doctors said at the time was just flu. It turned out to be a heart attack. His staff kept it a secret for a week because it was smack in the middle of the Texas primary. Taylor's pushed himself hard the past few months. Maybe too hard. I want to know if this flu story's a cover-up.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - 8:45 A.M.

Crowded. Doctors make rounds, nurses dispense medicines, orderlies push patients on gurneys. Moving unnoticed among them is a NEST AGENT wearing a lab coat and carrying a leather briefcase. In his ear is the Geiger counter receiver.

He stops, checks his watch -- the Roentgen reading is 000.978. He directs his briefcase away from the overhead "exit" sign. The Roentgen reading falls to zero.

He turns a corner and disappears.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER CORRIDOR

Crowded like the last, but all the patients are children.

The Agent moves slowly past the rooms: 410, 412, 414, 416. Suddenly

He stops, pulls out the earpiece: intense CLICKING is AUDIBLE. He checks his watch -- 3:14 and rising rapidly. He moves into --

ROOM 416

A fully occupied six-bed room. The four-year-old boy in the closest bed is sound asleep, his head buried against a large Teddy bear.

The Agent moves by him, heading for the corner bed where a NURSE with her back to the Agent adjusts an IV. The CLICK.. CLICK.. CLICKING of the GEIGER COUNTER GROWS LOUDER. The Nurse turns around, startled.

NURSE

May I help you, sir?

The Agent doesn't answer. He lifts his briefcase toward the deathly ill six-year-old ARAB BOY in the bed.

An oxygen mask covers his face; an intravenous bottle drips clear fluid into his arm. He coughs several times, and the GEIGER COUNTER CLICKS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

CUT TO:

A SMALL GLASS-PANELLED OFFICE

just off the nursing station of the Pediatric Ward. DR. JOHN MCPHEE, 27, the Senior Resident in Pediatrics, is buried in a foot-high stack of charts. He looks up with a start as Yared and Scott burst in.

YARED

Dr. McPhee?

McPhee nods. Yared flashes his FBI identification.

YARED

Nick Yared, FBI.

DR. MCPHEE

Yes?

YARED

We'd like to ask you some questions about the Al Saqh boy in 416. When was he admitted?

DR. MCPHEE

Last night.

SCOTT

Who brought him in?

DR. MCPHEE

His father. What's wrong?

Scott and Yared exchange a quick glance.

YARED

The boy has plutonium dust in his lungs.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - 9:25 A.M.

ABDUL AL SAQH, 28, the father of the boy in Room 416, enters the hospital warily and turns down a corridor.

Two orderlies pushing a gurney turn down the corridor behind him. Abdul presses the "up" elevator button and the door slides open.

INT. ELEVATOR

Inside are two male ORDERLIES -- one black, one white -- and a gurney. They politely squeeze into a corner to make room for Abdul and for a NURSE pushing a patient in a wheelchair.

Abdul reaches for the fourth-floor button, but it's already lit. The Nurse pushes the sixth-floor button. He eyes the Orderlies nervously.

EXT. FOURTH-FLOOR CORRIDOR

Abdul gets off the elevator. So do the two Orderlies. Abdul walks briskly down the corridor. The Orderlies follow at a leisurely pace, chatting and joking as they go.

INT. ROOM 416

Abdul enters the room, glances quickly at the five beds -- now empty -- and crosses to the corner where his dying son lies unconscious.

CLOSE ON ABDUL'S FACE: an uncontrolled wave of remorse sweeps over him.

The two Orderlies stop suddenly and push the gurney across the door to the room, blocking it. Each brandishes a small dart gun.

Two FBI Agents burst out of the closet and grab hold of Abdul. He reaches for a pistol in his coat pocket, but the Agents knock it loose.

Yared and Scott jump out of the bathroom.

YARED

(screaming)

His mouth! His mouth!

The two Agents force open Abdul's mouth and force him to bend over. One of them strikes three firm blows to his back.

A cyanide capsule falls from Abdul's mouth to the floor. Yared picks it up.

Scott and the two Agents drag Abdul to the sink where they flush out his mouth with a powerful jet of water.

Finally, Abdul vomits into the bathtub.

INT. SMALL CELL - FBI BUILDING BASEMENT - 9:50 A.M.

A windowless room. The steel-reinforced door is half open. Yared, smoking a cigarette, paces along one wall. Along the opposite wall, Scott sits on a stool and sips a cup of coffee. His face is starting to show the lack of sleep and incredible strain. The only SOUND is that of Yared's tapped SHOES HITTING the concrete FLOOR with militaristic monotony. Suddenly --

The HORRIFYING SCREAM of a man being tortured ECHOES down the adjoining corridor and into the cell. Yared freezes, looks at Scott. Gradually, the terror in Scott's face relaxes. Yared looks at the floor by Scott's feet: there's a puddle of spilt coffee. Suddenly

ANOTHER SCREAM -- much worse than the last. Yared again looks at Scott: Scott's forehead is now covered with sweat. Scott's in agony, filled with revulsion at what's happening in the next room.

SCOTT

Why can't we use drugs? Sodium pentathol.
Something--

YARED

--Neat and clean? Because they don't usually
work. And when they do, it takes a long time.
Which we don't have. Wait in your office.
Something breaks, I'll call you.

Scott considers the challenge.

ANOTHER SCREAM. ON SCOTT: burying his revulsion. Not willing to show any weakness to Yared.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - FBI BUILDING BASEMENT - 10:35 A.M.

The laboratory resembles an operating room with surgical lights, blood and drug-filled syringes, long needles and other instruments of electrical and chemical torture. The SOUND of a RUNNING FAUCET is HEARD O.S.

DOCTOR

(at first O.S.)

He knew very little. Only that he had to get the
jewelry box to the wrecking yard.

The DOCTOR, an elderly man in a lab coat, finishes washing the blood off his porcelain-white hands.

DOCTOR

He didn't even know why his son was sick.
Nobody told him it was dangerous to handle
plutonium.

Scott looks at the unconscious body of Abdul Al Saqh. A mechanical ventilator squeezes air into his lungs. Burn marks cover his chest.

SCOTT

(unnerved)

On the tape there is a reference... a reference to a man called 'The Messenger.' Did he ever use that word?

The Doctor shakes his head "no" as two orderlies transfer Abdul to a gurney and wheel him out of the room.

YARED

This man was just a cell. He knew only his job. He didn't even know who gave him the plutonium, just where to find it. The man called 'The Messenger' is the last cell, the one man who can stop the detonation of the bomb, the last link in the chain.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - WASHINGTON, D.C. - 11 A.M.

CLOSE ON AN AX as it rips apart the plaster of a wall. PULL BACK TO REVEAL a studio apartment which has been literally ripped apart by two-dozen NEST agents in white plutonium suits standing ankle-deep in curtains, boards, mattress stuffing, large chunks of plaster, and floor tiles.

The apartment is disintegrating before our eyes.

INT. HALLWAY

Yared and Scott emerge from an elevator and pass through the cordon of plainclothes FBI AGENTS blocking access to the apartment. The CRACK of the AX ECHOES through the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. ABDUL AL SAQH'S APARTMENT

A NEST Agent in a white plutonium suit carefully lifts a small black telephone-address book from where it is lodged inside a wall. He hands it to Yared. Scott stands beside him. They both wear white plutonium suits.

CLOSE ON THE PAGES OF THE TELEPHONE-ADDRESS BOOK: filled with names and addresses, many in Arabic. Some of the names are abbreviated. Others have no numbers.

O.S., THE RACHETING OF COMPUTER TERMINALS GROWS LOUDER.

CUT TO:

THE CABINET ROOM - 11:40 A.M.

YARED
(translating from address book)
Hajji Ben Sadir. No number.

Billings nods, enters the name into the computer and punches the code number. Suddenly --

The bearded face of a 25-year-old Arab man appears on the video terminal and the computer spits out

HAJJI BEN SADIR. BORN AL ASSAM
3/5/55. ENTERED U.S.A. 6/12/77.
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO.
PASSPORT #474377. ALIEN #327229.
STATUS: LEFT U.S.A. 7/14/78.
DESTINATION - AL ASSAM.

Scott shakes his head and Yared goes on to the next name. As the roll of computer paper filled with names spills onto the floor,

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM - TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 11:40 A.M.

Webster rips a sheet off the AP wire, heads for the row of offices.

INT. GINNY S OFFICE

Ginny's on the phone.

GINNY (into PHONE)
Do you have any idea what it was for?

We HEAR a short, muffled REPLY.

GINNY (into PHONE)
Thanks, Harry.

She hangs up as Webster enters. PULL BACK to reveal her office is eclectic and comfortable: a 1920's loveseat rests in front of a high contrast blow up of the White House. Another wall is covered with an Americana quilt.

WEBSTER
(dropping wire on her desk)
Taylor's dropped a point since he cancelled out.
They're calling it a dead heat.

GINNY
A truckload of sophisticated electronic equipment was moved into the White House at 4:30 this morning.

WEBSTER

What kind of equipment?

GINNY

Nobody knows.

She gets up, grabs her coat, and exits. Webster picks up the wire sheet, ponders the '68 Taylor heart attack clippings now pinned on the bulletin board above Ginny's desk.

He can't stand not knowing.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, GEORGE WASHINGTON - NOON

DR. GEORGE RENNING, 38 a 300-pound lumbering bear of a man, makes rounds with half-a-dozen RESIDENTS. One of them has just finished listening to the heart of an ELDERLY WOMAN.

RENNING

What do you hear?

RESIDENT

A normal S1 and S1 and a 2 over 6 ejection murmur at the base. But the S3's gone.

The Woman looks at Renning; the jargon has frightened her.

RENNING

He says you should be feeling better. Are you?

WOMAN

Yes.

RENNING

(squeezing her hand)

Good.

Renning and the Residents move out of the cubicle. Suddenly --

Renning stops short. Ginny's waiting in the doorway. Renning smiles.

CUT TO:

THE HOSPITAL CAFETERIA

Crowded and noisy. Renning and Ginny are seated at a small table in a corner. Renning has a tray with a salad, a Tab, and a huge piece of apple pie a la mode. Ginny has coffee and yogurt. They're speaking quietly.

RENNING

Taylor should have had another heart attack years ago. He's overweight, he doesn't eat right, and he doesn't get a stitch of exercise. I'm surprised he's lasted this long.

GINNY

But if he had a heart attack, wouldn't they have to move him to a hospital, to a coronary care unit?

RENNING

If they brought in the right equipment, they could keep him in the White House.

GINNY

What kind of equipment?

RENNING

Electronic monitors, defibrillators, crash carts. It'd be a lot of stuff but they could do it.

GINNY

For how long?

RENNING

Indefinitely.
(digging into the pie)
Want some?

CLOSE ON GINNY: She shakes her head "no." The pieces are starting to come together.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND RUBY'S RESTAURANT, WASHINGTON - 12:50 P.M.

Ginny waiting in an old Fiat. Beat, then BUZZ AIKMAN, 29, Taylor's assistant press secretary whom we saw at the television debate the night before, comes out the back entrance of the restaurant, nervously checks to see there's nobody else around, then opens the passenger door of Ginny's car and climbs

INTO THE CAR.

AIKMAN

(Texas accent)

I don't have much time. Taylor had a heart attack last night... a bad one.

CLOSE ON GINNY: sitting in the driver's seat, watching him closely. Although the idea is not new to her, she's still stunned.

GINNY

Why haven't they called the Vice President back?

AIKMAN

They don't want people like you to know. Look, I'm gonna be missed.

He puts his hand on the handle, begins to get out.

GINNY
Buzz, is he going to make it?

AIKMAN
I don't know. I'll call you.

He slams the door shut, hurries off.

CLOSE ON GINNY -- AND THE AWESOME IMPLICATIONS.

CUT TO:

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE - 1:30 P.M.

Scott leans back in his desk chair.

SCOTT
You're sure she bought it?

Buzz Aikman turns from the window, faces Scott.

AIKMAN
Yes. Quite sure.

CLOSE ON SCOTT: he's not so sure.

THE RACHETING OF THE COMPUTER TERMINALS GROWS LOUDER AS THE CAMERA MOVES THROUGH THE OPEN DOORWAY

INTO THE CABINET ROOM

where faces of young Arab men flash on the video terminals like lights on a pinball machine. Yared scans them, his face expressionless. Above him, on the huge electronic display, street-map images of the possible targets flash by: Boston, New York, Washington, New Orleans, Los Angeles...

THE RACHETING REACHES A DEAFENING ROAR.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ginny climbs the steps, enters. She stops at the security station and opens her wallet. The GUARD checks his book and buzzes her in.

INT. HAROLD BROOKS' PLUSH OFFICE IN THE STATE - 1:45 P.M.

GINNY
Harold, I need you to confirm that Taylor s had a heart attack.

Ginny sits on the oversized sofa. HAROLD THOMAS BROOKS, 43, the pudgy, balding, complacent Undersecretary of State, sits in an armchair right opposite her. On the wall above them is the Seal of the Department of State and beside it, a color photo of a smiling Ted Taylor.

Brooks looks at Ginny. They're both aware of his sexual attraction to her.

BROOKS

The President has nothing more than the flu. If it was anything more serious...

(a smug smile)

I'd know about it.

Ginny is not so sure.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 1:50 P.M.

Ted Taylor and Kit Carson burst into the room. Taylor is mad as hell.

One after another of the workers stops, watches them move through the maze of computers, telephones, televisions, and desks toward

SCOTT'S OFFICE

-- where Yared lays photographs of two Arab men on Scott's desk. Scott drops the computer printout he's reading and picks up the photos.

YARED

They're in the book. They're students at Berkeley. One's in engineering, the other's in chemistry. They haven't been in their apartment for a week. Nobody knows where they are, but we've got a car and plates and we've brought in the San Francisco and Berkeley police.

SCOTT

What did you tell them?

YARED

I said we were looking for a kidnapped five year old in the trunk.

SCOTT

Great.

A KNOCK on the DOOR O.S. Taylor and Carson enter.

TAYLOR

Blanche just called me from Austin. She wanted to know if I was all right.

Scott glances at him, then continues cross-checking computer printouts.

SCOTT

Ted, it's the only way.

CARSON

Every reporter in Washington's on my back.
I've had to take my phones off the hook.

SCOTT

Just stick to the flu story.

TAYLOR

Scotty, all we need is just one New York daily
to run a story saying I've had a heart attack --

SCOTT

(cutting him off)

-- It's not going to happen! At 10:30 tonight,
you're going to take a walk on the grounds to
get some fresh air. It'll make the 11 o'clock
news and the morning papers. Nobody'll know
what to think and that's just what we want.

CARSON

I like it. Any son of a bitch who jumps the gun
and announces your death is going to look like
the biggest fool since the joker who wrote
'Dewey wins.'

TAYLOR

It's a dirty, underhanded maneuver.

SCOTT

Is that a compliment?

A slow smile draws across Taylor's face.

Billings raps on the open door, enters excitedly. He hands Scott a computer printout and a photo of a 35ish Arab man.

BILLINGS

His name is Hafiz Al Gazed and he's in the
book. He's a student in the International
Studies program at Harvard, but twelve years
ago he got a Masters in Metallurgy at Cal Tech.

Scott scans the picture, passes it to Yared.

BILLINGS

He was supposed to get a Ph.D., but he
dropped out in '79 just before the Assami
revolution.

Scott and Yared exchange looks. This is their man, they can feel it.

YARED

Where is he now?

BILLINGS

Boston.

EXT. BOSTON - DAY

The sleek, green monolith of the John Hancock Tower dominates the skyline. O.S., the SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS hitting tile GROWS LOUDER.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- CAMBRIDGE, MASS. -- 2:20 P.M.

TWO FBI AGENTS move briskly down a long corridor in a modest Cambridge apartment building. They pause in front of the closed door to apartment #275, then check the hallway.

EXT. STREET - CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS - 2:20 P.M.

TWO MORE FBI AGENTS wait on the street below with binoculars and tranquilizer dart guns trained on the fire escape.

INT. APARTMENT

A YOUNG WHITE WOMAN opens the door. She's obviously stoned. MUSIC by "PRINCE" BLARES from within.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Boston accent)

What d'you want?

The FBI Agent, pistol drawn, kicks the door wide open, shoves his badge at her, and forces his way inside. His companion follows.

YOUNG WOMAN

What?! Hey! What the hell?

Her BOYFRIEND, white, early 20's, Cambridge hippie, jumps up from the couch with a joint of marijuana. He runs to the window and flicks it out. The Second Agent kneels and aims his revolver.

2ND AGENT

Hold it!

FREEZE on a moment of total terror.

BOYFRIEND

(Boston accent)

Hey! It was just a joint, man!

The First Agent pokes into the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom, checking to see if anyone else is in the apartment. He returns, shakes his head "no."

The Second Agent pulls out a FAX photo of Hafiz Al Gazed and hands it to the Young Woman.

2ND AGENT
Have you seen this man?

She shakes her head "no." Her Boyfriend looks it over.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah, sure I seen this guy. Don't you remember, Janet? This was the guy who got so mad when he found out the landlady moved his stuff out.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah -- he came here about three weeks after we moved in.

1ST AGENT
How long ago was that?

YOUNG WOMAN
About... April.

1ST AGENT
Thank you. Sorry about the mistake.

The Second Agent holsters his gun and they turn to leave.

BOYFRIEND
(still shaking)
Hey, I want your badge number. Give me your badge number.

The Agents ignore him.

BOYFRIEND
There's a Bill of Rights in this country, you asshole!

They're gone.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

The same Agent knocks on a door labeled "Manager." A 50ish red-faced Irish WOMAN appears, her pin-curlered hair half covered by a net.

WOMAN MANAGER
Whaddya want?

CUT TO:

INT. CABINET ROOM - 2:45 P.M.

SOUND SEGUE: the following SOUND PLAYS as Yared walks across the room toward Scott's office:

WOMAN MANAGER (V.O.)
I ain't seen him for six months. He sent checks
from Maryland.

1ST AGENT (V.O.)
Where?

WOMAN MANAGER (V.O.)
I dunno. Some little town. Barrington, Bruno... I
dunno. Then the checks stopped coming. So I
rented it to somebody else. What was I supposed to
do?

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE

Yared hands Scott a FAX photo of Hafiz Al Gazed.

YARED
He could be anywhere in Maryland.

SCOTT
If he's still in the country.

He puts down the pictures, crosses to a map of the U.S.

SCOTT
If he's our man, he would have bought himself a
blast furnace to convert the plutonium oxide
into plutonium metal. He would have bought it
as close as possible to the bomb assembly site.
There aren't many companies that sell blast
furnaces.

CLOSE ON THE STATE OF MARYLAND

CUT TO:

THE COUNTER ROOM OF CHARLES BREWER & SONS, INDUSTRIAL
SUPPLIES CO., MARYLAND - 3:15 P.M.

CHARLES BREWER, 68, studies the photo of Hafiz. The two FBI AGENTS on the
opposite side of the counter watch him closely.

BREWER
The name doesn't ring a bell, but I'm sure I've
seen him before... It had to be quite a while
back.
(moves off)
Let me just check the books.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 3:45 P.M.

Yared hangs up the phone and turns to Scott, waiting expectantly.

YARED

The furnace company made a photocopy of the check. It had a phony address, but it was drawn on the First National Bank of Baltimore. My men are at the bank now and they've got a photostat of the account. There are a couple dozen checks written to merchants in Brunswick, Maryland. One of the merchant's got a local address.

(he pauses)

Brunswick's just forty miles up the Potomac.

Yared exchanges a worried glance with Scott.

SCOTT

They could be in Washington with that bomb in less than an hour.

INT. GINNY'S OFFICE - 4:00 P.M.

Ginny finishes dialing a number on the phone.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

The White House.

GINNY

Buzz Aikman, please.

INT. ANTEROOM TO BUZZ AIKMAN'S OFFICE

INTERCUT: GINNY IN HER OFFICE WITH AIKMAN'S SECRETARY IN THE ANTEROOM.

SECRETARY

He's still at the staff meeting, Ms. Hopkins. But I'll give him your message. I expect him shortly.

GINNY

(hanging up, disappointed)

Thank you.

We STAY WITH Ginny -- unsettled. Nothing's coming together, nothing at all.

INT. ANTEROOM TO BUZZ AIKMAN'S OFFICE

The Secretary hangs up the phone, crosses to the door bearing the nameplate "WILLIAM BUSTER AIKMAN" and opens the door.

INT. AIKMAN'S OFFICE

Aikman sits at the desk. He's alone and he's nervous.

SECRETARY

Ginny Hopkins called again, Mr. Aikman.

INT. JACK WEBSTER'S OFFICE - 4:20 P.M.

A staff meeting is in progress with Webster and a HALF-DOZEN of his REPORTERS.

WEBSTER

(to incoming reporter)

What happened on the Hill?

ARNIE SHAPIRO, 33, takes off his raincoat.

ARNIE SHAPIRO

(New York accent)

Nobody in the Texas delegation knows anything.

Ginny enters, takes a position in the back.

REPORTER #1

(mid-20's; corduroy suited; Ivy League).

Jack, if Taylor had a heart attack, why wasn't the V.P. called back to Washington?

WEBSTER

It'd look too suspicious.

GINNY

Or he hasn't had a heart attack.

PAULA ROBINSON, 37, black, the White House correspondent, edges forward in her seat.

PAULA ROBINSON

Ginny's right. They could have at least brought him closer, say he was needed to shore up the Jersey or Philly vote. Instead, the Vice President cancels campaign appearances in Detroit to spend time in Grand Rapids and Eau Claire. It doesn't make sense.

ARNIE SHAPIRO

Sure it does. The latest polls show Taylor losing strength in the farm belt. If he can't win those states, he can't win the election. And he can't afford to have Hayes beat him in another debate. It's clear to me what Taylor's doing.

Paula Robinson doesn't buy it, looks to Webster. Ginny is skeptical, too.

WEBSTER

I don't have an answer. I just know if Taylor had a heart attack, we've got to have it on page one tomorrow. The public's got a right to know before they vote.

REPORTER #2, middle-aged male, enters -- breathless.

REPORTER #2

A helicopter just left the White House heading northwest. Taylor could be in it.

Webster crosses to the wall map of the Washington, D.C. area. The BETHESDA NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER is due northwest of the White House. He's got the encouragement he needed.

WEBSTER

(to Reporter #2)

Harry, get up to Bethesda Naval Hospital. See if they flew Taylor there. Arnie, check with your people in the Attorney General's office. See if any papers transferring power to the Vice President have been drafted.

(to Ginny)

Write the heart attack story.

GINNY

We need another confirmation.

WEBSTER

You'll have it soon.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - RURAL MARYLAND - 4:30 P.M.

A blaze of red and amber in the brilliant fall afternoon. The countryside is absolutely silent. Cows graze on a nearby pasture. A van is parked in the driveway.

TWO FBI SHARPSHOOTERS crouch near a window of the farmhouse.

EXT. WOODS

Scott, Yared, and a DOZEN FBI AGENTS lie flat in the woods near the house.

One of the Agents monitors an infrared heat-sensing device. Swirls of colors -- like gases moving on the surface of the sun -- diffuse across the screen. Gradually, we SEE that ONE BRIGHT RED BAND is moving faster than the others. The Agent turns a control switch. The bright red band fills the screen.

AGENT

One human.

Beside Yared, a super-sensitive directional GEIGER COUNTER CLICKS. The digital Roentgen counter climbs... 80... 100.

Yared taps his walkie-talkie.

YARED

Take him.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

The two FBI Sharpshooters hear his command through earpieces.

SUDDENLY --

One rises and smashes the window with his rifle. The other rises, aims, and FIRES a CO2 DART GUN through the shattered window.

INT. KITCHEN

HAFIZ AL GAZED grabs for an Uzi submachine gun as the WINDOW SHATTERS.

THE TRANQUILIZER DART zips past his shoulder and into the wall. He grabs the Uzi, rakes the window with a hail of BULLETS

HITTING the FBI Sharpshooter holding the dart gun. Blood flies. We HEAR SCREAMS. Suddenly --

A TEAR GAS CANISTER smashes in through a second window.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

An FBI Sharpshooter wearing a flak jacket takes aim with his rifle and SQUEEZES OFF ANOTHER SHOT.

Another tear gas canister CRASHES into the farmhouse.

INT. FARMHOUSE

Hafiz grabs the tablecloth and covers his face, then begins coughing violently. He runs--

EXT. FARMHOUSE

--out the back door toward the woods where the FBI Agents wait.

Three Agents with tranquilizer dart guns FIRE as Hafiz nears.

Startled, Hafiz pulls the trigger, sprays BULLETS at the three Agents. Two are hit. Blood flies.

Hafiz is hit by two tranquilizer darts. He begins to fall.

SILENT SLOW MOTION SHOT: He jams the barrel of the submachine gun into his mouth.

CLOSE ON SCOTT'S FACE: the horror.

A DEAFENING BLAST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE SHATTERS THE SILENCE.

SCOTT
(turning away)

Jesus...

He looks at Yared, kneeling beside one of the dying FBI Agents. For the first time, Scott sees Yared with his emotional defenses stripped away -- scared and angry. Their eyes lock in a communion of terror.

INT. GINNY'S OFFICE - 5 P.M.

Ginny typing. Cal, the slot-boy, enters through the open door, drops a stack of wire copy on her desk, then exits.

GINNY
Thanks, Cal.

Ginny stops typing, thumbs through the wires.

CLOSE ON THE THIRD WIRE

4:50 P.M. Preliminary report... FBI shootout in Brunswick, Maryland... At least two FBI agents killed...

She tosses the pile of wires aside, resumes typing. Suddenly --

She stops, rereads the third wire. She gets up, closes the door. On the back of it is a Washington area map.

CLOSE ON MAP: Brunswick is due northwest of the White House, midpoint on a line between Bethesda and the Capital.

Ginny grabs her coat and exits, slamming the door.

INT. FARMHOUSE BASEMENT - 5:30 P.M.

GEIGER COUNTERS CLICK CONTINUALLY as FIVE MEN in plutonium suits -- including Scott and Yared -- sweep through the basement of the house past two large workbenches, a lathe, a forge, and a small blast furnace.

Scott picks up a small fragment of a dull, silver-colored metal.

SCOTT
Beryllium.

Yared opens a file drawer, pulls out scattered pieces of paper including credit card receipts and technical drawings.

The SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING O.S., then Billings comes down the stairwell carrying a Geiger counter.

BILLINGS
(grimly)
It's not here.

INT./EXT. GINNY'S FLAT - 5:45 P.M.

Speeding along a winding road in rural Maryland. DAVID LEVY, 35, bearded and wooly, a Times photographer, sits in the passenger seat and holds tight. Suddenly

Ginny turns a sharp corner, SCREECHES the car to a halt. Just ahead is a police roadblock manned by sheriff's deputies. In the distance through the woods is the farmhouse where Hafiz died. A news helicopter swoops in overhead. Another helicopter, labeled "MARYLAND TRAUMA," sweeps by in the opposite direction. Ginny and David climb out of the car and make their way to a --

CLEARED AREA

where the press corps has encamped. Sheriff's deputies ring this area, cordoning it off from the farmhouse.

FEIN (O.S.)

It was here in the pastoral Maryland countryside that the last round between the FBI and the Weather Underground was fought this afternoon.

Ben Fein sits on a log and watches a video replay of himself. His SOUNDMAN and CAMERAMAN stand nearby. The World News Network helicopter is parked in the distance.

FEIN (V.O.)

(on video monitor)

Three men died in what FBI spokesmen describe as a 'tragic' and 'unnecessary' shooting accident. The FBI had staked out this home in an attempt to capture Howard Berenger, the last member still at large of the legendary Weather Underground. Then something went terribly wrong.

As this PLAYS, Ben, startled, turns to see Ginny watching over his shoulder.

FEIN

(smiles)

The printed word's late, as usual.

GINNY

(smiles)

Hello, Ben.

FEIN

Happy birthday.

GINNY

(bends down, kisses him)

Thank you.

We feel an uneasiness between them, as we did when they spoke on the phone this morning, the uneasiness of a long, caring relationship that hasn't reached the same destination for both parties.

FEIN

When did you start chasing fire engines?

GINNY

I always liked to hear the sirens and breathe the smoke.

Ben smiles.

GINNY

Did you see the body?

FEIN

They're not letting anyone see it. Word is there's nothing left to see.

Ben punches the fast-forward button. The images blur by. He stops intermittently to check his delivery.

ECU ON THE MONITOR: Robert Scott is barely visible as one of the many camouflaged men in the background of the pickup shots. Ginny's eyes widen; Scott's presence is surprising and suggestive and stirs up strong emotions in her. But Ben does not notice Scott in the shot.

FEIN

Did Taylor have a heart attack?

GINNY

(distracted by the screen)

I don't know.

Another image of Scott whizzes by. Ben snaps the monitor off. It's clear he didn't recognize Scott; Ginny's relieved.

FEIN

The flu story's bullshit.

GINNY

You should go on the news and say so.

FEIN

I can see the headline: 'Ben Fein calls Taylor flu "bullshit"?'

GINNY

Sure. But then we'd have to print Taylor's response: 'Taylor calls Ben Fein bullshit.'

FEIN

(grinning)

That's not news, Ginny.

She begins to move away.

FEIN
We're still on for tonight?

GINNY
No -- not till we put the paper to bed. Call me.

He nods, watches her run toward the farmhouse where David Levy is snapping pictures. At the far edge of

THE PRESS AREA

FIVE MEN in thick Army camouflage parkas move quickly toward a helicopter. Ginny sees them, grabs David's arm.

GINNY
Can you catch them?

David pulls up a camera mounted with an extremely long lens.

DAVID LEVY
Maybe.

He shoots fast as the men scramble aboard the helicopter.

The blades begin spinning. The helicopter lifts off, starts to arc overhead.

In the background, we HEAR the BULLHORN of the FBI spokesman.

FBI SPOKESMAN (O.S.)
No one will be allowed inside the house. Those members of the press still desiring information should proceed...

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER

Scott, dog-tired and defeated, sits by the window. He looks out as the chopper passes over the press area.

He sees Ginny down below -- watching the helicopter closely.

INT. DARKROOM - TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 6:30 P.M.

A HAND holding a magnifying glass scans a grainy photograph of the camouflaged FBI agents and stops on Scott's face -- startled and angry.

DAVID LEVY
(at first O.S.)
There's no doubt about it.

Levy and Ginny stand over the fix bath.

DAVID LEVY

It's Robert Scott... What the hell does he care
about Howard Berenger?

CLOSE ON GINNY: as she looks at the photo. Feelings of regret and disappointment that she tried to bury resurface.

David's not looking at her. He lifts ANOTHER PHOTO out of the bath and slips it under the magnifying glass. He stops on the image of Nick Yared, standing right beside Scott. Goes back to the first photo. Yared is again the only man close to Scott.

GINNY

Who is he?

DAVID LEVY

I've never seen him before.

INT. FILE ROOM - TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 6:45 P.M.

Ginny pulls open a file cabinet.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL a dark, dusty room filled with three long aisles of steel file cabinets. Above them hang two rows of naked lightbulbs.

CLOSE ON THE HEADING: FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,

Ginny holds the photo of Nick Yared in one hand and compares it carefully to each photograph in the file. Finally, she stops at a photo labeled YARED, NICHOLAS GEORGE.

She compares the two photos. Yared appears ten years younger and much more amiable in the posed file photo, but the resemblance is unmistakable.

She pulls out the dossier.

EXTREME CLOSEUP: the words at the bottom of the first page:

1984 -- ASSISTANT DIRECTOR IN CHARGE OF SPECIAL ANTITERRORIST UNIT.
EXISTENCE DENIED BY THE BUREAU.

She grabs the dossier and snaps off the light.

INT. GINNY'S OFFICE - TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 6:50 P.M.

Ginny drops the FBI dossier on her desk, picks up the phone and dials.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

White House.

GINNY

Robert Scott, please.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I'm sorry, but Mr. Scott is no longer with us.

Ginny hangs up -- puzzled. Then she flips through her notebook and dials a long-distance number. A WOMAN'S VOICE ANSWERS.

WOMAN (V.O.)

(guarded)
Hello?

GINNY

Ellen, this is Ginny Hopkins at the Times.

WOMAN (V.O.)

What do you want?

GINNY

Two years ago you put me in touch with Howard Berenger. Can you do it again?

WOMAN (V.O.)

Why?

GINNY

The FBI claims it killed Howard in Maryland two hours ago.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Those motherfucking pigs!

The Woman HANGS UP. Cal bursts in, carrying a wire.

CAL

This just came off the wire. Webster wanted you to see it right away.

She takes it -- startled.

CLOSE ON the wire she's holding marked "URGENT."

N.Y. TIMES NEWS SERVICE -- 7 P.M.
GINNY HOPKINS, OUR PRIDE AND JOY,
HAD A BIRTHDAY PARTY IN
WASHINGTON TONIGHT. EVERYBODY
WAS THERE.

The doorway suddenly fills with Times employees. Paula Robinson's in the lead, holding a birthday cake.

GINNY

(smiles)
This was the last thing on my mind.

CHORUS OF VOICES

Happy birthday to you...

SOUND SEGUE: A champagne CORK EXPLODES.

INT. NEWS ROOM

The cake and a knife lie poised for Ginny beside a pile of neatly wrapped birthday gifts. On the wall is a brightly colored poster which declares "HAPPY BIRTHDAY GINNY HOPKINS."

GINNY

You guys are too much.

WEBSTER

(wrapping his arm around her)

Who gave you permission to be born the day before an election?

GINNY

I'm sorry, Jack, I had a deadline to make.

Webster hands her the knife. She starts cutting as Ben Fein, turned out in a turtleneck and a corduroy jacket, appears at the edge of the group. His eyes catch Ginny's. She smiles. He pushes in through the crowd.

GINNY

Did you know about this?

FEIN

(kisses her)

Happy birthday.

He hands her an expensively wrapped present. She tucks it under her arm as she continues cutting the cake -- sloppily. Her mind is elsewhere.

FEIN

Go ahead -- open it.

She tears off the paper. Inside is a beautiful WOOD JEWELRY BOX with gold embossed letters. Ben winks at Paula Robinson.

Ginny opens the box slowly. Suddenly --

A coiled JACK IN THE BOX springs out at her face. She recoils, startled, and drops the box on top of the cake. Jack Webster and the others burst out laughing. Everybody's laughing but Ginny. She looks at Ben -- he's not laughing, either. Finally, she smiles and he smiles back.

INT. GINNY'S OFFICE

Ginny enters the office. Ben is right behind her. We continue to HEAR PARTY SOUNDS from the newsroom. Ben shuts the door.

FEIN

I loved you last night. You really stuck it to Taylor.

GINNY

Thanks.

FEIN

I wish I could have told you last night.

GINNY

Ben... don't start on me.

FEIN

Look, I don't want a scene. I just want to know if you were with Scott.

She doesn't answer.

FEIN

Are you going to Texas with him?

Ginny shakes her head "no." Ben is relieved, but still very angry. He pulls a pair of airline tickets from his breast pocket and presents them to her.

She looks them over -- amazed.

GINNY

Rio? -- Ben, you're crazy.

FEIN

We leave Monday.

GINNY

Jack won't let me go.

FEIN

Yes, he will. I already asked him.

GINNY

You are crazy.

Ben swoops her into his arms, begins singing as they dance.

FEIN

Danse la meringue! Danse la meringue!

(puts on TV voice)

Ben Fein reporting from Rio where he and Ginny Hopkins are looking at nothing but blue skies, white sand, the cool twilight of desire and languid evenings of passion...

She can't help but laugh now. So does he. Suddenly --

The PHONE BUZZES. She breaks loose, picks it up.

GINNY

Ginny Hopkins.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
This is Howard Berenger and I'm not dead.

Ben hears it, too.

INT. JACK WEBSTER'S OFFICE

CLOSE ON THE FRONT PAGE of the New York Post and the banner headline:

TED TOO SICK TO RUN?

Webster is on the phone.

WEBSTER
I don't give a good goddamn what the Post and
the Star print. It's irresponsible.

He looks up as Ginny enters through the open doorway.

WEBSTER
(into phone)
They are all working on it, thank you.

He slams the phone down -- angry and disgusted.

Ginny glances at the Post front page.

GINNY
It's all a lie. Howard Berenger wasn't killed at
the shootout in Maryland. He's alive. I just
talked to him in Mexico.

WEBSTER
Then who was killed?

GINNY
I don't know.

She hands Webster a pile of the Maryland photos. He leafs through them. We SEE
several different VIEWS of Yared and his men.

WEBSTER
(indicating Yared)
Who's he?

GINNY
The head of the antiterrorist division at the
FBI. And he was in the helicopter that left the
White House.

Webster considers.

WEBSTER
Find out who they killed.

CUT TO:

THE SITUATION ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE - 8 P.M.

CLOSE ON SCOTT as he enters the room and walks toward the same mahogany table we SAW EARLIER. They're waiting for Scott. He barely gets through the doors before Clement Johnson, the Secretary of the Interior from Georgia, goes on the prod again.

JOHNSON

(waving the three slips of paper)
Three gas station receipts -- New York, Boston,
Washington -- that's all you've got?

Scott sits down, doesn't answer.

JOHNSON

You're no closer to finding the bomb now than when you started. Isn't that so, Mr. Scott?

SCOTT

No, sir, it is not. We've got a list of all the long distance phone calls made from the farmhouse. And we're tracking them down.

JOHNSON

The search team's not gonna find that bomb in time. I don't care how good they are. Our duty is to protect the people of this country. We've got to evacuate every city on that hit list. And now.

Art Novick, the Secretary of the Treasury, punches out his cigar and looks up as

PRESIDENT TED TAYLOR enters with a telegram in his hand and Kit Carson right behind him. Taylor looks very troubled. When he gets to the NSC table the other men all stand up and wait for Taylor to take his seat. Nobody wants to sit close to him; Ted seems isolated at the head.

Kit Carson stands against the wall behind Taylor.

NOVICK

Mr. President, what is the word from Jerusalem?

TAYLOR

Rubin met with his cabinet for the fourth time. I have received a formal response.

(holds up a telegram)

Mr. President, men of many nations and three faiths have died for Jerusalem over the last two thousand years. I pray to God Americans will not die this time. If I could exchange places

(MORE)

TAYLOR (con't)

with you, I would. But my government has never submitted and will never submit to terrorist extortion.

JOHNSON

Mr. President, I think you ought to tell Prime Minister Rubin that he's not getting another goddamn fighter plane, another goddamn tank, another goddamn bullet unless he comes to his senses.

TAYLOR

Rubin made the only decision he could make. We all know that.

(picks up credit card receipts)

There's nothing else, Scotty?

SCOTT

We found the bomb assembly site. We'll find the bomb. We just need more time.

JOHNSON

We don't have more time! There's less than twenty-one hours to go and you still can't tell us what city it's in, let alone what building, what locker...

SCOTT

They've made two mistakes so far! They damn sure have made others. We'll find them.

JOHNSON

If thousands of our people die, every man in this room will be guilty of criminal negligence. If evacuation will save even one American life
(pounding on the table)
we must do it.

The sentiment of the room swings toward Johnson.

TAYLOR

Scotty, if you had to guess, where's the bomb?

SCOTT

Washington.

TAYLOR

(to John Link)

How long will it take to clear the cities, John?

JOHN LINK, the 55 year old Secretary of Defense, thumbs through a folder in front of him.

JOHN LINK

Washington -- twelve hours. Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Detroit, New Orleans and the smaller ones -- about twelve to eighteen. We're talking about saving human beings, nothing else. And it's only those people who are mobile. There's just no way we can get old people out of convalescent homes or sick people out of hospitals -- even children. We just don't have the manpower.

The mood is grim around the table.

TAYLOR

What about the big cities?

JOHN LINK

Chicago, New York, Philly, and L.A. are a different ball of wax. I'm not sure I could clear those even if we got the green light now. There's just no way to tell. We've never done that before.

CARSON

All the more reason to push ahead as quickly as possible. Mr. President, invoke the National Emergency Powers Act, declare martial law, and clear out the cities. It's the humane thing to do. The election will have to be postponed.

(hesitant)

After this is... resolved... we can expect a substantial increase in your popular support.

TAYLOR

This is not something to be exploited for political gain. Now or ever. Is that clear.

CARSON

You think Hayes would be so charitable?

TAYLOR

(raging)

I don't give a damn!

(then)

And I think he would.

JOHN LINK

Mr. President, the Fleet will be in range to launch a preemptive strike against the Assami Air Force by mid-morning tomorrow. Then we can torch their oil refineries one by one until President Husad tells us how to find the Black Crescent. I think President Husad just needs the proper, ah... *motivation*.

SCOTT

Forget it, John. President Husad doesn't know where the bomb is. Black Crescent is set up so that only two people on this planet know the target. One's the man who built the bomb. He's dead. The other is the Messenger. Black Crescent will never surrender the bomb to us. Even if we force the Israelis out of Jerusalem, they'd have to keep the bomb to make sure the Israelis never came back. We've got to find The Messenger, take him alive, and force him to defuse the bomb. That's our only hope.

JOHNSON

Then there is no hope.

Silence.

TAYLOR

John, move your troops tonight. Have them at their evacuation deployments at 0700 Eastern. If worst comes to worst, we'll evacuate every city on the hit list starting then.

Scott rises to go back to work. Taylor glances at the clock on the wall: 8:17 P.M., EST -- 20:43 to go.

TAYLOR

Scott, you have eleven hours to get your hands on The Messenger. May God help you.

INT. CABINET ROOM

Scott weaves through the maze of computers and technicians filling the room.

The DIN of the MACHINERY is AWESOME. Everything and everybody is going all out - to find the one bit of information that will lead to The Messenger. Scott looks at their faces -- so far, there's nothing. He crosses into

YARED'S OFFICE

Yared looking through papers, stops. He can't hide his own sense of futility.

SCOTT

We've got to take another angle. These people don't know how to handle plutonium.

YARED

So what're you suggesting? Check through every case of unexplained death in the last month looking for plutonium poisoning? It's impossible.

SCOTT

We could limit it - just the major cities in the last two weeks.

YARED

Still, you have to look at hundreds, maybe thousands of autopsy reports. We'd need hundreds of doctors.

SCOTT

We'll get them from the military.

YARED

But what'll we tell 'em? We can't tell 'em the truth.

SCOTT

A spill. Some plutonium dust fell off a weapons truck... we desperately need to know if anyone's been contaminated, because that's the only way to find out where the spill occurred.

YARED

And we want to clean it up before anyone else is harmed.

SCOTT

Yeah, but will it fly?

Beat. Both share the same doubt.

YARED

Lemme get a team on it right away.
(he moves toward the door)

SCOTT

There's one other thing, Nick.

YARED

(stops)
What?

SCOTT

(laughs)
I can't believe we haven't thought of this. If we find the bomb, who says we could get to it so we could defuse it?

Yared doesn't answer. Almost embarrassed that he, too, never thought of something so basic.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Let's say you were the Black Crescent, how would you package the bomb? You couldn't surround it with water. Too heavy. It has to be something you can move easily.

YARED

I'd put it in a suitcase. Lead lined. With a lock rigged so that if you tried to force it open, the bomb would detonate.

SCOTT

We need the best safecracker in the world.

CUT TO:

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE - SCOTT

Enters, stops short. Straight ahead is a MAN in Arab headdress and a grey business suit. He rises, extends his hand toward Scott.

SCOTT

Alami, I'm glad they found you.

HUSAF ALAMI, 42, Professor of Koranic Studies at Yale Divinity School, is tall, thin, intense, and very agitated right now.

ALAMI

I've gone over the tape and I've got bad news for you. Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah. There is no other.

SCOTT

What?

ALAMI

There is *no messenger* of flesh and blood.

SCOTT

Then who's going to stop the bomb if the demands are met?

ALAMI

No one. It would require an Act of God. A miracle. Detonating the bomb is Allah's will. Only if He changes his mind, can he stop the explosion Himself.

CLOSE ON SCOTT'S FACE: devastated. Then

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - 8:55 P.M.

An FBI AGENT trains his binoculars on a third-floor apartment in a plush, Colonial-style building in this chic Washington suburb.

POV THROUGH BINOCULARS: A light flicks on in the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 8:56 P.M.

A heavily armed FBI AGENT, dressed like a SWAT team member, lowers himself quickly over the roof of the building and climbs onto the third-story balcony outside the apartment.

A SECOND AGENT follows him down.

INT. HALLWAY IN APARTMENT BUILDING - 9 P.M.

Nick Yared holds a walkie-talkie to his lips and whispers into it.

YARED

Ten... nine... eight... seven...

As he counts down, he exchanges worried glances with Scott, crouched beside him.

CLOSE ON A SMALL EXPLOSIVE CHARGE on the closed door of apartment #312. The CHARGE EXPLODES; the DOOR BLASTS OPEN.

EXT. APARTMENT #312 - 9:01 P.M.

The two heavily armed FBI agents SHATTER the GLASS DOOR and burst into the apartment from the balcony.

INT. HALLWAY - 9:01 P.M.

We HEAR a WOMAN SCREAM as two Agents, followed by Yared and Scott, enter the apartment with guns drawn.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF APARTMENT - 9:02 P.M.

MARILYN ANDERSON -- 19, blonde, pretty, a little too much makeup -- sits terrified in an overstuffed chair. Four Ingram submachine guns are pointed at her head.

Yared presents his badge, nods to two of the agents. They move away, then begin searching the apartment. Marilyn is too frightened to speak.

CLOSE ON A SILVER HALLIBURTON SUITCASE standing by the door - identical to the one seen at the beginning of the film. Scott looks at the suitcase, looks at Yared, then at Marilyn. He goes carefully to the suitcase.

YARED

Wait! Let's X-ray it first.

Scott pauses, glances at Marilyn.

MARILYN

It's just a suitcase!

He gingerly lifts up the suitcase. Relieved:

SCOTT

It's too light.

Still, he opens it carefully. Inside are *WOMEN'S CLOTHES AND TOILETRIES*.

Yared pulls out a *PHOTOGRAPH* of Hafiz Al Gazed, the man who made the bomb and was killed at the Maryland farmhouse.

Marilyn averts her eyes from the picture.

YARED

Do you know this man?

Marilyn doesn't answer.

YARED

(growing angry)

He made twenty-two phone calls to this number over the past ten days. Who is he?

She's too terrified to speak. Scott moves to her.

SCOTT

(gently)

Ms. Anderson, did he ever use the phrase 'The Messenger'?

MARILYN

I don't know what you're talking about.

Marilyn's terror gives way to panic. She begins sobbing. Scott tries to calm her.

SCOTT

We're looking for someone close to Hafiz, someone you may have seen him with in the last few weeks.

MARILYN

We didn't know anybody here. Hafiz was always away. We never saw anybody else.

Yared eyes her skeptically.

MARILYN

(pleading; to Scott)

It's true.

YARED

What about Boston?

MARILYN

He only had a few friends there. And then
always spoke Arabic. They never spoke to me.

YARED

We have to know their names.

MARILYN

(screaming)

I don't know them. I don't know! I don't know!

Scott calms her.

SCOTT

Why did he leave Boston?

MARILYN

He needed the money. He took a job driving
for the Embassy.

SCOTT

The Assami Embassy?

Marilyn nods.

YARED

When was the last time you were at the
farmhouse?

MARILYN

What farmhouse?

YARED

We found your clothes there.

MARILYN

(to Scott)

I don't know what he's talking about.

Scott looks at Yared: he believes her.

SCOTT

He called you at ten o'clock this morning.
What did he tell you?

MARILYN

To meet him at the airport later tonight.

SCOTT

Where were you going?

MARILYN

To Assam. To visit his father. His father's sick.
He's got to go back.

A YOUNG FBI AGENT comes down the hallway and whispers to Scott. Scott follows the Young Agent --

INTO THE BEDROOM

where two FBI Agents continue to rip the place apart. One lifts the mattress off the box spring and begins cutting into it with a machete. Another tips over all the drawers of a bureau: jewelry, clothes, "Photoplay" magazines, and a Bruce Springsteen poster spill onto the already littered floor.

YOUNG FBI AGENT

There's nothing.

Scott gloomily sifts through the mess: nothing. He pushes aside a pile of clothes, pulls out a baby book.

YOUNG FBI AGENT

It's empty.

Scott looks at the Young Agent, then at the book. Suddenly, Scott crosses to --

THE BATHROOM -- and opens one cabinet after another: nothing. Finally, he reaches the towel closet, rips out all the neatly folded towels. At the far back of the closet are two boxes of DISPOSABLE DIAPERS. One box is open and some of the diapers are gone.

He turns toward the doorway: Yared's there. He sees the diapers, too.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Scott and Yared enter.

Marilyn, still guarded by two FBI agents, stares at the diaper box.

SCOTT

Where's the child?

MARILYN

I gave him up for adoption.

Neither Scott nor Yared believes this.

SCOTT

Hafiz Al Gazed is the father, isn't he?

Silence. She's almost too scared to speak.

YARED

Miss Anderson, you could face life imprisonment if you're found guilty of conspiracy.

MARILYN
 (fighting back tears)
 Conspiracy to what?!

Marilyn lets go and starts crying. Scott is moved; Yared angry, frustrated, impatient. Scott takes her hand, tries to comfort her.

SCOTT
 Where is your son?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - WASHINGTON, D.C. - 9:46 P.M.

The Jefferson Memorial and the tidal basin gleam in the moonlight. O.S., a BABY CRIES.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL a three-month-old BABY BOY squalling in the arms of his grandmother, BEATRICE ANDERSON, 45, blonde and still attractive. She sits in an overstuffed chair beside the window through which we SEE the Jefferson Memorial. The apartment is dingy: ragged carpets, vinyl chairs, unemptied ashtrays.

Beatrice, puzzled, takes a puff on her cigarette and looks up at Scott.

BEATRICE
 I was against it, you know. I didn't care how much money his family was worth. I knew there would be problems, not just 'cause of his color. But he was a good father and he really loved this boy.

SCOTT
 (to Marilyn)
 Did Hafiz know his son would be here with his grandmother while the two of you were away?

BEATRICE
 Yes.

SCOTT
 (to Beatrice)
 Mrs. Anderson, did your son-in-law ask you to leave Washington for any reason during the next twenty-four hours?

BEATRICE
 No, sir.

SCOTT
 Thank you.

Scott crosses to the telephone and dials. The BABY SCREAMS.

SCOTT
 This is Scott. Put me through to Taylor.

In the b.g., Marilyn lifts the baby from her mother and cuddles him. The BAWLING STOPS.

YARED

You'd better have a seat, Miss Anderson, we have some bad news for you.

SCOTT

(into telephone)
Ted - it's not Washington.

CUT TO:

THE OVAL OFFICE

Very dark. Taylor hangs up the phone -- scared but maybe a little relieved. The wall clock in the b.g. is caught by a ray of moonlight. 9:51 P.M.

O.S., We HEAR the pop of shoulder pads and the ROAR of a LARGE CROWD as we

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN WASHINGTON BAR - 9:50 P.M.

CLOSE ON A LARGE SCREEN TELEVISION where the Houston Oilers and the Dallas Cowboys collide with ferocious intensity.

We HEAR the excited VOICE of FRANK GIFFORD describing the play to

A LARGE AUDIENCE OF MEN filling the bar.

Ginny watches, too, from the back of the room. We SEE her bend over and talk to a COCKTAIL WAITRESS, who points in the direction of the screen.

Ginny winds through the chairs clustered haphazardly in front of the TV set and makes her way to the front row, where she taps VIC CONSTANTINOPOULIS, 60, the robust owner of the bar, who sits with a beer mug between his legs and CHEERS wildly at a hard tackle in the secondary.

GINNY

Mr. Constantinopoulos?

Vic looks up defensively.

GINNY

I'm Ginny Hopkins.

(flashing her press card)

I'm a reporter with the Times. I'd like to speak to you very briefly if I might.

VIC

Now?

GINNY

Yes, sir. It's very important.

VIC
More important than a football game?

GINNY
It's about a farmhouse you own in Maryland.

Vic freezes up.

VIC
I don't know nothin' about that.

INT. VIC'S OFFICE

Ginny enters, followed by Vic. He pulls the door shut.

The office is small and shabby. Cartons and booze are lined up against the walls. Behind the cluttered metal desk is a bookcase stuffed with bowling trophies and U.S. flags. A "Hayes for President" decal is on the side of the bookcase.

GINNY
Your wife said you rented it to an Arab student named Hafiz Al Gazed.

VIC
Betty's wrong. I rented it to Howard Berenger.

GINNY
Howard Berenger is in Mexico. I spoke to him on the phone only two hours ago. Why are you covering up for the FBI?

Vic doesn't answer.

GINNY
What country was Hafiz from?

VIC
Look, Miss Hopkins, the FBI goes in and shoots up my place and won't tell me why. They won't even let me look at it, and they haven't said if they're going to pay for the damages. Why don't you put that in your paper? How can they go in and tear a man's house apart and not pay him?

GINNY
What country was Hafiz from?

VIC
(hesitates)
Assam. He said he was a Theology student. He gave the damned ambassador as a reference. The ambassador, for Chrissakes!
(a beat)
I figured he was all right.

GINNY
Why did the FBI want him?

VIC
I don't know. And that's the truth.

INT. BAR

Vic -- dispirited and scared, watches Ginny exit. He turns back to the TV, rejoins his buddies.

VIC
Solly, another round.

The Waitress nods as a HAYES FOR PRESIDENT spot fills the TV screen:

ANNOUNCER (ON TV)
Hamilton Hayes. Now more than ever, it's time
for change.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE DRIVEWAY - 11:03 P.M.

A large crowd of PRESS and TV REPORTERS swarms around Kit Carson and Ted Taylor as they stroll down the White House driveway flanked by a phalanx of Secret Service Agents. The Reporters SHOUT QUESTIONS and shoot flash photos.

Taylor speaks in a hoarse whisper and coughs regularly, but is obviously enjoying himself.

TAYLOR
(posing for photo)
The story of my death has been slightly
exaggerated.

REPORTER #1
The Roper poll says Hayes will take your home
state tomorrow and, with it, the election.

TAYLOR
Never. I don't care what the polls say, ya'll will
be playing ice hockey in hell before Hamilton
Hayes carries Texas.

General LAUGHTER. Taylor's ebullience sparks the press corps.

CHORUS OF REPORTERS
Mr. President!--
Mr. President!--
President Taylor!--

Kit Carson guides the President aside.

CARSON

This isn't a press conference, gentlemen. The President just needed to get some air. It'll be a few days before he's himself again.

REPORTER #1

I'd say he was himself already.

EXT. BELMONT ROAD - WASHINGTON, D.C. - 11:03 P.M.

Ginny's Fiat swings around a corner and past the ASSAMI EMBASSY, where a small crowd has gathered. She SCREECHES to a stop and gets out.

EXT. ASSAMI EMBASSY

The entrance to the building is cordoned off and guarded by FOUR FBI AGENTS. She approaches one. We SEE "THE PEOPLE'S ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AL ASSAM" engraved on a gold plaque near the entrance.

GINNY

(flashing press card)

I'm Geneva Hopkins of the Times. What's going on?

AGENT

If you have any questions, ma'am, call the Bureau. In the meantime, keep moving.

GINNY

Where's Ambassador Hussein?

AGENT

Just keep movin', ma'am.

She moves aside -- angry. She spots a DERELICT peering at the scene from a nearby alley. He's got a wine bottle in a paper bag.

GINNY

Can you tell me what happened?

DERELICT

They went chargin' in and then they brought a bunch of people out and they drove away.

GINNY

Who went charging in there?

DERELICT

(suddenly paranoid)

I don't know.

Suspicious, he edges away from her. HOLD ON GINNY: trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together. They don't fit.

INT. CAFETERIA - OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - 11:03 P.M.

In the far corner of the room, we SEE a group of men huddled around a seated figure under a canopy light.

YARED (O.S.)

I'm going to ask you one more time.

CLOSE ON A POLYGRAPH MACHINE: the digital readings of the four oscilloscopes rise and fall slightly. We HEAR BREATHING.

YARED (O.S.)

What reason did he give you for entering this country?

CLOSE ON THE EMBASSY STAFFER, about 35 and frightened. He's strapped to the polygraph.

EMBASSY STAFFER

He wanted to study the American system of government.

CLOSE ON THE POLYGRAPH MACHINE: the levels on the indicators don't move.

CLOSE ON YARED: he towers over the terrified figure in the chair.

YARED

Didn't you think this was unusual for a man who had been a violent radical in Al Assam?

EMBASSY STAFFER

No.

YARED

(showing him passport)

Why is there no photo on his passport application?

EMBASSY STAFFER

I made a mistake.

CLOSE ON THE POLYGRAPH: the levels jump.

CLOSE ON ABDUL HUSSEINI, the Assami Ambassador, who looks on, shocked at what he sees. Scott is just opposite him.

FOUR MORE ASSAMI EMBASSY STAFFERS sit on a bench nearby, guarded by a half-dozen FBI agents. More agents are scattered about the large room.

Scott takes a photo of Hafiz off the work table and suddenly confronts the Embassy Staffer with it.

SCOTT
Was this man -- Hafiz -- was he The
Messenger?

EMBASSY STAFFER
Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah -- there
is no other.

CLOSE ON THE POLYGRAPH: the levels remain constant.

HUSSEINI
My people are not involved, Mr. Scott. Let
them go. I beg you!

SCOTT
(to Hussein)

One or more of your citizens built an atomic
bomb in this country. This man helped get him
the visa to do it. Nobody's going anywhere.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 11:07 P.M.

Scott bursts into the cabinet room, crosses to the wall map of Washington, now completely
cross-hatched.

Billings looks up from a table where he's on the phone. He motions to Scott.

BILLINGS
We've got a lead on those two students from
Berkeley. One of them owns a Ford Granada.
We've located the car in San Francisco and
we've got it staked out.

Scott turns to the OPERATOR of the electronic wall map.

SCOTT
Let me see San Francisco.

A street map of San Francisco appears on the screen. Like the map of Washington, it's
divided into squares.

SCOTT
(to Billings)

We've discovered an Assami clergyman who is
not a diplomat but is traveling on a diplomatic
passport. He entered the country at San
Francisco just six days ago.

Scott studies the map of San Francisco. Every square looks the same.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER FLYING OVER WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

CLOSE ON TYRONE "RED" JAMIESON, about 35, an amiable-looking black man with
just a hint of red in his hair. REVEAL THE HANDCUFFS binding his wrists.

RED

All those letters I wrote from prison, the Man read 'em, didn't he?

Neither the PILOT NOR THE TWO FBI AGENTS guarding him show any emotion. Red is undeterred.

RED

The Man heard me. He understands. I was framed.

The Chopper descends onto the East Lawn of the White House. ON RED: looking down on the stately white columns, bathed in light. As excited as any schoolboy:

RED

I can't believe it.

One of the FBI Agents secures a small blanket over the cuffs.

FBI AGENT

Keep 'em covered.

RED

Why? They got to hide their shame? Cover their mistake? The Man's gonna undo 'em. Get 'em off now, boy.

The Agent pushes open the door and shoves Red out.

FBI AGENT

Shut up and let's go.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BASEMENT

Red is astonished as he enters with his FBI escort and is led past

PRESIDENT TED TAYLOR, who nods at him and continues his quiet huddle with Kit Carson.

Red's mouth drops open when he sees the Prez.

RED

I believe in you, sir. And when I'm free, I'm gonna vote for you. Yes, sir!

The FBI Agent half-drags, half-leads Red into

THE SITUATION ROOM, over to

SCOTT. He looks at Scott excitedly, points to Ted Taylor just a few steps outside the door:

RED

That is the Man, isn't it?

Scott nods.

SCOTT

I'm Robert Scott, counselor to the President.

RED

Tyrone Jamieson, they call me "Red".

He tries to shake hands with Scott, but it's awkward since Red still has handcuffs on. Scott motions to the FBI agent, who unlocks Red's cuffs. As the Agent is struggling with the cuffs, Red takes in the scene around him, awestruck by the incredible amount of high-tech gear:

RED

Hey, I thought I was a computer junkie. You guys are unbelievable. Course you guys are runnin' the world and I was just runnin' a business, a legitimate business, Mr. Scott, before I was framed. But of course you know that, you read my letters.

SCOTT

This isn't about your letters.

RED

It's not?

SCOTT

No.

Yared ambles over from one of the computer terminals.

YARED

It's about how you got into the Bank of America safe in Los Angeles in under twelve minutes, how you got into First Dallas in eight.

RED

Yuh, all right, I used to do a few jobs like that. But the prosecutor's case was based on an illegal search, man.

Scott and Yared exchange a glance.

SCOTT

We need you to help us, Red. You do this and President Taylor will help you get out of prison.

RED

(still suspicious)

What's the gig?

SCOTT

We can't tell you.

CLOSE ON RED: this makes him very, very uneasy. He moves over close to Scott.

RED

This isn't like a Watergate type of thing, is it?

SCOTT

No. It's top secret. When the time comes we'll let you know what you have to do.

Scott nods to the FBI Agent, who comes over and escorts Red away.

YARED

(to the FBI Agent)

Give 'em anything he wants to eat or drink, anything he wants to read, but no TV and no radio, you got it?

FBI AGENT

Yes sir.

RED

Hey, I'm gonna need equipment...

SCOTT

That's all been arranged.

RED

Hey, remember, if I don't like the game, I don't play.

Scott shares a look with Yared, both wondering: Does it ever get easy?

INT. NEWSROOM - TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 11:07 P.M.

Ginny enters, moving a mile a minute. In the background, we HEAR TAYLOR'S impromptu "PRESS CONFERENCE" playing on the 11 o'clock news. She passes a group of Times staffers huddled around a television set.

REPORTER ON TV (V.O.)

Is it true the White House has received 5,000 'Get Well' telegrams?

CARSON ON TV (V.O.)

I'm sorry, gentlemen. No more questions.

She bursts into

WEBSTER'S OFFICE

Webster is also watching the press conference.

GINNY

The man the FBI gunned down in Brunswick was a graduate student from Al Assam who had worked as a chauffeur at the Assami Embassy. And the FBI raided the Embassy just now.

WEBSTER

What?! Why?

GINNY

Nobody's talking.

WEBSTER

What about the Ambassador?

GINNY

I couldn't get in to find out!

They exchange a long, anxious glance.

GINNY

Don't you see? Taylor timed it! He wanted to pull all the TV cameras to the White House so he could keep the Embassy raid off the 11 o'clock news!

WEBSTER

Well, it worked. But he's damn sure not going to keep it out of tomorrow's paper.

He grabs the microphone attached to the wall. His VOICE RESOUNDS OVER the overhead PAGING SYSTEM.

WEBSTER

Robinson! Shapiro! Get in here.

Ginny takes a deep breath. Paula Robinson and Arnie charge in. A mood of crisis sweeps the room.

WEBSTER

Paula, I want you to get to Prescott at the Pentagon. Get him out of bed if you have to, but find out if there have been any troop movements in the last twenty-four hours. Arnie, put the election story aside and get over to the Assami Embassy. Don't come back until you find out what's going on. And try to get to the Ambassador.

(punches intercom)

Harriet?

FEMALE VOICE

Yes, sir?

WEBSTER

Call in all the reporters, drunk or sober, and tell them to get their butts in here.

TUESDAY

EXT. SOUTH TEXAS CHAPARRAL - 12:30 A.M. (EST)

The moon is bright in the night sky.

CLOSE ON TWO COWBOYS ON HORSEBACK as they ride through the thick brush to a lonely bunkhouse, the only structure on the vast mesquite chaparral.

The cowboys dismount. One of them -- GUS -- leads the two horses to the watering trough behind the bunkhouse. The other -- RICARDO --hurries inside.

INT. SMALL BUNKHOUSE

Ricardo enters and goes straight to a VCR unit. He flips ON the TV and punches the rewind button on the VCR. As the tape rewinds, he suddenly hits the "play" button and We SEE the score:

HOUSTON 24 DALLAS 20 (FINAL)

on the TV screen. He smiles and hits the rewind button again.

RICARDO

(shouting, Mexican accent)

Hey, man, how about five dollars on the game?

GUS (O.S.)

I'll take the Cowboys and seven.

RICARDO

No way, cabron. I give you three points. The Cowboys and three. What do you say?

Suddenly, a BRILLIANT WHITE FLASH blinds Ricardo. He tries to shield his eyes. An eerie silence. Then a THUNDERING EXPLOSION hurls him into the wall and scatters glass and plaster everywhere. Shattering the TV. The ROOF BURSTS INTO FLAMES. Ricardo, cut, bruised, struggles to his feet and stumbles out the door.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE

The chaparral is a BLAZING INFERNO. Ricardo pulls his bandana up over his face and moves into the fire.

RICARDO

Gus! Gus! Gus!

There's no answer. Gus and the horses have vanished. Ricardo threads his way through the burning brush to a SIZZLING barbed wire fence and stumbles out onto the

ROAD NEAR THE BUNKHOUSE

In the b.g., flames from the firestorm shoot thousands of feet into the sky.

A LARGE GASOLINE TRUCK thumps toward him, SCREECHES to a halt, and backs up. Ricardo runs toward it, steps up, opens the cab door.

INT./EXT. TRUCK

RICARDO

Get the hell out of there!

The TRUCK DRIVER, wearing a football letter jacket and a cowboy hat, gestures to his load.

TRUCK DRIVER

I'm empty. Get your ass in here.

Ricardo jumps in. The CB RADIO is ON.

VOICE ON CB RADIO

Break one nine. Break one nine. What the hell happened? The whole damn world is on fire!

(a long pause)

Does anybody copy?

IN THE CABINET ROOM

A TAPE RECORDER is running. The VOICE is subdued but firm -- the cold monotone of the Black Crescent. Scott, Yared, Alami, Billings, Taylor, and Carson huddle around it, listening in terror. Around them are the other FBI agents and staff. Nobody moves.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(on tape)

The First Reckoning has passed. The hour of the Second Reckoning approaches. The Zionist unbelievers have done nothing to heed the call of Allah. We will watch the American television network ABC and we will wait for a live broadcast from the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. If the Zionist unbelievers have the wisdom to abandon the Holy City, a servant of Allah will appear before the Mosque and cry out in joy to the cameras, and The Messenger will hear his cry in North America and stay the chastisement of fire. But if the Zionist unbelievers refuse to act, the servant of Allah will cry out in wrath and this, too, The Messenger shall hear in North America, and no hand shall stay the chastisement. Allah is great. Allah is compassionate. His servants, the Black Crescent, wait for the cry of joy.

The room is filled with stark terror.

ALAMI

There is a messenger of flesh and blood.

The Computer beside the map operator ratchets forward.

YARED

The fire has consumed 20,000 acres and it's spreading. Preliminary estimates are at least thirty people dead, hundreds wounded.

CARSON

And if the fallout blows the wrong way, it'll be thousands.

Scott looks at the map: the South Texas coastline has replaced San Francisco. A blinking red circle identifies the spot near Kingsville where the explosion took place.

YARED

But why Kingsville? Why such a barren wasteland?

TAYLOR

That's where I was born. They want to show me they can strike anywhere. And there's nothing I can do to stop them.

(to Scott)

And they're right. And we should tell people the truth now.

SCOTT

No, you gave me until 0700.

ON TAYLOR: caught in his worst nightmare.

TAYLOR

And how are you going to explain this nuclear explosion. You don't think that's gonna cause a panic?

SCOTT

An Air Force B-52 crashed on a routine training mission. One of its warheads was armed and detonated when the plane crashed.

TAYLOR

The public thinks that can't happen!

SCOTT

But they'll believe *it did*. It'll buy us a few hours.

ON TAYLOR: disturbed. But not overruling Scott.

CUT TO:

INT. GINNY'S OFFICE -- TIMES WASHINGTON BUREAU -- 1:15 A.M.

Ginny leans over her desk studying a half-dozen index cards. She moves one after another down into view. One fact is handwritten on each card:

DEBATE CANCELED
 FBI AGENTS, ASSAMI STUDENT KILLED
FBI LIED -- WHY?
 ASSAMI EMBASSY RAIDED
AIKMAN LIED -- NO HEART ATTACK -- WHY?

She pauses, then slowly pulls down the last card:

WHY SCOTT?

She walks out into --

THE WIRE ROOM

and jerks the lengthy roll of stories off the International Wire hook and scans them quickly. Suddenly, she pauses.

CLOSE ON A STORY DATELINED "JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 3"

THE ISRAELI CABINET MET ALL NIGHT
 AND THROUGH THE MORNING TO
 DISCUSS "MATTERS OF NATIONAL
 SECURITY." OTHER DETAILS
 CENSORED.

Geneva rips off the story, continues leafing through the roll. Suddenly

ACROSS THE ROOM THE BULLETIN BELL RINGS and the NATIONAL AP
 TELETYPE RACHETS AHEAD, spilling out a wire.

Ginny crosses to the AP teletype.

CLOSE ON THE PRINTOUT:

CORPUS CHRISTI 12:17 A.M. CST LARGE
 NUCLEAR EXPLOSION ROCKS
 KINGSVILLE, TEXAS. THOUSANDS OF
 ACRES ON FIRE. SOURCE -- UNKNOWN.
 CASUALTIES -- UNKNOWN.

Horrified, she rips off the wire sheet and rushes --

ACROSS THE NEWSROOM

-- to

WEBSTER'S OFFICE

The door is open. Ginny bursts in. Webster looks up from his typing. And Ginny throws the AP bulletin on his desk:

GINNY
 THERE'S BEEN A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION
 IN TEXAS!

Ginny steps back, takes a deep breath. Webster, almost too scared to look, reads the bulletin. Suddenly, his own TELETYPE RACHETS FORWARD. He scans the printout.

WEBSTER

It was a B-52 that crashed. One of the warheads went off. The Air Force is gonna issue a full report in a few hours.

Ginny grabs the phone, punches a number.

GINNY

They're lying.
(into phone)
Buzz Aikman, please.

We HEAR the PHONE RING THROUGH, then Aikman's voice.

GINNY

This is Ginny Hopkins, Buzz. I know why you lied to me. I've got to speak to Robert Scott. I know he's there. Please. It's absolutely, positively a matter of life and death.

EXT. STREET IN NORTH BEACH, SAN FRANCISCO - 3 A.M. (EST)

The TINKLING OF BELLS and CYMBALS GROWS LOUDER O.S. as a DARK FIGURE emerges from the front door of a Middle Eastern supper club.

The Figure stops under a street lamp: it's a BELLY DANCER in full costume. A raincoat is draped over her bare shoulders. It's been a long night and she's exhausted. She lights a cigarette, then moves on.

Two ASSAMI STUDENTS emerge from the club, walk down the street after the dancer. Suddenly --

FOUR FBI AGENTS emerge from the shadows, pounce on the Students, pinning their arms behind their backs. More FBI Agents leap out of parked cars; they've got dart guns and tear gas.

They frisk the Students, shove them into separate cars and speed away, SQUEALING TIRES and surprising onlookers.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 3:20 A.M.

The PHONE RINGS. Billings grabs it. Yared rushes over and grabs another receiver.

YARED

Yared.

Scott and Taylor emerge from the small office and move eagerly toward Yared, who listens into the receiver. We can tell from Yared's face something is terribly wrong.

He looks at Scott and Taylor and shakes his head "no."

Taylor slams his fist down on a table, knocking coffee cups, pencils and computer printout sheets onto the floor.

TAYLOR

Goddamn it!

Scott picks up a phone from the bank along the wall.

SCOTT

(into phone)

What about the other man? The clergyman with the diplomatic passport?

All eyes are on Scott now. Finally, Scott hangs up, shakes his head "no."

Taylor falls into a chair and puts his head into his hands.

TAYLOR

They're so goddamn crazy they'll kill everybody.

He gets up and moves toward the door where Kit Carson is already waiting.

CARSON

Jerusalem is on the line again.

Taylor turns back to Scott.

TAYLOR

Three and a half hours. Then the troops are moving.

Beat. Then Buzz Aikman enters.

AIKMAN

Ginny Hopkins called.

He hands Scott a note. Scott reads it, pockets it.

SCOTT

What does she know?

AIKMAN

Too much.

SCOTT

Call her back and say yes.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BASEMENT - 3:25 A.M.

Scott hurries down a dark basement corridor.

EXT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - 3:25 A.M.

Scott emerges from a basement door, walks up a flight of stairs, and continues into the foggy night.

EXT. NEAR WASHINGTON MONUMENT - 3:30 A.M.

Ginny jumps out of her car and moves quickly across the damp grass to the --

BASE OF THE MONUMENT

eerie in the lights and fog of the dank morning. The area is deserted. Ginny checks her watch.

GINNY

Robert?

Scott steps out of the shadows. He looks grizzled and pained - almost dead from exhaustion.

She wants to touch him, to hold him, but she doesn't. She pulls THREE TYPED PAGES from her satchel and hands them to him.

CLOSE ON THE PAGES: U.S. THREATENED BY NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL

Scott skims through them quickly, then hands them back.

SCOTT

When did you take up writing fiction?

Ginny studies Scott's face. He's not a persuasive liar.

SCOTT

Who have you shown this to?

GINNY

Just you. It's all true, isn't it?

SCOTT

We thought we could find the bomb, or at least the target city. We gambled, we lost. You can only make things worse if you rush this story into print.

GINNY

Every news service in town will have their own version soon.

SCOTT

Not for hours.

(beat)

That'll be enough time.

An unspoken agreement flickers between them. Scott's BEEPER SOUNDS.

SCOTT

I've got to get back.

He starts to go. Ginny stops him with her touch.

GINNY

Is it Washington?

Scott shakes his head "no."

GINNY

Where are your kids?

SCOTT

At school. They're nowhere near any of the likely targets. Thank God.

GINNY

And Joyce?

SCOTT

She's back in the city.

GINNY

Does she know?

Scott shakes his head "no."

GINNY

Do you want me to call her?

Scott hesitates. Ginny sees that he desperately wants to say "yes," but he doesn't.

SCOTT

No. None of the others have told their families. Not even Ted.

CLOSE ON GINNY: This seems to her a noble but absurd interpretation of duty.

GINNY

Are you sure?

Scott leans back against the monument and covers his face with his hands. He's fighting back tears. The BEEPER SOUNDS AGAIN.

Ginny goes to him and surrounds him and kisses his neck and holds him hard.

GINNY

I love you. I want you to know.

Beat. He squeezes her against him as hard as he can. Won't let her say any more. Then he moves off, disappearing into the fog.

CUT TO:

INT. GINNY'S APARTMENT - 4:15 A.M.

Ginny pushes through the door into her dark apartment and stops cold. The TELEVISION in the study is ON. A dark figure emerges from that room.

DARK FIGURE

It's me -- Ben.

He switches on a lamp; he looks pale and fatigued.

GINNY

What are you doing here?

FEIN

I want to show you something.

Uncertain, she follows him into the study. He pulls out a VIDEO CASSETTE and pops it into the VCR unit attached to the TV.

The cassette plays. On the TV screen we SEE Israeli tanks and trucks churning past the camera. Several private cars can also be SEEN in the caravan. In the b.g., we can MAKE OUT the skyline of Jerusalem.

The tanks and trucks roll smoothly past the cameras.

FEIN

This is what the Israelis released.

He hits a button and the tape runs fast forward.

FEIN

This is what they tried to stop.

Now on the screen we SEE the camera pull back to a wide angle, revealing a circular pattern to the moving trucks and tanks. Obviously, the vehicles are not actually pulling out of Jerusalem -- they are driving around in circles, faking it for the cameras.

The camera zooms in jerkily to a closer shot. Once again, it looks as if a huge convoy of military vehicles was moving in a long, straight line away from Jerusalem.

Ben stops the tape.

FEIN

I pulled this off satellite relay. Ninety seconds later -- ninety seconds later! -- our correspondent in Jerusalem was arrested by the Israelis. New York called and asked if I knew why. I've got a pretty good idea. There's a nuclear blackmail threat against the United States and it involves Israel and Al Assam.

GINNY

Are you asking me or telling me?

FEIN

You spoke to Robert Scott, didn't you?

She doesn't answer.

FEIN

What did he say?

She can feel his jealousy and anger.

GINNY

He said there was nothing we could do.

FEIN

Where is it?

GINNY

I don't know.

FEIN

You do!

(a beat)

Nobody else has seen this tape. It's just you and me. This is the biggest story since the Kennedy assassination. Where is it?

GINNY

I don't know! Nobody does.

FEIN

You think Jack Webster's going to sit on this?

GINNY

Yes, he is.

FEIN

Come on, Ginny!

GINNY

He doesn't have confirmation.

Fein's frustration and anger are reaching the breaking point.

FEIN

Scott and that whole Taylor bunch are just trying to conceal this until the election is over.

(moves to her, grabs her)

He's using you. Don't you see? He's just using you.

She pulls away, frightened and furious.

GINNY

That's not true.

Silence... He's ashamed at his loss of control.

FEIN

The way to protect people is by letting them know the truth.

GINNY

The second bomb's going off today, Ben. In a few hours Taylor's going to postpone the voting.

Fein's stunned.

Silence... then he moves away.

GINNY

Ben?

He crosses to the apartment door.

GINNY

Ben, where are you going?!

He pauses at the doorway.

FEIN

To tell people the truth.

As he exits:

GINNY

Ben?!

But he's gone. Ginny agonizes over what to do, then picks up the telephone.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 4:24 A.M.

CLOSE ON SCOTT as he hangs up the phone: worried. He agonizes over what to do.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE GATE - 4:50 A.M.

Marine COLONEL "WILD" BILL DUNNING, 54, a Lee Marvin-like maverick, jolts his jeep to a stop in front of the White House gate. TWO PRIVATES sit beside him with M16s poised for action.

A crowd of REPORTERS reacts to Dunning's arrival with stunned amazement. They begin shooting pictures as fast as they can.

The Marine Guard prepares to unlock the White House gate and, as he does so, a half-dozen Reporters try to surge into the White House grounds. It takes the best efforts of the guard and four Secret Service Agents to hold back the surging mass of Reporters once the gate is open.

DUNNING

Out of the way!

The Reporters react with typical Washington chutzpah: they start shooting another round of photos and shouting questions at Dunning.

DUNNING

You assholes have five seconds to clear your carcasses out of the way and then I run you down. Five, four...

The private driving the jeep guns it, REVVING it way up in neutral.

DUNNING

... three, two, one.

The driver drops the clutch. The Reporters scatter and the JEEP SQUEALS through the White House gate. The Marine Guard salutes Dunning as he shoots past.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 5:02 A.M.

Dunning, followed by his Private, stomps through the maze of tables and electronic gear to --

SCOTT'S OFFICE

-- where Taylor and Scott are waiting.

Dunning enters, salutes, snaps sharply to attention.

DUNNING

Sir! Colonel William Dunning reporting as ordered sir!

TAYLOR

At ease, Colonel. I am told that you are a man who gets things done.

DUNNING

That depends, sir.

TAYLOR

Do you know what we're doing here?

DUNNING

No, sir.

TAYLOR

We are searching for an atomic bomb.

DUNNING

I didn't know we'd lost one, sir.

SCOTT

Not ours. The bomb was assembled by a group of fanatics who've made impossible demands. The World News Network is about to go public with the information and we've got no way to stop them.

TAYLOR

Colonel Dunning, ten minutes ago I spoke to the President of the World News Network and asked him to hold the story. He refused. If this information reaches the public before we're ready, it will be impossible for us to maintain any semblance of order during the evacuation.

Dunning considers.

DUNNING.

You want me to seal off the WNN studios in New York?

TAYLOR

That's right.

SCOTT

You'll have to isolate the building and cut all their communications with the outside world for several hours. Can you do it?

DUNNING

By when?

SCOTT

Before seven.

Dunning glances at the wall clock -- 5:02.

DUNNING

That's impossible, sir.

SCOTT

That's why we called you.

INT. NEWSROOM OF TIMES D.C. BUREAU - 6:20 A.M.

Ginny enters, breathless. She keeps her top coat on and carries her small canvas bag over her shoulder. The newsroom is eerily empty

INT. JACK WEBSTER'S OFFICE - 6:20 A.M.

We HEAR RAUCOUS ARGUING from within as Ginny enters. As soon as Webster sees her, all eyes turn to her and the room suddenly falls silent.

Six or seven reporters are crowded into the small room, including David Levy, Paula Robinson, and Arnie Shapiro.

The room is filled with stifled terror.

WEBSTER

Is there another bomb?

Ginny doesn't answer.

PAULA ROBINSON

You spoke to Robert Scott. Is there another bomb?!

Ginny doesn't answer.

PAULA ROBINSON

You've got to tell us! My kids are here --

ARNIE SHAPIRO

(breaking in)

All our families are here! For Christ's sake, you've been over to my house; you've played with Alex and Erica. Is there another bomb?

A long pause. Ginny looks at the faces surrounding her. Finally:

GINNY

You're safe.

WEBSTER

What the hell does that mean? What did Scott tell you?

Webster pushes into view the photographs of Scott taken at the Maryland farmhouse. Ginny glances at David Levy. He looks away.

WEBSTER

Why did you conceal these from me?

She doesn't answer.

WEBSTER

We've been together seven years; you've always been loyal. Why did you hide them?

Silence.

GINNY

You'd understand if I told you, but I can't. I don't know any more than any of you where the second bomb is.

They don't believe her.

GINNY

My guess is a major metropolitan area.

ON THEIR FACES: still unforgiving. Totally alone, she starts to walk out. In the bg we hear the reporters arguing among themselves, in their voices the hint of panic: "--It's gotta be LA. They'd do the most damage. -- Nah, Manhattan or Philly. Just as hard to evacuate. -- I've got relatives in Chicago. I gotta let 'em know."

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE MANHATTAN - 6:36 A.M.

We SEE a brilliant red sunrise as four military helicopters approach Manhattan Island from the south.

INT. HELICOPTER

Colonel Dunning studies a map of Manhattan. He also scans briefly a blueprint of the WNN building. We HEAR CHATTER on the chopper RADIO. We SEE the Verrazano Narrows Bridge directly below the helicopter and the Harbor and the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center ahead.

EXT. MIDTOWN NEAR PAN AM BUILDING - 6:40 A.M.

A helicopter approaches the heliport atop the Pan Am Building in midtown Manhattan.

EXT. ROOF - WNN BUILDING - 6:43 A.M.

Three helicopters land in quick succession, each discharging eight members of Dunning's elite Delta Blue commando squad. They wear red Airborne patches on their berets and blue insignias on their chests.

The wind created by the helicopter blades blows open a rooftop door as Dunning himself steps out of the third chopper. The team moves single file down through the rooftop door.

EXT. WNN BUILDING

A rented Ryder truck pulls to a stop in front of the WNN building. The ground squad, EIGHT YOUNG MEN dressed in casual civilian clothes and noticeable only for their short haircuts, leap out of the back. One of them -- the GROUND SQUAD LEADER -- taps his walkie-talkie.

GROUND SQUAD LEADER

We're go.

INT. FIRE STAIRS - WNN BUILDING

Dunning hears this on his walkie-talkie as he waits in the fire stairs. He signals to his men.

Dunning and his commando squad race down the fire stairs. A commando with a pistol and a megaphone remains behind at each floor.

INT. FRONT LOBBY - WNN BUILDING - 6:53 A.M.

The eight members of the ground squad amble into the lobby. A SECURITY GUARD looks up from the book he's reading.

SECURITY GUARD

Can I help you boys?

The Ground Squad Leader strolls nonchalantly toward the Security Guard at his podium. The Guard regards him suspiciously.

CLOSE ON THE GUARD'S PODIUM: the Guard's fingers move close to an alarm switch.

GROUND SQUAD LEADER

(Alabama accent)

What time does the tour start around here?

SECURITY GUARD

That's not for another two hours.

GROUND SQUAD LEADER

(grinning)

Two hours! We cain't wait two whole hours.

The Ground Squad Leader turns to go. Suddenly, he whips out a pistol and points it at the Guard's head, forcing him back away from the podium and the alarm switch.

GROUND SQUAD LEADER

You want to lock that door, please?

The Security Guard -- terrified -- pulls down his keys and moves cautiously toward the front doors.

INT. HALLWAY - WNN BUILDING - 6:58 A.M.

Two members of Dunning's "air squad" emerge from the fire stairs at a dead run and sprint into a room marked "Physical Systems."

INT. PHYSICAL SYSTEMS ROOM - WNN BUILDING

The two commandos confront a massive bank of CIRCUIT BREAKERS.

INT. WNN NEWS STUDIO - 6:59 A.M.

Ben Fein is seated at an anchor desk. He clips a microphone to his lapel as the FLOOR MANAGER sweeps by with his finger raised.

FLOOR MANAGER

One minute to air.

The lights come up. A SECOND ANCHORMAN across from Ben takes a sip of water and clears his throat.

Ben glances at a large TV monitor hanging from the wall below the control room: a "Taylor for President" spot is on the air.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 6:59 A.M.

Scott watches a TV monitor labeled "WNN." The "Taylor for President" spot ends, followed by the CHATTERING SOUND of WIRE MACHINES. The title: "World News Network Morning Report" appears, SUPERIMPOSED over an image of Ben Fein and the Second Anchorman. Suddenly --

The image cuts to a shot of black, smoldering brush with dozens of DEAD CATTLE in the f.g., as Ben Fein begins his broadcast. The words "Courtesy U.S. Air Force" are SUPERIMPOSED over the bottom of the frame.

FEIN (V.O.)

This is the scene near Kingsville, Texas, where a nuclear explosion shattered the still night just five hours ago.

The camera, fixed on a helicopter, moves up, up, up and we BEGIN TO SEE the awesome devastation wreaked by the blast. Black, scorched earth littered with dead cattle stretches as far as the eye can see. Small fires are still burning in the distance.

FEIN (V.O.)

The Strategic Air Command maintains that the explosion in this largely uninhabited Texas cattle country was caused by a B-52 bomber which crashed and accidentally detonated one of its nuclear warheads.

Scott turns to Yared.

SCOTT

(imploring)
Where's Dunning?!

Yared doesn't answer. He stares at the TV screen where the image cuts back to Ben Fein at the anchor desk.

FEIN (V.O.)

WNN will present exclusive evidence to show that there may be another, more sinister explana--

SUDDENLY, ALL AT ONCE:

INT. PHYSICAL SYSTEMS ROOM -- WNN BUILDING

The two commandos begin throwing the master breakers one by one.

INT. WNN BUILDING -- MONTAGE

Different room in the WNN building: a control booth, an office, the commissary, the wire room, and finally the news studio. In each SHOT, the lights suddenly go out.

INT. WNN NEWS STUDIO

The room goes black. Ben Fein flicks on a cigarette lighter. Similar small flames begin to appear at distant points in the room.

BEN FEIN

What the hell's going on?

INT. CABINET ROOM

Scott watches the WNN monitor go to snow.

THREE OTHER MONITORS labeled ABC, NBC, and CBS play with picture but no sound. On all three screens we see the Air Force-supplied footage of the aftermath of the atomic blast in Texas. Scott lowers his head into his hands, his nerves shot.

INT. WNN NEWS STUDIO

In through the door storms Colonel Dunning, puffing on a fat cigar and leading four commandos with submachine guns drawn.

Dunning shines a powerful flashlight from one face to the next. It catches Ben Fein at his desk.

DUNNING
(approaching Fein)
Ben Fein?

BEN FEIN
That's right.

DUNNING
Colonel Bill Dunning. I watch you a lot on television. I like your style.

Dunning pulls a cigar from his pocket and offers it to Fein, who is too dazed to respond. Dunning offers the cigar to one of the other Anchorman. He shakes his head "no."

Dunning pulls up a chair, leans back and sticks his feet up on Fein's desk. Everyone in the room is watching as Dunning pulls a deck of cards and a handful of bills and coins out of his pocket.

DUNNING
(cuts the deck)
Relax, folks, we're gonna be here a while.
(dealing out five hands)
Hey, I'm not playin' solitaire, get your asses over here now.

Fein stares at him in disbelief.

DUNNING
Single draw, jokers wild.

CUT TO:

THE BATHROOM ADJOINING SCOTT'S OFFICE - 7:12 A.M.

Scott, now with his shirt off, splashes water from the tap into his face, then studies his reflection in the mirror. His eyes are puffy and listless. Two days of growth covers his chin. For the first time, he has the look of defeat.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

Scotty --

Scott turns to the doorway. Taylor's there, watching him.

TAYLOR

Go on home.

Scott turns off the water, dries his face with a towel.

SCOTT

I'm okay.

He moves past Taylor into his office. A bank of four TV monitors is along one wall and they are TUNED to the MORNING NEWS ON CBS, NBC, and ABC -- just as in the Cabinet Room. The fourth monitor labeled "WNN" is snow. All three functioning monitors show Kit Carson conducting a live press conference. Scott puts on his shirt, watches the monitor.

TAYLOR

We gave it our best shot.

SCOTT

(distant)

Yup.

Silence... their eyes lock. It's a moment of pain and compassion. Back in

THE CABINET ROOM

Scott punches a button on his desk. The VOLUME on the CBS MONITOR GOES UP. Carson is still on the screen.

CARSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

...We were very, very fortunate that the wind was blowin' to the southeast... the fallout will blow out over the Gulf of Mexico.

The image on the CBS screen switches to the CBS ANCHORMAN at his desk.

He listens intently to his earpiece, then turns, startled to see he is on camera, obviously confused.

ANCHORMAN (V.O.)

It seems our video signal from South Texas has been temporarily interrupted. We don't know why. We will continue our coverage of other events and return to the South Texas blast site as soon as this technical problem is resolved.

He looks up at his teleprompter, then begins reading again:

ANCHORMAN (V.O.)

Last night, the worst bus accident in Canadian history left 63 dead and 10 injured. Roberta Sands in Montreal has the story.

The CBS image cuts to a thirtyish WOMAN REPORTER seated beside a heavily bandaged black patient who lies in bed with a cast and pulley attached to his leg.

ROBERTA SANDS (V.O.)

(on TV)

Carl Armstrong was one of the ten who survived this tragic crash. He was at the front of the bus just before it went off the road.

Scott stares at the CBS monitor -- mesmerized.

INT. CABINET ROOM

Yared, suddenly aroused, moves from the computer terminal to the CBS monitor and TURNS UP the VOLUME.

ROBERTA SANDS (V.O.)

(on TV)

Mr. Armstrong, can you tell us what happened?

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE

Scott continues to stare at the CBS monitor. Taylor's confused.

ARMSTRONG (V.O.)

(on TV)

The driver kept hackin' and coughin' like they was somethin' stuck in his throat. I moved up to help him, but he started spittin' up blood and collapsed. Then the bus run off the road and down the ravine. Praise God I'm alive.

Scott punches the intercom.

SCOTT

Nick, get someone up to Montreal to count that driver.

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - MONTREAL - 7:33 A.M.

A long row of covered corpses in a dimly lit room. The door flies open, the lights flick on. Two Canadian Mounted Police Captains and a white-smocked pathologist hurry down the aisle.

CLOSE ON ONE OF THE POLICE CAPTAINS who carries a Geiger counter. He quickly passes the wand from one shrouded corpse to the next, but the meter stays at ambient. Suddenly --

THE CLICKING INCREASES and he moves closer to the source, runs the wand from head to toe. The CLICKING is LOUDEST at the chest.

We HEAR MURMURS OF ASTONISHMENT IN FRENCH. The Police Captain runs to the phone on the wall and begins dialing as the CLICKING GROWS LOUDER.

INT. CABINET ROOM - 7:35 A.M.

CLOSE ON THE WALL MAP where we SEE the bus route in red. It begins in Washington, moves through New York City, and continues north up the Hudson Valley through Albany towards Montreal.

CLOSE ON SCOTT: sipping coffee as he studies the map. Billings, standing beside him, is on the phone. Nearby are Yared, Taylor, Kit Carson, and John Link, the Secretary of Defense.

BILLINGS

(turning to Scott)

The driver's name was Al Duvareaux and he came on in Washington. The bus made two stops: New York and Albany.

Scott and Yared instantly leap to the same conclusion.

YARED

New York.

Scott turns to Taylor.

SCOTT

The population of Manhattan Island will double in the next two hours. We've got to prevent that.

TAYLOR

Then let's break it now!

YARED

We can't do that.

SCOTT

We've got to be sure.

Silence. No one wants to consider this.

JOHN LINK

For every city we evacuate now, we can expect hundreds, maybe thousands to die in traffic accidents and gunfights.

Taylor's in agony. There seems to be no end.

TAYLOR

(to Link)

I can ask the subway authority to shut down all the inbound trains, but how can we stop the cars and buses flowing into the city without having to explain it?

JOHN LINK

We could fake accidents on the in-bound lanes of the freeways.

CARSON

The problem with that is the traffic helicopters. They're going to see that there's a pattern to it and God knows what they'll say.

SCOTT

Billings -- take ten of our people and have them call all the radio and television stations in the New York area. Find out which ones use helicopters to report traffic news. When you find a station that does, Ted, you speak to the manager of the station and ask him not to speculate on the air about traffic problems. That's all. Tell him it's an emergency but don't tell him what. Ask for ninety minutes.

TAYLOR

What if they refuse?

CARSON

If they refuse, jam their frequencies.

JOHN LINK

There's no way to do that.

SCOTT

(to Taylor)

Then make sure they don't refuse.

INT. EASTERN AIRLINES TERMINAL - JFK AIRPORT - NEW YORK CITY
7:36 A.M.

Ginny Hopkins hurries down the deplaning chute past a sign labelling her flight "ARRIVING FROM WASHINGTON, FLIGHT 803, 7:02."

EXT. EASTERN AIRLINES TERMINAL

Ginny throws herself into a yellow cab.

GINNY

Fifth Avenue and Sixty-First, please. As fast as you can.

The cab speeds away.

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER ABOVE MANHATTAN - 8:51 A.M.

A military helicopter carrying Scott, Yared, and five NEST agents sweeps into New York Harbor over the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Ahead and to our LEFT, we also SEE the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center.

It's a brilliant autumn morning.

EXT. MANHATTAN

The helicopter bearing Scott and Yared is poised above the enormous Port Authority Bus Terminal on Manhattan's West Side.

The chopper descends slowly and carefully to the roof of the building.

INT. BAGGAGE HANDLING AREA - 9:01 A.M.

Five NEST Agents in plutonium suits walk carefully abreast through the enormous room as they check the parcels and crates and cases stacked in the bins on all sides.

CLOSE ON THE DIGITAL READOUT of a Geiger counter. The levels remain at ambient.

IN AN ADJOINING OFFICE

VIC PARILLI, 35, the manager of the baggage room, pulls open a file drawer.

Yared enters -- dressed in a NEST plutonium suit -- and pulls up the visor.

YARED

No trace.

SCOTT

The bomb was leaking plutonium dust. That's the only way the driver could have been contaminated. If the bomb was taken off the bus in New York, there have got to be traces in this room. Keep checking.

Yared pulls down the visor and returns to the baggage handling room where we SEE other men in plutonium suits moving about.

Vic has finished sorting the time cards. He hands Scott the smaller stack.

PARILLI

These are the men who were working when that bus came through.

SCOTT

Are any of these men on duty now?

PARILLI

No, sir.

SCOTT

Call every one of them and find out what they saw.

INT. BAGGAGE HANDLING AREA

The digital readout of a Geiger counter. The levels remain at ambient.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

Vic Parilli is on the phone.

We HEAR FRAGMENTS of a FEMALE VOICE SPEAKING SPANISH.

PARILLI

He's got a cough. He's sick - delirious.

Scott leaps to his feet, opens the door.

SCOTT

Nick!

CUT TO:

EXT. HARLEM - 118TH STREET - 9:26 A.M.

A poor and dilapidated neighborhood. Four teenage boys huddle together on a street corner sharing a cigarette. They look up and their eyes widen in astonishment as

TWO BLACK UNMARKED FORD LTDs

SCREECH to a halt on the street near the woman and her child. Four NEST team members -- led by Scott and Yared -- leap out of the car and race up the stairs to an apartment entrance. Vic Parilli is right behind them.

Beside the apartment entrance are a half-dozen ripped and faded posters of Ted Taylor. Each declares: "Taylor, el Democrat."

The four teenage boys stalk the strange cars.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT HALLWAY

Scott knocks and a young Puerto Rican woman -- SENORA SALAZAR, 25 -- answers. She looks incredibly frightened. Vic Parilli moves forward to greet her.

PARILLI

Soy Parilli, y el es Scott, el amigo del Presidente Taylor.

SENORA SALAZAR

Si, si.

She opens up. Scott, Yared, Parilli and the NEST squad enter

THE APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

which is simple but clean -- filled with faded chairs, ancient lamps, an old TV, and a picture of Jesus on the wall.

A Catholic PRIEST -- young, Irish -- emerges from the bedroom and blocks Scott's path.

PRIEST

What do you want?

SCOTT

Mister Salazar is a baggage handler at the Port Authority Bus Terminal?

PRIEST

Yes...

SCOTT

I have to know why Mr. Salazar is sick.

PRIEST

Why does it concern you?

SCOTT

It concerns us all. Please -- there's no time to explain.

The Priest looks at him suspiciously. Scott edges past him into

THE TINY BEDROOM

-- where ENRIQUE SALAZAR, 29, lies feverish under a fancy brocaded bedspread. A crucifix is over the bed. Candles burn on an adjoining table.

Scott flicks on a Geiger counter, waits for ambient, then points the wand at Enrique. Mrs. Salazar, the Priest, and two of the Salazar children -- a BOY, four, and his SISTER, six, squeeze in behind.

The GEIGER COUNTER CLICKS LOUD and STRONG.

CLOSE ON SCOTT: another doomed man. He moves to the Priest, standing wide-eyed at the doorway.

SCOTT

Ask Mrs. Salazar to pack a bag. An ambulance will be here in five minutes to take her husband and the family to a hospital in New Jersey. Tell her she and the kids must go with him.

The Priest begins translating as Scott moves into --

THE LIVING ROOM

-- and picks up the phone. He dials quickly. We HEAR the SOUND OF COUGHING and expressions of concern from the next room.

SCOTT
(into phone)
Ted -- we're sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE AND 61ST STREET - 9:40 A.M.

A yellow cab careens through traffic and slams to a stop in front of a fashionable Fifth Avenue apartment. In the b.g., we SEE the Plaza Hotel and the horse-drawn carriages clustered on 59th Street at the south entrance to Central Park. On the street, traffic moves normally; there is no hint of crisis.

INT. CAB

Ginny Hopkins tosses a twenty dollar bill at the cabbie, jumps out onto

THE SIDEWALK

and hurries under the awning. She pauses and speaks to the doorman, then enters.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - 10TH FLOOR - 9:41 A.M.

Ginny knocks on the door. Joyce Scott answers. Glares at Ginny.

GINNY
Mrs. Scott, Joyce, I'm Ginny Hopkins...

JOYCE
(curtly)
I know who you are. What do you want?

GINNY
You've got to get out of the city.

JOYCE
Why?

GINNY
There isn't time to explain... Please. Get your things. Come with me.

Ginny seems hysterical, irrational.

JOYCE
Where's Robert?

GINNY
He sent me. He had to stay in Washington.

JOYCE

He didn't have anyone else to carry his messages?

GINNY

Joyce, I know you hate me and I know this sounds crazy, but this city may be blown up by a nuclear bomb in a matter of hours. And there's going to be mass panic when they start to evacuate it which is going to be any time now. Come with me now. Please.

Beat. Joyce, nervous laughter.

JOYCE

You're not kidding, are you?

Ginny shakes her head 'no'. Joyce moves into

THE LIVING ROOM

and pulls open the drapes. She looks out at Fifth Avenue and Central Park and sees nothing unusual. Ginny joins her at the window.

JOYCE

(suddenly)

Jesus -- look at that!

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE

From the 11th floor POV, we SEE a half-dozen Army troop carriers speeding down Fifth Avenue.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAXICAB AT APARTMENT AWNING - 9:58 A.M.

Joyce and Ginny run toward a yellow cab.

INT. CAB

The cab driver, DOMINIC ALBONICI, 31, drops the flag as Ginny and Joyce climb into the back seat.

A TROOP TRUCK churns by outside.

DOMINIC

Where to?

GINNY

Take us to New Jersey.

DOMINIC

Where in New Jersey?

GINNY

Hoboken.

Dominic SQUEALS out into traffic.

JOYCE

(leaning forward)

Driver -- we'll make one stop. At 115 West
23rd Street.

(to Ginny)

I'm not leaving my mother.

EXT. 45TH STREET AT BROADWAY

The yellow cab careens through the intersection of 45th Street and Broadway.

PAN TO the news display on the Allied Chemical building in Times Square. HOLD ON
the rapidly moving message:

STAND BY FOR STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT TAYLOR.

INT./EXT. TAXI

Dominic catches a glimpse of the message as the cab flies through the intersection.

DOMINIC

Stand by for...

Suspicious, he TURNS ON the RADIO and finds WCBS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(on radio)

WCBS will pass that information along to you as soon as it becomes available to us. Let me repeat again: President Theodore Taylor has invoked his powers under the National Emergency Powers Act and has declared a state of martial law in New York City. He has asked all residents of Manhattan to leave the island on foot or by subway as soon as they can. Do not attempt to drive. We will have more specific instructions momentarily. I wish to say again: President Taylor is certain that we have at least seven hours to vacate the island and that should be more than enough time for everyone. There is no need to panic.

The taxi wheels onto Ninth Avenue and speeds south at a frenzied pace.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE

Dominic's taxi blasts across 42nd Street on a yellow light. He continues south.

INT. TAXI

JOYCE

Where are you going?

Dominic turns to Joyce. The WCBS RADIO NEWS PLAYS ON in b.g.

DOMINIC

Home.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE

Dominic's taxi wheels onto 34th Street and speeds west.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE NEAR TWENTY EIGHTH STREET

Dominic slams on the brakes, grabs the keys, hops out of the car, and leaves it double-parked in front of a run-down apartment building.

Quickly, another taxi arrives and SCREECHES to a halt behind Dominic's. A MAN jumps out and runs into the same apartment, tossing a wad of bills at the cab driver.

MAN

(in Italian)

Wait! Please wait! I'll just be one minute.

As soon as the Man disappears into the apartment, the cabbie speeds off, leaving him to his fate. Several bystanders wave at the cabbie, but he ignores them.

We SEE the sidewalks begin to fill with people as the apartments empty out. They're mostly old people, women, and children. The children shout playfully -- to them it's just a game.

A YOUNG MAN runs up to Dominic's taxi, looks in, sees the missing keys.

YOUNG MAN

You got the keys, lady?

Ginny shakes her head "no." The Young Man swears and slams his fist on the roof of the cab.

Dominic emerges with his wife, GUILIETTA ALBONICI, 25, and their two-year-old daughter, ESTELLA. Mrs. Albonici speaks only Italian.

They cram into the back seat with Ginny; Dominic climbs into the driver's seat. The Young Man tries to force his way into the cab, but Dominic pushes him away. The Young Man starts swinging at Dominic; Dominic ducks, then covers his face.

GINNY leaps out of the back seat of the car and smashes the Young Man over the head with her shoe several times. He steps back, staggered, and she and Dominic hop into the taxi.

As Dominic starts the engine, several passersby surge into toward the cab. Dominic SCREECHES away from the curb and into the street.

Several people try to flag him down, but he weaves past them.

The cab disappears around a corner.

INT./EXT. CAB

Dominic guns it through an intersection.

JOYCE
One-fifteen East 23rd.

DOMINIC
I ain't stopping for an old lady.

JOYCE
Please --

But he will have none of it. Ginny glances at Joyce, then at Guilietta Albonici, who will not meet her glance.

EXT. TENTH AVENUE NEAR 38TH STREET - LINCOLN TUNNEL ENTRANCE

Hundreds of people press forward at the tunnel entrance. In the midst of the crowd, four mounted POLICEMEN with megaphones attempt - without success -- to prevent cars from getting into the tunnel.

Three Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST) helicopters sweep by in formation. PAN TO Ginny and Joyce, looking up from Dominic's cab just a block from the mouth of the tunnel.

CUT TO:

SCOTT'S HELICOPTER - 12:40 P.M.

Moving above Manhattan. Scott sits beside Alami, who listens to the cassette player through earphones.

SCOTT
Who is the patriarch of the Zionist
unbelievers?

ALAMI
It could mean Herzl, the founder of modern
Zionism. It could be America. It could also be
the United Kingdom, which fostered the first
Zionist immigrations to Palestine in the 20s.

Scott grabs the microphone.

SCOTT
NEST One to Yared.

YARED (V.O.)
Yared to NEST One.

INTERCUT: Scott and Yared helicopters.

SCOTT

Comb every inch of the British Consulate.

YARED

The NEST squads are there now and we've checked all the synagogues on the island and all the diplomatic missions at the U.N. So far, nothing.

INT./EXT. DOMINIC'S TAXI NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE LINCOLN TUNNEL

O.S., THE SOUND OF HONKING CARS GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER to a DEAFENING PITCH as Dominic tries to make his way into the tunnel, but the road is hopelessly clogged with vehicles.

DOMINIC

We must get out and walk.

He pulls his daughter into his arms. They all abandon the car.

EXT. NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE LINCOLN TUNNEL

The entrance is jammed with hundreds of people on foot threading their way between the stalled cars.

Ginny, Joyce Scott, and the Albonicis are caught in the crush of humanity.

CLOSE ON VARIOUS PEOPLE IN THE GROUP: Some are calm; some are laughing inappropriately; most are terrified and confused. The road is blocked behind and in front. There is no escape.

Suddenly, the SOUND OF SIRENS GROWS LOUDER and

A POLICE HELICOPTER SWOOPS IN OVERHEAD

A dozen SWAT team members armed with riot sticks and protected by gas masks quickly lower themselves from the chopper and plunge down into the crowd.

Tear gas canisters EXPLODE in a perimeter one hundred yards from the mouth of the tunnel, creating more havoc and angry cries. The crowd begins to peel back and the SWAT team tries to establish a line.

The COMMANDER of the SWAT team -- a young lieutenant - climbs up on the Dyer Avenue overpass and turns on his megaphone. We HEAR the SQUEAL of FEEDBACK, then:

SWAT TEAM COMMANDER

Remain standing exactly where you are.

But the tear gas drifts toward the mouth of the tunnel and the crowd lurches back in a sudden shock reaction.

Guilietta Albonici is literally swept away from her husband and carried several yards by the crush of bodies.

DOMINIC
Guilietta! Guilietta!

Ginny, holding tight to Gordon and the others, turns and sees Dominic -- frantically looking for his wife who is drifting further and further away. Desperately, he tries to cover his daughter's head to protect her from the battering arms and elbows of the mob.

Guilietta DISAPPEARS FROM VIEW.

DOMINIC
(screaming at the top of his lungs)
Guilietta! Guilietta! Where are you? Where
are you?

He DISAPPEARS into the crush of bodies.

INT. DARK ROOM - 2:00 P.M.

CLOSE ON A TELEVISION SCREEN: A hand reaches INTO FRAME, turns the channel. Every station is filled with scenes of the Manhattan evacuation.

The hand reaches in and switches the channel to the ABC network.

On the screen we SEE the entrance to the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem where it is now 10:00 P.M. The area is deserted.

Huge arc lights illuminate the front of the mosque as though it were a movie set.

CLOSE ON A MUSCULAR MALE TORSO in the dark room. A bulletproof vest of lightweight nylon and steel mesh is pulled tight around it. TILT UP SLOWLY as a tunic slips down over the vest onto

THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH.

His motions are slow and deliberate as he buttons his tunic and puts on his overcoat.

EXT. WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL - 50TH AND PARK AVENUE - 3 P.M.

The Messenger emerges from the revolving doors of the Waldorf to a deserted Park Avenue.

EXT. MANHATTAN - A MONTAGE OF STILL SHOTS

WALL STREET - deserted

THE U.N. BUILDING

THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

ROCKEFELLER CENTER - swarming with NEST agents in plutonium suits.

THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

TIMES SQUARE

-- completely empty. The message board on the Allied Chemical building is dead still:
 "...TO LEAVE THE CITY AT ONCE."

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

In the twilight of the Seventh Sun--

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION

CLOSE ON THE SPEAKER OF A PORTABLE TAPE RECORDER

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(through speaker)

--the world of the infidel will be ripped asunder
 for now and all time.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER PLAZA - 3:28 P.M. (1:32 TO GO)

CLOSE ON Husaf Alami: he switches the recorder off and looks up.

CLOSE ON SCOTT: tired, despondent.

Scott and Alami stand opposite one another, dwarfed by the statue of Atlas holding up the world.

The entire plaza is deserted except for a dozen white-suited NEST agents searching for the bomb.

INT. LINCOLN TUNNEL - 4 P.M.

Ginny and Joyce are huddled together in the crowd. AHEAD, SOLDIERS in riot gear stand on the service walkway lining the sides of the tunnel trying to supervise the procession.

SOLDIER THROUGH MEGAPHONE

Move at a steady pace. Keep the person in
 front of you at arm's length.

But it's hopeless, all forward progress has stopped and a quiet dread has replaced the early hysteria. Everyone speaks in whispers.

JOYCE

Robert didn't know about your coming here?

Ginny shakes her head 'no'.

JOYCE

You must love him an awful lot.

GINNY'S FACE tells Joyce what she would rather not believe.

GINNY

Do you, still?

JOYCE

Yes. But it's different for us... we have twenty two years behind us... Sometimes I think if I'd only forced him to leave Washington sooner... But now I don't think so. You have to love a man for what he is, not blame him for what he's not.

Ginny's moved by her honesty. As the Crowd starts to edge forward

CUT TO:

INT. MOSQUE - 4:01 P.M.

Scott and the Koranic Scholar Alami enter a mosque on New York's East Side. It is completely empty except for an OLD MULLAH who sits serenely near the front of the chapel, engrossed in prayer.

Two NEST AGENTS in plutonium suits fan out to search the area. Alami is surprised to find anyone present and he speaks to the old man in Arabic, but the Mullah ignores him and continues praying.

SCOTT

Tell him he's got to get out.

Alami translates Scott's words into Arabic.

MULLAH

(in English; to Scott)

Allah will protect his servants.

INT. SMALL, DARK SPACE - 4:10 P.M.

CLOSE ON an Uzi submachine gun. The barrel gleams. A magazine clip snaps on.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL The Messenger assembling the submachine gun in front of a television set. We are in a cramped, dark space.

With The Messenger is another man wearing a chef's apron: THE COMPANION. He straps on a bulletproof vest.

On the TV monitor we SEE the scene at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Nothing moves.

The Messenger studies the image intently. Still nothing moves.

Allah is silent.

The Companion snaps the magazine into his submachine gun. They exchange words in Arabic, then recite the chanting, rhythmic litany of the Moslem faith.

MESSENGER & COMPANION

There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.

INT. MOSQUE - 4:15 P.M.

A NEST Agent searches the room as Alami approaches Scott.

ALAMI

You must not blame Moslems for the actions of the Black Crescent. They are a tiny group of insane fanatics. These men are blasphemers against the true Prophet.

Scott doesn't answer. He leans against the wall, exhausted.

ALAMI

Is there anything else I can do?

Scott pulls himself up, moves off.

SCOTT

(calling back)

Yes. Pray for us.

Alami goes to the front of the mosque under the golden dome, bows and kneels slowly. We HEAR -- in Arabic -- the same CHANTING litany we heard in the previous scene.

CLOSE ON A NEST AGENT: as he discovers a back door to the mosque which leads to a greenhouse.

INT. GREENHOUSE - 4:17 P.M.

The Agent begins to get a reading. Puzzled, he passes his wand over the flowers and date palm trees. He focuses on an old tool shed in the corner. The CLICKING INCREASES.

INT. TINY TOOL SHED

The NEST Agent follows his signal past hoes and rakes and pruning shears and bags of fertilizer to a stick of latex caulk. As he passes close to it, the Geiger counter shoots off the scale. The NEST Agent picks up the caulk, puts it into a plastic case.

EXT. MOSQUE

The white-suited NEST Agent runs through the door of the mosque to --

EXT. 48TH STREET

-- where Scott waits in a military jeep.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL where we are: on 48th Street near FDR Drive. We SEE the Secretariat Building of the U.N. in the b.g.

INT./EXT. JEEP - 4:18 P.M.

The NEST Agent hands Scott the latex caulk.

Scott is puzzled. Then he looks over his shoulder at the U.N. building.

ALAMI

The Patriarch of the Zionist unbelievers.

Suddenly, it makes sense. Scott grabs the microphone to the jeep radio.

SCOTT

Nest One to Yared.

YARED (V.O.)

Nest One. This is Yared.

SCOTT

The bomb was resealed across the street from the U.N.

YARED (V.O.)

We searched it already. We covered every inch of it.

SCOTT

I don't care. We'll search it again. Put every unit on it now.

He hangs up the microphone, turns to his driver.

SCOTT

Let's go.

The jeep ROARS OFF toward the U.N. building, past the 150 flags flapping in the breeze.

INT. LOBBY OF UNITED NATIONS

Scott and a small army of NEST Agents pour into the U.N. lobby at the north side of the General Assembly Building.

INT. SECURITY COUNCIL ROOM

Scott and the NEST squad enter. Cigars and cigarettes still smolder in ashtrays around the table.

We HEAR no trace signal here, just the SLOW CLICKING of the ambient level.

INT. DELEGATES' DINING HALL

A NEST agent scans through the cavernous dining hall.

INT. U.N. KITCHEN

A large, modern cafeteria kitchen with massive ovens on one side and a long chopping block table down the center of the room.

The NEST agent passes his wand carefully around the room. We HEAR the SLOW CLICKING of ambient.

He rounds the corner and suddenly --

We HEAR the sharp HISS of a round from a silenced PISTOL. HE IS SHOT CLEANLY BETWEEN THE EYES.

The NEST agent crumples to the floor.

INT. U.N. LOBBY - 4:25 P.M.

Yared and Scott are reunited in the lobby beside the blue Chagall windows.

SCOTT

It's here. I can feel it.

A NEST agent is checking with his operatives on his walkie-talkie. Each man BEEPS as his name is called: ONE BEEP for "no trace," TWO BEEPS for "following trace signal."

NEST AGENT

Search Team Command to Perkins.

(ONE BEEP)

Jackson.

(ONE BEEP)

Jones.

(ONE BEEP)

Yaffe.

No answer.

NEST AGENT

Yaffe!

Scott and Yared and three FBI agents run to the elevator. The NEST agent shouts after them:

NEST AGENT

Fourth floor!

INT. KITCHEN - 4:28 P.M.

Scott and Yared burst into the kitchen preceded by THREE FBI AGENTS with pistols drawn.

Scott surveys the room carefully. He is the only one of them who does not carry a gun.

Nothing has been disturbed. Several large pots of chicken still simmer on one of the stoves. Pots and pans and knives hang in neat rows from the ceiling.

The five men fan out through the room.

SCOTT

I want him alive.

Yared cocks his .357 Magnum. Suddenly A NOISE O.S. Yared turns, draws bead

ON A RAT rummaging through the garbage. Yared eases up, embarrassed.

ON THE OTHER FBI AGENTS - poking carefully through everything; the ovens, the storage cabinets, the office cubicle.

Scott sees something glisten on the wall and goes to investigate.

CLOSE ON THE WALL: a small spot of blood. Scott touches it.

SCOTT

(quietly)

Nick.

But The Messenger and The Companion kick open the refrigerator door and begin spraying SUBMACHINE GUN BULLETS at thirty rounds a second.

One of the FBI agents turns, FIRES, then is knocked down by a DOZEN BULLETS. The Other Two FBI Agents are killed. Yared is hit, again and again. Blood flies everywhere. Scott is hit in the arm as he retreats behind a stove.

The Messenger and The Companion advance cautiously.

Yared lies on the floor in a pool of blood with his finger on the trigger of his .357.

He rolls over and shoots The Companion in the neck, knocking him down. He SCREAMS.

But The Messenger FIRES A BURST into Yared and finishes him off.

The Messenger advances carefully toward Scott, who has crawled

BEHIND A MASSIVE GAS STOVE

A gas hose regulated by a valve runs into the stove. Scott turns the gas off, grabs the hose and severs it with a kitchen knife. He pulls a cigarette lighter from the pocket of a dead FBI agent and waits.

Just as The Messenger's feet appear at the corner of the stove, Scott snaps the gas jet on full and flicks on the cigarette lighter.

FLAMES leap out at The Messenger, knocking him back. He FIRES the SUBMACHINE GUN wildly, then retreats, his tunic blazing. The bulletproof vest is now VISIBLE through spots where the cloth is burned through. The Messenger does not flinch.

Scott struggles to hold onto the gas hose -- now a flamethrower -- as it becomes unbearably hot in his hands. The Messenger advances, disregarding the painful burns on his body, and climbs up on the stove to reach a place where the gas jet cannot be directed and he can kill Scott without resistance.

Scott crouches low, listens to the RACKET as The Messenger mounts the stove. Then he jerks up the gas hose

CATCHING The Messenger by surprise, sending him reeling back just as

An FBI AGENT leaps in through the doorway, kneels, FIRES, hits The Messenger twice in the chest, then sees the bulletproof vest and drills The Messenger in the head, slamming

him hard against the wall where he topples down into the crawl space where Scott crouches.

A beat of pure, silent terror. Scott turns off the gas valve and pushes The Messenger, shirt still smoldering, away. The Messenger is stone dead.

Suddenly, the room is swarming with FBI and NEST personnel. NEST agents enter the refrigerator from which the two gunmen came.

NEST AGENT (O.S.)

We've found it!

An FBI agent stands over The Companion, still breathing in the corner of the room.

FBI AGENT

One of them is alive.

Scott crosses over, holding his wounded arm.

The Companion is bleeding to death on the kitchen floor.

SCOTT

Where is The Messenger?

COMPANION

You have killed The Messenger.

Scott slams him with the back of his hand.

The NEST BOMB EXPERT shouts from the refrigerator.

BOMB EXPERT

The bomb is housed in an aluminum case with a combination lock.

Husaf Alami runs over to The Companion and asks about The Messenger in Arabic. The Companion does not respond. One of the FBI agents kicks The Companion brutally. He SCREAMS in agony. Scott stops it.

SCOTT

(to Alami)

The combination! What is it?

Husaf asks the question in Arabic. The Companion responds in Arabic.

SCOTT

What?

The Companion motions for Scott to bend down close to his face, then he whispers in English:

COMPANION

Only The Messenger can stay the chastisement of fire.

He grabs Scott desperately, holding him tighter and tighter. The Companion stops breathing. His eyes grow fixed and glazed.

Scott turns to look at The Messenger lying dead, still smoldering by the stove. Scott YELLS in frustration and runs --

INTO THE REFRIGERATOR

-- followed quickly by the NEST BOMB EXPERT and TWO FBI AGENTS. All of them wear plutonium suits.

The Bomb Expert examines the maze of wires surrounding the silver Halliburton suitcase, the same case we saw at the beginning of the film.

CLOSE ON THE COMBINATION LOCK: It reads 9 -- 6 -- 9.

SCOTT

Can we move it?

BOMB EXPERT

No, sir, we can't touch it. They've got a whole series of electrical circuits around the outside. If any one of them is shorted or broken, the bomb detonates. The only way to defuse it is with the combination. And we better not guess wrong.

FBI Agent#1 checks his watch; even through his visor, we can see the panic starting to build.

SCOTT

Bring in the safecracker.

CUT TO:

A HELICOPTER SHOT, looking down on a big twin-rotor Army chopper as it maneuvers above the Secretariat Building. The city below looks deserted.

INT. HELICOPTER

CLOSE ON JOHNNY "RED" JAMIESON. He's surprised by the stillness.

RED

What the *hell's* goin' down?

The Army Pilot doesn't answer.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE U.N. KITCHEN

Red is escorted into the kitchen and immediately sees the incredible mayhem which has just laid waste to it; his fear multiplies.

RED

Somebody gonna tell me, what's goin' down here, or what?

SCOTT

We need you now. And we've got all the equipment you'll need. You do this for us and you're a free man.

RED

And what if I don't?

SCOTT

Then your sentence -- and your life -- will end in

(checking watch)

Ten minutes, forty seconds.

The door to the kitchen suddenly opens and FBI Agent #1 enters wearing a plutonium suit. Red's jaw drops a good three inches. He looks through into

THE KITCHEN

where HALF A DOZEN PLUTONIUM SUITED AGENTS finish setting up a microcomputer and a four super-sensitive tiny microphones.

FBI AGENT #1

(to Scott)

We're ready, sir.

RED

I wanna know what the hell's goin' on right now.

Scott starts slipping into his plutonium suit and the FBI Agent brings one to Red Jamieson.

SCOTT

A nuclear bomb's going to go off in nine minutes and thirty seconds. All you have to do is crack a combination lock to stop it. Everyone in this room has put his fate in your hands.

CLOSE ON RED: stunned and frightened.

RED

Put me back on that chopper and get me outa here!

SCOTT

It's too late. You'd be caught in the fire-storm.

The FBI agent puts the plutonium suit for Red on the table, then crosses into the kitchen.

CLOSE ON RED as the FBI Agent bends over to unlock the cuffs.

INT. KITCHEN - 4:54 PM

Red enters, dressed in the plutonium suit. Hands trembling, he pulls the visor down and follows Scott to the

REFRIGERATOR - 4:55 PM

ECU ON THE COMBINATION LOCK as Red gently attaches four tiny microphones -- they look like tiny suction cups -- all around the lock. Then he flicks on a switch on

A COLOR COMPUTER MONITOR, where we see swirls of red sine waves on a yellow background. We can HEAR the quiet MURMURINGS of the NEST agents in the kitchen.

RED

Ssssssh!

The room grows DEAD SILENT. The sine waves subside to ambient. Red turns the first lock cylinder -- CLICK -- and watches the screen react as he does. Then he turns it another notch -- CLICK -- and another.

ECU ON THE LOCK: now the first number is five.

Red pauses, fidgets with the sensors. He starts singing to himself the Beatles' song: 'Golden Slumbers': "Once there was a way to get back home..." His voice cracks. He goes to work on the second number.

CLOSE ON THE FBI AGENTS: each thinking about death which is only minutes away.

CLOSE ON SCOTT: for the first time we sense fear in his eyes. It's out of his control now -- the fate of Manhattan in the hands of a professional thief.

CLOSE ON RED: something's not right. He re-adjusts the sensors, studying the monitor as he does.

CLOSE ON THE CLOCK: 4:58.

The second number clicks into place -- nine. Dead silence.

INT. KITCHEN

A figure in a white plutonium suit kneels at a window overlooking the East River and bows his head low. Through the suit we hear the muffled VOICE of Husaf Alami, whispering the litany of the Moslem faith in Arabic:

HUSAF ALAMI

There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Messenger.

ECU ON ALAMI'S EYES, through the visor of his plutonium suit. He's crying.

INT. REFRIGERATOR - 4:59

Red watches the monitor as the third cylinder **CLICKS** -- four. He tries it a second time and something in the swirling mass of red and blue sine waves tells him that he's right. He stands up and moves away from the silver Halliburton case containing the bomb.

Scott moves forward, checks Red's face, then reaches toward the bomb and squeezes the latch on the case.

SHOCK CUTS TO IMAGES OF NEW YORK:

The Empire State Building

The World Trade Center

Wall Street

The Statue of Atlas in Rockefeller Center --

as Scott opens the case to find

THE DIGITAL CLOCK reading 00:15... 00:14... 00:13... and

A SWITCH WITH TWO POSITIONS MARKED IN ARABIC.

SCOTT

Alami! Now!

Alami runs over.

SCOTT

What do they say?

ALAMI

(pointing which is which)
On, off.

(beat)
But is it a trick? Are they reversed to fool us?

Scott hesitates. Four seconds. Three seconds. Two seconds. Scott pushes the switch to off. The digital clock counts down to "00:00".

DEAD SILENCE.

Nothing happens. Scott takes a breath and turns to

RED standing bent over in the corner of the refrigerator with his hands over his ears.

Red slowly straightens up, turns, and sees they're still on earth. Real cool:

RED

Piece of cake, man. Piece of cake.

A beat, Scott hugs him. They slap five. They high-five. Red emerges from the refrigerator

INTO THE KITCHEN

with his hands up over his head in triumph, like a football player who's just scored a touchdown, and suddenly the NEST agents blow off all their tension and go nuts *high-fiving* each other, cheering, hugging each other, and jumping up and down. A moment of pure joy after forty hours of pure terror.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.N. PLAZA

SCOTT EMERGING FROM THE U.N. BUILDING AS THE PRESIDENT'S CHOPPER comes down. In the bg, Army troops are stationed all around the periphery of the Plaza.

Taylor, surrounded by four very nervous Secret Service Agents, steps out and approaches Scott.

Silence, they just look at each other. Then they embrace.

TAYLOR

Thank God you're alive.

Beat. Then,

TAYLOR

We need to brief the press.

SCOTT

I need to find Joyce.

Taylor understands.

CUT TO:

SCOTT IN A LARGE ARMY CHOPPER FLYING OVER THE HUDSON RIVER TOWARD JERSEY CITY

We HEAR TAYLOR'S VOICE O.S. and Scott's eyes flick to the portable TV the Co-Pilot is watching.

ON THE TV: Taylor at the U.N. Plaza, surrounded by 50 or so newspaper and TV reporters.

TED TAYLOR

The credit must go to the Nuclear Emergency Search Team and to the FBI, particularly to Assistant Director Yared who gave the full measure of sacrifice in the course of this investigation. To him and to the other five FBI Agents who lost their lives the world owes an enormous debt. I also want to praise the role
(MORE)

TED TAYLOR (con't)

played by my close friend and advisor, Robert Scott, who worked with the Search Team from the beginning

THE CHOPPER SWOOPS OVER NEW JERSEY. We see Meadowlands Stadium packed with people. The Chopper continues moving, Scott using binoculars to scan the thousands of people and cars in the streets, all held up by Army Roadblocks.

CO-PILOT

Beggin' your pardon, sir, but it will be one difficult job, sir, to find one person in all that mess.

Scott looks down at the mouth of the Jersey side of the Holland Tunnel. The first cars and pedestrians are being allowed back on. He doesn't argue.

TAYLOR (ON TV)

I am going to speak to Premier Gorbachev and the leaders of all nuclear nations. Measures must be taken to prevent this from ever happening again... There must be a ban on plutonium reprocessing.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOYCE'S APARTMENT, FIFTH AVENUE AND 61ST STREET - SCOTT

sitting on the steps looking down at Fifth Ave. - empty. And Central Park - deserted. The only sound the wind faintly rustling through the trees... Overall, an inescapable feeling of loneliness and fear: the sense that if the bomb had gone off, it would have been this quiet forever. **HOLD ON SCOTT, and**

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER: SCOTT still sitting there. But

AT THE END OF THE STREET the first wave of people coming back.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER: A GROUP OF KIDS on skate boards whizzing past Scott, who's still sitting there. The kids laughing and joking as if nothing had happened. The first few cars pass by. Scott looks down the street at the oncoming crowd of people. No sign of Joyce. **A TAXI HONKS. FADE UP MORE CARS HONKING AND**

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER: A HUGE TRAFFIC JAM ON FIFTH AVE. DRIVERS SCREAMING AND HONKING AT ONE ANOTHER, THE SIDEWALKS PACKED WITH PEDESTRIANS WHO REMAIN OBLIVIOUS OF THE CARS. We're glad to say everything in Manhattan is back to normal.

Scott looks down the street, freezes. Stands up to make sure what he's seeing is real.

SCOTT'S POV: Ginny and Joyce walking together, talking animatedly. They haven't seen him. He nervously walks toward them. They stop when they see him.

Beat. Joyce smiles when she sees his eyes flick nervously from her to Ginny and back.

JOYCE

You look like the bomb went off?

SCOTT

It didn't?

He smiles. Joyce rushes into his arms. He holds her tight. Kisses her.

JOYCE

I was so worried.

SCOTT

You were worried?

Beat. He looks at Ginny. Joyce releases her grip. Scott lifts up his arms and Ginny rushes into them. He squeezes her as tight as he can. Kisses her.

Beat. He breaks the embrace, looks at Joyce.

JOYCE

C'mon, everybody's hungry. I'm going to make us all some dinner.

START CRANING UP AND AWAY AS Scott keeps one arm around Ginny, puts his other around Joyce and they start walking back to the apartment. They become lost in the crowd.

FREEZE FRAME.

THE END

LIBRARY