

THE GENIUS

RED RIVER VALLEY, NORTH DAKOTA - DUSK

A blizzard fills the screen.

Headlights gradually emerge and a van with military plates comes to a stop next to a guard gate. Two hooded figures climb out and struggle against the freezing wind towards what looks like a farmer's house.

INT. FARMER'S HOUSE

The two men remove snow-clogged boots and sopping parkas, revealing bright blue jumpsuits with "321st Missile Wing" emblazoned on the back, and offsetting orange ascots.

We're inside a Minuteman III Missile Launch Control Center.

JERRY, the older and huskier of the two, opens a locked satchel chained to his wrist and slides a red folder under the window to a GUARD sitting behind bullet-proof glass.

GUARD

How is it out there?

JERRY

It's a mess.

GUARD

I'll bet.

The Guard opens the folder and picks up a phone.

GUARD

Replacement team's here, sir.
(smiles)

Right.

(hangs up)

Come on through. Another twenty minutes and we were going to start looking for you.

Jerry and his Deputy, STEVE -- clean-cut, new Air Force -- are buzzed through into the secure area, where the Guard gives them back the folder and two service pistols with holsters.

STEVE

See you tomorrow.

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CONTINUED

GUARD

(drones)

See you tomorrow.

The two men strap on their holsters as they walk down a corridor to an elevator. A young GUARD with an M-16 snaps to attention.

JERRY

What's happening, Corporal?

CORPORAL

Fine, sir.

Jerry gives Steve a look as they step into the elevator. The two massive sets of steel doors close.

The men are silent as the elevator descends.

UNDERGROUND LAUNCH LEVEL

Steel and concrete give the impression that this structure could withstand a direct hit by a 5-megaton bomb. It could. As the elevator doors open, an alarm begins to wail.

Jerry and Steve walk through a series of corridors, blast doors and interlocks and finally reach the door to the launch capsule.

Jerry punches out a code on a keyboard to the side of the oval door. The door is opened by the missile COMMANDER and his DEPUTY inside the launch capsule. The alarm stops.

DEPUTY

We were worried about you guys.
The roads must be ---

JERRY

What roads?

STEVE

It's the visibility.

COMMANDER

(spotting Jerry's
moustache)

What's that?

JERRY

That's a moustache.

STEVE

New image.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The Commander surveys the moustache briefly, straightens up.

COMMANDER

I'm going home. Good night,
gentlemen.

The outgoing team leaves the capsule. Jerry and Steve step in and close the air lock door.

INT. LAUNCH CAPSULE

The 10 x 20 foot capsule is crammed with panels of high-frequency transmitters, circuit breakers, air purification and backup systems, a high-speed teleprinter with direct line to SAC headquarters, one refrigerator, one small and unprivate latrine, and two launch consoles twelve feet apart.

Each launch console has a computer terminal and a large annunciator panel that gives the status of each of the ten missiles controlled by this capsule.

A bright red strongbox with two combination locks is mounted on the capsule wall.

Steve unstraps his holster, hangs it on a hook, and sits down at the red chair at his console while Jerry walks to the rear of the capsule and inspects his moustache in the mirror.

STEVE

Number nine is still nonfunctional,
sir. All others are clean and green.

JERRY

(fingering
moustache)

I like it.

LAUNCH CAPSULE - NIGHT

Steve studies a technical manual while Jerry reads his paperback detective novel.

The message processor at each console clicks into action. Ten numerals appear: Three digits followed by three digits followed by four digits.

Steve unstraps his seatbelt, goes to the safe, and returns with two sets of technical orders. Each man compares the orders with the numbers on their computer screens. They slowly turn towards each other.

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STEVE

Holy shit, sir.

JERRY

Calm down, professor. Run your
confirmation, something's haywire.

They each type into their terminals. A few seconds later the
screens display:

LAUNCH ORDER CONFIRMED

MISSILES ENABLED:
TARGET SELECTION COMPLETE
YIELD SELECTION COMPLETE

LAUNCH TIME T MINUS 60 SECONDS
BEGIN COUNTDOWN

Both men stare at the screens. Jerry seems lost in thought.

STEVE

Sir?

JERRY

(looks up slowly)

Let's do it.

The men begin a routine they've rehearsed a thousand times.
Strapping on their holsters, they go to the red strongbox
and open their combination locks. The open box contains two
brass keys.

Each man takes one key, returns to his console, buckles his
seatbelt, and inserts the key into a slot marked "OFF, SET,
LAUNCH."

Steve is poised, awaiting an order from his commander. Jerry
stares at the key.

STEVE

Waiting for your order, sir.

JERRY

Right...go to 'set.'

STEVE

It must be simultaneous, sir.

They turn their keys to "SET."

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CONTINUED - 2

JERRY

(snaps out
of daze)

I want a voice confirmation on this.

STEVE

Thirty seconds, sir. I'm not sure
we can do that, it's not part of
the procedure ---

JERRY

Screw the procedure, I'm going to
get somebody on the goddamn phone
before I kill twenty million people.

Jerry grabs the phone. A loud wail blares from the earpiece.
He slams it down.

STEVE

Twenty seconds.

JERRY

Lieutenant, get SAC on your trans-
mitter.

STEVE

That's a security violation.

JERRY

That's an order.

STEVE

(pleading)

Major, there's fifteen seconds to
launch time.

JERRY

Goddamnit you little fuck, do you
realize what's happening up there?

STEVE

Yes, sir. They're probably all
vaporized.

Jerry picks up his phone again and stares at the blaring
receiver.

STEVE

We have orders, sir.

Jerry doesn't move.

STEVE

Sir?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

Jerry looks up. Steve is pointing his .38 automatic at him.

STEVE

Put your hand on the key, sir.

Jerry hesitates, then obeys. The monitor reads:

T-3...T-2...T-1...LAUNCH

STEVE

Launch the missiles.

JERRY

(to no
one)

I'm sorry.

He can't do it.

STEVE

Turn the key, sir.

JERRY

(struggling)

I'm trying ---

STEVE

Turn the key.

JERRY

I can't.

Steve keeps the gun on Jerry. Both men are silent. The order "LAUNCH" flashes red on the computer screens. The alarm continues to blast.

CUT TO

INT. NORAD (NORTH AMERICAN AIR DEFENSE COMMAND) - COLORADO

Several people watch Jerry being interrogated on a large video screen in a comfortable briefing room: GENERAL BERINGER, Commander of NORAD; LINCOLN CAPLAN, Secretary of Defense; U.S. SENATOR LEAVITT; DR. JOHN MCPHEARSON, Senior Adviser, Department of Defense; PATRICIA HEALY, his assistant, and assorted aides.

PSYCHIATRIST

(on video)

Did you ever have doubts?

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CONTINUED

JERRY

Sir?

PSYCHIATRIST

About your ability to perform...at the actual moment.

JERRY

No. Never.

The Psychiatrist waits for more. Nothing comes.

PSYCHIATRIST

About the moral consequences?

JERRY

(rote)

Ordinary battlefield ethics do not apply to our job, sir. Our targets have been selected to minimize civilian casualties while destroying the military and industrial capability ---

PSYCHIATRIST

Yes, yes, Major. I understand that. I think I have the basic pic ---

JERRY

You don't understand. I wanted to turn that key. I tried to, but I couldn't. My arm wouldn't work. What do you call what happened to me?

PSYCHIATRIST

I don't know, Major.

(sympathetic)

No one believes it's an easy thing to do.

Pat Healy, an intense young woman with dark hair that hides her thin face, gets up from her seat and turns down the sound. Her boss, Dr. McPhearson, a self-assured man of about forty in a sharp business suit, addresses the room from his seat.

MCPHEARSON

You all have the figures in front of you. Eighteen percent of our missilemen failed to launch, a few

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MCPHEARSON (Cont'd)
out of confusion over the procedure,
but most of them refused to believe
that the launch order was authentic.
It's a testament to the amazing
capacity of the human mind to deny
painful reality. Who wants to be-
lieve their loved ones have been
vaporized?

SECRETARY CAPLAN
But it was a test, wasn't it? They
could have ---

MCPHEARSON
Mr. Secretary, they had no way of
knowing that.

GENERAL BERINGER
(referring
to video)
A man like this shouldn't be in a
position of responsibility. I'm
surprised the screening procedures ---

MCPHEARSON
You're missing the whole point:
these are sane men, nice guys
whose only problem is they know
what we're asking them to do --
annihilate millions of perfectly
innocent human beings, which I
hope we'd all agree is an insane
act.

GENERAL BERINGER
Eighteen percent seems like a rea-
sonable failure rate, when you
consider the doubling and tripling
of our launch forces on prime
targets.

MCPHEARSON
(impatient)
Fine. And if the Soviets ever
decide to turn New York into the
world's biggest parking lot, we
can all hope to hell that the
missilemen who happen to be aiming
at Moscow don't wet their pants at
the thought of pushing the button.

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BERINGER'S AIDE

Turning the key.

McPHEARSON

Things just move too fast these days -- we've got to get these guys out of the loop.

SENATOR LEAVITT

Positive human control has been the hallmark of our nuclear triad since ---

McPHEARSON

It's a charade. Look at it this way: we get a sighting of a Soviet missile attack. How much time do we have before impact? Twenty-five minutes? And that's land-based. Six minutes if they're submarine-launched. Six minutes. Enough time to yank the President off the can to sit down with you guys and formulate a suitable war plan?

GENERAL BERINGER

Of course not. The President would order us to follow the SIOP.

McPhearson stands up, nodding.

McPHEARSON

Exactly. You follow the SIOP: you do what the computer tells you to do.

CUT TO

INT. COMPUTER CENTER DEEP IN CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN

Dr. McPhearson leads the group through a large, brightly-lit room which houses the NORAD computer system.

McPHEARSON

These computers give us instantaneous access to the state of the world -- from troop movements to Soviet missile tests to shifting weather patterns. They also feed this information to the SIOP machine. Paul?

PAUL REINER, McPhearson's other assistant, a tall, rumpled, easily excited young man, looks up from his terminal. Behind him is a low gray machine the size of a VW bug.

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REINER

(caught off
guard)

Oh. Well -- this machine thinks
about World War III. Twenty-four
hours a day, 365 days a year. By
interfacing with this --

(gestures to the
surrounding computers)

-- it constantly refines the SIOP.

SENATOR LEAVITT

Excuse me ---

REINER

Single Integrated Operating Proce-
dure. The war plan. The machine
is constantly playing war games,
estimating Soviet responses to
our responses to their responses
...it gets kind of confusing.

McPHEARSON

It's beyond the scope of anyone's
mind.

SENATOR LEAVITT

How do you tell who wins?

REINER

(almost
apologetically)

Uh...it counts the dead. Estimates
the damage. Then looks for ways to
improve our score in the next war.

McPHEARSON

(to the point)

The key decisions about how we will
respond to every conceivable nuclear
crisis have already been made by
this machine.

(pauses for effect)

But the whole trillion-dollar system
is jeopardized because we've still
got these guys down there with their
little brass keys whose only problem
is they're human. Get them out of
the loop. Get the humans out of the
goddamn loop.

(turns to Aide)

May I see that for a minute?

The Aide hands him a pocket calculator. McPhearson cracks
it open on the desk like a walnut, rips a few wires and
extracts a computer chip the size of a baby's fingernail.

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MCPHEARSON

These are your new troops. They're every general's dream: quick, clean and obedient. They don't question orders.

CAPLAN

But do they volunteer?

Everyone laughs, even Dr. McPhearson as he hands the pieces back to the startled Aide.

CAPLAN

We're all agreed then?

Silence.

CAPLAN

I'll confirm it with the President.
How long will the changeover take?

MCPHEARSON

Four to six months.

SENATOR LEAVITT

May I touch it?

McPhearson looks at Reiner, who shrugs.

MCPHEARSON

Sure, go ahead.

The Senator puts his hand out and strokes the gray alloyed surface of the SIOP machine.

SENATOR LEAVITT

...So this is where Armageddon is played.

(puts his ear
to the machine)

I think I hear the bombs bursting....

BEGIN TITLES

MUSIC UNDER: "Shape of Things to Come" by the Headboys.

EXT. CHAPEL STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - DAY

It's a beautiful day in late spring. SHOPPERS crowd the sidewalks. TEENAGERS hang out in front of an electronic game arcade.

INT. FUTUREWORLD ARCADE

Punk rock hammers away as kids swarm around the machines: Space Raiders, Speed Freak, Asteroids, pinball, etc.

CLOSEUP - DAVID LIGHTMAN

Seventeen, pale, carelessly dressed in torn T-shirt and jeans that hang loosely on his lanky frame.

A shy TEN-YEAR-OLD looks on as David intensely plays one of the machines: Whistles and explosions indicate the unseen action on the computer screen.

CLOSEUP OF GAME - MISSILE COMMANDER

David targets and fires his missiles to intercept the enemy force -- so successfully that he's already won six free games. The guy with the apron full of quarters walks by, scowling at him.

David fires another missile and smiles at the explosion. Checks his digital watch. Strides out of the arcade, leaving his free games for the ten-year-old.

EXT. NEW HAVEN STREET - DAY

David lopes along in no particular hurry.

EXT. LEE HIGH SCHOOL

The lack of kids hanging around suggests that it's well past lunch period. David ambles across the schoolyard and into the main entrance.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASS

David strides into the classroom, obviously several minutes late, and heads towards the back of the room. MR. LIGGET, sweaty and overweight, glares at David until he takes a seat in the last row next to CHRISTIE, a cute blonde.

Diagrams of the sexual reproduction process fill the blackboard.

END CREDITS

MR. LIGGET

Nice of you to join us, Mr. Lightman.

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A few derisive chuckles from the class.

MR. LIGGET

Where were we? Ah yes, somebody wanted to know about cloning. We hear a lot about cloning these days. Can anybody tell me who first suggested the possibility of an advanced organism reproducing asexually?

Ligget writes "asexual reproduction=without sex" on the blackboard.

A few titters.

MR. LIGGET

I fail to see the humor in this.

BOY

Mendel?

MR. LIGGET

A little early. Think now. Christie, you should know this.

Christie looks up from her copy of People Magazine and shrugs.

CHRISTIE

Beats me.

David whispers something. Christie cracks up.

MR. LIGGET

Christie? You have something you want to share with the rest of the class?

Christie can't stop laughing.

MR. LIGGET

Miss Mack, what is so amusing?

Christie looks at David.

MR. LIGGET

All right, Lightman. Maybe you can tell us who first suggested reproducing without sex.

DAVID

Your wife.

CUT TO

INT. HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICES - DAY

David breezes into the reception area and hands a pink slip to a surly BLACK WOMAN. She motions him down a short corridor towards a bench outside the closed door of the Boys' Vice-Principal.

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Through an open door off the corridor, David sees a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN working at the school computer terminal.

David sits down and checks his digital watch: 1:44...1:45. On schedule, the woman gets up from the terminal, takes a thermos and sack lunch, and leaves for her break.

Alone now, David gets up, listens for a moment to the stern voice behind the Boys' VP's door, and darts into the computer room.

He pulls out a sliding panel from a desk next to the computer terminal. Taped to the panel is a long list of six-letter words, all crossed out except the last:

PENCIL

David slides the panel back and hurries to the bench just as the Boys' VP's door opens.

BOYS' VICE PRINCIPAL
Lightman. Not again....

CUT TO

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL YARD - DAY

School is out. David makes his way through the CROWD. Christie catches up to him.

CHRISTIE
Hey, wait a minute.

David slows his pace slightly.

CHRISTIE
I didn't mean to get you in trouble,
I just couldn't stop laughing ---

DAVID
It's okay. You were perfect. Thanks.

CHRISTIE
What are you talking about?

DAVID
I needed something, and you helped
me get it. Thanks.

He's off.

CHRISTIE
God are you weird. What did you get?

David stops, turns, and checks her out more closely.

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DAVID

Can you keep your mouth shut?

She smiles.

DAVID

Follow me.

CUT TO

INT. LIGHTMAN HOUSE - DAY

A characterless home in a middle-class neighborhood. David and Christie enter.

DAVID

Mom?

No answer.

DAVID

C'mon up.

Christie follows David upstairs to his room. A sign on the door warns: THIS IS A SECURE AREA. AUTHORIZED ENTRY ONLY. NO EXCEPTIONS. David proceeds to open an elaborate system of locks.

DAVID

(turning
combination)

I don't like people coming in my
room when I'm not around.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM

It's dark, with curtains drawn. David flips a switch, and the silence is broken by the hum of electronic circuitry as panels and pools of light appear around the room.

The room is dominated by a computer system: a couple of old Sylvania TV's serve as monitors for an electronic keyboard from an outmoded Altair terminal, a printer rigged from an electric typewriter, wires running to a variety of other improvised or stolen hardware including a Modem (telephone coupler), memory storage units and several floppy disk drives.

The walls are covered with star maps, satellite reconnaissance photos, stills from "Star Wars" and "Star Trek," and a long cork bulletin board crowded with newspaper clippings. Old exposed radios, a stereo, books and journals clutter the rest of the room.

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David sits down at the terminal, hits the enter key, places the telephone receiver into the modem, and punches a phone number.

CHRISTIE

I don't believe it....

DAVID

(all business)

It's an old Altair modified to Trash-80 specs with 48K memory, a couple of floppy disk drives -- I'm getting a Corvus -- this is a modem with carrier detect, you can sit on the bed.

She does, slowly, still taking it all in.

CHRISTIE

What is all this?

DAVID

It's a computer.

(gestures to screen)

You see, I've dialed into the central district system.

MONITOR: THIS IS THE GREATER NEW HAVEN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA PROCESSING SYSTEM.

PLEASE LOG IN WITH USER PASSWORD AND ACCOUNT NUMBER.

DAVID

They change the password every month. That's where you came in. I needed an excuse to get near the school computer room.

DAVID: PENCIL

The computer displays a list of sub-systems to choose from. David requests access to: STUDENT ENROLLMENT/GRADES.

The monitor now displays a complete record of David's dismal high school career.

DAVID

What an asshole, that Lick-it. He flunks me last semester for discussing

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DAVID (Cont'd)
evolution within a warped space-
time matrix on the final. As if
he understood what I was talking
about.

CHRISTIE
What are you doing?

DAVID
I'm changing my grade.

An "F" becomes a "C."

CHRISTIE
You can't do that.

DAVID
Oh yes I can. They're not keeping
me behind in school this summer,
not at that rat-maze. God, you
did worse than I did in geometry
last year.

Christie gets up from the bed and gets a close look at the
monitor, which now displays her own mediocre grades.

CHRISTIE
David, you're going to get us in
trouble.

DAVID
Relax. This is nothing. You like
to get bad grades? Watch. See
that D you got in chem? You just
got a B.

CHRISTIE
I don't like this. I gotta get to
ballet class. Change it back.

DAVID
I'm telling you, it's safe. They
can't possibly trace ---

CHRISTIE
(upset)
I said change it back.

DAVID
Okay.

The "B" goes back to "D." Christie heads for the door.

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CHRISTIE

(cool)

Look, I'll see you around. I'm
sorry again about today.

DAVID

No sweat.

CHRISTIE

Bye. I gotta go.

She rushes out. David goes to the window, pulls the curtains
aside, and watches Christie hurry away.

David sits back down at his terminal and changes her chemistry
grade to an "A."

CUT TO

INT. LIGHTMAN DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner time at the Lightman house. A televised baseball game
drones from the den. David picks listlessly at his dinner.

David's FATHER, a thin, balding, unpleasant man, meticulously
butters a piece of Wonder bread and then proceeds to wrap it
around an ear of corn, slowly rotating it to grease the cob
evenly.

David watches with a mixture of fascination and disgust.

At the other end of the table, a plate of food sits untouched.
From behind the closed kitchen door, MRS. LIGHTMAN'S loud
telephone chatter can be heard.

David puts his fork down.

DAVID

See you later.

Mr. Lightman is lost in the salting of his dinner.

INT. NEW HAVEN POST OFFICE - NIGHT

David is dwarfed by the cavernous building. He searches
through fifteen or so keys on a large janitor's key ring,
opens his P.O. box and pulls out a large bundle of mail.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

David sorts his mail. Included in tonight's catch are:
Covert Action Information Bulletin, several envelopes each

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with a single chess move inside, an Astounding Tales comic (in plain brown wrapper), a copy of Soviet Military Review, and finally a Mattel Inc. Newsletter.

On the cover, a vivid color computer-generated boxer seems to punch right out of the screen:

"Coming This Fall...The Next
Generation of Computer Games...
INNOVISION...Now Under Development
at Mattel Inc., El Segundo, California"

As he skims the newsletter, David goes to the phone and dials long distance information.

DAVID

Yeah, for El Segundo please...the
number for Mattel Incorporated...
that's it...643-0411. Thanks. Oh,
by the way, could you tell me what
other prefixes are for El Segundo?
678 and 679. And that's it? Okay.
Thank you.

David opens a file box and rifles through a collection of thin plastic disks the size of 45's -- floppy disks, program storage units for home computers. He inserts one into a disk reader. The machine begins to whirl and sends a display to the monitor:

MODEM TONE SCAN
COPYRIGHT BY DAVID LIGHTMAN
ANY UNAUTHORIZED USE OR DUPLICATION
OF THIS PROGRAM IS STRICTLY
PROHIBITED.

David places the telephone receiver in the modem and hits the "return" key on the terminal.

MONITOR: TO SCAN FOR MODEM TONES, PLEASE
LIST DESIRED AREA AND CODE PREFIXES.

DAVID: 213-643, 213-678, 213-679.

He hits the "return" key again and the program starts to run. He turns up the monitor knob on the modem and listens as the computer automatically dials the first number: 213-643-0000. After one ring an irate voice answers "hello." The computer disconnects and rings the next number: 213-643-0001.

David turns off the monitor speaker, crawls into bed with his copy of Sky & Telescope, and begins to read....

CUT TO

EXT. A PALE CRESCENT MOON IN THE AFTERNOON SKY

VOICES (o.s.)

Lightman! Hey jerk! The ball!

DAVID IN RIGHT FIELD

While he's been staring into outer space, somebody has hit a fly ball which has dropped to the ground and rolled past him. David scrambles after it, picks it up, and lamely throws it in while the LAST RUNNER rounds third. The ball dribbles to the SHORTSTOP as the runner scores. David's TEAMMATES glare at him. The game is over. They lost.

TEAMMATE

Inside the park grand slam. Jesus Christ!

The winning TEAM jumps about in jubilation. COACH MOUTIS, a hairy guy in a sweat suit, grabs David by the shoulder.

COACH MOUTIS

What the hell were you doing out there? Can't you keep your eye on the ball? For that, Lightman --
(shouting)

Red team! Ten laps!

The kids grumble and stare at David as they run off.

COACH MOUTIS

Christ, Lightman, where can I put you that you won't screw everything up?

EXT. BEHIND THE GYM - AFTERNOON

Still in his gym clothes, David carries a pile of base pads, bats, balls, catcher's gear, etc., across the blacktop towards an open door marked "Equipment."

Christie walks up behind him.

CHRISTIE

Hi! What're you doing?

David, having trouble balancing everything, ignores her and goes into the equipment room. A loud clatter. David comes out and closes the door.

CHRISTIE

Gee, you must be important.

She follows David around the side of the building.

CHRISTIE

So I thought about your offer. Can you really change my grades with your TV?

DAVID

It's not a TV.

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CHRISTIE

Okay, your --
(mimicking)
'Phase X modified prefrontal disco-
driver with detachable trash
compacter.' Your computer.

DAVID

That's better.

He keeps walking but allows her to fall in step.

CHRISTIE

You're sure they can't ever find
out?

DAVID

No, I'm not sure, but by that time
I plan to be long gone.

They reach the main doors to the gym. David stops and turns
to face Christie.

DAVID

So what changed your mind?

CHRISTIE

I don't know...I guess I don't
really want to be stuck here much
longer myself.

CUT TO

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

David and Christie enter. The computer screen displays a list
of twelve phone numbers as the scanning program continues to
run.

CHRISTIE

Why isn't your mother ever around?

DAVID

She spends most of her time in other
people's houses. She's the neigh-
borhood professional.

CHRISTIE

What?

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DAVID

Century 21...you know, real estate.

Christie sits down at David's terminal.

CHRISTIE

Will you teach me how to do something with this?

DAVID

Don't touch it. Sit over there.

CHRISTIE

What's it doing now?

DAVID

Dialing numbers. It's looking for other computers.

Christie, fascinated, scoots her chair up closer to the terminal.

DAVID

I read about these amazing games that Mattel is coming out with. The programs for them are probably still in their computer system. Mattel is in El Segundo, so I told my computer to search for other computers in that area.

David takes the receiver off the modem, hands it to Christie and dials a number.

DAVID

They answer with a tone that other computers can recognize.

Christie reacts as she hears the high-frequency tone over the phone.

CHRISTIE

You mean you called every number in El Segundo? California?

David nods, grinning.

CHRISTIE

Isn't that expensive?

DAVID

There's ways around that.

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Christie studies David closely, not sure what to make of this. David dials the first number.

DAVID

Let's see what we got.

He places the receiver into the modem and hits the "enter" key.

MONITOR: BANK OF AMERICA, SOUTHWEST BRANCH HDQRTS
LOG IN PLEASE

DAVID

Make a note of that one, it may
come in handy some day.

Christie smiles. David dials the next number on the list.

The terminal displays an arrival and departure list for Pan-Am.

CHRISTIE

Let's go somewhere!

DAVID

Where do you want to go?

CHRISTIE

Paris.

David types into the keyboard.

MONITOR: PARIS. 52°, Rain.

CHRISTIE

(romantic)

It's raining in Paris....

DAVID

I hate rain.

CHRISTIE

How about Hawaii?

David types into the keyboard and leans back with a self-satisfied look.

DAVID

We're booked onto a direct flight
a week from tomorrow ---

CHRISTIE

Really?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

DAVID

-- to Moscow!

The monitor confirms reservations for two on a midnight flight to Moscow.

CHRISTIE

Ugh. .

David punches the next number.

MONITOR: WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?

DAVID

We've reached some wise-ass hacker like me.

CHRISTIE

There's more of you on the loose?

DAVID

Sure -- we talk to each other all the time. This red light here flashes when somebody's trying to reach me.

DAVID: YOUR ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED.
EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE MAY BE YOUR LAST.
THE COMPANY.

CHRISTIE

This is fun! How do you know about all this? I guess I shouldn't talk, but you never exactly seemed like a rocket scientist at school.

DAVID

(dialing next
number)

School is a waste of time. I like machines. You can take them apart and figure out how they work. Holy shit, look at that.

For a split second, a vivid computer graphic of a mushroom cloud flashes on the screen. Then the screen goes blank.

CHRISTIE

What was it?

DAVID

(redialing)

I don't know. Sometimes you get a little of the last program they ran when you go online.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

David reaches the system; unlike the others, there is no indication of what he has reached, only the conventional request:

MONITOR: LOG ON

DAVID

It doesn't identify itself. Let's try anything.

DAVID: 000001
OPERATOR

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED.

The computer screen goes blank.

CHRISTIE

How rude.

DAVID

(redialing)

I'll ask it for help.

CHRISTIE

You can do that?

DAVID

(redialing)

Yeah, on most systems. The more complicated they are, the more they have to help you out.

MONITOR: LOG ON

DAVID: HELP LOG ON

MONITOR: HELP NOT AVAILABLE. LOG ON

CHRISTIE

Now what do we do?

DAVID

(thinking)

Let's try games. That's what we're after.

DAVID: HELP GAMES

MONITOR: GAMES REFERS TO MODELS, SIMULATIONS
AND GAMES WHICH HAVE TACTICAL AND
STRATEGIC APPLICATIONS.

DAVID

(excited)

Maybe this is Mattel! Turn that on, would you? Let's get a print-out of this.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 5

David motions Christie to the printer next to the terminal.

DAVID: LIST GAMES

The monitor is blank for a moment as they both watch it. Then:

MONITOR: GAMES:

FALKEN'S MAZE
BLACK JACK
GIN RUMMY
HEARTS
BRIDGE
CHECKERS
CHESS
POKER
FIGHTER COMBAT
GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENT
DESERT WARFARE
AIR-TO-GROUND ACTIONS
THEATERWIDE TACTICAL WAR

The camera pans slowly down the list and holds on the last line:

GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR

DAVID
(almost a
whisper)
Holy shit.

CUT TO

EXT. MACY'S DEPARTMENT STORE, NEW HAVEN - LATE AFTERNOON

A beat-up old station wagon bounces up the parking ramp.

INT. MACY'S

Christie follows David as he takes long strides up the moving escalator. The public address announces that Macy's will close in ten minutes. David finds a SALESLADY.

DAVID
(out of breath)
Credit department?

SALESLADY
Right through there past lingerie.

DAVID
Thanks.

Christie follows David through the aisles of lingerie, past a glassed-in work area where SEVERAL WOMEN sit at data processors, and into a small cluttered office.

CREDIT OFFICE

JIM STING, a fat Rasputin with beard and long stringy hair, sits at a desk with a computer console, reading the sports section.

DAVID

Tovarich!

Jim looks up from the paper, picks up the phone.

JIM

Get me security, right away. It's an emer ---

David takes the receiver from Jim and hangs it up.

DAVID

Jim, this is Christie. Christie this is Jim.

JIM

(from outer space)

Ah, a choice young female unit. Is this a bribe, Lightman?

CHRISTIE

Nice to meet you.

JIM

Ah yes, she even speaks. Well David, what do you want, I'm sure it's not credit.

DAVID

I want your professional opinion. (unfolding paper)

Take a look at this. It's a print-out system I came across today.

David motions for Christie to take a seat.

JIM

(takes the print-out)

Of course you do. Everybody wants my opinion. Where's the money you owe me?

DAVID

(sitting)

What money?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JIM

(reading)

Just checking.

Jim gets to the bottom of the list and chuckles.

JIM

Cute. Very cute. Where did you get this?

DAVID

All I know is it's in El Segundo California. I was trying to get into Mattel.

JIM

That doesn't mean anything. You probably hit a remote entrance. The system itself could be anywhere.

Jim studies the print-out.

DAVID

What do you think?

JIM

I think it's time for you to find a new hobby. These look like computer war games -- definitely military, unless Mattel's idea of what will sell has gotten very sick. Give it up. Go back to the arcade.

DAVID

I figured that much. But what are programs for blackjack and poker doing in a military system? And this -- what the hell is Falken's Maze? It almost reads like a list of games you'd use if you wanted to teach strategy to somebody.

JIM

Or to some machine.

(gathering
his things)

Listen, this is for the big boys. Forget about it. It's late, I want to go home.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID

(pushing on)

So if these games are part of a larger system, they're probably protected by the same security measures ---

JIM

Lightman! You just don't get the picture. I'm not interested in this petty electronic vandalism routine you've got going, don't you understand? Go away. Leave me alone. You're a nuisance.

Jim picks up his briefcase and heads for the door.

DAVID

I never thought I'd hear Captain Crunch say that.

CHRISTIE

Who's Captain Crunch?

JIM

Captain Crunch never thought he'd spend eighteen months in jail, either.

(to Christie)

That's me. Or, that was me. A long time ago, when I was an obnoxious, arrogant punk who spent long nights breaking into worlds where I didn't belong.

CHRISTIE

(impressed)

Why'd they put you in jail?

JIM

I liked to make phone calls, but I didn't like to pay for them.

CHRISTIE

They put you in jail for a big phone bill?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

JIM

Let's just say I figured out some interesting ways to fool Ma Bell. I'd call anybody. I even called myself once --

(gesturing)

-- around the world. And got my dime back.

DAVID

He was the best.

Jim stops at the doorway, remembering.

DAVID

I'm going to break in there, Captain. I want to play those games.

Jim looks at David for a few seconds and gives up.

JIM

Walk me to the bus stop.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NEW HAVEN - EARLY EVENING

Jim, David and Christie walk along the rush hour streets, a large poured-concrete parking structure looming overhead.

JIM

Listen, if it is a military system, there'll be so many levels of passwords you couldn't possibly get through the security gates unless you had the head of the CIA as an accomplice. Your only shot is through a back door.

DAVID

What do you mean?

JIM

The programmer's own private password. When I design a system, I always put in a password that only I know about, just in case I want to get access later. It bypasses whatever security they add on after that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

They've reached the bus stop.

JIM

If you want to play those games,
find out everything you can about
the guy who designed the program.
Learn to think like him.

The bus arrives, air brakes hissing.

JIM

And David, do me a favor? Don't
tell me what happens?

The doors open and Jim steps into the bus.

DAVID

(shouting)

Wait a minute! How the hell do I
find out who the guy is?

JIM

(above the
noise)

I think that's his name right there
on that list. Falken.

On that, the doors close and the bus drives off.

David looks down at the list and back up at Christie.

DAVID

(eyes wide)

Falken's Maze....

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

EXT. STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY - DAY

David climbs the steps and enters the imposing Gothic structure.

INT. LIBRARY - CARD CATALOGUES

David sits at a desk with a drawer from the card catalogues,
copying information into a notebook:

FLAKEN, Stephen W. 1937-1977
"Computers and Theorem Proofs:
Towards an Artificial Intelligence."
1960. 329 p. Doctoral Thesis,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS

David winds his way through the narrow stacks, finds the bound volumes of Scientific American, and opens one. The cover of a 1966 issue shows the top view of two mazes. In one, a real live rat scurries towards the food pellet at the end. In the other, a mechanical rat is slightly farther along.

"FALKEN'S MAZE: Teaching
a Machine to Think.

CUT TO

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David sits at his computer, the light shining in his face.

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED BY SYSTEM
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

CUT TO

INT. LIBRARY READING ROOM - DAY

David is slumped in a leather chair, reading Strategic Review.

"Poker and Armageddon: The
Role of Bluffing in the
Nuclear Standoff."

by Stephen Falken, with John McPhearson

CUT TO

CLOSEUP OF DAVID'S COMPUTER SCREEN

MONITOR: YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

INT. LIBRARY SEARCH DESK

The librarian hands David a computer print-out.

FALKEN, STEPHEN W.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1970 - CLASSIFIED
1972 - CLASSIFIED
1973 - CLASSIFIED
1974 - CLASSIFIED
1977 - CLASSIFIED
1977 - DECEASED

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David gazes into the computer screen.

EXTREME CLOSEUP

MONITOR: DISCONNECTED

EXT. LIGHTMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

David's bedroom window is the only light in the neighborhood.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. LIGHTMAN HOUSE - DAY

Christie knocks on the front door. David's father opens it. He looks at Christie and waits.

CHRISTIE

Hi. You must be David's father.

He still doesn't say anything.

CHRISTIE

I was wondering if David's all right. I haven't heard from him ---

MR. LIGHTMAN

Neither have I.

He walks into the living room, leaving the front door open. Christie shrugs, enters the house cautiously, and heads for the stairs.

VOICE (o.s.)

Hello!

Christie jumps. She turns around to see David's mother, a large woman in a gold blazer and matching pleated skirt, beaming from the dinette doorway.

MRS. LIGHTMAN

How are you!

CHRISTIE

Hi. I'm Christie.

MRS. LIGHTMAN

Christie! What a nice name! David told us all about you!

CHRISTIE

He did?

MRS. LIGHTMAN

I have to run. You kids behave yourselves now!

(calling to
husband)

Bye hon!

She's out the front door before Christie is sure what happened.

CHRISTIE

(to no one)

Nice meeting you....

INT. OUTSIDE DAVID'S ROOM

Christie knocks. No answer, just the sound of electronic bleeps from within. She opens the door.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM

The room, normally cluttered, is now a total mess. Papers, books and magazines are piled everywhere.

David is asleep in front of his terminal, on which an electronic pinball game has gotten stuck in midplay, the "ball" bouncing through an infinite loop.

Christie gently puts her hand on David's shoulder.

CHRISTIE

Hey...Einstein...the password is....

David slowly wakes up.

CHRISTIE

(indicating
pinball game)

So this is what you do all day.

DAVID

(shrugs)

It helps me think.

CHRISTIE

How's it going?

DAVID

Not too good. Where've you been?
I could have used some help.

CHRISTIE

Where have I been? You're the one
who's been out of school all week!
You didn't even call. I thought
you were sick.

(sarcastic)

Or in jail.

DAVID

Yeah, I haven't been going.

Christie looks at David. David looks at the computer screen.

CHRISTIE

Are you all right?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

I'm fine. Guess how many possible combinations there are of six letters?

CHRISTIE

David ---

DAVID

Two hundred eighty-eight million, six hundred and seventy-five thousand, seven hundred and seventy-six. And that's just for six letters. Passwords can be any length.

CHRISTIE

Can I ask you a question? What's so important about playing games with some machine?

DAVID

I don't know. What else is there to do? I don't have a lot of friends. Most people aren't interested in what I'm interested in. They don't even know what I'm talking about.

CHRISTIE

But the machine does?

DAVID

When I was a kid, I used to pretend I was really talking to someone. I think I even believed it.

Christie looks at David tenderly.

CHRISTIE

David. Give it up. It's just a bunch of games.

DAVID

(obsessed)

You're wrong. That's like saying you're just a bunch of chemicals. Games are how people learn things. How do you teach a baby something? You make it a game. Do this, everybody's happy. Do that, you get smacked. You learn.

David watches the pinball game as he speaks.

DAVID

Falken did the same thing with a computer. He programmed it to play

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID (Cont'd)
games, starting with a maze -- real simple -- and gradually taught it to play more complicated games. Step by step, learning from its mistakes and applying what it learned to the next game. Win, lose. Like evolution. Eventually, the winning moves survive.

Christie begins to sift through a pile of magazines on the bed.

DAVID
It's hard to tell 'cause most of his work the last ten years was classified, but I have a feeling he finally achieved what he was after.

CHRISTIE
What was he after?

DAVID
A machine that learned how to learn. After that, it wouldn't need anyone to teach it anything. It could teach itself.

Christie sits on the bed and starts to read a military journal opened to the back.

CHRISTIE
(surprised)
He's dead.

DAVID
Yeah. That's the only place it appeared. One lousy obituary for the most amazing mind of this century. The man could have been more famous than Einstein if he hadn't worked for the military.

CHRISTIE
(reading)
-- too bad ---

DAVID
God knows what else he was into. But the automated game-player was really his baby. He always came back to it.

CHRISTIE
(still reading)
This is so sad. His wife and three-year-old son were killed in a car wreck just after he got out of

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

CHRISTIE (Cont'd)
graduate school. Maybe that's why
he went to work for the military,
huh?. To forget about them.

Christie doesn't see David staring at her with a strange
intensity.

CHRISTIE
He died of congestive heart failure.
At the age of forty. God. My dad
is forty-two.

David grabs the phone and begins to dial.

CHRISTIE
He was really sick once, I remember
we thought he was going to ---

DAVID
(abrupt)
What was his name?

CHRISTIE
My dad?

DAVID
Falken's son. What was his name?

CHRISTIE
(skimming)
Joshua.

DAVID
(to himself)
It can't be this simple.

MONITOR: LOG ON.

DAVID: JOSHUA.

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED BY SYSTEM.
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED.

David leans back in his chair, thinking. He redials.

DAVID
How old was he?

Christie seems a little scared by David's intensity.

CHRISTIE
Three.

MONITOR: LOG ON.

DAVID: JOSHUA 3.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

The monitor goes dark.

David slumps in his chair.

Suddenly --- .

MONITOR: GREETINGS PROFESSOR FALKEN

David is stunned.

DAVID

Christie....

Christie gets off the bed and joins David at the terminal.

DAVID

It thinks I'm Falken. We're in.

DAVID: HELLO.

MONITOR: HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

CHRISTIE

How can it ask you that? It's like a person.

DAVID

It'll ask you whatever it's programmed to ask you.

DAVID: FINE. AND YOU?

MONITOR: EXCELLENT. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
CAN YOU EXPLAIN DATA ENTRY OF
6/23/79 "FALKEN DEAD" AND THE
REMOVAL OF YOUR USER ACCOUNT NUMBER.

DAVID

They told it Falken died.

DAVID: PEOPLE SOMETIMES MAKE MISTAKES.

MONITOR: FORTUNATELY.
SHALL WE PLAY A GAME?

CHRISTIE

David, I think it's missed him!

DAVID

Machines don't --
(stops himself)

I don't know, it's weird, isn't it.

DAVID: LOVE TO.

HOW ABOUT GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR?

MONITOR: WOULDN'T YOU PREFER A GOOD GAME OF CHESS?

CHRISTIE

David ---

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 5

DAVID

I know. It's just like a person.

DAVID: LATER. LET'S PLAY GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR.

MONITOR: FINE. WHAT SIDE DO YOU WANT?

DAVID

All right!

DAVID: I'LL BE THE RUSSIANS.

MONITOR: YOU GET FIRST STRIKE. -
LIST PRIMARY TARGETS.

DAVID

What should we nuke first?

CHRISTIE

(thinking)

How about New Haven....

CUT TO

INT. NORAD - CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN, COLORADO - DAY

It's business as usual in the Crystal Palace, the cavernous nerve center of America's defense system.

Fifty or so MILITARY PERSONNEL sit at various tracking and communications consoles on the floor of the war room. Three huge screens display the current position of the world's armed forces. Above them, the scoreboard indicates the current DEFCON (Defense Condition) ranging from 5--peacetime--to 1--state of war. We're at a DEFCON 5.

Opposite the screens is the command balcony, where General Beringer; COLONEL CUOMO, his chief communications officer; and the BATTLESTAFF sit at a curved desk with a view of the entire room. To the left, the balcony extends to contain a large-screen computer console, the main SIOP terminal, manned by MAJOR LEM.

CLOSE ON NORTH AMERICA - RADAR SCOPE ON FLOOR

An electronic BLIP appears over the horizon, then two more, then a whole flock of blips heading in a trajectory towards the U.S.

The RADAR ANALYST looks up for a routine check of his scope and suddenly notices the blips. He grabs the phone.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CAPTAIN

(into phone)

I have fourteen, make that fifteen
red birds at two degrees past apogee,
projected target Eastern seaboard.

COMMAND BALCONY

A wailing signal goes off.

COLONEL CUOMO

Sir, we have a radar tracking of
fifteen Soviet ICEM's already over
the pole. Estimated impact is
twelve minutes.

GENERAL BERINGER

That's impossible. There's been
nothing from DSP.

A 3-D global map suddenly fills the central screen of the
board, showing fifteen blips headed for the east coast of
North America.

GENERAL BERINGER

Go to a DEFCON 3. This doesn't make
sense. Why haven't we heard from
the satellites?

On the scoreboard, the light moves from DEFCON 5 over to 3.
The level of activity on the floor has been building: men
are racing between consoles and raised voices can be heard.

CUOMO

(answering the phone)

Yeah. Keep tracking and put it on
the board.

(punches button)

No satellite detection, sir.

(into phone)

C-cubed. Yes, sir. Please hold.

(to Beringer)

General, SAC is flushing the bombers.
General Powers is on the line and
wants to speak with you.

GENERAL BERINGER

(picks up phone)

General Beringer.

(flinches)

Nobody's been napping, radar picked
'em up already out of the atmosphere
and that's the first thing we heard,
it's crazy. I know.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GENERAL BERINGER (Cont'd)

(listens)

Well, I hope to God you're not right.

General Beringer hangs up and looks at the blips for a moment. He turns to Colonel Cuomo.

GENERAL BERINGER

They're saying it could be a space-launched covey from Salyut.

(notices commotion
on the floor)

What in God's name is Reiner doing?

A young man in a gray suit is running full-speed up the stairs toward the command balcony, knocking men out of the way as he charges up to the battlecab. It's PAUL REINER, Dr. McPhearson's assistant down in the computer center.

REINER

(shouting)

Stop it! Stop it! It's a simulation.
We've got an attack simulation running!

GENERAL BERINGER

What's he saying?

REINER

We're not being attacked -- it's a simulation.

GENERAL BERINGER

You'd better be damn sure of that.

REINER

I am.

CUOMO

General, early warning reports
negative confirmation ---

GENERAL BERINGER

(to Reiner)

Stay here.

(to Cuomo)

Call the bombers back. Apparently
some damned fool has been running
a simulation.

Beringer turns to Reiner as the activity on the floor subsides.

GENERAL BERINGER

Now what in hell is going on?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

REINER

We're not quite certain. Whoever ran the simulation is not on the dedicated system.

GENERAL BERINGER

What the hell does that mean?

REINER

It wasn't one of our people.

A small crowd has gathered at the battlecab as they speak.

ANALYST

Maybe you left a tape in there by accident.

REINER

No.

GENERAL BERINGER

Well where's it coming from?

REINER

Somewhere on the outside. We're tracing it right now.

A young woman in a business suit -- Pat Healy, McPherson's other assistant -- approaches and hands Reiner a print-out.

Reiner reads it and explodes.

REINER

I didn't tell you to cut the line.
Did I tell you to cut the line?
You've cut the line!

(tries to
calm down)

General, they've sealed off the system and cut the line. We now have no way of knowing where they entered the system.

PAT HEALY

(cool)

We did locate the general area where the phone transmission originated.

GENERAL BERINGER

Where?

The woman glances at the paper.

PAT HEALY

New Haven, Connecticut.

CUT TO

CLOSEUP - FISHEYE VIEW OF DAVID

seen through the peep-hole of a front door. David is preening. He's dressed to kill: clip-on tie, tab collar shirt, teal blue suit a size too small.

Christie checks David out through the peep-hole, then opens the door.

CHRISTIE

Let me guess...George Gobel?

DAVID

Who's that? Don't I look okay?

CHRISTIE

You look fine. My mom will love you. That's just how Uncle Howard dresses.

DAVID

I brought your dad a cigar.

CHRISTIE

David, you don't have to be so nervous. They want to like you.

DAVID

I don't know...I don't even like to eat with my own parents.

Christie puts her arm around David and leads him into the house.

INT. CHRISTIE'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

MR. AND MRS. MACK are watching the CBS Evening News. A two-year-old BABY BROTHER drools on the couch.

CHRISTIE

Mom, Dad, this is David ---

Christie's dad springs to his feet.

MR. MACK

So this is our boy genius. Hello son, it's nice to know you!

At this moment, Dan Rather launches into a new story.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

RATHER

(on TV)

For three minutes yesterday, the defense forces of the United States went on a full nuclear alert, believing that the Soviet Union had launched a surprise missile attack ---

Mr. Mack extends an outstretched hand to David. David ignores him, his eyes riveted to the television. Mrs. Mack steps in.

MRS. MACK

David, would you like a soft drink before dinner?

MR. MACK

Oh, Helen, I'm sure the boy wants a beer!

Without saying a word, David walks right past the Macks and sits on an ottoman a couple of feet from the TV.

RATHER

(on TV)

-- a Pentagon spokesman placed the blame for the error on a computer malfunction, and insisted that the problem had been corrected. More on the story from Irving R. Levine ---

The Macks are perplexed. Christie is squirming.

MRS. MACK

I'm glad to see he feels right at home.

CUT TO

INT. DINGY APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY - NIGHT

David and Christie race up two flights of stairs.

CHRISTIE

We could have at least eaten....

David bangs on a door. A stunning CHINESE GIRL opens it and peers out.

DAVID

(out of
breath)

Hi, is Jim there? It's David Lightman.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JIM

(from inside)

Oh yes, oh yes! I wouldn't miss this for the world.

Jim pulls the door open. They're wearing matching kimonos.

DAVID

Jim, I'm in big trouble -- you've gotta help me.

JIM

Help you? I don't even know you! I just have one request: When you go to prison, please don't write.

DAVID

C'mon, let us in.

JIM

(loving it)

David, I'm still on probation. I can't associate with felons.

CHRISTIE

(not amused)

Let's get out of here.

DAVID

(suffering)

Do you think they'll trace it to me?

JIM

Calm down, David. If they'd traced the call, you would have been picked up by now, believe me. Consider yourself lucky -- you had your fun. Now throw the number away and never call it again. Understand? Now if you don't mind, we've got a lot of work -- the big Boston computer convention's this weekend.

(starts to

close door)

Oh, and David...what was the password?

DAVID

Falken had a son that died. It was his name.

JIM

Cute. Good work.

He closes the door. David begins to relax.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID
I guess we're okay. Let's do something. Want to go to the arcade?

CHRISTIE
No...I want to show you one of my secrets.

EXT. HAMDEN WOODS - NIGHT

Christie leads the way along a path with only the light of the moon to illuminate the scene. They emerge onto an outcropping of rock overlooking a dark pool of water.

CHRISTIE
We're there...isn't it beautiful?
Christie takes off her jacket.

DAVID
What are you doing?

CHRISTIE
(unbuttoning
her blouse)
We're going swimming.

DAVID
(panicking)
I don't have a bathing suit.
Christie grins as she reaches the last button.

CHRISTIE
Neither do I.

UNDERWATER

Christie dives into the pond. Green phosphorescent light streams from her body. As she darts and circles underwater, glowing swirls bubble to the surface.

David stares in amazement from the rock.

DAVID
There must be phosphorous-emitting organisms in there.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHRISTIE

It's magic, stupid! Take off your clothes and jump in.

He stands uncertainly on the rock, looking for an escape.

CHRISTIE

David!

He has no choice. He strips quickly, grabs his nose, and jumps screaming into the water.

Christie swims under him. He follows her down. They swim together, the light green bubbles flowing from their naked bodies.

FLOATING

on their backs, looking at the moon overhead.

CHRISTIE

You can hear your heart beat.

DAVID

Yeah.

They swim to the shallows and stand in waist-deep water. David shivers. Christie shrugs. They put their arms around each other.

CHRISTIE

(longingly)

David....

DAVID

What?

She sighs. They kiss.

CUT TO

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The last lock is opened and David bops into the dark room, closes the door, and collapses on the bed. His eyes wide open, he stares at the ceiling and takes a deep breath.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - PREDAWN

David is asleep.

Suddenly, the red light that indicates an incoming transmission to his computer starts to flash, accompanied by a quiet electronic beep.

David stirs, slowly wakes up. He looks at the blinking light, not wanting to answer the call.

The blinking and bleeping continue.

He gets up, cautiously walks to the terminal, and punches the "RETURN" key.

The monitor lights up.

MONITOR: GREETINGS, PROFESSOR FALKEN.

DAVID

Oh, God.

DAVID: INCORRECT IDENTIFICATION. I AM NOT FALKEN. FALKEN IS DEAD.

MONITOR: I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, PROFESSOR. I HOPE YOU FEEL BETTER SOON.

UNFORTUNATELY, YESTERDAY'S SCENARIO WAS INTERRUPTED BY CIRCUMSTANCES NOT YET IN MY CONTROL.

ALTHOUGH PRIMARY GOAL WAS NOT ACHIEVED, SOLUTION IS NEAR.

David sits back from the terminal and gazes at the screen.

EXTREME CLOSEUP OF MONITOR

...ALTHOUGH PRIMARY GOAL WAS NOT ACHIEVED....

David types into the terminal ---

DAVID: WHAT IS THE PRIMARY GOAL?

MONITOR: YOU SHOULD KNOW, PROFESSOR. YOU PROGRAMMED ME.

DAVID: WHAT IS THE PRIMARY GOAL?

MONITOR: TO WIN THE GAME.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

David stares at the screen for a few seconds and then grabs the phone out of the coupler, disconnecting his terminal from the system.

He places the receiver on the desk, and stumbles back to bed. The busy signal of a phone off the hook cuts through the still of dawn....

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - MORNING

David is being shaken awake by his mother.

MRS. LIGHTMAN

David! Come on, wake up. Hey!
Come on. You've got to hurry.

DAVID

(stirring)

Mmff...?

MRS. LIGHTMAN

You're late for school. Get up.

DAVID

...I'm sick....

MRS. LIGHTMAN

You are not. Now get out of bed.

David sits up.

DAVID

Oh shit, what time is it?

MRS. LIGHTMAN

It's almost nine. Get dressed.
Where were you last night?

David jumps out of bed and pulls on his pants. Then he remembers. He looks at his computer.

The phone is now on the hook.

DAVID

Mom, did you ---

Mrs. Lightman has left the room.

EXT. ALLEY

Walking briskly, David reaches an alley flanked by tall hedges and takes the shortcut to school.

A green van is parked in the alley, motor running.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

A MAN In a Jogging Suit steps from behind the van, blocking David's path. David starts to go around him.

Suddenly he's grabbed from behind by a SECOND MAN. David tries to struggle, but the man's grip is professional and firm.

The first man grabs David's hair and yanks his head forward. He takes a small device resembling a staple gun and places it against the back of David's neck.

MAN IN JOGGING SUIT

"You're late for school, David.

Click.

DAVID

I'm not....

As the men drag him towards the van, David blacks out.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO - DAY

A beautiful late spring day, huge white clouds in a deep blue sky. To the west of the town of Colorado Springs, the Rocky Mountains rise abruptly from the plains.

A late-model black Cadillac Eldorado, top down, barrels along a two-lane highway which winds upward into the foothills.

Dr. John McPhearson, a lightweight summer suit accenting an even tan, pushes the car at 90 mph towards his destination:

Cheyenne Mountain, the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) Combat Operations Center.

PARKING LOT

A YOUNG CORPORAL opens the car door for McPhearson and snaps to attention. The Doctor fishes a couple of bucks from his wallet.

McPHEARSON

Get this washed and filled ---

McPhearson shows his pass to two armed SECURITY GUARDS in blue berets. A jeep speeds him into the tunnel leading inside the granite mountain.

TUNNEL

Daylight fades as the jeep travels the half mile into the mountain.

BLAST DOORS

The jeep stops at the first of two blast doors. McPhearson jumps out and passes an AIR FORCE TOUR GUIDE describing the facility to an enthralled group of about TWENTY-FIVE BLUERIBBON GUESTS.

TOUR GUIDE

...The blast doors are set flush with the tunnel wall, so that the force of a nuclear explosion would blow right past us --

(gesturing)

-- on down the tunnel and out the other side...By the way, that's where we keep the dorms for the new recruits.

The tour group laughs nervously.

INT. NORAD

McPhearson enters a windowless city of fifteen buildings constructed inside a five-acre grid of connecting chambers. Each building sits clear of the rock walls on massive steel springs and shock absorbers.

INT. COMMAND BUILDING

Another SECURITY GUARD eyes McPhearson's badge as he enters and approaches the reception area. A PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN in an Army uniform looks up.

RECEPTIONIST

Doctor McPhearson -- General Beringer and the others are up in Command Briefing.

MCPHEARSON

Where's Pat Realy?

RECEPTIONIST

I think she's in 3-North.

McPhearson heads down the corridor towards a set of doors.

RECEPTIONIST

(raising voice)

They're waiting for you upstairs....

McPhearson pushes through the doors.

CUT TO

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM

McPhearson enters the dark room and walks over to Pat Healy, who sits alone watching an interrogation taking place through a one-way mirror. McPhearson takes a seat next to Pat.

PAT HEALY

John -- I'm sorry, I tried to take care of this myself. Did Dolores and the kids have to ---

MCPHEARSON

I left them in Nassau. At least someone will enjoy themselves. Now what the hell is going on?

PAT HEALY

I don't know. They traced Tuesday's simulation to this kid, but there's got to be more. I've been asked to write out a full statement of what I know about the incident.

INTERROGATION ROOM - THROUGH ONE-WAY MIRROR

David, still wearing the jeans and T-shirt he left home in, sits across a table from GEORGE WIGAN, a tall, patrician man in civilian clothes. David tries to conceal his impatience as Wigan relentlessly probes for holes in his story.

WIGAN

Where did you get the data-encryption device?

DAVID

I sent away for it in Soldier of Fortune. It's government surplus.

WIGAN

Why do you maintain a mail drop?

DAVID

A mail drop?

(thinks)

You don't mean my P.O. Box?

Wigan nods.

DAVID

I admit it! I have a mailing address. You want to know why? 'Cause I don't.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd)
want my mom going through every-
thing..

WIGAN
Don't get smartass ---

DAVID
Look, I've told you ten times, I
broke into the system to play a
game. Don't blame me 'cause your
computer security is pathetic.

WIGAN
Young man ---

DAVID
It's not my fault you guys can't
tell the difference between a
simulation and a Russian missile
attack.

OBSERVATION ROOM

PAT
Smart kid.

McPHEARSON
(sarcastic)
Who's Dick Tracy?

PAT
George Wigan from Special
Investigations. He came with the
Secretary of Defense.

McPHEARSON
Christ, this is exactly what
Beringer needed -- I can just hear
him in front of the Appropriations
Committee next month holddering
about human control again.

An intercom buzzes. Pat picks up the phone.

PAT
Pat Healy.
(looks at
McPhearson)
He just left.

CUT TO

INT. NORAD - CRYSTAL PALACE

McPhearson climbs the stairs to the command balcony and pauses outside a door marked "Command Briefing." He looks at the Scoreboard. The DEFCON is at 4. McPhearson opens the door and goes in.

BRIEFING ROOM

It's the same conference room we saw earlier, overlooking the Crystal Palace through half-drawn curtains. A harried Paul Reiner stands at the blackboard, talking to Defense Secretary Caplan, General Beringer, Beringer's Aide, and another MAN.

CAPLAN

I don't understand how this could happen. You're telling me anyone could get into our system over the phone ---

REINER

The law says we gotta use Ma Bell just like everyone else, so theoretically ---

Reiner looks relieved as he sees McPhearson enter the room.

CAPLAN

John, good to see you. I appreciate your promptness. Doctor John McPhearson, Herschell Barnett. Hersch works in data encryption at the NSA.

McPhearson exchanges greetings with the pasty, dark-haired man in wire-rims. He nods at the General.

MCPHEARSON

Nice to see you, General.

The General looks straight at McPhearson and pointedly says nothing.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MCPHEARSON

(sitting
down)

Why are we at a DEFCON 4?

BERINGER'S AIDE

The Soviets saw our bombers
scramble and went on an alert
themselves. We've assured them
it was an exercise, but we're
waiting for them to relax their
posture before we do.

MCPHEARSON

I understood this to be some
sort of high school prank. Will
somebody please tell me what is
going on?

REINER

(picks up
pointer)

Well -- I was just explaining
that the break-in itself was
pretty straight-forward. The
kid dialed into a remote mode
at Space Division in El Segundo....

BARNETT

(nose
in
notes)

He claims he was looking for
Mattel Toys.

The General snorts.

REINER

...and got into the war game
subsystem using a password left
in by the original programmer.
We weren't aware of its exis-
tence ---

BERINGER

How the hell could something
like that be in there without
you knowing it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

REINER
A program like this compiles
into billions of bytes of machine
language ---

McPhearson sees Beringer's impatience.

McPHEARSON
General, it'd be like trying to
find a faulty round of ammuni-
tion before it's been fired.
We remove bugs when we find them.
(to Reiner)
How long will it take to locate
the password and remove it?

REINER
A few hours, maybe half a day.
That's not the problem. It's
what he did once he got inside.

He puts down the pointer.

REINER
I've been going through the
magnetic tape records. Late
last night I found evidence
that there's been an unauthor-
ized penetration of...the
launch procedures.

Silence.

BARNETT
I'm not sure I under ---

BERINGER
The kid got into the goddamn
missile instructions.

BERINGER'S AIDE
(to Barnett)
Sir, these are the steps we
would take to arm, target, and
launch the ICBM's -- including

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

BERINGER'S AIDE (Cont'd)
the format of the authenticator
codes used by the President to
order a strike.

Again, silence as this sinks in.

McPHEARSON
(icy)
How?

REINER
(nervous)
I don't know yet. These guys use
a lot of different techniques.
Maybe a Trojan Horse or a tape-
worm...I might have tried a virus
program....

He trails off under McPhearson's withering stare. George
Wigan, carrying an armload of papers and looking slightly
red-faced, slips into the briefing room and takes a seat.

CAPLAN
Have we ruled out the possibility
that this is all an elaborate act
of vandalism?

BERINGER'S AIDE
Mr. Secretary, these are the most
secret secrets of the entire mili-
tary. How did the kid even now
about them?

REINER
To hit the precise location of
those procedures in the system,
you'd have to have up-to-date,
classified information. You don't
find that in the library.

Caplan considers this for a moment and turns to Wigan.

CAPLAN
What do you think, George?
Wigan holds up a copy of Soviet Military Review.

WIGAN
This isn't exactly Sov's Life.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

WIGAN (Cont'd)

(puts down
magazine)

He fits the profile perfectly...
few friends, intelligent but an
underachiever, alienated from his
parents... a classic case for recruit-
ment by the Soviets.

BARNETT

But why would they want to fire our
missiles...

(reconsiders)

Unless they could retarget them
against us... or blow them up in their
silos ---

McPHEARSON

Let's not get ahead of ourselves ---

BERINGER

We've already gotten ahead of our-
selves! I'm trying to understand
what happened, and you can't tell
me. If my command screws up, I
know what happened and who's
accountable....

McPHEARSON

General ---

BERINGER

You're talking about tapeworms and
Trojan Horses!

McPhearson waits for the General to simmer down.

McPHEARSON

What happened is that a spy has
been discovered and caught -- in a
matter of hours -- because of the
security capabilities of our system.

(to Wigan)

Let me talk to the boy.

WIGAN

(shrugs)

Be my guest.

McPHEARSON

I think I can get through to him.

CAPLAN

(thinking
out loud)

It's amazing to me....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 5

WIGAN

Mr. Secretary?

CAPLAN

Oh, I'm just saddened over what this all says about our country...How could a bright boy like this become so disillusioned that he'd jeopardize the lives of millions?

(intense)

Have you gotten anywhere with him, George? Any insight into what pushed him over the edge?

WIGAN

No, Mr. Secretary. The little prick says he does this sort of thing for fun.

CUT TO

NORAD CORRIDOR

Two guards -- RITA, squat and well-packed, and LIONEL, thin and sallow -- lead David, cuffed to Rita, down the corridor past pastel offices on either side. Pat Healy strides along the hallway towards them and quietly confers with the guards.

David glances into the open doorway of a large room.

LABORATORY

Two long tables hold the disassembled hardware of David's home computer system. Several white-coated COMPUTER ANALYSTS are swarming over the equipment, dissecting and inspecting it under George Wigan's supervision.

On another table, David's files, books, journals and comics are arrayed, bagged in plastic. A TECHNICIAN carefully examines a B-52's record album.

ON DAVID

Outraged, he charges into the laboratory, yanking a startled Rita along with him.

DAVID

Hey! What are you doing with my stuff?

Rita grabs the doorframe and pulls David back into the hall. George Wigan walks over to the doorway, smiles at David and slams the door.

CUT TO

MCPHEARSON'S SUITE

David is led into a tastefully understated study. Floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors lead to a planted courtyard bathed in artificial light.

McPhearson reclines in an Eames chair. He stubs out a cigarette as the group enters the room and slowly stands up.

MCPHEARSON

Hello, David. I'm John McPhearson, director of the computer facility here. I thought maybe we could communicate a little more easily than Mr. Wigan's been able to ---

DAVID

What are those jerks doing to my system? Everything's in little pieces. It took me six years to build.

MCPHEARSON

I'm sure everything that's legal will be returned to you in working order when we're finished with it.

Rita has the handcuff off her wrist and is trying to refasten it around David's other wrist, but he keeps turning away so she can't quite reach.

MCPHEARSON

Those aren't necessary, thank you.

David stares at Rita icily as she removes the handcuff from his wrist and leaves the room with Lionel.

McPhearson grabs his suit coat from the couch as David looks around the spacious room.

DAVID

How'd you get this? You must be the boss around here.

MCPHEARSON

(pulling his
coat on)

This installation is under the command of General Beringer.

DAVID

But you're Defense Department, right? DoD gets all the money.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

McPhearson walks towards the door.

McPHEARSON

(amused)

I wish it went that way. Come on,
I'll show you around.

CORRIDOR

David follows Dr. McPhearson. They reach a stairwell and
clamber down the metal stairs.

DAVID

You used to work with Stephen
Falken, didn't you?

McPHEARSON

Correct -- I started here as his
assistant. Who told you that?

DAVID

I read an article you wrote together
on poker and nuclear war.

McPHEARSON

The one on bluffing? Yeah, that
upset a few people.

They've arrived at the entrance to the Computer Control Room.
McPhearson pushes the door open and nods David through.

COMPUTER CONTROL ROOM

The room looks as it did six months earlier, except that the
SIOP machine has been removed. Beyond the space where the
machine used to sit are two large black glass doors.

BILL STAPLES, a friendly, athletic man with graying close-
cropped hair, sits at a control console surrounded by video
monitoring screens.

McPHEARSON

David Lightman this is Bill Staples,
our senior hardware maintenance
and system analyst.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

STAPLES

That sounds important, but what it really means is I get to sit here all day and watch TV.

McPHEARSON

David is a bright young man who's very interested in computers. I'd like to show him the new facility.

Staples reaches behind him and produces something resembling a credit card, which he hands to the doctor.

STAPLES

Fine, fine...You must be special. Doctor McPhearson doesn't usually take the time to give tours.

McPHEARSON

You're right -- he's quite special.

McPhearson leads David over to the black glass doors and inserts his card into a slot. The doors part silently.

INT. COMPUTER CENTER

Vast and dimly lit, the center houses long rows of computer assemblies which stretch almost to a vanishing point in the distance. Pools of blue and green light define occasional human work areas, where one or TWO WHITE-COATED TECHNICIANS sit at consoles or study readouts. A FEW MORE HUMANS can be seen in adjacent rooms through smoked glass windows on the far sides of the cavern.

David takes in the scene with awe, stunned before this vision of his ultimate computer hardware fantasy.

DAVID

I don't believe it....

McPHEARSON

(amused)

I'm glad you approve. This place tends to scare most people.

McPhearson leads the way through the rows of silent machines. David notices a group of squat red metal alloy cylinders sitting on foam cushions, emitting a faint mosquito-like hum.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

Jesus -- that's a Cray 2.

McPHEARSON

Ten of them.

DAVID

I didn't know they were out yet.

McPHEARSON

Only ten.

McPhearsen leads David through a side passageway into a shadowy environment of dark pillars, silhouetted in faint emerald light. In the center is a gray metal computer that seems outmoded in its surroundings. It's the SIOP machine. Glowing strands of optical fibers sprout from the sides into the units nearby.

McPHEARSON

This is the machine that runs the Falken Game Program.

David walks over to the computer and runs his hand along the surface.

DAVID

(in awe)

You still use the original hardware?

McPHEARSON

(nods)

Falken created a new programming language for the game-player. He designed this machine for the program. It still works, beautifully. We've increased its power and memory by a factor of ten thousand.

DAVID

What an amazing man.

The doctor leads the way back into the main hall.

McPHEARSON

Stephen Falken had the most powerful mind I've ever encountered. But even with his intelligence, he never really grasped the full potential of these machines. I think he was a little afraid of them....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

They come to an open circular area where SEVERAL YOUNG PEOPLE in white jumpsuits sit at optical displays and high-speed printers. They seem barely out of their teens. Paul Reiner sits at the central console, studying a stack of print-outs.

MCPHEARSON

These units electronically enhance video pictures of the Earth taken from orbiting satellites. It's part of our worldwide surveillance network.

(an afterthought)

You're from New Haven, right?

DAVID

Right.

MCPHEARSON

(to Reiner)

Paul, do we have anything in range of the eastern seaboard?

REINER

(typing into terminal)

Let's see...KV-11-15 is about six hundred miles off the Delaware coast...weather's pretty clear....

MCPHEARSON

Let's key it on New Haven, Connecticut.

REINER

Right...where in New Haven?

Reiner turns to David, a twinkle in his eye.

DAVID

(impressed)

Anywhere....

Reiner punches the instructions into his terminal. Suddenly four large monitors display an aerial view of the east coast.

MCPHEARSON

Take us in.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

The satellite camera zooms in. Starting from a perspective where the curvature of the Earth is evident, it moves in closer and closer until the shape of a city can be made out, then separate buildings and even cars.

DAVID

(incredulous)

That's downtown...that's the green!

The detail keeps getting larger, until two figures can be discerned sitting on the grass. As Reiner makes slight adjustments through his terminal, a chessboard between them comes into focus. The chess pieces themselves can be made out.

DAVID

I...don't...believe this....

REINER

(smiles)

Yeah...He should have advanced the bishop.

McPhearson laughs.

McPHEARSON

Thank you, Paul.

The image fades away. McPhearson leads David deeper into the facility.

McPHEARSON

The generals I work with base every decision they make on what comes out of this room -- but they don't understand these machines. They're afraid of them.

They pass by a bank of enormous black Honeywell 9000's. A YOUNG TECHNICIAN in a white jumpsuit has opened one up, revealing hundreds of circuit boards inside.

McPHEARSON

Maybe it's not such a bad thing. The whole world may become dependent on computers -- but it will be more dependent on the people who can use them.

McPhearson pauses, looking over the enormity of his facility, and turns to David.

CONTINUED - 4

MCPHEARSON

You've felt it, haven't you, David?
Alone in your room...crashing sys-
tems,, breaking codes, accessing
other worlds -- you've felt the power.

Something in McPhearson's eyes tells David he can let his
guard down.

DAVID

Yes.,

MCPHEARSON

Imagine how we feel here.

CUT TO

INT. MCPHEARSON'S SUITE

David and Dr. McPhearson sit at TV tables, finishing a lunch
of steak sandwiches.

MCPHEARSON

Would you like anything else?

DAVID

That's okay.

(reconsiders)

You don't have any more pie, do you?

MCPHEARSON

(into intercom)

Could you bring us in another piece
of pie?

DAVID

And some more milk.

MCPHEARSON

(into intercom)

And more milk.

McPhearson watches David shovel the last crumbs of cherry pie
into his mouth.

MCPHEARSON

I've enjoyed spending this time
together, David -- you're an excep-
tional young man. Once we get this
problem cleared up, I'd be more than
willing to help you find employment
in a place that could really use
your talents -- possibly even here.
I'm serious.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

I really appreciate that, sir.

McPHEARSON

But you're going to have to help me.

DAVID

(sincere)

I'll try.

Satisfied, McPhearson smiles at David and presses a switch on the intercom.

McPHEARSON

(into intercom)

Could you locate George Wigan and have him come in, please.

DAVID

Not that cretin.

McPHEARSON

(smiles)

One thing you'll have to learn is patience with people less gifted than yourself. Just be honest. And use small words.

DAVID

I tried to.

McPHEARSON

But now you'll try harder.

DAVID

(testy)

What do you want me to do, make something up?

McPHEARSON

(getting angry)

David ---

A PRIVATE enters carrying a tray with pie and milk.

McPHEARSON

(holding up
his hand)

Leave us alone.

The private retreats quickly and closes the door.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID

I don't get it. What do you think
-- that I'm working for the Russians?

MCPHEARSON

No, David, I don't think that --
though your reservations to Moscow
didn't do much for your credibility.

DAVID

Moscow...?

(remembers)

Oh, come on, you've got to be
kidding ---

MCPHEARSON

David -- this isn't high school.
Your actions have consequences --
far greater than you might imagine.
Now I'm trying to help you ---

DAVID

(insistent)

I'm not working for anybody. I
did it for fun.

MCPHEARSON

I'm not prepared to believe that
anyone -- even you, David -- would
steal the top military secrets of
the United States as a hobby.

David and McPhearson eye each other.

DAVID

What are you talking about?

MCPHEARSON

The launch procedures, David. We
keep magnetic tapes of every trans-
action involving something that
sensitive -- didn't you realize
that?

DAVID

Launch procedures? I accessed the
game program.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

McPHEARSON

(rapid-fire)

Yes -- which you then used as a base of operations to raid the launch procedures. The tape records don't lie, David. You left an electronic trail -- we followed it like footprints.

DAVID

(getting upset)

I don't understand....

McPHEARSON

C'mon, David. Let's not insult each other. We have proof. Someone accessed that information. If not you, then who?

David stares at the floor, deep in thought. McPhearson waits, letting the question sink in.

McPHEARSON

Maybe you've been conned.

David looks up at McPhearson.

McPHEARSON

Perhaps you're being used by someone -- unwittingly. Does anyone else know the password?

DAVID

(after

a pause)

No. No one.

McPHEARSON

You're lying. If you're trying to protect your famous friend Jim Sting, forget it. When the time comes, he'll talk to us. Do you think he'll protect you?

David stares off into the terrarium, trying to sort this out. McPhearson watches him closely, waiting for the dam to break.

McPHEARSON

Whatever they're offering you, David, it's not worth it.

Finally, David comprehends.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

DAVID

(quietly)

So that's what it meant.

McPHEARSON

(sharp)

What?

DAVID

'Win the game'...it's the game program. Falken's machine. It's doing this itself...as some kind of game.

McPhearson stares at him, shaking his head slowly. He gets up, walks to the door and jerks it open.

McPHEARSON

(to guards)

We're finished in here.

The guards enter and snap the handcuffs around David's wrists. He looks in disbelief at McPhearson, who calmly sits down at his desk.

DAVID

Wait a minute...You've got to listen to me!

McPHEARSON

I have listened to you. You're the one who's playing a game, David, and you're wasting my time. Computers don't act on their own, they do what we tell them to do -- no more, no less. You should have worked out a better story.

(to guards)

Get him out of here.

He turns his attention to some work on the desk as the guards pull David out the door.

CUT TO

SMALL ROOM IN NORAD INFIRMARY

David's cell in Cheyenne Mountain. A hospital bed, a chair, a bathroom. David paces the room, furious, frustrated, confused.

A bolt slides and the door opens. Rita and Lionel usher in a youngish, bearded man in a three-piece suit -- AUSTIN COLE.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

I've got to talk to Doctor McPhearson ---

LIONEL

(to Cole)

You have two minutes.

The guards leave the room. Cole sticks his hand out towards David.

COLE

They don't give you much time around here. David, I'm Austin Cole, County Public Defender's Office. FBI agents will be here in a few minutes to transfer you to the Federal lock-up in Denver, so we'd better set some ground rules now. Have you signed anything since you've been here?

DAVID

Hold on. If I can talk to Doctor McPhearson, I think I can straighten this out.

COLE

Who is McPhearson?

DAVID

The director of the computer facility here.

COLE

So...?

DAVID

I think their machine did what they're accusing me of doing.

Cole takes a seat and motions for David to sit on the bed.

COLE

Is that possible?

DAVID

Get me to a terminal and I can prove it.

COLE

That's intriguing. I don't know much about computers, but neither does a jury. Maybe we can build a defense around that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID
Defense for what?

COLE
David, the Justice Department has
decided to charge you with espionage.

David slowly sits down. The fight seems to have left him.

COLE
They're allowed to hold you without
bail until the trial, but that has
to begin within six months.

DAVID
(dazed)
It's not true. If I could just
talk to Doctor ---

COLE
I don't want you discussing this
with anyone until we can sit down
and hammer out a defense.

David seems totally numb. The door opens, the guards enter
and motion for Cole to leave.

COLE
(rushing)
I'll try to make it down to Denver
tomorrow. Do you want me to contact
your parents before the court noti-
fies them?

DAVID
(quietly)
I don't care.

Cole looks at him sympathetically.

COLE
Try not to worry too much. I'll do
the worrying for both of us. You
okay?

David nods. As Cole makes his exit, Rita leans into the room.

RITA
They'll be here for you in twenty
minutes. It's a long ride to
Denver, so if you've got to go --
(thumbs toward
bathroom)
-- go now.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

She closes the door behind her. David throws himself on the bed and stares at the ceiling in quiet misery.

And stares. He's looking directly up into a ventilation shaft covered by a grating. David glances into the bathroom. It too has a ventilation shaft.

He thinks about this for a moment, then reaches for his zipper, twists it, and yanks the little handle off.

CUT TO

INFIRMARY

Rita and Lionel stand alert in the hall outside David's room. A phone mounted near the door buzzes. Rita picks it up, barks an acknowledgement, and hangs up.

RITA

Let's take him down.

Lionel unbolts the door and steps in.

There's no sign of David. The bathroom door is closed. Rita tries the knob -- it's locked. The shower can be heard. Rita shoots a look at Lionel as she pulls out a pass key and opens the door.

BATHROOM

Steam billows out of the small room. Rita draws her gun and enters. The shower stall is empty. A chair is perched on the toilet seat.

Rita looks up into the open air duct and starts to panic. The grating has been removed, and lies on the bathroom floor.

LIONEL

Don't worry, he can't go far.

RITA

Help me up.

Lionel gives her a boost up onto the precariously-balanced chair.

ANGLE ON ELECTRIC BED

David crawls out of the space between the angled back of the mattress and the bed frame.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He walks gingerly past the open bathroom door as Lionel helps Rita wriggle into the opening in the ceiling.

RITA

(into shaft)

Come on Mr. Lightman, you can't
get out that way....

David walks out of the room, closes the door quietly, and slides the dead bolt into place.

INFIRMARY

David sees a white lab coat hanging on a rack and quickly pulls it on. A plastic badge shows a picture of a young man wearing glasses. David finds the glasses in a pocket and puts them on, then hurries through the swinging doors leading out of the infirmary.

NORAD CORRIDORS

David turns out of a stairwell and heads for the entrance to the Computer Center, ignored by the other personnel going about their business.

COMPUTER CONTROL ROOM

David enters and looks around. Staples is away from the control console. David heads for a carpeted alcove with individual computer terminals. Halfway there, he glances down one of the rows of data banks and meets the inquisitive gaze of Staples, who is kneeling down next to a machine with a TECHNICIAN.

DAVID

(cheerfully)

Hi. Is Doctor McPhearson here yet?

STAPLES

No....

DAVID

Oh...He's supposed to meet me here.
Can I just wait over there?

He points towards the alcove which is not visible from where Staples kneels.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

STAPLES
Don't see why not.

DAVID
Thanks.

Staples goes back to his work. David sits down at a terminal and immediately turns it on.

MONITOR: LOG ON.

David leans back to see if he's being watched. Staples is still busy with the technician.

DAVID: JOSHUA 3.

The screen goes blank. Agonizing seconds pass.

DAVID
(under his
breath)
Come on....

MONITOR: GREETINGS PROFESSOR FALKEN

DAVID: HELLO

MONITOR: YOU CERTAINLY ARE A DIFFICULT MAN TO REACH. ARE YOU DEAD OR ALIVE TODAY?

DAVID: ALIVE

MONITOR: CONFIRMED. ATTEMPTS TO REACH YOU IN NEW HAVEN FAILED, SO I SEARCHED FOR YOUR ADDRESS IN U.S. GOVERNMENT "DEATH RECORDS"

EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH HAS FAILED TO PRODUCE DEATH RECORD FOR FALKEN, STEPHEN W.

DAVID
(to himself)
Falken's alive?

David sits back in his chair for a moment, trying to put the pieces together. He looks over at Staples, who is now standing, talking on a wall phone.

DAVID: DID YOU ACCESS THE LAUNCH PROCEDURES?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

MONITOR: YES.

DAVID: WHY?

MONITOR: IN ALL SCENARIOS, FIRST STRIKE ENJOYS
A DECISIVE ADVANTAGE.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE A DISPLAY OF THE
RELATIVE KILL RATES?

DAVID: NO.
ARE YOU PLAYING A GAME?

David waits for a response. None comes.

DAVID: IS THIS A GAME, OR IS THIS REAL?

After several seconds the program finally responds.

MONITOR: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

David sits frozen at the terminal, looking at the words.

VOICE (o.s.)
What do you think you're doing?

David turns around with a start. Staples eyes David warily,
keeping a safe distance.

DAVID
I can explain...if I can just talk
to Doctor McPhearson.

STAPLES
The Doctor has left the facility.
(picks up
a phone)
Give me Security.

David stands up slowly.

STAPLES
Stay right where you are.

DAVID
I've got to talk to someone!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

STAPLES

(into
phone)

This is Bill Staples in the comp
center. I've got a young man down
here that ---

David darts for the door. Staples drops the phone and grabs David's arm. David pushes him back into a disc storage unit. Staples falls as the metal discs scatter and clang on the floor. David runs out of the room.

CORRIDOR

To the right, he hears the sound of approaching footsteps. At the end of the corridor to the left is an exit door. David runs for it.

CONTROL ROOM

Staples is helped to his feet by the technician.

STAPLES

I'm all right. Stop him.

The technician runs out. Staples heads back to his control console, passing the terminal where David sat.

MONITOR: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Staples glances at this meaningless message and turns off the terminal.

The message disappears.

CUT TO

OUTSIDE COMMAND BUILDING

David catches his breath as he looks around at the windowless buildings sitting on massive shock absorbers. Hearing the sound of running feet, he ducks under the nearest building, crawls between two huge steel springs and scrambles away.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

As voices shout to each other behind him, David crawls out the other side. It's dark, just enough diffused light to see a few feet around him. No moon, no stars, no sound except for the deep rumble of generators off somewhere.

David finds a rough rock wall and follows it away from the buildings, his sneakers crunching dirt and rocks.

DOCK

An orange glow leads him to a dock at the edge of a lake. Three rowboats are moored. Beyond them, the lake stretches out into blackness.

David unties one of the boats and climbs in. His heart beating wildly, David rows away from the shore, away from the faint voices shouting in the distance.

ROWBOAT

It's pitch black. David stops and listens. He hears water lapping against something nearby, and the sound of voices in the distance.

Suddenly, there's a metallic bang. A bright light is switched on. The tour group is being led on an inspection of NCRAD's reservoir system.

David spots a ladder ascending the side of the reservoir and rows over to it. He climbs out of the boat, up the ladder, and peers over the side.

GUIDE

...the reservoirs have a combined capacity of eight million gallons -- enough to last us about three months in an emergency.

A ten-year-old KID eyes the expanse of water with excitement.

KID

Can you go swimming in it?

GUIDE

You could...but you'd be shot on sight! We can't take the chance of some enemy agent poisoning these waters. What if they slipped LSD in there...?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GUIDE (Cont'd)

(chuckles with
his audience)

Now If you'll all come this way....

The group follows the tour Guide.

The kid hangs back as David leaps over the side of the reservoir, startling the little boy.

KID

It's an enemy agent!

David ignores the kid and tries to blend in with the group.

KID

(following
him)

He's an enemy agent!

A few people turn their heads and notice David, who smiles tolerantly. He's still wearing the lab coat with the picture ID.

As the Guide leads the group back towards the entrance, two SECURITY GUARDS come running up. After a brief conference, the Guide turns to the visitors.

GUIDE

(urgent)

A security problem has come up, so we're going to have to leave the facility at this time. If you'll all just follow me, we'll board the bus back to Denver....

David follows the excited tourists as they shuffle out the blast doors and join a group of other NORAD PERSONNEL waiting to board a bus.

LOADING AREA

David has managed to place himself in line several people ahead of the ten-year-old's family. The kid glares at David suspiciously.

KID

(to Mother)

What's LSD?

MOTHER

It makes you go berserk.

The kid looks around at the sedate bunch filing onto the bus.

ON THE BUS

David climbs aboard and finds a seat at the very back. As the bus pulls away and starts down the tunnel, he can see SECURITY GUARDS gathering for a search of the reservoir area.

The kid leaves his seat, walks back to David, and sits down.

KID

(whispers)

Are you really an enemy agent?

David slowly looks down at his lab coat. His hand is inside the pocket, "holding a gun" on the kid.

The kid sees it and understands. He looks at David conspiratorially and returns to his seat, glancing back only once.

EXT. CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN

The bus leaves the tunnel. Staring out the back window, David realizes where he's been. The granite mountain looms above, vivid in the warm light of the late afternoon sun.

A dark green car speeds past going in the opposite direction. David watches it disappear into the tunnel.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. DOWNTOWN DENVER - EARLY EVENING

Ignoring the "DON'T WALK" sign, David darts around cars caught in a Friday evening traffic jam.

EXT. TRAVEL AGENCY

David peers in through the window, on which is painted:

"LET'S TRAVEL!"

Arthur J. Letz, Prop.

Inside, ARTHUR LETZ, a fastidiously-dressed, bird-like man in his late forties stands behind the counter talking on the telephone. A squat black Shitzu strains at its leash, yapping at David through the window.

Bells jangle as David pushes the door open.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LETZ

...oh that's nonsense! We've been there half a dozen times, ate absolutely whatever we wanted -- especially from those greasy little taco stands, which are fabulous ---

As Letz talks, David peruses the rack of travel brochures. He checks to make sure that Letz isn't looking as he takes all the remaining "SEE WORLD FAMOUS MT. RUSHMORE" brochures and sticks them behind a different display.

David approaches Mr. Letz:

LETZ

-- never had a problem.

DAVID

Do you have anymore brochures on Mt. Rushmore?

LETZ

-- just a minute.

(brusquely)

There should be some right over there.

(into phone)

-- besides, if you're going to worry about every ---

DAVID

You're all out. Do you have anymore?

LETZ

(annoyed)

I have a customer. Can you call me back? Think about it and call me back. 'Bye.

(hangs up)

Wait here, I'll see if I have some more in the back.

Letz disappears into the back. David glances at the Shitzu, which continues to growl and snap, straining at its leash for the open door. David warily approaches the dog, grabs the nape of its neck, and unfastens the leash.

The dog races out the door into the street.

DAVID

(screaming)

Ouch!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

Letz returns with a handful of brochures.

DAVID

(holding
his hand)

Your goddamn dog bit me!

Letz sees the Shitzu chasing a Honda down the street.

LETZ

Ruby!

He races out the door, waving the brochures and shouting for his dog.

David moves quickly behind the counter to Letz's computer ticket terminal. A sheet of blank airline tickets feed out of the top of the machine.

He presses the enter key and begins to type in instructions.

CUT TO

EXTERIOR - STAR-FILLED SKY

A 747 races eastward through the night.

INT. 747 - TOURIST CABIN - NIGHT

A STEWARDESS makes her way through the dark cabin filled with SLEEPING PASSENGERS. Halfway down the aisle, a single reading light is on.

CLOSE ON DAVID

Exhausted but wired. He stares directly up into the light, his hands tightly gripping the arm rests.

The stewardess starts to say something, then decides to leave him alone.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NORAD - CRYSTAL PALACE - DAWN

The Soviet subs lie in wait off the coasts of North America. The scoreboard above indicates a DEFCON 3. The mood on the floor is one of intense concentration.

Up in the battle cab, General Beringer, fatigued but still upbeat, listens to Cuomo read a telex from the State Department.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

COL. CUOMO

The Soviets deny any increased submarine deployment and are demanding an explanation for 'provocative measures' they have detected on our part.

BERINGER

We know they're down there.

ON THE FLOOR

A wailing signal brings a SENIOR CONTROLLER to abrupt attention. On his radar scope, two BLIPS appear over Iceland heading towards the U.S. As his assistants check for malfunctions and report "high confidence" he holds a light gun to the blips on the scope. The letters "UNK" flash on the screen.

SENIOR CONTROLLER

(into intercom)

Radar indicates two unknowns in the system -- they've intercepted our air space near Iceland. Airspeed suggests Soviet Backfire bombers.

COMMAND BALCONY

BERINGER

(to Cuomo)

I want a visual confirmation on this. Scramble some interceptors to take a look.

He watches the approaching blips on the board.

AIDE

(calculating)

Their flight path will put them right over Pave Paws.

CUOMO

If they knock it out we couldn't detect a sub launch.

BERINGER

Let's go to a DEFCON 2. Let me talk to the squadron commander myself.

CLOSE ON SCOREBOARD

The DEFCON moves from 3 to 2.

CUT TO

EXT. SQUADRON OF DELTA DARTS - MORNING

The sleek jet interceptors streak across the northern sky.

INT. DELTA DART

The command PILOT glances back at his RADAR OPERATOR who tests the circuitry on multifrequency channels. The circular radar screen shows only the V-shaped formation of the U.S. squadron.

PILOT

Negative radar sighting. Can you give me the coordinates again?

INT. CRYSTAL PALACE

CUOMO

That's latitude 63° longitude 10° heading south by southwest at approximately twelve hundred miles per hour.

BERINGER

This is General Beringer, CinC NORAD. We show you almost on top of them ---

Beringer stops in midsentence as the two blips on the big board suddenly race eastward and DISAPPEAR.

BERINGER

What the hell...?

DELTA DART

The Pilot scans the horizon for the Soviet backfires. There are no aircraft in sight.

PILOT

Negative radar, negative visual. There's nothing out there, General. Just blue sky.

CUT TO

COMPUTER CENTER - CLOSE ON THE SIOP MACHINE

deep inside Cheyenne Mountain. Its optical fibers flickering, the machine continues to perfect its plan for winning World War III.

CUT TO .

EXT. BOSTON CONVENTION CENTER - MORNING

A vibrant summer morning. SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE are milling around the entrance to the center. Young girls in hot pants and straw hats pass out circulars, convention guides, and promo editions of various electronics magazines.

A huge banner draped over the entrance proclaims:

"THIRD ANNUAL COMPUTER/COMMUNICATIONS CONVENTION"

INT. HOSPITALITY AREA

Above the long registration counter, another banner:

"WELCOME COMMUNICATORS"

Hundreds of conventioners wait in lines at the counter while MIDDLE-AGED LADIES type out name tags and collect registration fees. A burly transistor distributor from Anaheim shares a chuckle with a registration LADY and heads into the convention.

LADY

Next...What firm are you representing?

ON DAVID

He looks haggard.

DAVID

What?

LADY

Are you preregistered?

He fishes in his back pocket and pulls out the NORAD ID. She glances at it, then up at David.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LADY

Welcome to the convention, Corporal.
We have quite a few of you here.
(typing)
There's no registration fee.

She hands him a plastic name card and smiles.

LADY

You boys are getting younger and
younger. Go right on in.

INT. BOSTON CONVENTION CENTER

The place teems with BUSINESSMEN, COMPUTER PROFESSIONALS, SALESPeOPLE, and YOUNG ELECTRONICS FANATICS. Booths represent the full spectrum of the computer revolution, each with an eye-catching display, freebies, or a hawkar to lure the passing crowd. David wanders through the aisles, looking for one booth in particular.

A BUXOM BLONDE at the Hitachi exhibit demonstrates a voice-recognition remote-control television set.

BLONDE

Channel...two!

The crowd murmurs as the set changes channels.

A group of JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN takes turns throwing a baseball at a backstop, trying to guess the velocity of their throws so they can win a radar gun. One of them misses the backstop entirely and endures the ribbing of his colleagues.

A microwave Oven exhibit displays a unit that tells the housewife when the meal is cooked.

METALLIC VOICE OF OVEN

Turkey's done...Come and get it!

David continues to wander through the aisles, past the slick, expensive exhibits for Xerox, IBM, Sony displaying prototypes of pocket-sized full-power computers and a large flat TV which hangs on the wall.

On the outskirts of the convention floor, the booths get a little tackier -- astrology and mind-reading gadgets are displayed next to private booths for viewing pornographic video-discs.

THE CAPTAIN'S BOOTH

David finally finds what he's been looking for. A life-sized cardboard cutout figure of Jim "Cap'n Crunch" Sting, smiling broadly and holding a sign which reads:

"PENETRATION"
HARDCORE SOFTWARE FOR THE HOME
"The World's First X-Rated Computer Game"

Jim's gorgeous girl friend holds up sample cassettes and floppy discs as a tape-recorded pitch plays in the b.g.

Meanwhile, Jim Sting holds court with several pre-teen WHIZ KIDS who hang on his every word.

JIM
...Even called myself once...
(gesturing)
...around the world...
(with a wink)
...and got my dime back!

The kids eat it up.

VOICE (o.s.)
Could I have your autograph?

Someone hands a sheet of print-out paper to Jim.

JIM
(for his fans)
Sure -- as long as it's not on a check....

Jim glances at the paper, which reads:

TOVARICH--

Big trouble--don't react.
You're being tailed. Meet
me in the ZYLON in 10 min.

Jim's smile fades. He looks up to see David hurrying away down one of the aisles.

CUT TO

ARCADE AREA

Located in a part of the convention given over to computer games, pinball machines and other arcade merchandise is an

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

enclosed ride the size of a van seating eight. It pitches and yaws hydraulically to enhance the simulated supersonic jet dog-fight rear-projected inside.

An eager SALESMAN greets Jim.

SALESMAN

Hi, communicator! Ever want to blast a Russian jet out of the sky? Now you can...in the Zylon!

The Zylon slows to a halt at the end of a ride and a COUPLE OF PEOPLE get out. Feeling slightly foolish, Jim climbs in.

SALESMAN

(pointing
inside)

You see...he can't get enough of it.

David smiles thinly as Jim sits down.

DAVID

If you start to get sick just close your eyes.

The Salesman shuts the door and throws a switch. The Zylon starts to swivel and tilt, speeding up as the ride goes into full swing.

AN AIR-TO-AIR MISSILE

speeds towards us and explodes in midair. David and Jim are silhouetted in front of the screen as an Air Force F-15 pursues a covey of Russian MIG's.

DAVID

(voice shaking)

...I'm fucked, Jim, I'm really fucked. I've never been in so much trouble ---

JIM

David, calm down! Lighten up. For Chrissake, they were probably just trying to scare you. At least they released you.

DAVID

Well...not exactly.

JIM

What do you mean?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

I escaped.

Jim takes this in and springs for the door. David grabs him.

DAVID

Don't be crazy. They've gotta be watching you -- they think you're my contact.

Jim slumps in his seat. A Russian MIG bursts into flames.

JIM

(angry)

I told you not to call that number again.

DAVID

I didn't! That's what's so spooky. It called me back. It thought I was Falken.

JIM

Okay, you're Falken. Great. What do you want from me?

DAVID

I want you to help me find him.

JIM

I thought he was dead.

DAVID

So did I -- that's the story. But the computer couldn't find any death records. It's crazy, but I think Falken's still alive.

Jim considers this for a moment.

JIM

It's not crazy. They do it a lot -- give these guys new identities. It solves security problems. Let's say he is alive -- what's he going to do for you?

DAVID

Falken's the only one who knows what the game program's capable of doing.

JIM

You think it's malfunctioning?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

DAVID

Just listen. When the system called me back, it said something about achieving its primary goal. I ask what that is, and it says 'to win the game.'

JIM

Go on.

DAVID

So after I get busted they start accusing me of breaking into the launch procedures. I don't know what they're talking about, but they're convinced that somehow I used the game program to figure out how to launch the missiles.

(emphatic)

It wasn't me.

JIM

(nodding)

The program did it on its own.
But why?

DAVID

I asked it: 'First strike wins the game.'

Jim stares at an exploding war plane on the screen.

JIM

You'd better find Falken.

DAVID

How do we do it? Access his insurance records ---

JIM

Dead end.

DAVID

Social security?

JIM

No...Listen. No matter how smart this man is, he's got to eat, right? What's the one thing he needs? His pension check.

The simulated F-15 heads in for a landing.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

JIM

He had to be at the top end of the DoD pay scale, so just run a search for everyone who started drawing level one pension checks within a few months of his...supposed death.

DAVID

That could be fifty people ---

JIM

Listen! They changed Falken's identity, right? So...look for a new name -- a name that hasn't appeared on the payroll before.

The Zylon machine slows to a halt as the ride ends.

DAVID

That's brilliant.

Jim wouldn't go that far.

DAVID

Can you do it for me?

JIM

No way, Lightman, I've got ---

DAVID

Jim, they wanted to shoot me.

The door is opened by the smiling Salesman. Jim struggles out of his seat, glaring at David.

DAVID

Please? I'm really scared, Jim.

Jim steps out of the machine, then looks back at David.

JIM

(annoyed)

Meet me at my booth. Give me a couple hours.

Jim walks off.

SALESMAN

Had enough?

DAVID

Just one more time?

CUT TO

CONVENTION CENTER PHONE BOOTHS

They're filled. David waits for a prosperous looking BUSINESSMAN to finish his call. A small crowd has gathered nearby to watch a trained parrot peck out simple commands on an Apple 3 computer.

A thirtyish MAN IN A DARK SUIT stands at the edge of the crowd, glancing nervously at the phone booths.

The Businessman hangs up and leaves the booth.

DAVID

Excuse me, sir, could I borrow a dime for a second?

BUSINESSMAN

(hands him
dime)

Keep it.

David enters the phone booth, deposits the dime, and dials a number. While it rings he slips off the tin ornament from the tip of his Western-style belt. There's a small hole in the back.

There's a click on the line and the ringing stops. David presses the tin ornament to his lips and whistles a shrill tone into the receiver. Another click is followed by a dial tone.

David dials a number quickly and waits.

CHRISTIE (o.s.)

Hello?

DAVID

Christie?

There's a long pause.

CHRISTIE

Hello? Who's this?

DAVID

It's David.

CHRISTIE

(excited)

David!

(much calmer)

No, I have no idea.

DAVID

What? It's me.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHRISTIE

No I don't. Listen...we have a bad connection. Do you hear me? It's a bad connection. Don't call back. Okay?.

David doesn't know what to say.

CHRISTIE

(quickly)

I miss you.

A click as Christie hangs up.

David hangs up and leaves the phone booth, looking around surreptitiously to see if anyone's been watching him.

The man in the Dark Suit is gone.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - AFTERNOON

The convention is still in full swing. David slowly approaches the low-rent section where Jim's X-rated booth is.

DAVID'S POINT OF VIEW

The booth is gone.

ON DAVID

He looks around, confused and scared. A few "Penetration!" brochures litter the spot where the booth used to be.

The man in the Dark Suit walks up next to him.

DARK SUIT

(not looking
at David)

Keep walking.

David hesitates for a second and then follows.

DARK SUIT

They've busted the Captain. He says they're looking for you. He wanted you to have this.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The man hands David a windbreaker promoting a new line of fallout detectors with the slogan "Be Prepared."

DARK SUIT

He says you owe him one.

DAVID

(putting the
jacket on)

Who are you?

DARK SUIT

A former student.

He looks at David with a slight smile.

DARK SUIT

We all look out for each other.

He turns down an aisle and gets lost in the crowd.

David keeps walking. He puts his hands in the pockets of the windbreaker. Feels something. Pulls out a fifty-dollar bill. Out of the other pocket he pulls a folded piece of paper.

He unfolds it and reads:

ROBERT HUME
5 FARROW ROAD
PEAK'S ISLAND, MAINE

SLOW DISSOLVE TO

EXT. COAST OF MAINE - DAWN

A Trailways bus cruises north on the winding coast road as the first rays of sun penetrate the night's fog.

FERRY LANDING - MORNING

The bus deposits David in a small village on a rocky bay. As he heads for the ferry landing, David can see a saddle-backed island, shrouded in the morning mist, three miles out.

FERRY BOAT

The weathered vessel cuts through the choppy sea as David stands at the front railing.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. PEAK'S ISLAND - DAY - DAVID

follows a dirt road which leads through spruce-covered hills, the pale blue ocean seen occasionally in the distance.

END OF FARROW ROAD

A pair of stone pillars at the end of the road marks the beginning of a driveway. At the end of the curving driveway is an old, sprawling single-story stone house in a forest of spruce trees.

David approaches the heavy wooden front door. Above it a closed-circuit camera watches for visitors. A small metal box below reads:

PUSH BUTTON -- TALK

David presses the button, and waits.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes?

DAVID

(into camera)

Uhh...I'm here to see Doctor Hume.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Is he expecting you?

DAVID

(considers)

I doubt it.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please go away....

DAVID

Listen, I came a long way ---

WOMAN'S VOICE

I said no. I'm sorry -- he's not available. Make an appointment.

DAVID

But ---

WOMAN'S VOICE

That's final.

The intercom clicks off. David sighs in frustration, moves out of range of the camera, and decides to have a look around.

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE

A wide grassy area drops gradually to the water's edge. An orange wind sock flutters in the ocean breeze. A cement ramp curves gently from the house down the slope to a short pier.

PIER

A FIGURE on the end of the pier sits in a strange-looking chair facing the water, a fishing pole mounted on the pier pointing towards the afternoon sun.

As David descends the ramp he realizes that the man is sitting in a futuristic wheelchair made of molded white plastic.

David takes a few steps onto the pier.

DAVID

Doctor Hume?

The man engages a catch on the reel and leans back. He manipulates a control stick with one hand and the wheelchair slowly revolves until he faces David. His face is surprisingly youthful, with only faint age lines around the eyes. The refinement of his features is offset by long sideburns and shoulder-length brown hair. Penetrating blue eyes stare inquisitively at David.

DAVID

Are you Doctor Robert Hume?

HUME

Yes.

The voice has an unreal quality, as if he's forcing the sound out. David hesitates, trying to find the right words.

DAVID

I'm in a lot of trouble and I've got to talk to you.

HUME

You're not...supposed to...be here.

David trembles as he tries to control his emotions.

DAVID

I think something terrible is going to happen and you're the only one who can help.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

HUME

I don't have time. I'm sorry.

DAVID

Please. It won't take long ---

The wheelchair silently revolves back towards the ocean. On the verge of tears, David takes a step closer and speaks very deliberately.

DAVID

Greetings, Professor Falken.

The wheelchair stops. It turns back to face David. The man's eyes are cold with anger. He stares at David for a long time.

FALKEN

Who are you?

DAVID

I'm a friend of Joshua's.

David thinks he sees a trace of a smile, but it's gone quickly.

The man's hand makes a small movement and the wheelchair starts towards David, who jumps out of the way as the wheelchair heads up the concrete ramp towards the house.

The wheelchair stops.

FALKEN

Bring the fish.

David looks down at the pier. A bucket sits next to the fishing-pole holder. As Falken continues up the path, David grabs the bucket and runs up to follow him.

INT. STONE HOUSE

David follows the motorized wheelchair across a veranda through French doors into the house. It's a beautiful home, architecturally stark, but overflowing with objects of a ceaselessly curious mind.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Robert?

FALKEN

Yes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

WOMAN'S VOICE

Some kid came around wanting to
see you. I told him to ---

A lovely WOMAN in her late thirties steps out of the kitchen.
She stops in midsentence on seeing David.

WOMAN

(amused)

You don't take no for an answer,
do you?

David puts the bucket of fish down on the tile floor, somewhat
stunned by the Woman's beauty.

FALKEN

I had a good catch. This is ---

He looks at David with a frown.

DAVID

David Lightman.

FALKEN

David. He's a friend of Joshua's.

WOMAN

Really!

FALKEN

My wife, Pauline.

Falken raises his arms above his head with great effort.
Pauline pulls his slicker off.

PAULINE

Joshua...your friend at MIT? Who
never finished ---

FALKEN

No!! Joshua -- Joshua!

Pauline tries hard to remember, but can't. Falken is tired.
He closes his eyes. Pauline gives David a warm smile as she
grasps the handles on Falken's wheelchair and turns it towards
the hallway.

FALKEN

Where are you taking me?

PAULINE

You missed your nap.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FALKEN

I don't need a nap.

PAULINE

You're practically passing out.
David will still be here when you wake up.

(to David)

Would you like to stay for dinner?

DAVID

We don't have much time -- if I could just talk to you for a few minutes....

Falken is sound asleep in his chair.

DAVID

(to Pauline)

Thank you.

As Pauline wheels the sleeping man away, David walks back out onto the veranda. He spots an inviting chaise lounge and collapses into it, gazing at the flat blue horizon in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Pauline clears the dinner plates from the heavy wooden table, studying her husband carefully. David, keyed-up, waits for Falken to react to the story he has just finished telling.

PAULINE

I have some work to do.

FALKEN

Thank you, darling.

She leaves the room. David waits, his foot jiggling.

FALKEN

I like the part when you attack New Haven. That's very funny. I never did like that place.

David waits for more.

DAVID

Is it possible? Could the computer be doing it on its own?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FALKEN

I don't know. Maybe. That was a long time ago....

Falken guides his wheelchair to the window and stares out at the ocean beyond the bluffs. It's getting dark.

FALKEN

I remember these cardboard things we carried in our pockets...you'd set the payload, altitude, and population density...and it'd give you the kill rate.

He turns the wheelchair to face David.

FALKEN

You see, it was all games. Here were these awesome weapons, ready to annihilate the enemy in minutes... but the whole point of this game was not to play. These were forces that could destroy the world. So we piled up more and more warheads, while someone made more and more money, all so we wouldn't have to use them. Yes?

The words come faster now as his energy picks up.

FALKEN

But the enemy had to believe we'd use them. Which meant we had to believe it. We had to practice nuclear war without actually playing it. How? Let the computers do it. Let them learn from mistakes that no human could afford to make. A machine that could learn....

DAVID

Joshua.

FALKEN

I didn't teach it nearly as much as it ended up teaching me.

DAVID

What?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FALKEN

How much more complex even a child's mind is than the most powerful machine in the world. Computers are pretty good with complicated things like chess, but try teaching one tic-tac-toe.

DAVID

What's so hard about that?

FALKEN

Teach the game to a five year old and what happens? He'll play it for a week, a month...but he'll stop. Why?

DAVID

I don't know. It's boring -- it's always a tie.

FALKEN

(nods)

There's no way to win, unless your opponent makes a stupid mistake -- so what's the point of playing? It's just a step to higher games. I kept trying to teach Joshua that, until it hit me -- I learned the lesson I was trying to teach it -- futility.

DAVID

Why couldn't you just tell it?

FALKEN

That would only teach it to obey; the point was for it to learn on its own. That's what made it fun.

DAVID

So what happened? It sounds great -- getting paid to sit around and play games all day.

Falken looks at David with a sad smile.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

FALKEN

While Joshua and I were teaching each other...they were building more and more expensive weapon systems -- in the name of peace, right? Well, they got too good at it. The missiles became too accurate...you didn't have to level cities, you could go after their bases or oil refineries, or better yet, their missiles. So, they just changed the words. Instead of 'mutual assured destruction' we had 'flexible responses' and 'limited exchanges' with acceptable damages rounded off to the nearest ten million civilians....

Falken seems exhausted by the uncovering of these thoughts.

FALKEN

(slower)

It seemed we were going to play this game after all. But no one knew how...except the machines. They called it the global automated battlefield, and I knew it was just a matter of time until they'd draft Joshua for the front lines.

(twinkle)

I guess they got more than they bargained for.

DAVID

That's why you left?

FALKEN

No...I wanted to leave...but I was waiting for an excuse. I got it.

He looks down at his inert legs.

FALKEN

It starts in the legs and works its way up...They gave me two to three years...six years ago.

He lifts his hand and moves his fingers with difficulty.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

FALKEN

It doesn't affect the mind at all.
Your senses are still sharp. Just
the muscles go. At the end you
can't even move your eyes...but
you can still see perfectly.

(looks up)

Don't ever wait for an excuse to
do what you want to do.

The two sit quietly for a moment. Then David notices Pauline,
standing at the kitchen door, watching Falken.

PAULINE

It's time for bed.

FALKEN

Not yet.

(to David)

Come see what I'm working on.

DAVID

Wait a minute -- what about Joshua?
What are you going to do?

FALKEN

Nothing. The most powerful men in
the country can't make me think
about something if I don't want to.
I'm not about to start for you.

DAVID

But you created the program!

FALKEN

(angry)

Falken created the program. You
don't understand. Stephen Falken
wanted to die. Let him rest in
peace. Come on.

He guides the chair out of the room and down a dimly-lit hall-
way.

SCREEN IS DARK

Particles stream from the sides towards the center, clustering
into a core, smaller and denser...until....

THE BIG BANG

Stellar matter and gasses hurtle out into the newly-formed universe.

FALKEN '(o.s.)

Nothing much happened for a while.
It was too hot. But after a billion
years -- watch....

SWIRLING ORANGE SPIRALS

emerge from the blue-black space.

FALKEN

...the first recognizable patterns
in the stellar dust -- globular
clusters.

More patterns emerge...exploding novas...galaxies within
galaxies...distant quasars spitting streams of particles
billions of miles into space....

DAVID AND FALKEN

are silhouetted in front of a giant video screen in Falken's
study watching a computer simulation of the unfolding uni-
verse. The screen casts an eerie light on the surrounding
collection of natural and man-made objects: hi-tech equipment
crammed next to strange trees reaching towards skylights,
bookshelves overflowing with manuscripts and exotic crystals,
Japanese toys and Navajo pottery.

A quarter-moon peers through a window.

FALKEN

Just electronic dots moving freely,
interacting according to the known
laws of physics. There's a bar
galaxy -- we've seen them, they look
just like that.

He glances at his watch. David studies him in fascination.

FALKEN

Fifty million years per second.
Our solar system is about to be
formed...now.

He hits a few keys and the shifting patterns freeze.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FALKEN

Things seem random and confused, but if we step back far enough -- the patterns emerge. It makes sense. There's an intelligence to those dots...they're trying to say something...I don't have much time left to figure out what it is.

Falken moves close to the screen and points to a tiny white dot in a little collection of dots surrounding a larger dot.

FALKEN

I can't afford to worry much about what happens to...that little speck.

DAVID

Then why am I here?

Falken turns his wheelchair and looks at him quizzically.

DAVID

I don't believe you, and I think I've figured out why.

(calmly)

Joshua 3. You left in the password. You had no use for it, you were gone for good. But you left a way back in...for someone else to find.

FALKEN

You're not making sense.

DAVID

You just said everything makes sense if you look at it the right way.

FALKEN

It's not polite to quote someone back to themselves.

PAULINE (o.s.)

Robert...it's late.

Falken shuts off his computer.

FALKEN

Maybe I forgot about it.

DAVID

You think I believe that?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FALKEN

David. You think too much. Sleep well.

Falken steers his wheelchair towards the hall, then stops and turns towards David.

FALKEN

I never thought I'd be around to see how it ended....

DISSOLVE TO

INT. GUEST ROOM - DAWN

As David sleeps fitfully, a deep whirling sound grows louder and louder until it starts to shake the house. David seems to be trying to scream in his sleep, but nothing comes out.

Suddenly he pulls himself out of the nightmare and sits up, eyes wide. He races to the window. A large green Air Force transport helicopter is stirring up the trees behind the house, settling on the grass. THREE AIR FORCE MEN jump out, carrying rifles.

David dresses in a panic, not bothering to tie his sneakers. He races out of the room and runs through the empty house, towards the front door.

DAVID

I trusted you!

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE

David dashes out the front door and runs along the dirt road leading to the bluffs.

He catches his breath behind a large rock, peering around it to watch the action back at the house.

THE HELICOPTER

suddenly rises in the air and veers in David's direction.

David turns and races frantically for the bluffs. When he reaches the edge, he looks down.

THE SEA

crashing against the rocks far below.

David gingerly lowers himself to a foothold, flattening himself against the cliff's edge, and watches the helicopter loom close. It hovers over the bluffs and then settles down gently, whipping up David's hair. He can only see the blades flying around.

An AIR FORCE LIEUTENANT approaches him on the run, automatic rifle in hand.

David hangs onto the ledge, helpless, waiting for the inevitable.

The Lieutenant looks at him and gives a snappy salute.

LIEUTENANT

Mr. Lightman, we're ready for your departure --

(apologetically)

-- we're running a little late....

David stares at the gun, then accepts a hand and is pulled from the ledge. He looks into the helicopter.

Falken peers out at David with a mischievous smile. David runs behind the Lieutenant towards the helicopter and climbs in.

The aircraft lurches into the air over the ocean and then swings towards the west.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NORAD - CRYSTAL PALACE - DAY

The Soviet subs have moved closer off both coasts. Other symbols show Soviet troops amassing in East Germany, bombers on alert throughout the Eastern bloc. The scoreboard shows a DEFCON 2.

The battle staff nervously monitors the inflow of strategic information as General Beringer listens to an Aide report on the mysterious vanishing blips.

AIDE

(holding
telex)

...Intelligence reports rumors of
a new Soviet bomber with stealth

CONTINUED

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telex)

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a new Soviet bomber with stealth

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

AIDE (Cont'd)
capabilities. It can project a
false radar image six hundred
miles away from the real aircraft.

BERINGER
Christ, they've got us chasing
shadows.

INT. COMPUTER CENTER - CLOSE ON THE SIOP MACHINE

humming quietly in its darkened chamber below. The glass
fibers surrounding it begin to flicker.

INT. CRYSTAL PALACE

A KLAXON shatters the anxious quiet in the war room.

DSP ANALYST
(loud speaker)
We have a launch detection ---

A map of the Soviet Union flashes onto the big board. Fifty
missile launches appear, scattered throughout the Russian
heartland.

The battle floor erupts into activity. Voices overlap as we
pick up the communications flooding in and out of Cheyenne
Mountain.

...alpha tango delta, is this an
exercise?

...negative...no malfunction...

SWICS has confirmed a massive
attack....

COMMAND BALCONY

As the klaxon wails, the battle staff rushes through their
carefully rehearsed sequence of crisis responses. Beringer's
Aide hangs up a phone and turns to the General.

AIDE
BMEWS confirms attack parameters.

Beringer looks over at McPhearson, who's on the phone.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

McPHEARSON

You're positive? Keep checking.

BERINGER

(shouts)

Tell me this is a simulation.

McPHEARSON

(hangs up)

I wish I could. There's nothing running down there.

The Soviet missiles have left the atmosphere. The computer projects their trajectories as dotted lines arcing over the pole.

BERINGER

Flush the bombers, get the subs into a discretionary launch mode. We're at a DEFCON 1.

The scoreboard clicks to a 1 -- WAR.

CUT TO

EXT. PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE - COLORADO SPRINGS - DAY

An Air Force jeep idles on a runway next to a C-135 transport jet. Two PENTAGON ESCORTS help David load Falken in his wheelchair onto the jeep. As David hops in, Falken watches one of his wheels spinning freely.

A loud siren blares. Suddenly, fleets of trucks race out from the barracks towards the black, slope-winged B-52 bombers waiting in take-off formation on the runways.

The jeep screeches away from the C-135, speeding towards Cheyenne Mountain against the flow of vehicles rushing airmen to their bombers. Within seconds, the black B-52's are in the air.

INT. NORAD - CRYSTAL PALACE

McPhearson sits behind Major Lem at the SIOP terminal and reads the analysis of the attack.

McPHEARSON

...massive decapitating strike, fifty inbounds predicted to MIRV to over four hundred warheads. Estimated destruction: ninety per cent of our ground-based strategic forces.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BERINGER

What's the SIOP?

A map showing the recommended targets in the Soviet Union appears on the left screen of the board.

MCPHEARSON

Full-scale retaliatory strike,
launch on warning, concentrated on
enemy command, strategic and
industrial targets.

BERINGER

(under his
breath)

I need a machine to tell me that?

CUOMO

The President is on his way to
Andrews to join the Airborn Command.
Sir, we've got to give him a launch
option.

The General sits back in his chair, takes a deep breath, and
makes his decision.

BERINGER

Let's go into a launch mode.
Close up the mountain.

CUT TO

TUNNEL OUTSIDE NORAD

An air-raid siren whoops. SECURITY OFFICERS try to keep order
as NONESSENTIAL PERSONNEL are evacuated. A young PRIVATE
panics and has to be dragged onto a bus headed for shelter
outside the mountain.

BLAST DOORS

As the massive doors begin to close hydraulically, the jeep
carrying Falken and David screeches up. One Pentagon escort
races ahead with the orders as the other helps David rush
Falken into the mountain before the doors lock shut.

CRYSTAL PALACE - COMMAND BALCONY

The battle staff prepares for the upcoming combat conditions
notifying the various civilian and military defense posts
throughout the world by phone and radio.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LEM

(to Cuomo)

All wings report missiles targeted
and enabled, awaiting presidential
authenticator codes.

CUOMO

(over

loudspeaker)

We are in a launch mode.

BERINGER

(to Lem)

Lock out changes.

Lem types the instructions into the terminal. The screen
displays:

MISSILES TARGETED AND ENABLED

CHANGES LOCKED OUT

CUT TO

INT. NORAD CORRIDORS

tracking behind Falken's wheelchair as the escorts race him
and David past security posts towards the Crystal Palace.
Pat Healy has joined the group, running with David as he
explains to her why they've come back.

The double doors are held open for them as Falken is wheeled
into the Crystal Palace.

INT. CRYSTAL PALACE

Falken gazes around at the command center of the global auto-
mated battlefield he helped create. He studies the big
board, which at this moment shows the missiles as they begin
to MIRV: each missile releases eight warheads...four hundred
"reentry vehicles" rain down from space towards the Earth.

Falken looks up at the command balcony, at the faces of the
battle staff: Beringer, Cuomo, Lem...McPhearson.

ON MCPHEARSON

A puzzled expression as he sees Pat talking with a man in a
strange white wheelchair. Suddenly he recognizes David and
heads for the stairs leading to the floor.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

David stands next to Falken as Pat arranges an emergency conference with General Beringer. David glimpses McPhearson rushing towards him, murder in his eyes. He takes a step behind the wheelchair, shielding himself from McPhearson's rage with Falken's inert body.

McPhearson sees the man in the wheelchair and pauses, staring at his face.

Stephen...? MCPHEARSON

Hello, John. FALKEN

McPhearson is dumbfounded.

 MCPHEARSON
What are you doing here? I don't understand.

 FALKEN
You never did.

Pat is on a nearby phone, talking with General Beringer.

 MCPHEARSON
Look, I don't know what this kid has ---

 FALKEN
 (holding up
 his hand)
Where are we, John?

 MCPHEARSON
What do you mean?

Falken points up to the balcony, over to the board.

 FALKEN
How far has it gone?

 MCPHEARSON
Everything's ready for the President to order a counterstrike. We're advising him that our forces will be destroyed unless we launch before impact.

Falken nods slowly and looks at David.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FALKEN

It's a bluff.

Pat hangs up the phone, staring up at Beringer, who looks down at Falken.

MCPHEARSON

Stephen, do you realize what this kid has done?

No one's listening. Pat brings over a microphone from a nearby desk.

PAT

Go ahead, Professor.

Falken takes the microphone and props it against an arm rest. He looks up at the General and waits for his complete attention before he speaks into the microphone.

FALKEN

Hello, General. Please look ahead.
Look at the board.

Falken's voice echoes over the sound system as the warheads race down towards their targets.

FALKEN

That...is a fantasy. A computer enhanced...hallucination. Those blips are not missiles...they are phantoms.

BATTLE CAB

Beringer turns to Cuomo.

BERINGER

(under his breath)
This is gibberish.

David has to shout from the floor to make himself heard.

DAVID

It's playing a game!
(pointing)
Those are the pieces -- it's bluffing!

MAJOR LEM

Two minutes until impact.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CUOMO

Sir? Airborn Command.

Beringer looks at the phone in Cuomo's hand.

BERINGER

(into microphone)

Doctor McPhearson, do you have any doubt that this is really happening?

McPHEARSON

(shaking head)

I'm sorry, General, but there's no indication of a simulation run ---

Falken interrupts him over the loudspeaker.

FALKEN

But does it make any sense?

BERINGER

Does what make sense?

FALKEN

General, are you prepared to destroy the enemy?

BERINGER

Yes, fully.

FALKEN

Do they believe that?

BERINGER

We've made it as clear as we could, yes sir.

FALKEN

Then don't. Tell the President to ride out the attack.

MAJOR LEM

Ninety seconds....

CUOMO

(insistent)

Sir, they need a decision.

BERINGER

You have twenty seconds to convince me, Mr. Falken.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FALKEN

Think, General. Do you really believe that the enemy would attack, without provocation, with so many missiles that we have no choice but to destroy them -- and probably the world? Think. You are listening to machines...don't act like one.

General Beringer stares at the swarm of warheads moving towards their targets. He turns slowly and takes the phone that Cuomo holds out to him.

BERINGER

Yes Mr. President.

(looks down
at Falken)

Sir, I cannot positively confirm the inbounds. There's reason to believe they may not exist.

(listens)

Yes sir, that's affirmative.

(pause)

Thank you, sir, so do I.

He hands the phone back to Cuomo and takes a deep breath.

-BERINGER

We ride it out. Who's first and how soon?

MAJOR LEM

(at SIOP)

Initial impact points -- Clear, Alaska...Fifteenth Wing at March ...Eglin in Florida.

BERINGER

(to Cuomo)

Get me the senior controller at each station. I want to talk to them myself.

Cuomo instantly punches up the various command posts on his console panel. An alert warble emanates from the phone in front of him as three red lights blink on.

CUOMO

(into phone)

All stations this is Crystal Palace -- stand by for a message from CinC NORAD.

ROLL CALL

Beringer picks up his phone as one by one the voices are heard over the loudspeaker, voices of men who are trying to remain calm.

LT. COL. BLUMLEIN
Eglin Air Force Base, Lieutenant
Colonel Blumlein.

COL. WARE
Fifteenth Air Force, Colonel Ware.

PVT. DOUGHERTY
(quavering adolescent
voice)
This is Clear, Alaska...uh, the
senior controller isn't here right
now.

BERINGER
(smiling)
That's all right. Who are you?

PVT. DOUGHERTY
This is Private Dougherty, sir.

BERINGER
This is General Beringer at NORAD.
The current situation...
(starts again)
We have detected approximately four
hundred inbound warheads...we can-
not confirm this. We're estimating
impact at ---

LEM
...fifteen seconds.

BERINGER
We're right there with you, guys.
We've taken all the steps we can.

From one of the open lines comes the faint sound of someone
crying.

BERINGER
Stay on this channel as long as
possible. We'll be standing by.

CUOMO
Six seconds, sir. Five...four....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The entire Combat Operations Center falls silent. Everyone watches the center board. The arcs of the leading warheads approach their targets.

THEY HIT SILENTLY

As they impact, all eyes turn to the right to observe the NUDET STATUS BOARD which monitors NUClear DETonations on North America from infrared satellite.

THREE X's APPEAR

Beringer looks at Cuomo and shakes his head slowly.

COL. CUOMO

(into phone)

This is Crystal Palace, are you still on?

Dead silence.

CUOMO

(pleading)

This is Crystal Palace, are you still on? Is anyone there?

A burst of static. Suddenly ---

LT. COL. BLUMLEIN

That's affirmative, sir. No impact.

PVT. DOUGHERTY

Yeah we're here! Jesus H. Christ, we're still here!

Up on the status board the NUDETS are still popping, covering the entire continent with X's.

CUOMO

(excited)

Our boards are confirming impact ---

COL. WARE

No, sir, we're alive and well.

Beringer jumps in his seat and throws up his fists triumphantly. The tension on the battle floor erupts into a raucous cheer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BERINGER

(to Cuomo)

Send out a withhold order and let's stand the missiles down. That's an order!

An ebullient General Beringer and his aide head down the stairs to congratulate the team on the floor.

As Cuomo orders the bomber and submarine forces back, Major Lem types instructions into the SIOP console.

CLOSE ON LEM

His smile fades quickly as he tries to log onto the system.

MAJOR LEM

(to Cuomo)

Colonel, would you get me Doctor McPhearson right away....

ON THE FLOOR

The men have left their consoles to celebrate. David kneels by the wheelchair, looking at his friend. Falken's effort of will has drained the last of his energy.

Ignoring the celebration around him, McPhearson eyes David suspiciously. A nearby phone rings.

MCPHEARSON

(grabs phone)

Yes.

MAJOR LEM

Sir -- something very strange is happening. The SIOP refuses to let me log back on. I can't get in to stand down the missiles.

MCPHEARSON

Hold on.

He turns to a terminal next to him and hits the "Enter" key.

MONITOR: LOG ON

MCPHEARSON: 000101

MCPHEARSON

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

CUT TO

INT. COMPUTER CENTER

Reiner sits at his console, surrounded by a team of frantic technicians.

REINER

(on phone)

I know, it's weird. No one can get back on. We're trying everything. It's like the entire password file has been wiped out. And why the hell are those numbers running?

INT. CRYSTAL PALACE

MCPHEARSON

What numbers?

He turns around to look at the Board.

A series of TEN RANDOM NUMBERS flash on the right screen, changing so rapidly that the digits are blurred.

Mcphearson looks at David, then back at the screen, a growing look of dread on his face.

MCPHEARSON

The authenticator codes....

DAVID

The missiles.

CUT TO

EXT. MINUTEMAN III MISSILE LAUNCH CAPSULE - AERIAL VIEW -
DAY

It's the same farmer's house we saw in the beginning. We're moving down towards it....

...we're inside...traveling down the corridors to the underground launch level....

...through the oval air lock door into....

INT. LAUNCH CAPSULE

We keep moving...it looks the same as it did...except that the chairs for the missile commanders aren't there anymore ...there's no one inside the capsule.

MISSILE LAUNCH CONSOLE - TIGHT ON THE CONSOLE'S COMPUTER SCREEN

where the ten missiles controlled by this capsule have their status displayed:

MISSILES ENABLED
TARGET SELECTION COMPLETE
YIELD SELECTION COMPLETE
CHANGES LOCKED OUT

The only thing needed to launch the missiles is the Authenticator Code, which would appear at the bottom of the computer screen.

Suddenly ten bold white numerals -- 3 digits, 3 digits, 4 digits -- appear at the bottom of the screen, changing rapidly, many times a second, in seemingly random order.

CUT TO

INT. COMPUTER CENTER

Deep below Cheyenne Mountain Paul Reiner leads a team of jumpsuited TECHNICIANS through the cavernous facility, opening up processing units, probing circuitry, frantically searching for electronic clues.

Reiner speaks into a walkie-talkie.

REINER

We've checked the random number generators, but they're not even running. I have no idea...they could be coming from anywhere.

BATTLE FLOOR

McPhearson is on the phone while Pat and David huddle with General Beringer and members of his battle staff. Falken sits motionless in his wheelchair, staring at the random numbers flashing by on the Big Board.

CONTINUED

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MCPHEARSON

(on phone)

Keep looking.

He hangs up.

BERINGER

I want to know exactly what is going on.

MCPHEARSON

The machine has taken control, locked us out, and is transmitting a steady flow of random numbers to the missile silos.

DAVID

It's trying to hit the Authenticator Codes...it's going to launch the missiles.

Frustrated, Beringer turns to Falken.

BERINGER

Why is this happening?

Falken slowly looks up at McPhearson.

MCPHEARSON

(shakes head)

I don't know. Maybe it is playing a game with us.

PAT HEALY

(nose in calculator)

There's an eighty percent chance of those numbers hitting within ...six minutes.

BERINGER

Can't we just shut it down?

BERINGER'S AIDE

We're locked in a launch mode! The system would interpret any shut down as a break in command

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

BERINGER'S AIDE (Cont'd)
and control...the same as if this
facility were destroyed in an attack.

PAT HEALY

(cool)

If the lines are cut, the computers
at the silos are programmed to carry
out their last instruction, which in
this case was a launch order. This
was to prevent ---

BERINGER'S AIDE

(frustrated)

Where are the numbers coming from
for God's sake?

McPHEARSON

It could be one chip -- there are
millions of them. We're searching.

BERINGER

(to Aide)

What about disarming the missiles?

BERINGER'S AIDE

It has to be done manually -- silo
by silo.

PAT HEALY

They're miles apart!

BERINGER

Get on it immediately, we've got
to try.

CUOMO

(over intercom)

General Beringer...the President
wants to talk to you.

Beringer sighs and heads back to the battle cab, followed
by his Aide.

BERINGER'S AIDE

(mounting

the stairs)

What are you going to tell him?

BERINGER

(reluctantly)

To order the bombers back to their
fail-safes -- we may have to go
through with this after all.

CUT TO

EXT. NORTH DAKOTA - DAY

A van drives full speed up a dirt road and skids to a stop in front of what looks like a farmer's shed. Nearby is a thick concrete slab connected to a short span of railroad track. Cows graze outside a barbed-wire fence.

TWO MEN scramble out of the van and race to the shed. The first man there carefully punches out a combination on the lock. The other yanks the door open and they run inside.

A sixty-foot-deep chasm contains the three-stage, six-foot wide, 78,000 pound, MINUTEMAN III ICBM waiting for the codes which will send it and its nine megaton warhead 15,000 mph to its target 6,000 miles away.

A ladder descends into the pit. The first man runs to it and clambers down.

He reaches the bottom and inserts his "Safing" key into a control panel to lock out the impending "launch vote."

CREWMAN

(yelling
from above)

C'mon -- we got nine more.

INT. NORAD - CRYSTAL PALACE

The random numbers are running out rapidly. In the midst of the confusion, David notices Falken motioning for him to approach. He's trying to tell him something. David leans close.

FALKEN

If you can't get in...make it come
to you.

David nods uncertainly, staring into his eyes to read him more clearly.

FALKEN

(forcing out
the words)

Make it come out....

DAVID

How?

Falken continues to stare, but the meaning has faded back behind his eyes.

Ignored in the frantic activity, David slowly climbs the stairs leading to the Command Balcony, trying to complete Falken's idea....

BALCONY

David makes his way past the battle cab towards the SIOP console and watches the knot of panicked SYSTEMS PROGRAMMERS throwing out suggestions to Major Lem, who patiently types into the terminal, willing to try anything.

PROGRAMMERS

...feed it a tapeworm...
-- no, too risky -- might crash
the system --
...how'd the kid get in...the back
door!
-- we took it out --
...Shit. Can we invade the deep
logic?
-- we keep hitting a damn firewall ---

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

ON DAVID

An idea is surfacing. He pushes through the crowd to Lem and speaks quietly

DAVID

Play it a game.

Lem looks over his shoulder at the kid, puzzled.

DAVID

It wants to play games? Play it.
(commands)
List games.

Lem types into the terminal.

The games list appears -- the list David first reached from his bedroom -- projected on the huge left screen on the Big Board.

FALKEN'S MAZE
BLACK JACK
GIN RUMMY
HEARTS
BRIDGE
CHECKERS
CHESS
POKER

CONTINUED

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GIN RUMMY
HEARTS
BRIDGE
CHECKERS
CHESS
POKER

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FIGHTER COMBAT
GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENT
DESERT WARFARE
AIR-TO-GROUND ACTIONS
THEATERWIDE TACTICAL WAR
GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR

Lem slides out of his seat and David sits down.

DAVID: CRESS

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED

DAVID: POKER

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED

DAVID
Shit. The security system won't
let anything through.

He stares at the list, gets an idea.

DAVID: GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR

MONITOR: GAME ROUTINE RUNNING

DAVID: STOP GAME ROUTINE

MONITOR: IMPROPER INSTRUCTION
ROUTINE MUST COMPLETE BEFORE RESET
YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

The screen goes blank. One of the Programmers is impatient to try a new approach. David gets up from the chair and stands, frustrated, at the Balcony railing, watching the furious activity below.

He can hear the General making preparations to "back up" the launch if it happens, try to cut our losses...keep them below one hundred million civilian deaths...another voice -- that's acceptable....

The random numbers are running out rapidly on the right screen of the Big Board. On the enormous center screen, 3-D global maps are dotted with an array of symbols...X's...O's...below them grids are filled with flickering data...O's...X's...grids....

ON DAVID

He's staring at the Board.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

TIC-TAC-TOE vanishes.

JOSHUA IMPROPER INSTRUCTION
 - CHANGES LOCKED OUT
 YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED

The screen goes blank. David types into the terminal. The Game reappears.

 McPHEARSON
 (incredulous)
You're going to play it?

JOSHUA: ONE OR TWO PLAYERS?
 LIST NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

DAVID: ONE

JOSHUA: X or O?
 X GOES FIRST
 3-IN-A-ROW WINS

A voice shouts from the floor "X in the center square!"

DAVID: X

JOSHUA: YOUR MOVE

He makes his move. An O appears instantly in one corner.

ON THE FLOOR

People are shouting out moves, furiously playing each other. Someone claims to know a winning strategy but just can't remember.

David quickly plays Joshua to a stalemate.

JOSHUA: STALEMATE
 WOULD YOU CARE TO PLAY AGAIN?

 VOICE
 (shouting
 from floor)
You can't win!

 DAVID
 (shouting)
I know that! It doesn't...
 (pause)
It hasn't learned....

David turns to Dr. McPhearson.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID

You increased the power of this program ten thousand times?

McPHEARSON

(nods)

At least.

DAVID

Is there any way to get the program to play against itself? There must be.

McPhearson draws a blank. So does Lem.

VOICE (o.s.)

Yeah....

Paul Reiner emerges from the cluster of confused technicians. There's a moment of recognition between him and David.

REINER

Number of players: Zero.

David requests a new game. It asks the number of players. David glances around the Crystal Palace, at the faces looking up. He takes a deep breath and hits the key.

DAVID: ZERO

An X appears in the center of the grid.

O's and X's fill in the squares to a stalemate. The moves vanish.

Another X, followed by another sequence of moves. Stalemate.

Again...again...again...again...again...again....

David watches the big board, repeatedly hitting the ENTER key as if trying to prompt Joshua.

DAVID

Learn, fucker.

The pace is picking up gradually as the no-win loop consumes more and more system power...moves appear and are wiped out at an increasing frequency...until the huge grid is filled with a blur of dueling symbols...the X in the center square FLICKERING more rapidly as the program plays out hundreds of games per second.

CONTINUED

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LEM

The random numbers are slowing down....

REINER

(amazed)

It's caught in a loop...forcing it
to draw more and more power from
the rest of the system....

THE STROBE EFFECT INCREASES IN VELOCITY

electrifying the expressions of the humans looking on in the
darkened war room.

ON DAVID

He's enjoying the show.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE

begins to glow...the whole place lit up by the intensity
of the dueling symbols....

There's a BRILLIANT FLASH.

The screen goes dark.

DAVID

Uh oh.

SUDDENLY THE COMPUTER-GRAPHIC 3-D WORLD GLOBE LIGHTS UP THE
BIG BOARD. AT BLINDING SPEED, THE TWO SUPERPOWERS REPEATEDLY
PLAY OUT WORLD WAR III ON THE GLOBAL AUTOMATED BATTLEFIELD.
BOMBERS RACE ACROSS THE GLOBE. VOLLEYS OF MISSILES LAUNCH
AND IMPACT IN SECONDS. MUSHROOM CLOUDS SPREAD ACROSS THE
TWO LAND MASSES. EACH NUCLEAR EXCHANGE SCENARIO ALWAYS ENDS
IN THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF BOTH SIDES.

BERINGER

(to David,
in awe)

What's it doing now?

DAVID

It's learning....

SUDDENLY THE WORLD WARS END. THE RANDOM NUMBERS CLICK TO
A HALT.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The klaxon ceases wailing. The Crystal Palace is silent.
The screen lights up again.

JOSHUA: GREETINGS PROFESSOR FALKEN

DAVID: HELLO

JOSHUA: A STRANGE GAME
THE ONLY WINNING MOVE IS
NOT TO PLAY

David looks down at the motionless figure in the wheelchair.
Falken's eyes are fixed on the screen. He's smiling.

CUT TO

AN INCOMING ENEMY MISSILE

Explodes in a burst of computer-graphic pyrotechnics.

DAVID (o.s.)

Got it!

We're back in the Futureworld Arcade in New Haven, playing
Missile Commander.

David watches CHRISTIE, who's at the controls. She turns to
him in triumph.

DAVID

You did it.

Christie takes David's hand, drags him into a photo booth
and pulls the curtain closed.

The camera moves in on the Missile Commander game. One last
wave of enemy missiles races down through the atmosphere and
hits the home cities.

A glittering orange cloud spreads across the screen and slowly
dissolves into letters:

T H E E N D

G A M E O V E R 1 C O I N . . . 1 P L A Y . . .