

THE WALKING DEAD

"Pilot"

Teleplay by Frank Darabont

**From the Graphic Novel by
Robert Kirkman**

FADE IN:

EXT. GEORGIA LANDSCAPE - DAY

An endless vista: beautiful, checkerboarded farmland, rolling hills, blazing blue skies, drifting clouds.

And a highway. Clean, well-maintained. And empty as far as the eye can see.

In fact, there's nothing moving at all. Nothing to disturb the silence. Nothing.

Until a speck appears on the highway. Coming closer.

The speck becomes a COUNTY POLICE CRUISER. The only thing moving as far as the horizon.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

CLOSEUP: FUEL GAUGE flirting with empty.

REVEAL: The driver, OFFICER RICK GRIMES, one eye on the gauge, the other on the highway.

Unusual: We'd expect a guy like this to be spit-and-polish, but he's not. He's haggard, exhausted, unshaven, no tie.

He shields his eyes against the sun, seeing ahead:

EXT. GAS STATION ON HIGHWAY - DAY

A HUGE SPRAWL OF ABANDONED CARS radiates outward from the gas pumps. It looks like the world's biggest and most disorganized used-car lot. Vehicles spill out onto the road and even into the surrounding fields.

The cruiser pulls in. Weaving slowly among the cars.

Rick stops, cuts the engine. This is as close as he can get to the pumps, which are hemmed in tight.

Rick gets out. It is deeply, eerily quiet here. All we hear is:

Just the breeze. And a scrawled SIGN flapping idly on string: "NO GAS." And the faint droning of flies.

RICK

starts to walk. Awed by the quiet and the sense of desolation that surrounds him.

He's noticing things:

Laundry here and there, hung on lines among the cars. Old campfires. Luggage strewn. Empty cans. A few tents. Sheets duct-taped to the sides of cars to make lean-to shelters.

The people who were here tried to stick it out for a while. God knows what happened to them. Maybe they moved on.

But. No. Not all. He's starting to register it now:

BODIES in the cars. Corpses slumped. Heads leaning against windows. Hard to tell how many.

Rick stops. Jesus. People died waiting here in their fucking cars.

Hard to take. The silence, the desolation, the decay. He turns to leave, but:

A sound. A shuffling? Something scuffing on dirt?

Rick is drawn, straining to hear. There's nothing for a moment, and then: hears it again. A few rows over.

He drops to his belly, looking under the cars...

RICK'S POV (UNDER THE CARS)

A PAIR OF BUNNY SLIPPERS can be glimpsed a few rows away. Pale, dirty ankles. A little girl.

The feet shuffle along, desultory. In this heat, these conditions, she'd have to be malnourished and dazed.

The slippers come to a filthy TEDDY BEAR on the ground. A little hand reaches down, picks it up by one leg. The bunny slippers shuffle on, teddy bear dangling.

RICK

Heart racing. Knows he has to rescue her, doesn't want to scare her. He rises, weaving among the cars, CAMERA FOLLOWING as he tries to catch sight of her...

He comes around a car, catches a brief glimpse as she moves out of sight. Pajamas and a pink terry robe.

FOLLOW RICK faster, desperate not to lose her. He comes around some more cars, sees her up the row ahead...

RICK
(calling gently)
Little girl. Little girl.

She slows, stops. Looking very vulnerable. Little shoulders. Badly-matted hair. That dangling teddy bear.

RICK

I'm a policeman. I'll help you.
Don't be afraid, okay?

(pause)

Little girl?

She turns. Staring at him with deep, sunken eyes. Flesh drawn tight on skull and bone. Lips torn away, leaving just a snarl of teeth. She's got braces. Clots of old decayed meat caught in the metal.

She's dead.

Not sick. Not dressed up for Halloween. Dead.

A hungry glare comes into her eyes, the closest thing we'll ever see to an actual thought. She starts toward him down the row of abandoned cars.

He backs up, numb. Unsnaps his holster, hand on the butt of his service revolver.

She breaks into a shambling, snarling run. He pulls his weapon, a .357 COLT PYTHON. She's getting close.

BLAM! The GUNSHOT snaps her head back in halo of dark, viscous fluid. She's thrown back, a bunny slipper flying off, crumpling pathetically, her teddy bear bouncing and tumbling to a stop in the dirt...

VARIOUS ANGLES

CORPSES in the cars rouse at the sound of the gunshot, dead faces rearing up, heads swiveling, eyes gleaming, staring at Rick. Way more of them than he realized.

He gazes around -- oh shit -- as we

GO TO:

TITLE CREDIT IN BLACK

"THE WALKING DEAD"

Title should be short and simple, graphic and powerful...

DISSOLVE TO:

TIGHT DETAIL SHOT: a POLICE SCANNER issues sporadic crackles of faint crosschatter, as:

RICK (O.S.)
What's the difference between
men and women?

SHANE (O.S.)
This a joke?

RICK (O.S.)
No. Serious.

ANGLE WIDENS...

INT. A PARKED POLICE CRUISER - DAY

...revealing a SHOTGUN in its floor mount. CONTINUE
DRIFTING past a dangling DAY-GLO NET BAG containing a few
spare 9MM AMMO CLIPS and .357 SPEEDLOADERS...

SHANE (O.S.)
In my experience? Never met a
woman who knew how to turn off
a light. It's genetic. They're
born thinking the switch only
goes one way -- on.

WE DRIFT past rubber-banded notebooks. A stapler. A dash-
mounted cup of mismatched pens and pencils. All the little
telling details that show a cop car is a working office...

SHANE (O.S.)
It's like they're struck blind
when they leave a room. Every
woman I ever let have a key,
swear to God, I come home and
my house is lit up like a mall
at Christmas.

We come to a GREASY TRAY-BOX OF FRIES on the dash. We
hear rustling fast-food wrappers, slurps of soda...

SHANE (O.S.)
So then my job, apparently
because my chromosomes are
different, is to go through the
house and turn off every light
the chick left on.

A HAND reaches in, grabs fries, dips ketchup...

SHANE (O.S.)
This, then, is the core basis
of the male-female dynamic. The
yin and the yang.

RICK (O.S.)

That right?

FOLLOW THE FRIES TO: OFFICER SHANE WALSH, County Police, in the passenger seat outside a fast-food restaurant.

SHANE

Yeah, baby, Reverend Shane is a'preachin to ya now...

He shoves the fries in his mouth, chewing thoughtfully.

SHANE

The same chick, mind you, will bitch about global warming. That goes double if you want to drive something with a decent V8 under the hood, in which case you're a selfish prick killing baby polar bears.

He grabs the box of fries off the dash, passes them...

REVEAL: Rick Grimes at the wheel, looking way more spit-and-polish than in the teaser, half-heartedly picking at his burger. Rick's a quiet, Gary Cooper-type, has long experience when it comes to listening to Shane.

SHANE

So Reverend Shane quotes from the Guy Gospel: Well, darlin', maybe if you and every other pair of boobs on this planet figured out the light switch goes the other way too, we might not have so much global warming.

RICK

You say that?

SHANE

The polite version. Still. Earns me a look of loathing you wouldn't believe. Out comes this Exorcist voice, out of nowhere: "You're just like my goddamn father! Always yelling about the power bill and I should turn the goddamn lights off!"

(looks to Rick)

See, to us it's just lights. To them it's a traumatic flashback that dredges up all their father issues.

RICK

What do you say to that?

SHANE

I know what I want to say. I want to say: Bitch, you mean to say you been hearing this shit all your life and you're still too goddamn stupid to learn how to turn off a switch?

Pause. Shane looks over.

SHANE

I don't actually say that, though.

RICK

That would be bad.

SHANE

I do the polite version there too.

RICK

Very wise.

A beat. Things yet unspoken. Rick's mood is down, subdued, his manner distracted.

SHANE

How's it with Lori?

RICK

(deflecting)

She's good at turning off lights. Really good. I'm the one who sometimes forgets.

SHANE

Not what I meant.

Beat. Rick uncomfortable. Finally admits:

RICK

We didn't have a great night.

SHANE

Yeah. File that under "no shit."

(off Rick's look)

Look. I failed to amuse you with my sermon. But I tried. Least you could do is speak, tell me what's going on.

RICK

That's what she always says.
"Speak." You'd think I was the
most closed-mouth son of a bitch
ever, to hear her tell it.

SHANE

You express your thoughts? Share
your feelings? That stuff?

Rick hesitates, searching for the words.

RICK

Thing is. Lately. Whenever I
try, everything I say makes her
impatient. Like she didn't wanna
hear it after all. It's like
she's pissed at me all the time,
and I don't know why.

SHANE

Couples go through shit like
that. Just a phase.

RICK

(quieter)

Last thing she said this morning?
"Sometimes I wonder if you even
care about us at all." She said
that in front of our kid. Imagine
going to school with that in
your head.

Pause. Rick stares ahead, hiding his depth of pain.

RICK

The difference between men and
women. I would never say
something that cruel to her,
and certainly not in front of
our child.

Suddenly, the police scanner SQUAWKS:

DISPATCHER

(filtered)

Available units, code 3. High
speed pursuit in progress,
Highway 18, EB, Linden County
units request local assistance,
suspects reported as two, male,
Caucasian, GTA, ADW, 217, 243,
advise extreme caution...

Shane and Rick toss the food, relaying it out the window into a bin, Rick firing up the engine..

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A rural road is revealed in a LONG LENS SHOT. Blacktop and blue skies, lush farmland. Idyllic, except for:

A PAIR OF CROWS squabbling over a red smear of roadkill on the broken yellow line. A brief hint that we're entering a world ruled by blood. And then:

Rick's cruiser crests the rise, light-bars swirling red-blue-red-blue. The crows shrieking, flapping away...

A SECOND CRUISER appears some quarter-mile behind, also racing to the scene...

IN FAST CUTS

A trunk flies open, Rick and Shane wrestling out a spiked TIRE STRIP on a thick flexible backing...

The tire strip is thrown across the blacktop, metal spikes unraveling toward camera...

The cruiser backs away from the tire strip at speed with Rick at the wheel. They screech to a stop by the second cruiser, angling to create a roadblock...

RICK AND SHANE

scramble out, take cover, aim weapons over the hood.

Doing the same: TWO COPS at the second car: an older guy, LAMBERT "LAM" KENDAL, and a young rookie, LEON BASSET.

The men gaze up the road as Rick pulls the dash radio.

RICK

Dispatch, unit 1, unit 3, we
are 10-97 and code 100, Highway
18, EB of interstate, please
advise.

DISPATCHER

(filtered)
Stand by, unit 1...

The cops wait, listen, hearing:

DISTANT SOUNDS ECHO across the countryside: roaring car engines, wailing sirens, the chop of a helicopter...

LAM

Sounds like they're chasing those idiots up and down every back road we got.

Leon nods, amped, nervous. Looks over at Rick and Shane.

LEON

Think they'll even get here?

Shane shrugs, uncertain. But:

RICK

They will. Those Linden County boys are good. Carter and those guys. They'll steer 'em right to us.

Leon looks to Lam. The older cop gives a tight nod -- if Rick says so, expect it.

LEON

Maybe we'll get on one of those video shows? World's Craziest Police Chases? You think?

RICK

What I think, Leon, is you need to stay focused and make sure you got a round in the chamber and your safety off.

Leon, chastened, checks his breech and safety, as:

RICK AND SHANE

DISPATCHER

Unit 1, unit 3, be advised, suspects are now EB 18, your direction.

SHANE

(quietly)

We could, you know. Get on one of those shows.

RICK

God, no.

(glances over)

You know how she hates me doing this job. Please let's not embellish today's events any more than we have to. That's if we ever talk about it, period.

SHANE

I just don't see her point.
 (off Rick's look)
 You? You're not closed-mouthed
 at all. Can't shut you up.

A BEAT-UP, PUKE-GREEN '69 DODGE CHARGER comes sailing over the crest of the road from the opposite direction.

A POLICE COPTER rises up behind, ROARING, pacing. Several LINDEN COUNTY POLICE CARS in full pursuit, but slamming on their brakes as:

The Charger hits the tire strip at full speed, never saw it coming, TIRES BLOWING OUT, car swerving as the driver tries to maintain control but loses it, and:

The Charger flips, rolls, smashing itself all over the blacktop...lands hard on its wheels...and is still.

The Charger just sits, nobody visible, steam hissing from its smashed radiator.

Beyond it, B.G., COPS are pouring from the Linden County pursuit cars, weapons poised, making their way along the side of the road toward the car, covering one another...

RICK AND SHANE

Rick gives the others a nod and emerges from behind the cruiser, gun poised, edging toward the Charger.

The others hang back, covering him, Shane grabbing the handset, speaking through the cruiser's loudspeakers:

SHANE

(loudspeaker, amplified)
 IN THE CAR. IF YOU CAN HEAR ME.
 DO NOT RESIST OR WE WILL OPEN
 FIRE. AN AMBULANCE HAS BEEN
 CALLED AND IS ON THE WAY.

No response. Rick gets closer to the silent Charger, now about fifty feet away, when suddenly:

TWO MEN pop from the Charger, bleeding, crouching behind doors, pistols and shotguns thrusting over sills, and:

A THUNDEROUS EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE, shotguns BOOMING, pistols CRACKING...

Rick caught in the open, throwing himself to the pavement...

Fellow officers scrambling, ducking, FIRING on the Charger from all directions...

Rick crawling toward the roadside ditch for cover...

Shane ducking, the light bar of their cruiser EXPLODING from a shotgun round, red and blue fragments raining...

The suspects FIRING, taking hits in the crossfire, metal PUNCTURING, glass SHATTERING, windshield EXPLODING...

Rick gets to the ditch, too shallow for cover, and a BULLET HITS HIM IN THE CHEST, his kevlar vest saving his life but the impact knocking the wind right out of him...

The suspects finally get taken down, torn apart by gunfire, lives draining away red on the pavement...

And it's over. Stunned silence follows. The only sound now is the helicopter hovering high above.

SHANE

RICK?!

RICK

I'M ALL RIGHT!

Rick rises, a bit shaky. Moves toward the Charger. Other cops emerge, closing in from all directions.

Rick gets to the Charger first, gun poised, assessing the scene. Shane edges up behind Rick, shotgun aimed.

Rick glances down at his dented vest in dazed disbelief.

SHANE

Saw you get tagged. Scared the shit out of me.

RICK

Me too. Son of a bitch shot me. You believe that?

He glances to Shane, half-turning...

RICK

Shane? You do not tell Lori that happened. Ever. You understand?

Rick never sees the THIRD SUSPECT thrusting up in the back of the Charger, never sees the PISTOL, he sees only Shane's face as he tries to scream a warning...

BLAM! Massively loud.

The bullet hitting Rick, but Rick not so lucky this time because he's half-turned and the bullet hits him in the side under the armpit where the vest offers no protection, erupting in blood, and in the same instant:

BOOOOOM! Shane FIRES his shotgun, killing the suspect, blasting him through the rear window onto the trunk, as:

Rick is spun/staggered/thrown to the pavement, rolling onto his back in a growing pool of his own blood...

Shane drops to his knees at Rick's side, rips open the kevlar vest, trying to stop the bleeding, hands turning red as he applies pressure...

SHANE

Rick! Rick! Oh god, he's hit!

ANGLE WIDENS, RISING UP, figures growing smaller below us, officers shouting and running in, Shane screaming...

SHANE

WHERE'S THAT AMBULANCE? WE NEED
AN AMBULANCE! OFFICER DOWN!

...and Shane's voice grows distant, fading, as we

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

RICK'S POV: Weird, surreal, dreamlike. We're looking up at a ceiling. Shane appears, gazing down at us. Off-duty clothes. Image weaving. Sound strange, distant:

SHANE

Buddy. Hey.

(pause)

We're here. Still hanging in.

(beat)

I'm sorry. I say it every time

I come in, I know, but...

He stops, reins his emotions. He leans out, returns with a VASE OF FLOWERS. The vase is a blue-and-white frilly porcelain pattern, the flowers a mixed arrangement.

SHANE

Everyone pitched in. Asked me
to bring this down. They send

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)
 their love. Want you back real
 soon.

(re: vase)
 Gals in dispatch picked it out.
 You can tell. I'll just leave
 it here on your side table...

Shane leans out of shot to place the flowers, as:

REVERSE ANGLE

TIGHT ON Rick in bed, oxygen tube in his nose. Haggard,
 unshaven. It's not a dramatic cut, it's what we'd expect,
 but it is a strange cut, because:

Everything goes normal. Image. Sound. The hallucinatory
 quality is simply gone. In the silence:

Rick smiles, lets out a dry, papery laugh. Weak:

RICK
 That vase. That's something
 special. Fess up. You steal it
 from your granny's house?

That strikes him as even funnier, but his laughter rasps
 into a dry cough. It tapers away, he catches his breath.

RICK
 Yeah, that's right. Gramma Dale.
 Hope you left her that spoon
 collection. The ones with Mount
 Rushmore. Yellowstone.

A long stretch of silence.

RICK
 Shane.

He eases a look to the side. Nobody's there.

HIGH WIDE ANGLE

Rick just lies there. Deep, deep silence. The shades are
 drawn, murky daylight filtering in.

He's been talking to an empty room.

RICK
 Shane?
 (waits)
 You in the john?

TIGHT ON RICK

Wondering where Shane went. He turns his head on the pillow, sees something he doesn't understand...

ANGLE TO: That vase on his nightstand. Same frilly blue-and-white pattern. But...

The flowers are long dead. Dry petals everywhere.

How can that be? Shane just brought them in.

He gets his hand moving, finds the call button. Presses it to summon a nurse.

Nothing. He keeps pressing. Glances at the clock on the wall:

THE CLOCK

Dead. The sweep second hand is frozen.

RICK

Power's out. He gives up on the call button, tries to yell for help, his voice still weak:

RICK

Hello?

He sits up. Huge effort. Swings his legs to the floor, removes the tube from his nose.

Picks up a flower petal. It goes to dust in his fingers, drifts to the floor.

He looks around. There are other flowers arrangements around the room. All just as dead.

He looks up. The I.V. bag he's hooked up to is empty.

He tries to stand, using the I.V. tree for support. Halfway to his feet, the tree topples, dumps him hard on the floor.

He rolls over, fetal, weeping with frustration and pain.

RICK

Nurse! Help!

He gets his hands under himself, pushes painfully to his hands and knees. Listens to the silence.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

He's leaning on the sink, gulping water from the faucet as if he never intends to stop.

He pauses, gasping for breath. Looks up in the mirror at his reflection, shocked at how bad and gaunt he looks.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Gloom. No lights on. Corridor deserted.

Rick appears, moving slowly, leaning on walls for support.

He finds the nurses' station. Papers strewn everywhere. A computer smashed on the floor.

He fumbles for the desk lamp -- nothing. Tries the phone, the various lines -- more nothing.

He checks the nurses' counter in the gloom, sweeping his hands along, looking for anything that makes light.

He finds a book of paper matches. Opens it. Five ragged little matches left. They'll have to do.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

He's on the edge of the bed, laboriously pulling his pants on. His eyes go back to that vase of dead flowers, still trying to understand it.

He notices a "get well" card propped behind it. He picks it up, opens it.

TIGHT ON CARD

In a childish hand: "Dear Daddy. We miss you. Get well soon and come home!!! I love you, Carl."

RICK

closes the card. A pained, wistful smile.

EXT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rick emerges from his room again, wearing his hospital robe and pants. The bandage on his wound is quite evident, covering one side of his chest under his arm.

He comes to an intersecting corridor. He turns the corner...and stops, seeing:

A DEAD NURSE lies sprawled down the hallway, visible in the faint glow of some skylights. She's lying there torn open. Blood so old it's turned dark brown.

Rick numb. Tries to process what he's seeing. He turns back, continues...

FOLLOW HIM hobbling slowly, panic increasing, as more and more dried blood is revealed on the walls, long smears of it, a handprint or two...

And bullet holes. Lines of them. Machine guns were fired.

DOUBLE DOORS

at the end of the hall. A sign: "Cafeteria."

Rick steps into frame. There's a two-by-four jammed through the door handles on this side. The door handles are chained and padlocked too.

Painted hastily on the left door is a message: "DON'T OPEN!" And on the right door: "DEAD!"

He approaches, slowly, wondering what it means...

RICK'S POV

PUSHING SLOWLY TOWARD the door...

The doors heave slowly outward, pushed from the other side. The two-by-four CREAKS, the chain goes taut.

RICK

flinches back. Stares in horror as:

Fingers probe through the crack before his eyes: pale, wriggling, fish-white fingers with torn fingernails.

Then more fingers appear, all up and down the crack of the door. Straining. Seeking.

FAINT GRUNTING is heard within, a sound like malevolent feral pigs.

Rick backs away, terrified. Sees the elevator, hits the button. Nothing happens -- of course, the power's out.

He continues to a door marked "STAIRS." Throws one last look back at the cafeteria doors. Those awful, weird fingers are still there, wriggling in the crack.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Rick steps in, mind reeling, closes the door quietly behind him.

Total darkness now. Shit.

We hear him fumble out the book of matches. He strikes one. The glow is faint, but at least something.

He moves forward. The staircase is a black, cavernous void yawning before him. Something smells bad, too.

He goes to the railing, catches a direct whiff of incredible stench below. He jerks his head back.

Match goes out. Pitch black.

In the dark, we hear the forced quiet of a man not panicking. The fumbling of a matchbook...

Another match is struck. Light. Not many left, only three after this. Gotta make them count.

He starts down the stairs, leaning on the railing for support. He takes the steps like an 80 year-old afraid of tripping in the dark and falling.

That stench, Jesus. He glances over the railing, trying to see, but the light won't reach down the stairwell.

Match goes out. Pitch black.

He strikes another one. More steps taken carefully. That stench from below is unbelievable.

The matchlight shows: Doors on the landing below, vague in the darkness. A sign that says "EXIT."

Huge relief. Gotta get to those doors. Then home free.

Match goes out. Pitch black.

Just sound now:

Rick breathing. Wondering if he should risk another match. Coming further down the stairs in darkness, using the railing as a guide.

Is he near the lower landing? He can't take it any more. We hear the matchbook. He lights his next-to-last match.

Relieved to see: The door's close. Just a few more steps down, then across the landing.

He can't believe that stench. He turns to the railing, peers down the stairwell shaft.

Inky blackness below, impenetrable. Faint, guttering match in his fingers, about to die.

He's gotta know. Can't help himself. He holds the dying flame to the last match in the book. It catches, flares up, igniting the matchbook cover as well.

He leans out over the railing. Lets it drop.

The flaming matchbook plummets down and down, fluttering like a firefly in the dark...

TIGHT ON DEAD MAN'S FACE

...and smacks a corpse's cheek, bounces off, lands inches in front of its decaying, sclerotic eyes...

Flame dies. Pitch black.

ANGLE IN PITCH BLACK

Rick lets out a yell, runs blind, hits the door, the blackness suddenly torn open before us, throwing us headlong into blazing daylight...

Rick reeling, blinded, hands before his face, trying to get his senses, to tamp his inarticulate terror.

He gets hold of himself...somewhat. Enough to reapproach the doors. He forces himself back across the threshold.

Taking slow steps in. Moving to the railing.

He's thinking: What I thought I saw in that brief flare of light can't be right. Can't be.

He gets there, looks down. The daylight from the open doors spills faintly down the shaft, but it's enough:

The stairwell shaft below is a pit of dead. God-knows how many there are, God-knows how deep it goes. A vast tangle of them, Dachau in the stairwell of a Georgia hospital.

Head wounds. All or most were shot in the cranium before they were dumped down the stairwell.

EXT. HOSPITAL/LOADING DOCK - DAY

Rick re-emerges into blinding daylight, mindblown, gasping for fresh air.

ANGLE WIDENS as he moves along the loading dock...

MORE AND MORE DEAD BODIES are revealed, though these at least show some attempt at organization:

The bodies were hastily wrapped in white sheets and stacked like firewood along the hospital wall. Hundreds of them.

Blots of dried blood on the sheets: They, too, were all shot in the head before being dumped here like garbage awaiting pickup.

Rick looks back at the exit door he just came out of, realizing:

When they ran out of sheets and time and manpower, they just started shooting them and dumping them down the stairwells inside the building.

ANGLE WIDENS, FOLLOWING HIM past DUMP TRUCKS sitting silently with their load-beds full of sheet-wrapped bodies, stacked in layers like sacks of grain.

ANGLE KEEPS WIDENING...

Rick goes into the street. Sees madness everywhere: Broken glass. Overturned cars. Debris. It looks like the world's biggest riot took place.

WIDE, WIDE HIGH ANGLE

Rick is a mere speck in the street below, the silence crushing...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREETS - VARIOUS ANGLES - DAY

Rick walking. Streets deserted.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rick moving, barely on his feet. Checking cars for ignition keys. Many were abandoned, doors hanging open.

EXT. STREET - DAY

WHUM, WHUM, WHUM -- the sound of an engine trying to turn.

A car sits plowed into a mailbox. Rick is inside, cranking the key. The car almost starts. Kicks a cloud of noxious blue smoke from its exhaust pipe. Dies.

Silence again.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rick weaving on his feet, past exhausted.

Up ahead, he sees:

A BICYCLE lying in the tall weeds just off the road. He approaches, sees a DEAD WOMAN lying near it.

It looks like she took a horrible spill and died here at the side of the road. She's desiccated, skeletal, her lower half mostly gone as if consumed by animals.

Rick reaches for the bike. Gets it upright. A tire's flat, but the bike rolls.

The woman turns her head, looks at him.

Rick cries out in shock, drops the bike on the grass. Her hand twitches, claws in weak frustration.

Rick reels back, horrified. He turns away, not wanting to look, stumbles to sit on a park bench.

TIGHT ON RICK

Sitting. His back to the body lying on the grass B.G.

Willing himself not to turn and look again. Mind whirling. Trying to convince himself he imagined it.

He finally glances back. The woman is still. Rick looks forward again. Working up his courage.

He forces himself to his feet, forces himself to go back for the bike. As he gets close:

The woman starts moving again. She knows he's there.

Rick gets on the bike and pedals away. She's left writhing weakly in the grass, making awful keening sounds...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - RICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Rick appears, a lone figure, shaky on the bicycle.

He arrives at his house, drops the bike on the lawn. The house looks bad: windows broken, screen door torn off.

He's badly winded, dizzy and spent, but forces himself up the porch steps to the front door.

Heart racing. Trying not to panic at the condition of the place -- and the fact that the front door is open.

INT. RICK'S HOUSE - DAY

He finds the living room trashed. Curtains hanging in tatters. Furniture overturned. Items strewn about.

RICK

Lori?

CAMERA FOLLOWS as he staggers through the house, finding destruction everywhere. Dishes broken and scattered in the kitchen, shelves overturned in the den...

RICK

LORI! CARL!

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

He enters and stops, breathing hard. Drawers are pulled out, dumped empty on the floor. As if items were packed.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Rick exits onto the porch, dazed, at a loss. He gazes out at the dead street. The empty desolation.

Some kid's Big Wheel in the street. A tire swing moving slowly with the breeze. Strewn clothing.

He sits down on the porch steps, devastated. Not knowing what to do, how to feel, how to cope.

Pause. He glances up, sees:

A FIGURE in the street. A man is walking slowly in this direction, coming up the block.

RICK

shields his eyes against the sun, trying to see. He raises a hand, gives a wave.

THE WALKING MAN

Pauses. Seeing Rick. Changes course in this direction.

RICK

Watching. CAMERA DRIFTS IN TIGHTER on his face...

...as, B.G., a SECOND FIGURE appears, out-of-focus. Moving slowly around the corner of the house. Sneaking up behind.

Rick just sits, oblivious, watching the Walking Man approach in the street, while the figure behind Rick stalks closer and closer and...

A board CREAKS. Rick spins, gasping, as:

WHAM! A SHOVEL hits him in the face and we

CRASH TO BLACK

WE HOLD IN BLACK, hearing a voice:

LITTLE BOY (V.O.)
(shouting, echoey)
Daddy...Daddy!

RICK (O.S.)
(moaning)
Carl...

AND WE FADE UP FROM BLACK to:

RICK

lying on the yellowed grass, semi-conscious:

RICK
Carl.

LITTLE BOY (O.S.)
Daddy!

RICK
Carl. Carl. I found you.

RICK'S POV

Looking up through weeds, TILTED at an angle, we see:

A black boy, DUANE (age 10), standing over us with a shovel, getting ready to whack us again, calling past Rick toward the street....

DUANE
Daddy, I got this sumbitch! I'm
gonna smack him dead!

RICK

turns his head on the grass, sees:

THE STREET (RICK'S POV)

A fast, jarring, handheld glimpse:

Walking Man reaches the curb. Another MAN, out of nowhere, steps up fast with a small handgun. POP! Head shot.

Walking Man crumples, flops on the pavement.

RICK

jerks his gaze, shocked. The gunman turns, comes running up the grass...

RICK'S POV

...and skids to a stop: MORGAN JONES, Duane's dad, aiming the small .38 revolver.

MORGAN

Whoa, whoa, wait! Is he one of them?

DUANE

Looks like it.

Morgan maneuvers his son back, cautiously peers closer.

MORGAN

Mister?

RICK

Blinking, blinded by the sun, confused.

RESUME POV

MORGAN

He say something? I thought I heard him say something.

DUANE

He called me Carl.

MORGAN

Son, you know they don't talk.

DUANE

Careful, Dad. I don't like him.

Morgan, tense as hell, thrusts his .38 at the lens, leans closer, peering down.

MORGAN

Mister? What's the bandage for?

RICK

Wh--what?

MORGAN

What kinda wound? Hey, you hear me?

TIGHT ON RICK

Face in the grass. Morgan presses the gun to his head.

MORGAN

Answer me, damn you! What's your wound? Tell me or I'll kill you!

Rick tries to answer, but loses consciousness as we

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Rick wakes up in bed. The room is dark, one candle.

The windows are covered with blankets, faint daylight seeping around the edges.

Morgan's at the bureau, stripping off Playtex gloves so he can wash his hands in a bowl of water. Duane's down at the end, peering at Rick over the footboard.

Rick turns his head slowly on the pillow, realizing:

He's restrained: wrists strapped down tightly to the bed frame with knotted bungee cords.

MORGAN

Got that bandage changed out. Was pretty rank.

Rick says nothing. Morgan scrubs his hands.

MORGAN

Looks like you had some doctor work on you. That right?

RICK

Must have.

MORGAN

What was it? Your wound.

RICK

Gunshot.

MORGAN

Gunshot?

Rick nods, perplexed by this conversation.

MORGAN
What else? Anything?

RICK
Gunshot ain't enough?

Morgan approaches, tense. Pissed.

MORGAN
Look. I ask. You answer. Common
courtesy.

He leans closer, as if talking to a child:

MORGAN
Did. You. Get. Bit.

RICK
Bit?

MORGAN
Bit. Chewed. Maybe scratched.
Anything like that?

RICK
No. I got...well, shot. Just
shot. Far as I know.

Morgan relaxes a bit, but still isn't convinced.

MORGAN
We'll see.

Morgan heads for the door.

RICK
You gonna keep me tied up?

Morgan pauses, looks back. Says nothing. He exits, taking his son with him...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rick lying in darkness, still strapped to the bed.

A faint glow of candlelight from the outer room spills through the doorway. FAINT SOUNDS: a spoon stirring a pot, utensils being laid out. Whispers.

A candle appears in the doorway. Morgan peers in, quietly enters. He pulls a chair to the bed, sits down.

The gun is tucked in Morgan's belt, ready.

Duane hovers in the doorway, holding a baseball bat.

Morgan sets the candle on the nightstand, reaches a hand toward Rick's face. Rick flinches away, but:

MORGAN
(quietly)
Let me.

Rick settles. Morgan puts his hand on Rick's forehead, feeling his temperature. A long beat, their eyes locked.

MORGAN
You're cool enough. Fever would
have killed you by now.

RICK
I don't think I have one.

MORGAN
No. Be hard to miss.

Beat. Morgan pulls a knife. Gives Rick a hard look.

MORGAN
This knife. Take a moment. Good
long look. How sharp it is. You
try anything, I'll kill you
with it. Don't think I won't.

Rick absorbs that, nods.

Morgan slices through the restraints, freeing Rick's wrists. Rick brings his hands shakily to his chest -- no feeling, circulation's been cut off a long time.

MORGAN
You sit up?

RICK
Ah. God.

Morgan helps him sit up...

INT. LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Rick emerges, hands still held numb and raw before him, a blanket over his shoulders. He moves slowly into a living room (not his) lit by a few candles.

Morgan stands at the table, stirring a pot over sterno warmers. Duane is pouring bottled water into tumblers.

Rick drifts, looking around.

RICK
This place. Fred and Sally
Werner's?

MORGAN
Don't know.

RICK
Neighbors. Few doors up.

MORGAN
Never met them.

RICK
(looking around)
I've been here. This is their
place.

MORGAN
It was empty when we got here.
Picked it because of the small
windows. Easier to board up.

Rick looks, sees blankets duct-taped over the front window. He touches, feels boards nailed across the window under the blankets. He hears DISTANT GROANING outside. Faint.

There's a viewing slit safety-pinned together. Rick reaches for it, but:

MORGAN
Don't. They'll see the light.

Rick turns. Morgan and Duane are watching him warily.

MORGAN
There's more of them out there
than usual. I shouldn't have
fired that shot today. Sound
draws them. Now they're all
over our street.

He and his son take their seats.

MORGAN
Stupid, using the gun. Happened
too fast, I didn't think.

Morgan ladles canned stew into a bowl, slides it to an empty chair. Motions for Rick to sit. Rick doesn't.

RICK

You didn't think.

MORGAN

No. I should have used the baseball bat instead. My mistake.

(off Rick's stare)

What?

RICK

You shot that man today.

MORGAN

Man?

Morgan and Duane trade a look.

DUANE

Weren't no man.

MORGAN

What the hell was that out of your mouth just now? Son, you speak English, I know you do.

DUANE

It wasn't a man.

Rick stares at them. A man who committed murder today is calmly correcting his son's grammar. Surreal.

RICK

I saw you. You shot him. In the street out front. A man.

MORGAN

You need glasses, friend. It was a walker.

(nods at chair)

C'mon. Sit down before you fall down.

Rick gives in, sits. Duane is seated between the men, poised with his spoon.

DUANE

Daddy, blessing.

Morgan holds out his hand to Duane, who takes it.

Duane offers his other hand. It's meant for Rick. Rick stares at it while the boy stares at him, waiting.

Feeling unreal, Rick takes the boy's hand. Morgan's watching, dips his head, keeps his eyes on Rick.

MORGAN

Father, we thank Thee for this
food, Thy blessings, and ask
You to watch over us in these
crazy days, amen.

DUANE

Amen.

The boy lets go of Rick's hand and digs in. Morgan looks to Rick, motions to the silverware. Eat. Rick picks up the spoon -- not easy. Hands not yet fully working.

MORGAN

And you. Damn fool. Just sittin'
on a porch like it's any sunny
day. You even waved to it. Jesus.

Morgan watches him take a few bites. It's dawning on him that Rick may be every bit as clueless as he seems:

MORGAN

Mister? What's wrong with you?
(pause)
You even know what's going on?

RICK

I woke up today. In the hospital.
Came home. That's all I know.

Morgan and Duane trade a look.

MORGAN

You know about the dead people,
though, right?

RICK

Saw a lot of that. Stacked like
firewood. Out on the loading
dock. Piled in trucks. Even
tossed down the stairwells.

MORGAN

Not the ones they put down. The
ones they didn't.

DUANE

The other ones.

RICK

Other ones.

MORGAN

The walkers.

Rick stares. Doesn't understand.

MORGAN

Like the one I shot. He'd have ripped into you. Tried to eat you. Taken some flesh at least. That's what they do.

Rick doesn't even know what to say to that.

MORGAN

If this is the first you're hearing it, I guess I know how it must sound.

RICK

Insane.

Yes, insane. But...

RICK

I saw a...woman. In the park today. She...looked at me. Reached out.

Morgan nods without question, keeps eating.

RICK

They're out there now? In the street?

MORGAN

They get more active after dark sometimes. Maybe it's the cool air. Or, hell, maybe it's just me firing that damn gun today.

(beat)

Should be fine, long as we stay quiet and they don't figure out we're in here. They'll probably wander off by morning.

Rick searches their faces, trying to make sense of it.

MORGAN

They were saying on the news some kind of virus. They were

(MORE)

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 guessing. There was a whole lot
 of that going on. All those
 experts looking scared down to
 their socks.

(beat)

Then the broadcasts stopped,
 that's the last we heard. That
 was a few weeks ago.

Rick absorbs this. He was in a coma at least that long.

MORGAN
 One thing I do know. Don't get
 bit. I saw your bandage, that's
 what I was afraid of.
 (off Rick's look)
 Bite kills you. Fever burns you
 out. After a while you come
 back. Hungry.

Rick was about to take a bite of stew. He hesitates, forces
 himself to take the bite. Glances to Duane.

The boy has stopped eating. In a quiet voice:

DUANE
 Seen it happen.

There's a story behind that. Rick doesn't press. They
 resume eating in silence, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bare mattresses on the floor, blankets, sleeping bags,
 one candle lit. Duane is tucked against his dad, sleeping
 fitfully. But the men are awake.

Listening to the sounds outside. Weird groans. Occasional
 distant snarls. Thumps.

MORGAN
 (softly)
 Carl. Is he your son?

Rick gives him a look.

MORGAN
 You said his name today. And I
 saw that in your pocket.

Rick pulls his get-well card from Carl out of his robe pocket, smiles at the crayon lettering.

RICK
He's about your boy's age.

MORGAN
He with his mother?

RICK
I hope so.

MORGAN
Me too.

Duane stirs, still half-asleep:

DUANE
Did you ask him?

MORGAN
(off Rick's look)
The gunshot. We got a bet going.
My boy says you're a bank robber.

Rick can't help smiling.

RICK
Yeah, that's me. Deadly as
Dillinger. Ka-pow.
(shakes his head)
Police officer.

Morgan smiles...

A CAR ALARM STARTS BLARING out there in the night. Duane jerks fully awake with a gasp.

MORGAN
It's okay, son, I'm here. It's
nothing.
(to Rick)
One of them must have bumped a
car.

RICK
You sure?

MORGAN
Happened once before. Went for
a few minutes.

The men trade a look, hearts pounding. Both uncertain.

Wordless agreement: They rise, blowing out the candle, move to the front window, to the duct-taped blanket.

Morgan carefully undoes the safety-pins of the viewing slit. Opens it a few inches, just enough to see out. A spill of moonlight hits his eye.

POV (THROUGH BLANKET SLIT)

Dark street. Figures moving around out there. Walking, aimless. Some are turning toward the noise of the car alarm -- a vehicle parked down the street.

RICK AND MORGAN

MORGAN

That Honda down the street.
Same one as last time.

Morgan eases aside so Rick can take a look. Rick peers out, sees the car lights blinking as the alarm blares.

Joining them: Duane undoes a lower viewing slit, peers out too.

MORGAN

Think we're okay.

RICK

That sound. Won't it bring more
of them?

MORGAN

Nothing we can do about it now.
Just wait it out till morning.

Suddenly: Duane. A sharp intake of breath. Horror.

DUANE

She's here.

Morgan reacts, moves Rick aside, looks out.

MORGAN

Don't look, Duane. Just get
away from the window.
(off Duane's hesitation)

Go.

The boy tears himself away from the window, runs back to their mattress, throws himself down.

Morgan hurries after him. Rick is left at the window, no clue what's going on.

MORGAN

Shhh. Quiet now.

Morgan gathers his son in his arms, the boy huddled against him, crying on his chest.

RICK

turns back to the viewing slit, peers out.

RICK'S POV

A WALKER is drifting up the lawn toward us. A woman. Her skin, once black, now the color of dead fish.

RICK

pulls back. It's like she knows they're inside. In fact, as he watches, she changes course from the window and drifts toward the front door.

Rick loses sight of her. He leaves the slit, eases to the door instead. Listens. Barely breathing.

He puts his eye to the peephole.

PEEPHOLE POV (FISHEYE LENS)

The woman is just outside, wildly distorted in the fish-eye effect. Turning her head, also listening.

She reaches her hand out toward the door, and:

Soft scratching. She wants in.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Morgan's holding his son, grabs a pillow, whispering:

MORGAN

Gotta be quiet now, Duane. Cry
into the pillow.

RICK AT THE DOOR

At the door. Frozen. Listening, as:

The scratching stops. Pause. He looks down:

The door knob is turning slowly back and forth. She's trying to get in. But boards are nailed in place.

Rick backs away. Goes back to his spot, sinks to the floor. Riveted to the doorknob revolving slowly, compulsively.

Rick looks over. Sees tears shimmering in Morgan's eyes.

MORGAN

She died in the other room. On that bed in there. Nothing I could do. That fever. Her skin gave off heat like a furnace.

(pause)

I should have put her down. I know that. But. I didn't have it in me. The mother of my child.

And it's clear: he hates himself for it.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

The street mostly deserted now.

One walker, male, sitting on the curb, slumped against a telephone pole in a torpor state common to their behavior, like a deep stupor.

Also, a body in the street: another walker, for-real dead, a smaller female, torn apart and eaten.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

ON DOOR: A crowbar enters frame, pulls the boards...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The door opens. Rick and Morgan cautious. They emerge, trailed by Duane. Nobody got much sleep last night.

Rick has the baseball bat, keeping his voice down, eyeing the walker slumped on the curb.

RICK

We're sure they're dead?

(off Morgan's look)

I know. But I have to ask. Least one more time.

MORGAN

They're dead.

Rick nods -- okay. He turns and moves off the porch, heads across the lawn. Morgan brings the crowbar as backup.

On the curb: The walker rouses, looks back, sees them coming. It heaves itself up, lurching to its feet, but:

Rick, fast, without pause, hauls off and splits its skull with a few brutal blows of the bat.

The walker collapses, twitches at his feet, goes still.

Rick, breathing hard, pauses to see how he feels about what he's just done. In truth, right now, he doesn't feel much of anything.

He looks out at the female lying eaten in the street, throws a questioning look to Morgan.

MORGAN

If they don't find fresh, they'll eat one of their own. Take one of the weaker ones.

They start down the street toward Rick's house. Morgan motions for Duane to stick close.

RICK

(points)

That porch. Where you found me. You ever see anybody over there? That house?

MORGAN

Area was pretty deserted by the time we got here. Saw a few folks scurry out, a few last holdouts, but not that house.

INT. RICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Rick leads the way in. Stops. Looks around at the wreckage that used to be his home.

RICK

They're alive.
(looks to Morgan)
My wife and son.

Morgan, doubtful, looking around.

RICK

At least they were when they left.

MORGAN

How can you know? From the look of this place...

RICK

I found empty drawers in the bedroom. They packed some clothes. Not all, they were in a hurry, but enough to travel.

MORGAN

(hesitates)

Anybody could have broken in here and stolen clothes.

Rick gazes at the walls, shaking his head.

RICK

See the framed photos on the walls?

Morgan looks, sees nothing. Blank spots.

RICK

Neither do I. Some random thief take those too, you think?

Rick abruptly crosses to a cabinet, rummages wildly.

RICK

Our photo albums. Family pictures. All gone.

MORGAN

Photo albums.

Morgan shakes his head in wonder, sinks onto the arm of the couch, starts laughing.

MORGAN

My wife. Same goddamn thing. There I am packing survival shit, she's grabbing photo albums.

He laughs until he cries, wipes the tears away. Duane appears in the doorway, watching.

DUANE

They're in Atlanta, I bet.

Morgan considers, looks to Rick with a nod.

MORGAN

That's right. If they got out of here okay, they're in Atlanta.

RICK

Why there?

MORGAN

Refugee center. A huge one,
they said. Before the broadcasts
stopped. Military protection.
Food. Shelter.

(off Rick's look)

Told people to go there. Said
it'd be the safest.

DUANE

Plus they got that disease place.

MORGAN

Center for Disease Control.
Said they were working out how
to solve this thing.

HOLD ON Rick absorbing this. A feeling of hope stirring
in him for the first time since he woke up.

FOLLOW HIM into the kitchen. He opens a drawer, rummages
sets of keys, finds the set he's looking for...

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The back door unlocks. Rick leads them in. Morgan and
Duane carry duffels, cleans stacks of clothes. Rick closes
and bolts the door.

The place is deserted. Messy, but not trashed. Some broken-
open vending machines. On the counter: a pot of coffee
containing a layer of mold. A tray of fossilized donuts.

They make their way through the halls, past offices and
silent cubicles. Rick nods the direction:

RICK

Back there.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rows of lockers. Several shower stalls.

They enter. Rick goes to a shower stall, turns the handle,
puts his hand under the water. Waits.

He turns to them, sees their hopeful faces.

RICK

Gas pilot's still on.

TIMECUT:

Hot water. Three showers going full-blast. Steam billowing.

Each of them in a stall, lathering and shampooing like crazy. There's a lot of joyful hollering going on.

TIMECUT:

Silence now. The guys wearing towels, basking in the aftermath of a hot shower. Rick and Morgan seated on the locker room bench.

Rick grabs some folded clothes: jeans, underwear, shirts. Boy's size.

Rick motions Duane over, holds up one of the jeans.

RICK

Thought so. You and Carl, just about the same size.

He hands the clothes over, nods toward the back.

RICK

Dressing room back there.

Delighted, the boy hurries off, leaving the men.

MORGAN

What do you say, Duane?

DUANE

(calling back)

Thank you!

The boy's gone. The men start sorting clothes. Quietly, staying out of Duane's earshot:

RICK

Atlanta sounds like a good deal. Safer, anyway. People.

MORGAN

That's where we were headed. Things got crazy. Lot of panic. Streets weren't fit to be on. Then...my wife. Couldn't travel, not with her hurt. Had to find a place and lay low.

(quieter)

After she died, we just stayed hunkered down. I guess we just froze in place.

RICK
Plan to move on?

MORGAN
When we're ready.

Morgan pauses. Evasive. Ashamed. Finally looks Rick in the eye.

MORGAN
Haven't worked up to it yet.

A long look between them. Things not said.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

At the gun closet: Rick, dressed in a fresh uniform, picking through what's left in the gun closet. He pulls some shotguns, finds a few sidearms. Nothing fancy, more like leftovers.

RICK
A lot of it's gone missing.

He relays them to Morgan, who lays them on blankets. Duane is behind them, watching.

DUANE
Daddy? Can I learn to shoot?
I'm old enough.

MORGAN
Hell yes, you're gonna learn.
But we're gonna do it carefully,
teach you to respect the weapon.

RICK
That's right. It's not a toy.
You pull the trigger, you have
to mean it. Always remember
that, Duane.

DUANE
Yes sir.

Rick finds one BOLT-ACTION RIFLE with a SCOPE, an older weapon with a wooden stock. He pulls it down.

He hands it to Morgan. A moment of eye contact.

Rick turns back, sorts the remaining ammo boxes, keeping his voice even:

RICK

You can take that one. Nothing fancy. Scope's accurate.

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

An enclosed lot. The group emerges from the back door, heading toward the cars, each person toting a blanket of weapons. Morgan has the rifle and scope.

RICK

Conserve your ammo. Goes faster than you think at target practice. Find yourself a nice open field where they can't sneak up on you.

They come to a dirty Ford Explorer parked near a few police cruisers. Rick unlocks a cruiser's door, lays his duffel and weapons in. At the Explorer: Duane doing the same.

RICK

Sure you won't come along?

MORGAN

Another week maybe. By then at least Duane'll know how to shoot and I won't be so rusty. Improves our chances on the road.

Rick thinks a moment, ducks into the car, pulls out a WALKIE-TALKIE. He turns it on a moment, gets a healthy dose of static, turns it off, hands it to Morgan.

RICK

You got one battery. Week from now, I'll start turning mine on a few minutes every day at dawn. You get up there, that's how you find me.

MORGAN

You think ahead.

RICK

Can't afford not to. Not anymore.

MORGAN

One thing. They may not seem like much, one at a time. But in a group? Riled up and hungry? Hell, they almost turned our car over. Watch your ass.

RICK

You watch yours.

MORGAN

(offers his hand)

You're a good man, Rick. I hope you find your wife and son.

They shake. Duane comes up to say goodbye.

RICK

Be seeing you, Duane. Take care of your old man.

DUANE

Yes, sir.

Duane's gaze suddenly shifts, seeing something:

Rick turns, sees it too: a WALKER on the other side of the chainlink fence, watching them.

It's wearing a moldy version of the same uniform Rick has on. A NAME TAG: "Leon Basset." The rookie. It approaches, stops at the fence. It clings there, fingers poking through the chainlink, starts shaking the fence and moaning.

Rick is sickened. Unholsters his gun. Off Morgan's look:

RICK

Leon Basset. Didn't think much of him. Careless and dumb. But I can't leave him like this.

MORGAN

They'll hear the shot.

RICK

Let's not be here when they show up.

Morgan nods, backs off. Rick takes a deep breath.

Quickly, before he can change his mind, Rick strides to the fence, presses the gun through the chainlink.

BLAM! The head snaps back, the corpse crumples to the ground.

Pause. The guys staring. Morgan, especially, wrestling with what he just saw.

With nothing more said, they get in their cars and go their separate ways. A final wave from Duane...

EXT. RICK'S STREET - DAY

The Explorer comes cruising up the street.

Inside: Morgan and Duane look at Rick's empty house as they pass it...

EXT. ROAD INTO SUBURBS - DAWN

The same stretch of road where Rick found the bicycle.

Rick's cruiser comes into view, pulls over. Rick gets out, enters the park...

INT. WERNER HOUSE - DAY

Morgan and Duane enter the house, laying out all the stuff they brought home. Morgan pauses, sad, looks around.

He meets Duane's gaze. They both want to leave this place, be with people again. Having Rick there reminded them of that. Morgan give his son a smile -- it'll be okay.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Rick walks up to where he saw the dead bicyclist, but:

The grass is bare. She's gone.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

ON DOOR: Boards are being nailed back into place...

EXT. PARK - DAY

Rick walking under sun-dappled leaves. Puzzled. Searching.

Finally seeing: She's about a hundred yards off. Crawling slowly.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Duane on the bare mattress, reading some comic books.

Morgan goes to a pile of luggage. He pulls a particular bag, a little suitcase. Duane is watching him.

MORGAN

You read your comic books a while. I'll be upstairs.

He heads up the steps with the bag. Heavy silence.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The dead woman crawling. Very slowly.

No destination, no legs, pulling herself along inches at a time with her hands...

Rick arrives, gazes down. She doesn't seem to notice him.

Too intent on crawling. It's painful to watch.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Morgan in a chair at the attic window, pensive, a spill of daylight streaking in.

He opens the little suitcase on his lap, revealing:

Photo albums. The ones his wife wouldn't leave behind. And a spill of LOOSE PHOTOS in a shoebox.

He picks one: Morgan, his wife, and son. He stares at it, picks the next photo...

EXT. PARK - DAY

Rick sits down on the grass, listening to the birds, feeling his sadness. Watching the dead woman crawl.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

ATTIC WINDOW overlooking the street. One or two aimless walkers out there.

HANDS open the window, up on its tracks. ANGLE DRIFTS from the now-unobstructed line-of-sight...

A PHOTO has been taped to the window frame: a portrait of Morgan's wife taken some years ago...

CONTINUE DRIFTING from the photo, a SMOOTH PAN that brings the barrel of a rifle into view...

TRAVEL UP the barrel to reveal the rifle resting on the back of the chair. Morgan kneeling with his eye to the scope, trying it out for feel.

RIFLE SCOPE POV (LONG LENS)

Crosshairs sweeping the street. Finding a walker. Settling. Finding its head. Perfect line-up.

BLAM! The head erupts, the walker goes down, the RIFLE SHOT ECHOES for miles.

DOWNSTAIRS

Duane jumps up, to the stairs, heart pounding.

DUANE

Daddy?

MORGAN (O.S.)

It's all right, Duane. Stay there. Don't come up.

Duane, uncertain, goes back to his spot.

IN THE ATTIC

Morgan puts his eye back to the scope. Blinking away the sweat.

MORGAN

(a whisper)

Jenny. Come on, baby.

EXT. PARK - DAY

As Rick watches:

The dead woman realizes he's there. Turns her head, gazes up at him. Starts reaching. Moaning. Chewing the air. There's something deeply pathetic about it.

Rick pulls his pistol. Softly:

RICK

I'm sorry this happened to you.

He abruptly FIRES a round through her brain. She goes still. He rises, walks away.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Morgan at the scope, finger on the trigger, waiting.

RIFLE SCOPE POV

Many more walkers out there now, drawn by the earlier rifle shot. Crosshairs sweeping among them, searching.

Coming through the crowd of them: His wife.

MORGAN

An intake of breath. Watching her.

RIFLE SCOPE POV

She keeps coming, less aimless than the others. Knowing where she's headed...

MORGAN

Breath gone. The world seems to stop for a moment. His finger tightens on the trigger.

RIFLE SCOPE POV

The crosshairs find her forehead. Perfect line-up.

At that moment: She seems to pause and look up. Staring right at him. As if sensing he's there.

MORGAN

A second passes, but it's an eternity. His finger eases off the trigger.

He can't do it. Again.

His head droops, sagging over the rifle, and he starts to weep. It turns into deep, deep sobs of regret, as we

FADE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Rick's police cruiser travels up the highway under a blazing blue sky past fields and farms.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Rick at the wheel, speaking into his radio handset:

RICK
...broadcasting on emergency
band...traveling on highway
85...anyone out there...anyone
hear my voice, come back...

He waits...no response. He's been at this a while. He glances at the gas gauge...

TIGHT ON GAS GAUGE

Needle dipping low.

RESUME RICK

Concerned about the fuel. Keeps trying the radio:

RICK
 ...hello, hello, can anybody
 hear my voice...

EXT. CAMP - WOODED AREA - DAY

Smoke is drifting from a campfire. PEOPLE are crossing frame, doing heavy chores, carrying wood. RACHEL (college age) stops in frame, eyes going wide, as:

RICK'S VOICE
 (filtered, static)
 ...anyone out there...can anyone
 hear me...please respond...

ANGLE SHIFTS TIGHT TO A POLICE SCANNER hooked to a small generator. Rachel drops her wood and comes running...

We're in a small wooded encampment outside Atlanta (not the big refugee center we might have expected): an OLD RV (atop which sits DALE, 60's, on guard duty with a rifle), ragtag TENTS, other VEHICLES.

Rachel grabs the handset, toggles:

RACHEL
 Hey! Hello?

RICK (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 ...hello...can you hear my
 voice...

A few others are gathering to listen, as:

RACHEL
 Yes, I can hear you! You're
 coming through! Over!

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Rick's hearing nothing but crackles and static, as:

RICK
 ...broadcasting on emergency
 channel...traveling on highway
 85...if anybody reads, please
 respond...

EXT. CAMP - DAY

RACHEL
 Yes! Yes, I'm reading you!

She tweaks the dial, trying to clear the signal, but Rick's voice is breaking up:

RICK
--hello--anybo--rgency band--
aveling on highw--

RACHEL
My name is Rachel! We're here
just outside the--

She loses the signal in a storm of static.

RACHEL
Damn it.

She keeps tweaking the knob, trying to get the signal back, toggling:

RACHEL
Hello? Hello?

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Rick gives up. Clicks off. Hangs the radio.

Gazing ahead. One eye on the gas gauge. Looking tired, haggard, unshaven.

Up ahead, he sees:

EXT. GAS STATION ON HIGHWAY - DAY

In a repeat of the teaser:

Rick's cruiser pulls quietly in past all the abandoned cars. He stops, gets out. Listens to the silence.

The breeze. That hand-scrawled sign "NO GAS." The faint droning of flies.

He starts to walk. The desolation profound...

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Rachel looks to somebody offscreen:

RACHEL
He didn't hear me. I didn't get
a chance to warn him.

Behind her is JIM (50's), in a John Deere cap:

JIM
 Try and raise him again.
 (shift his gaze)
 Go on, you know best how to
 work the thing.

A HAND reaches in, raises the handset, toggles:

VOICE (O.S.)
 Hello, hello. Is the person who
 called still on the air?

Beat. TILT UP to reveal: Shane. Rick's best friend and
 fellow cop. He keeps tweaking the signal...

SHANE
 Officer Shane Walsh here,
 broadcasting to unknown person.
 Please respond. Hello, hello,
 come back...

Nothing. Just static now. Shane shakes his head.

SHANE
 He's gone.

The others fall silent. "Gone" sounds ominous.

SHANE
 (off their looks)
 We'll try again. Every twenty
 minutes or so.

Shane hangs up the handset, as:

WOMAN
 There are others. It's not just
 us.

He turns. A WOMAN is among the others. Watching him.

SHANE
 We knew there would be. That's
 why we have the scanner on.

WOMAN
 Lot of good it's doing. I've
 been saying for a week we have
 to put signs out on 85. Warn
 people away from the city.

Shane glances around, uncomfortable at being challenged
 in front of the group.

SHANE

Haven't had time.

WOMAN

We need to make time.

SHANE

Right now that's a luxury we can't afford. We're staying alive here day to day, you may have noticed.

JIM

Who the hell would we send anyway?

WOMAN

I'll go. Give me a vehicle.

She turns and stalks off. A BOY in the group is horrified:

BOY

Mom!

Shane rises, motions to the boy -- don't worry -- and catches up to her. She's pissed. So is he, but he keeps his voice even, speaking quietly:

SHANE

Wait. Now look. Nobody goes anywhere alone, you know that. Be pissed at me all you want, but it's just not gonna happen.

She pulls away, glowering, moves off...

INT. TENT - DAY

...and enters a tent. He follows her in.

SHANE

I'm not putting you in danger. Even if you wanna slap me upside the head sometimes. You feel the need, go right ahead.

She softens a bit at that. He goes to her, takes her in his arms, speaking intimately now:

SHANE

Baby. You cannot run off half cocked. Promise me. If not for my sake or yours, then for his.

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

(nods outside)

He's been through a lot. Doesn't
need more grief. Okay?

She gives in, nods. Shane pulls her close, gives her a
deep kiss. It lingers. Then he walks out.

Beat. The boy drifts to the tent flap, peers in. She gives
him a wan smile, forcing it for his sake.

WOMAN

Don't worry. I'm not going
anywhere.

EXT. GAS STATION ON HIGHWAY - DAY

WIDE, WIDE ANGLE:

That landscape, all those cars, all that silence.

And then: a DISTANT GUNSHOT echoes across the fields.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The little girl flies back, hitting the ground, a bunny
slipper flying off one foot. Her teddy bear rolling,
tumbling, coming to a stop in the dust...

RICK

Horrified at what he just had to do.

SURROUNDING CARS

Many of the CORPSES rouse, faces appearing, sitting up,
staring at Rick.

He gazes around -- oh shit. He thought they were all
actually dead. He had no idea so many of them weren't.

He hears a car door creak open -- then another. A few are
already crawling and slithering.

Rick hauls ass back toward the cruiser, walkers appearing
in the rows around him, fast glimpses as he runs.

He jumps in his car, starts the engine, backs out fast. A
walker appears at his side window, clawing the glass, but
Rick puts it in drive, accelerates away...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Rick driving, repeating endlessly into the handset:

RICK
 ...anyone out there...please
 respond...broadcasting on
 emergency band...highway 85...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The cruiser comes up the road, sputtering and slowing down, jerking to a stop on fumes. Then:

Silence. Just the engine ticking in the heat.

Rick gets out. He reaches back in, slings his duffel bag of weapons over his shoulder.

He pops the trunk, pulls a gas can, starts walking...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Sun beating down. Duffel getting heavier. Rick pauses, seeing a FARM HOUSE a few hundred yards ahead. He leaves the highway, cuts across the field...

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

...and approaches the house.

RICK
 HELLO? POLICE OFFICER OUT HERE!
 CAN I BORROW SOME GAS?

He moves to the front door, POUNDS on it. Nothing. It's dead quiet. Eerie.

Rick circles the house, peers in a window, sees an empty kitchen. He continues to the next window, gazes in...

RICK'S HANDHELD POV (THROUGH WINDOW)

...and sees a FAMILY sprawled on the floor of the parlor.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Rick is at the window, peering in, face grim. TILT DOWN to the BODIES on the floor. All shot in the head.

ANGLE GOES TO A RIFLE dangling from a hand. WE PAN UP TO THE DEAD MAN holding the gun. He's on the couch, the wall behind him spattered brown.

CONTINUE PANNING to the wall. Scrawled in paint: "GOD FORGIVE US."

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Rick turns away, shaken. FOLLOW as he goes around the house, sees a PICKUP TRUCK near the barn.

He goes to the truck. It's unlocked, but no keys. He gazes back at the house, nauseated at the thought of having to go in there to look. But then:

He hears a WHINNY. He turns, sees a HORSE eating grass in the field. She lifts her head, stares back at him.

TIMECUT:

Rick is easing into the field from the barn, a rope coiled in his hands, trying not to spook the horse.

The horse watches him, ears swiveling. Bends down to crop some more grass.

RICK
Easy now. Easy.

The horse lifts its head, shies a bit. Uncertain.

RICK
Not gonna hurt you. Nothing
like that. More like a proposal.

The animal just stares. Rick eases ever closer.

RICK
There's this place. Up the road
a ways. It's safe. Food, shelter,
people. Other horses too, I
bet. How's that sound?

He steps up. She lets him gently slip the rope over her head. A good start, at least...

TIMECUT:

Rick leads the horse from the barn, now saddled.

RICK
I haven't done this for years.
Let's go easy, okay?

He cautiously gets his foot in the stirrup, waits to see how the horse will react. She waits patiently.

He swings himself up into the saddle. Rick relaxes, prods gently. The horse starts off...

MOVING SHOT

All easy and pleasant at first. A nice slow walk.

But it's been a while since she's been ridden. She likes it. The walk turns into a trot, then a canter...

RICK

Whoa, whoa...

...and then a full gallop.

RICK

WHOA!

The horse isn't stopping. All Rick can do is hang on at first...but then he gets the rhythm of being in the saddle, starts to enjoy it too, and is swept by an unexpected joy that makes him laugh out loud.

It's a feeling that won't last long, because:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Rick grimly rides the horse up at a slow walk, stops and gazes off. Softly:

RICK

Holy God.

WIDE, WIDE REVERSE ANGLE

Atlanta before us.

Skyscrapers looming like silent tombstones. Several are just charred husks -- they caught fire at some point and simply burned out of control until the fires died.

Rick and the horse are standing on the FREEWAY. The lanes going into the city are empty...but the lanes heading out are choked with THOUSANDS OF ABANDONED CARS AND SUVs.

There are many wrecks in evidence -- doors hanging open, fenders crumpled, windshields smashed.

Everybody tried to leave at once. Some ran out of gas, some had accidents, and this is the result: an endless river of dead metal. Rick spurs the horse forward.

TRACKING RICK AND THE HORSE

CAMERA MOVING PAST all those stalled and wrecked cars.
The horse is spooked. So is Rick.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ATLANTA STREETS - VARIOUS ANGLES - DAY

Rick rides slowly down a major street. Windows are smashed.
Cars are overturned. Trash and debris everywhere.

Rick moves past:

AN ABRAMS TANK sits mutely in the street, muzzle aimed at
the sky. The CORPSE OF A SOLDIER is sprawled across the
turret where he was killed and eaten, CROWS now picking
at his remains.

Other corpses too. Eaten. They were slaughtered here and
torn apart days or weeks ago, a ghastly Alamo.

FIGURES appear here and there...walkers...they peer out
of broken windows...straggle out of doorways...one emerges
from an abandoned city bus...

They start following Rick and the horse. Rick gets the
horse to a trot and easily outdistances them. The horse
is nervous. Rick pats her neck, reassures her:

RICK
It's all right, girl. Steady.
There's just a few. Nothing we
can't outrun.

Suddenly, Rick hears a sound...a DISTANT RUMBLE that comes
and goes teasingly.

He reins the horse up, stops to listen. Just silence now.

CAMERA MOVES IN on Rick as he keeps listening, holding
his breath, wondering if he imagined it...

There it is again...a DISTANT RUMBLE. For a moment, the
sound becomes distinct -- WHUP-WHUP-WHUP-WHUP.

Helicopter rotors?

Rick reins back, trying to track the sound. It echoes
from various directions, bouncing off buildings.

Rick is craning in the saddle, desperate, and:

There! A helicopter! A fast, fleeting glimpse of it between buildings, there and gone in an instant. Hard to say what kind, but it might have been a MILITARY HUEY.

RICK

Hyah!

Rick spurs the horse to a gallop, racing in that direction.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Rick rides hard, following the helicopter sound, veering around a corner at a full gallop...

ON THE STREET

...and he reins back in shock, cold fear slamming through him, because:

REVERSE ANGLE

This street filled with walking dead. Not just some stragglers like before, but dozens of them.

The walkers turn their faces to Rick. Dead, greedy eyes.

The mass of dead surge toward us. It's animal feeding-frenzy instinct, as Morgan had warned.

Rick wheels the horse around, gallops back around the corner, but:

The dead are surging from that direction too. The horse panics and rears, almost throwing Rick.

The animal bolts toward the tank, Rick hanging on, walkers closing from all directions.

The horse plows into them, walkers grabbing and clawing, Rick fumbling for the duffel, trying to pull a shotgun...

The horse starts rearing in circles, getting swarmed by the dead. And Rick is thrown.

He lands hard on the pavement, wind knocked out, losing the duffel of weapons. He looks up and sees:

THE HORSE

rearing and falling, screaming and kicking as it disappears into a seething mass of snarling dead.

RICK

doesn't have time to be horrified. The dead are swarming the horse in a mindless frenzy, but more than a few are noticing Rick.

They come for him.

Rick scrambles back in terror, ass-and-elbows across the pavement, toward the back of the tank, trying to get away, and just as they lunge at him, he rolls...

UNDER THE TANK

...under the rear of the vehicle, onto his stomach, crawling forward as they grab his ankles...

He kicks free, keeps crawling, trapped by the TANK TREADS on either side, creating an enclosed dark tunnel open only at the front and back...

Walkers crawl under the tank after him, growling like dogs, trying to grab his feet...

Rick keeps going toward daylight at the front of the tank, pulling his sidearm from his holster (his only weapon now). Forward is his only means escape, but:

Walkers there too. Crouching and crawling under. He's getting hemmed front and back.

He FIRES TWICE toward the front, THREE TIMES toward the back, killing a few. But they keep closing on him, far outnumbering the bullets in his gun.

In that horrible moment:

Rick knows he's dead.

We can see it in his eyes. There's no way he'll let himself get torn apart. He puts the gun to his own head...

RICK

Lori. Carl. I'm sorry.

...rolls onto his back to pull the trigger...

...and sees an open BELLY HATCH above his face.

He scrambles up through the hatch into the tank, walkers snarling and clawing as he pulls his legs up...

INT. TANK - DAY

He SLAMS the hatch in their faces. Sits there a moment, heart beating and mind racing. He leans back against the bulkhead, catching his breath.

A DEAD SOLDIER nearby. Lying there slumped.

The soldier turns his head. Looks at him.

They stare at each other a moment. Rick's breath leaves his body. The soldier starts to lean forward...

BLAM! The last bullet in Rick's gun. Stunningly loud in the steel confines of the tank. The soldier's head snaps back, punching a halo of blood onto the bulkhead, as:

SLOW MOTION SEQUENCE

Only slightly SLO-MO, enough to be weird, disorienting:

As the gunshot ECHOES OFF:

Rick cringes -- oh, fuck, mistake. His hearing's gone.

A high ringing tone in his ears, like being in a vacuum.

He looks up. A round glimpse of daylight: the upper turret hatch is open. If they get in up there, he's dead.

Groggy and dazed: He leans over, reaching, pulls the dead soldier's sidearm, a NATO-approved 9MM COLT AUTOMATIC.

Checks the breech. Loaded.

He pushes to his feet, unsteady, starts up the ladder toward the turret hatch. Eyes on that round hole of daylight above. Dreading it as he gets closer.

A face appears up there. He thrusts the Colt up, FIRES. He barely hears the gunshot this time: just a muffle.

The face disappears, falling away. Rick gets up there, puts his head through the hatch, sees:

RICK'S HANDHELD POV (SLO-MO EFFECT GONE)

On the ground: His duffel lying there. Weapons scattered among the walkers. Even worse, his WALKIE-TALKIE, the one he promised Morgan he'd turn on every morning at dawn.

Walkers are swarming, climbing the tank to get at him. His hearing is starting to come back, real sounds returning: their grunts, snarls, moans...

RICK

reaches up, pulls the hatch down, as dead hands come scabbling...

INT. TANK - DAY

Rick gets the hatch locked. Slides back down, drops heavily to the floor. Catching his breath.

He sits up. Leans heavily on the bulkhead. Spent.

His hearing slowly returning. He can hear his own breathing now in the silence of the tank.

And the sounds outside:

EXT. TANK - VARIOUS ANGLES - DAY

Walkers everywhere. A disorienting frenzy. Teeth and flailing hands. The horse on its back, thrashing and kicking weakly in the swarm...

INT. TANK - DAY

TIGHT ON RICK:

A pensive silence. He glances around, hopeless. Knowing this tank will very likely be his tomb.

Listless, he raises the Colt, ejects the mag to check it. It's got a full load of rounds.

He shoves the mag back in. Considers what to do.

He sits there for a while. Numb.

The SHOT HOLDS, and just when we think there's nothing left to break the silence:

A SOFT CRACKLE OF STATIC. A voice.

VOICE

(filtered)

Hey, you. Dumbass. You in the tank. You cozy in there?

END CREDIT MUSIC begins, as:

CAMERA CLOSES IN as Rick turns his head, stunned. Staring toward the forward compartment at the radio...

EXT. TANK - DAY

ANGLE LOOKING DOWN:

CAMERA RISES SLOWLY, DRIFTING UP FROM THE TANK, dreamlike, revealing more and more of the street below...

..more and more walkers arriving, flailing en masse...

...an ever-widening shot, a vast snarling frenzy...

An ocean of them.

FADE OUT