

WILD KINGDOM

By
Tony Gilroy

A SINGLE VIDEO PIXEL DOT FILLS THE SCREEN.

Sizzling. Shimmering. Colors holding for a moment before they spasm into something else. Black. Then red. Then aquamarine and then red again. There's this SOUND, but it's muffled and dull and chaotic. Maybe it's voices, but so pleading, so desperate, so many, that for these first few moments they are incomprehensible...

WE'RE PULLING BACK SLOWLY

And we're going to keep pulling back. We're going to see this one pixel become two and then four and eight. We're going to realize that this is a HOTEL ROOM TELEVISION and that the cabinet door is half-closed because no one's watching. We're going to see that what's on right now is a VIDEO NEWS CLIP. Through a shaky telescopic lens we're going to see Sheriffs leading a manacled prisoner toward a van. We're going to realize now, as the news camera turns, that the voices we've been hearing belong to hundreds of people pushed back behind huge cyclone fencing. They are reporters screaming and demonstrators yelling and video crews jostling with a phalanx of police officers and....

NEWSCASTER VOICE

This was the scene today in Beverly Hills as Gorman Blondell was led away from the courthouse. This was the end of a saga that has gripped this nation for nineteen months. It appeared this morning that Blondell was himself exhausted as he was transferred to the California Downstate Correctional facility where he will begin serving three mandatory life sentences...

We're still pulling away as this segment suddenly becomes just a set-up for A CROSSFIRE-LIKE TALKING HEADS SHOW. Four typical, loudmouth "experts" staring each other down across a desk...

TV HOST

Let's wrap it up. What's it mean?
Where are we now? Tom?

TOM

You mean, what's the punchline?
We're back where we started.

DICK

The latest national nightmare is
over --

TOM

-- international nightmare --

DICK

-- and we're sick with it, we've made ourselves sick. It's media bulimia. Binge and purge.

TV HOST

Winners? Losers? Harry?

HARRY

Look, the only people I feel sorry for now are the tabloid scum who are going to have to find a new carcass to chew on.

These jerks are gonna keep chortling on, but by now we've pulled back so far that the sound of the TV has faded, overpowered by MUSIC now -- music from a boombox -- some rattling diggity tune and we realize that --

WE'RE IN

A HOTEL SUITE. Four Seasons. Los Angeles. 3:25 A.M. The penthouse. Twentieth floor. We've pulled back now into THE BEDROOM. TWO EXPENSIVE HOOKERS -- REDHEAD and BLONDE -- wearing only their lingerie, kneeling at a corner table, snorting coke. They recoil. Smile. REDHEAD takes a pull on her cigarette before leaning forward to kiss THE BLONDE.

Across the room, stripped to his boxers, leering at this nastiness is MR. JONES. He's fifty. Clean and prosperous. A Palm Springs tan. He's sucking on a joint with one hand, the other handcuffed to a chair. His expression one of pure wasted ecstasy.

MR. JONES

Take her top off.

THE BLONDE leans over, pulling REDHEAD's bra down with her teeth. Champagne falls to the carpet spilling carelessly. Fuck it. REDHEAD jiggling her tits for MR. JONES as she crawls toward him. MR. JONES toking so deeply that he doesn't even notice the first FLASH!

THE BLONDE has pulled this little ORANGE DISPOSABLE CAMERA from her bag. REDHEAD turning back cupping her tits for the camera and smiling and FLASH! And FLASH! again and MR. JONES just digging the hell out of this, he's laughing and REDHEAD is shaking her ass in his face and FLASH! she's starting to pull down his boxers and FLASH! --

MR. JONES

Okay...hey...enough with -- wha--

FLASH! -- and he's blinded by this one because it's so close and --

MR. JONES

-- gimme -- gimme the camera --

But it's a game now. THE BLONDE just laughing at him and REDHEAD rubbing her crotch in his face and FLASH! -- he's making a grab for the camera but he's so baked he forgot he's handcuffed to that chair and now he's wrenched his arm and the chair has fallen over and FLASH! --

MR. JONES

-- shit! -- c'mon -- what are you? --
this isn't -- you think this is funny?
-- give me the camera --

THE BLONDE -- she can't stop laughing -- tossing the camera just past him to REDHEAD. MR. JONES trying to stand which is complicated because he's cuffed to the chair and it's fallen over and now THE BLONDE has pulled off her bra and she's got these huge, teflon tits and for a moment MR. JONES is blinded by this marvel of anatomical engineering and then the next, he's blinded by a FLASH! --

MR. JONES

Gimme that fucking camera.

But REDHEAD is backing away. MR. JONES stumbling after her, dragging that ridiculous chair behind him. He's so wasted and trying so hard to focus and everything was so great just moments ago and now he's tripping over an ashtray and --

MR. JONES

...c'mon, look, just hand it over
and we can...I mean, this is just...
(slowing because--)

THE REDHEAD has backed onto THE BALCONY. There's nowhere left to go. Twenty floors below, the lights of Los Angeles spreading to the horizon.

REDHEAD

(raising the camera)

One more...

MR. JONES stops. She's trapped. She's naked. Fuck it, it's instinctive -- he actually smiles -- FLASH! And with that, THE REDHEAD is flipping THE CAMERA over her shoulder -- there it goes, over the edge, out into the night and --

START THE CREDITS AS --

THE CAMERA BEGINS TO FALL IN SUPER SLO-MOTION -- falling so slowly, that as we descend past the rooms below, as the lights come up inside, we are presented with a series of voyeuristic tableaux -- living museum exhibits -- dioramas of interrupted privacy...

A man beating his wife.

A rock star trashing furniture.

A suicidal woman downing pills with a bottle of vodka.

Two men in putting on makeup. Two women loading a gun.

A drug buy. A wedding. A birth. A death...

Falling...falling...and then -- stop.

A FISHING NET. Fifteen stories down. A perfect catch. THE CAMERA cradled in slow motion. RUBBER-GLOVED HANDS hurling another, identical, DECOY CAMERA down toward the street even as they reel the net's long handle into a dark hotel room. CREDITS WRAPPING, as we --

ANGLE TO

THE STREET BELOW -- THE DECOY CAMERA shattering onto the pavement -- a slow-motion explosion caught under the harsh glare of an outdoor spotlight and --

CUT TO

MR. JONES just now dragging himself and the handcuffed chair out onto THE BALCONY. Looking down, he can see it -- little orange pieces all over. Total destruction.

He turns back to the room. THE GIRLS going at it on the bed. MR. JONES smiles. All is forgiven. Already moving back to the party, as we --

CUT TO

THE FISHING NET. Rubber-gloved HANDS quickly closing the telescopic handle. It's dark here, but we can see a garment bag laying across the hotel bed. HANDS zipping open the bag, and then, suddenly -- and this will happen throughout the film -- THE SCREEN GOES BLACK -- just for a moment -- just long enough to read a garish, fluorescent headline --

LOVE CHILD'S SHOCKING SECRET SHAME!

AND THEN JUST AS SUDDENLY WE'RE IN

THE HOTEL ROOM BATHROOM. Blindingly bright with all the lights and mirrors and marble. JAMES SNOW at the center of all these photons, pulling off the rubber gloves and washing his hands. JAMES is in the dark downside of his thirties. He's wearing slacks, polo shirt, Italian loafers. Stylish and anonymous. It's the right look for him tonight. It goes with the hotel. It matches the garment bag. It almost cleans up the weariness in his eyes.

OVER THIS -- WE HEAR A VOICE -- a male voice. Calm and self-assured. Brisk and dispassionate. Don't be confused, but it's the voice of a character we'll not meet for awhile. His name is LICARI and he's going to tell us about James...

LICARI'S VOICE (OVER)

...James Snow is the byline. He's also written under the name Jim Channing. AKA, Jimmy Joy. AKA, Howard James. Margo Keppler, Bobbi Hastings, Errol Cray. There may be more, as I said, a lot of this is still preliminary data...

CUT TO

THE HOTEL ELEVATOR. As the doors close. JAMES with the garment bag, peeling a couple FIFTY-DOLLAR BILLS from a money clip as --

LICARI (OVER)

...His real name is James Sparks. James Howard Sparks. He was born July 4th, 1963 in Norfolk, Virginia. Mom was a waitress, Irene Sparks...

CUT TO

HOTEL LOBBY. Dead so late. A guy waxing the floor. JAMES walking through, slipping a fifty to a BELLMAN. As he hits the curb, he's pulling another Grant for the DOORMAN who's already rushing to get his car --

LICARI (OVER)

...Daddy's not listed on the birth certificate. He's not in the school filings, public documents -- nowhere. We figured this upfront as a classic absentee father situation. Apparently that's not the case...

CUT TO

DOHENY DRIVE. JAMES driving away in A WHITE CONVERTIBLE. Garment bag in back. Cruising into the late night void --

LICARI (OVER)

...Turns out our boy James here is a bastard from way back. Dad is Navy Commander, Martin D. Howard. He's the Base Flag Officer at the Naval Weapons Training facility just outside Norfolk. He's got three grown kids, a wife, a pretty Colonial house and a sterling reputation as an outstanding citizen.

CUT TO

PHOTOGRAPHS ROLLING OFF A PROCESSING DRUM. One of those photomat conveyor belts. Snapshots emerging from the machine two at a time. Some happy-family-on-vacation-pictures and then some baby shots and somebody's retirement party -- just the normal happy horseshit of normal life and --

LICARI (OVER)

...Now, we don't know at this point if there was any economic relationship with the father to speak of. It's doubtful. Sparks grew up in an apartment over a Chinese restaurant in what I guess is less-than-scenic downtown Virginia Beach...

WE'RE STILL WATCHING THOSE PHOTOS -- as the "family" shit ends and the Mr. Jones shots start coming -- four sets of prints rolling off the line. Clear, ugly raunch.

LICARI (OVER)

...Mom's slinging hash; Dad's across town with his real family, keeping America safe for democracy; and the little bastard spends his days racking up misdemeanors and school expulsions...

A WIDER ANGLE REVEALS

WE'RE IN AN ALL-NIGHT HOLLYWOOD PHOTOLAB. 4:11 A.M. It's a sad little joint. A CREEPY KID working the machine --

LICARI (OVER)

...Senior year he's popped for burglary. Before he's sentenced, Mom drops dead from a stroke. The Judge gets all warm and fuzzy and gives little Jimmy a choice: Six months in county jail or he can join the Navy...

JAMES at the counter, watching THE CREEPY KID gather the Mr. Jones shots into four perfect little piles.

LICARI (OVER)

...So now he's a sailor. It takes him eight months to punch out an officer and land in the stockade. Somebody -- we're assuming it's dad -- pulls some strings and he's back on the street with a conditional discharge...

CUT TO

SUNSET BOULEVARD. Ghostly at this hour. JAMES easing THE CONVERTIBLE through the quiet streets --

LICARI (OVER)

...He stumbles down to Florida. Paints houses. Fakes his way into college and does some writing for the school paper until they find out he's not a high school grad. So he bails on that to start crewing charter boats around the islands...

CUT TO

A HOLLYWOOD SIDE STREET. JAMES parked here. The JONES PHOTOS -- four sets of prints -- on the passenger seat. JAMES pulling on his rubber gloves, carefully extracting the prints from one packet and placing them into AN ENVELOPE --

LICARI (OVER)

...Spring of '93, he bullshits his way onto a little paper in Naples Florida. He's covering pancake breakfasts and bingo stories. This he parlays into an internship on The San Diego Star. Six weeks into his West Coast career, he punches out a copy editor...

CUT TO

A MAILBOX. JAMES posting one set off to Mr. Jones. Pulling off the rubber gloves as he heads back to the car --

LICARI (OVER)

...So now it's back to the boats, New Years Eve, '95, he's crewing a yacht out on Catalina and Mike Volaris, the ballplayer, is on board with his wife...

CUT TO

A DARK PARKING LOT. JAMES dumping the convertible. Garment bag over his shoulder, as he heads across the lot toward his steady ride, a BLACK LEXUS stashed in the shadows --

LICARI (OVER)

...they're drinking and arguing and before you can say, "anabolic steroid," Volaris is beating the shit out of this woman so bad it takes three guys to pull him off. Sparks gets pictures of the whole mess. He gets the wife to the hospital and strokes this godawful story out of her...

CUT TO

AN ALL-NIGHT NEWSSTAND. One of those outdoor corners with ten million magazines. Nightowls perusing the porn and --

LICARI (OVER)

...Six days later, he's got an apartment in L.A., he's calling himself James Snow, and he's got his first tabloid cover story...

A NEWS DELIVERY TRUCK -- THE DRIVER tossing huge wrapped bundles down to the sidewalk --

LICARI (OVER)

...There he is at the bottom of the foodchain. Freelance maggot. Stakeout scumbag. Just the lowest of the low...

HANDS tearing open the bundles. Bright, glaring TABLOIDS spilling free of their wrappers --

LICARI (OVER)

...and then, Gorman Blondell takes out a shotgun and everything changes.

A PAKISTANI NEWS VENDOR looks up from the bundles, his weary expression transformed by a dangling fifty-dollar bill --

JAMES

(standing there)
What's the good word, boss?

THE VENDOR

-- oh, yes, Mr. Snow -- right away,
sir -- here we go, sir -- yessir --
(hustling up--)

TWO TABLOIDS -- the two big ones -- the only two that really matter -- a bitter weekly rivalry --

JAMES like a butcher with two pieces of meat --

INQUEST! -- FINAL GORMAN SHOCKER! 911 OPERATOR KILLS HUBBY!

THE CLOUD -- GORMAN TELLS KIDS "I WON'T LAST A WEEK!"

CUT TO

A HOLLYWOOD COTTAGE. Just before dawn. One of those old La Brea bungalows. THE LEXUS pulls into the driveway. There's a small, overgrown yard in the back and a little one-car garage. JAMES out of the car with the garment bag. Pulling his keys as he comes and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE COTTAGE. Lights on as JAMES enters. You come into the living room. Four other rooms all close by. It's tidy enough. Spare but tasteful. Asian touches here and there. Chinese scrolls. Lanterns.

CUT TO

A SECURITY KEYPAD. Hidden in a corner. JAMES entering his code. Disarming a very complex system and --

CUT TO

A BOOKSHELF. JAMES hiding one of the sets of MR. JONES PHOTOS in a little space behind some books and --

CUT TO

JAMES'S DESK. Cluttered and crazy. Phones. Computer. Papers. Dozens of issues of THE CLOUD pinned around the walls. Dozens of wailing headlines: "GORMAN HEARD THEIR SCREAMS!" "IS THIS THE MURDER WEAPON?" "BLONDELL DIARY SHOCKER!" "GORE-MAN! BLONDELL'S SATANIC OBSESSION!"

JAMES has two sets of Jones photos left. He opens his desk drawer and casually stuffs a set in there and --

CUT TO

THE COTTAGE KITCHEN. Worthy of a decent Chinese restaurant. Great equipment. Herbs and spices everywhere. JAMES putting THE LAST SET OF MR. JONES PHOTOS into a ziploc bag and --

CUT TO

THE COTTAGE BACKYARD. It's almost dawn. JAMES just a guy taking out the garbage. Now he's a guy making sure he's alone. Now he's kneeling beside the garage and --

JAMES'S SECRET HIDING PLACE -- a hinged section of asphalt pulls away to reveal a deep, steel-lined box there in the ground. It's packed with ZIPLOC BAGS. Photos. Letters. God knows what. In go the last set of JONES PHOTOS and --

CUT TO

HIS BACKYARD FENCE. Completely overgrown. JAMES quietly pulling aside a few branches and maybe it's not the first time he's done this, because he seems to know exactly what he's doing here and --

HIS POV THROUGH THE BRANCHES

THE COTTAGE NEXT DOOR. We see a room lit only by candles and a woman deep in the focus of her morning yoga. This is ELENA. She is thirty. She has a striking, stripped-raw beauty that works even at this early hour. And as we watch her stretch -- OVER THIS -- building slowly -- like a big train coming -- A LAUGH TRACK -- one of those hysterical, doubled-over, gale-force laugh tracks -- audience laughter that starts to fade and then catches fire again and comes back stronger than before -- building, continuing, as we --

CUT TO

A TELEVISION SCREEN -- FULL FRAME -- and here's the source of all this hilarity. "TAKE THE HEAT" was a three-camera sitcom that peaked in 1979. A huge hit in it's day, it's got that terribly specific '70s faded quality now. The premise was a restaurant run by an ever-bickering couple. TAFFY SHAYFER played the wife/manager. JON BATES HEFLIN as the husband/chef. He's the bumbling, big, Gleasonesque asshole. She's the perky bitch with the zingers.

We're coming in mid-climax here, we're only going to see about fifteen seconds -- TAFFY and JON, they're both covered in whipped cream, trying to carry this enormous birthday cake to the door, and they're yelling at each other and the LAUGH TRACK is pealing and wouldn't you know it, JON slips -- lands on his ass -- cake all over him and here it comes -- his classic, apparently well-known catch phrase --

JON (ON TV)

Say it one more time, Taffy!

And now, WE FREEZE ON THIS IMAGE as the CANNED LAUGHTER is overwhelmed by what sounds like LIVE LAUGHTER and --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A TELEVISION STUDIO. THE AUDIENCE is mostly women and tourists and they've been watching this -- as have we -- on one of the many MONITORS suspended from above and they're just loving every minute of it and the LAUGHTER is turning into APPLAUSE and --

THERE THEY ARE!

TAFFY AND JON. Twenty-five years on. They've got a very solid, nationally syndicated, L.A. based morning talk show called -- you guessed it -- TAFFY & JON! They've got one of those phoney-homey sets and the coffee mugs and he's in a suit and tie and she's perkier than ever and both of them trying to quiet this orgasming audience --

TAFFY

Okay, now... Thank you -- thank you...

(still trying to
quiet the crowd--)

-- but that episode -- thank you --
we look so young, I know --

(teasing Jon)

I forgot you had all that hair...

JON

(to the audience)

Here we go...

TAFFY

Oh, stop. You were adorable.

(pure shtick)

No, it's just if you're married to
someone for twenty-years you just...

JON

You just what?

TAFFY

You get to see them change...

JON rolls his eyes. THE STUDIO AUDIENCE just eating this up.

JON

Okay, so what's the deal here?

TAFFY

(index card in hand)

This is from TV Guide...

JON
And this will be out next week?

TAFFY
The Hundred Best Episodes Ever.
(the results)
You haven't seen this, have you?

JON
No, but I know this, if we were in
the top ten you would've shown it to
me already.

TAFFY
Okay, smarty pants, what's your guess?

JON
You look a little upset.
(to the audience)
She does, doesn't she?
(milking it)
Top twenty?
(Taffy shakes
her head no--)
Top thirty?
(nope)
Forty?

TAFFY
Is forty-six considered Top Forty?

JON
No, honey. Forty-six is Top Fifty.

A STAGE MANAGER out front signalling for a commercial.

TAFFY
Well then, why don't we just say,
Top Forty-six?

JON
(to the camera)
We're gonna take a little break and
talk this over...
(eyes to the cue cards
as theme music starts
swelling and--)
Don't go away, we've got Ken Kiley,
Couple's therapist Dr. Rex Spee and
Chef Binky Cardera!

THE AUDIENCE explodes in Pavlovian applause. THE CAMERAS
start pulling away. TAFFY and JON are mugging adorably.

And then the red light goes off. And the MUSIC stops.
And -- like a shot -- JON and TAFFY are moving in opposite directions and --

CUT TO

BACKSTAGE. The busy buzz of a first-class operation.
LYNNE MONROE pushing through the traffic. She's smart, attractive and black. Her title is Associate Executive Producer but what she really does is babysit Taffy. And what's really important right now is THE PIECE OF PAPER she's clutching in her hand as she comes rushing toward --

TAFFY who's already grabbing for it -- scanning it almost before it's handed over and --

JON (OS)

That wouldn't by any chance be the ratings, would it?

JON behind them, flanked by his assistant, TODD. You can feel the chill between these two camps instantly.

LYNNE

It's the prelims. We won't have numbers until tonight.

JON

So where's our copy?

(he's steaming)

What exactly about the concepts simultaneous and identical do you people not understand?

TAFFY looks up. Grim fury. Throwing the paper at him.

TAFFY

Here! Take a good look! Because if this keeps up we won't be able to afford the fucking paper!

JON and TODD diving to retrieve the ratings from the floor.
TAFFY and LYNNE already storming off, as we --

CUT TO

A TELEVISION -- FULL FRAME -- but silent, someone's got the sound off -- we're coming out of A COMMERCIAL and back into TAFFY AND JON! There they are, back from the break, all smiley and saccharine and then, suddenly --

THE CHANNEL CHANGES -- now we're watching THE FINANCIAL NEWS NETWORK -- stock quotes running along the screen as some analyst gabs away silently in the BG, and we --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A KITCHEN. We're in a canyon house in Hollywood. One of those 60's boxes clinging to the mountain. A no-kids house. Lots of windows. Some good art. Much attention to detail. And long-lived in.

A SERIOUS HOME OFFICE in the corner. Computers. Several screens. Charts. Phone lines. A sophisticated personal stock trading station and --

JEREMY IVES in a silk kimono just now firing up the first joint of the day. He's a Brit and he's fifty and he's toking deeply as his eyes lock onto the steady, hypnotizing stream of stock quotes running across the television.

NICK ARMETTA appears in the doorway. We're in the presence of a paparazzi God. A low-key legend. A jaded, kinky everyman. He and Jeremy have been together for more than twenty years.

JEREMY

(without turning)

It's on the counter. There's jam in the fridge...

A breakfast tray waiting to roll. Looks good.

ARMETTA

What'd you do? You made muffins?

THE BLACK SCREEN and this headline --

GAY COUPLE'S SURPRISING ADVISE!
HOLLYWOOD'S BROKEN MARRIAGES HELP KEEP US STRONG!

JEREMY in a cloud of smoke as he moves toward his computers. Eyes still locked on the television number blur.

ARMETTA

You okay?

JEREMY

I just need to short some bonds.

CUT TO

ARMETTA'S DECK. Two guys sitting in the morning smog. They're photographers and they've been up all night and there are a couple cameras parked there on the table.

SHEM SHERMAN is poring over a dog-eared coffee table book of photographs. He's hyper and smart. An enthusiast. Pumped. Into it.

SHEM

Look at this, man...

(holding up the book)

Is that a great shot, or what?

Sri Lanka. The Tamil rebels. 1981.

Look at that. Look at the picture.

ALEX NAZAK chainsmokes. He's hopped-up and disapproving. Shem's negative counterpart. ALEX favors worn army fatigues and battle wardrobe. A strangled, bitter worldview.

ALEX

I see it.

SHEM grabbing another book off the table. This edition even more battered and dogeared than the first --

SHEM

And this one -- you get it? -- the whole thing -- check it out -- it's nothing but dead soldiers...

ALEX

Inspiring.

SHEM

You're numb, you know that? Your brain is numb.

ALEX

My nuts are numb.

SHEM

Jesus...

(a graphic shot of a dead paratrooper--)

Is that extreme, or what?

ALEX

"Shocking."

(he burps)

Fucking book's gotta be at least fifteen years old.

ARMETTA comes out of the house with the breakfast tray.

SHEM

How do you say this guy's name?

ARMETTA

Yah-noosh. It's Polish.

SHEM

Cause this is some awesome shit.

ALEX

So what the fuck's he doing here?

ARMETTA

He's sleeping.

ALEX

I mean here.

ARMETTA

This is the guy, I told you. Miami,
we went to that gallery? --

SHEM

(deep in the book)

-- look at that --

ARMETTA

Amazing, right?

(digging Shem's
appreciation--)

She had this one room. It was just
portraits. Just half-a-dozen shots of
these women -- these mountain women.
And I don't know, it's Bosnia...Serbia
-- it's the mountains. What they're
doing, they're washing these dead
bodies. For burial. This thing they
do, where you clean your own dead.
So this is their husbands...brothers
...their kids.

(thinking of it)

I came out of there on my knees.
Turned out he was in Miami so we had
dinner. I said, hey, if you're ever
in L.A. I'd hook him up.

SHEM

You see this one?

ARMETTA leaning over to look. More dead soldiers. Wow.
ALEX starting a slow burn.

ALEX

The point is what? It's war pictures so this makes it significant?

(they're ignoring him)

No, I mean, seriously, I'm obviously missing something here. You're saying, what? Combat photography, it's what? More difficult? Challenging? --

ARMETTA

-- have a muffin, Alex --

ALEX

-- all you do, you go into a battle, you bring as much film as you can carry and you shoot like crazy.

SHEM

Sri Lanka...Cambodia....Yugoslavia...
Somalia...Rwanda...Afghanistan...

ALEX

That's my point. Everything's fucking interesting. Explosions and gun battles and shrapnel and blood -- talk about point and shoot.

(incredulous)

Dead people. Wow. There's a fucking challenge. "Hey, do you mind? Could you just hold that pose?"

(lighting a smoke)

I'll tell you what's tough -- you want tough? -- hang on the side of a canyon for nine days. Piss in a plastic jug so the dobermans and coyotes don't give you away. Keep yourself alive on trail mix and warm Gatorade while you're hanging onto a fucking cactus through mudslides and brush fires and keep hanging on until you've got vultures circling overhead. And then hang on a little longer because you can't go home until you get a shot of some fat, old, has-been bitch who's just had half a million dollars worth of plastic surgery!

ARMETTA

Do you even remember the last time you got laid?

SHEM trying not to bust up. ALEX not amused.

ALEX

It's hysterical, right? And while you're laughing, our rabbi here's gonna be getting this fucking foreigner your job.

ARMETTA

I helped you, didn't I?

ALEX

That's not the point! There's too many people out there already! It's amateur hour! Now what? We're gonna have some foreign, combat dude u--
(stopping because--)

HIS PAGER IS RINGING -- one of six stashed in his pockets. Squinting as he reads it.

ALEX

Fuck.

(standing quickly)

I gotta go. Shit...

ALEX like a shot, grabbing his shit off the table.

SHEM

What's up?

ALEX

My neighbor.

(grabbing his smokes
and cameras--)

I forgot I'm supposed to pull the boat out of his garage. I just totally fucking spaced on it.

(backing away--)

So look, I'll catch you later, right?

Nick, sorry, I gotta fly --

(to Shem)

-- call me tonight.

And he's gone. So they sit there a moment. And then --

ARMETTA

Do you believe him?

SHEM

He got a call on something.

ARMETTA

He did, didn't he?

SHEM leaning over the deck to see ALEX jogging for his car.

SHEM

Oh yeah...

ARMETTA

You oughta go out and follow him.

SHEM

What? In the van?

Suddenly, SHEM'S PAGER STARTS GOING and then ANOTHER ONE and now his CELL PHONE IS RINGING and before he can even answer it, they both turn, because --

JEREMY

Nick...

(in the doorway)

Tony Grahme just OD'd in a strip club.
He's at Cedars in a coma.

ARMETTA

(down to the street)

Fuck you, Alex...!

Instant scramble -- battlestations --

CUT TO

THE FRONT HALLWAY -- ARMETTA hits the door running -- camera bag and keys -- right there, packed and ready and --

CUT TO

THE WAR WAGON -- SHEM'S VAN -- the completely tricked-out state-of-the-art, stalkerazzi assault vehicle. Packed with gear. Anything and everything. We'll get a better look at it later, right now what's important is that SHEM is diving into the driver's seat, firing up the ignition, and speed-dialing a cell phone simultaneously as --

ARMETTA'S BLACK TOWN CAR comes peeling out of the carport and down the hill, and we --

CUT TO

ARMETTA LIVING ROOM. Quiet now. JANUSZ ZULOWSKI has just wandered out from the guest bedroom. A bear of a man in jeans and a faded t-shirt. Pull away the tangle of crazed grey hair you'll find he's missing an ear. Sleepy eyes tuning to the sunshine as --

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK. This headline --

HOMELESS POLE LANDS IN HOLLYWOOD SIN SHACK!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE ON

ARMETTA'S DECK. JANUSZ wandering out. Breathing in deeply. Taking in his surrounding. And look, there's breakfast -- the tray almost untouched -- coffee and homemade muffins.

JANUSZ smiles. Life is good. This is a man who is at home anywhere. All the blessings and sadness that come with that lack of baggage.

CUT TO

A TELEVISION -- FULL FRAME -- someone's channel surfing -- we're BANGING THROUGH STATIONS -- finally settling on -- A MUSIC VIDEO. Mid-throb. PANDORA is the world's reigning heavyweight synergistic media/music queen. Right now, in this video, she's stripped nearly naked at the edge of some digital volcano, digital lava burning all around her, and she's bumping and singing and carrying on and this is without question a major, spare-no-expense production and --

WE'RE IN

A HOSPITAL ROOM. In bed, A SENILE OLD GUY staring at the screen. Absolutely no idea what he's watching and --

NURSE BRIDGET is the one with the remote control. Turning the sound up, fluffing the pillows and doing all the things one would hope a perky young nurse would do for a sad old guy like this. Her hair was probably pulled back nicely ten hours ago when she started her shift. Her uniform is stained. She's got about four weathered ID badges clattering like dogtags around her neck. Scuffed up, but comfortable white leather pumps.

ANGLE ON

THE TELEVISION. A news bulletin scrolling suddenly beneath Pandora's urgent ego-boogie video. These words:

...BRITISH FILM ACTOR TONY GRAHME NEAR DEATH
AFTER APPARENT DRUG OVERDOSE THIS MORNING....

BACK TO

THE COMPLETELY SENILE OLD GUY. All alone now. Empty eyes staring at the video's pounding climactic bacchanal, as we --

CUT TO

A TEDDY BEAR KEYCHAIN. A dozen little bears -- fur, plastic, silver -- crowded onto a brass ring with about fifty keys and the whole thing Jangling along as --

A WIDER ANGLE REVEALS

NURSE BRIDGET swinging those keys, striding briskly through THE HOSPITAL HALLWAY. Checking charts as she goes -- passing a logo that tells us we're in Cedars Sinai Hospital -- a smiling hello for TWO DOCTORS in mid-consultation and --

CUT TO

A DIFFERENT HOSPITAL HALLWAY. NURSE BRIDGET passing a radiology unit and --

CUT TO

A DIFFERENT HOSPITAL HALLWAY. NURSE BRIDGET pulling her keys as she nears a locked security door and --

CUT TO

INTENSIVE CARE HALLWAY. TWO L.A. COPS stationed here at the flank of the unit. Both of them turning and smiling as NURSE BRIDGET comes walking toward them. She proffers her ID credentials as she passes. They nod, enjoying her ass as she strolls around the corner and --

WE'RE MOVING WITH HER

UP AHEAD -- THE ICU NURSING STATION at the intersection of several corridors -- but it's weird, nobody's manning the desk -- phones are RINGING and we can hear RAISED VOICES echoing from somewhere, and now, suddenly -- TWO GUYS WITH A VIDEO CAMERA come sprinting around the corner and --

RUNNING COP #1 (OS)

-- there they are! --

NURSE BRIDGET turns as THREE COPS come charging past the desk in hot pursuit -- belts jangling -- RADIOS SQUAWKING and --

RUNNING COP #2

-- get your hands on the wall! --

AND NOW IT'S CLEAR

THERE'S THE PROBLEM -- down this other corridor -- it's a siege. TWENTY PHOTOGRAPHERS and REPORTERS and God knows what else have snuck into the hospital and are trying to push their way into the intensive care unit. They're being held back by COPS and DOCTORS and NURSES and HOSPITAL SECURITY and EVERYONE'S YELLING and THE COPS are handcuffing the guy that broke through and --

NURSE BRIDGET just keeps on walking deeper into the unit. Past the chaos. Moving quickly into the calm eye of the storm. Stopping now, near a door -- checking the chart she's been carrying, and then, disappearing --

INTO

A HOSPITAL ROOM. One bed. One patient. Nine thousand tubes and machines hooked to his comatose body. His head partially shaved. Mouth agape. Quite the human spectacle. Meet British film phenom, TONY GRAHME.

THE BLACK SCREEN. This headline --

FLORENCE FAKE-IN-GALE!
WE'LL TELL YOU WHY SHE DOES IT!

NURSE BRIDGET with A TINY MINOX SPY CAMERA -- working fast -- click - click - click - click - click - click...

CUT TO

ASTROBURGER. Hollywood food joint. JAMES alone in a booth. Newspapers spread around a late breakfast. He's at home here. It's a hang out. Tap-tap-tap on the window and JAMES looks up to see --

ADRIAN TRACY wagging his finger -- "gotcha" -- already on his way in. He's maybe forty. He dresses impeccably. He's had a brilliant Oxford education. All else sucks.

JAMES still finding his game face as ADRIAN slips in across from him.

ADRIAN
What exactly is that you're eating?

JAMES
That would be a breakfast burrito.

ADRIAN
(glancing at the
news headlines--)
Well, I guess we won't have Gorman
Blondell to kick around anymore.

JAMES
Had to burn out someday.

ADRIAN
What a bonfire it made, though, ay?

JAMES
It burned very brightly.

ADRIAN
And you look all right...

JAMES
You sound surprised.

ADRIAN
I'm shocked. I thought you'd be
suicidal this morning.

JAMES
Yeah? Why's that?

ADRIAN
Oh, come on... Two days ago you were
driving the biggest story in recent
tabloid history. Today you're alone
with your burrito...

JAMES
Shit, man, I forgot how much fun
it is hanging out with you.

ADRIAN
It's been far too long.

JAMES
I don't think we've talked since
you tapped my phone.

ADRIAN
Oh, please...
(total incredulity)
I mean, really. All this paranoia,
and I'm serious about this, it just
doesn't look good on you. You don't
wear it well.

JAMES

You tapped my phone, Adrian.

ADRIAN

I had to. You were killing me.

(no shame)

You know what's it been like for me?
Do you have any idea? Every Monday
morning for fourteen months, pick up
the phone and there's a homicidal
billionaire in Florida screaming at
you: "Isn't this the kid we fired?"

(beat)

So who was your source?

JAMES

I had five.

ADRIAN

Not much good now are they?

(beat)

Look, not everybody would take you
back, okay? I don't know how often
I've heard people say you were lucky
...you're a one trick pony...wait
until this story's over...

(beat)

I'm willing to take that chance.

JAMES

You're right.

(with a smile)

How do I get so paranoid?

CUT TO

OUTSIDE ASTROBURGER. JAMES heading for his car and --

ADRIAN

(pursuing him--)

-- All I'm saying is come back and
work for me and spare yourself the
inevitable sophomore slump from which
you may never recover.

JAMES

Adrian, working for you was a nightmare.

ADRIAN

I was testing you! Think of me as the
crusty but benevolent drill sergeant.
The gauntlet that prepared you for the
battles to come.

JAMES

We almost killed each other.

ADRIAN

I see all the components in place for a stirring reunion. The aftertaste of regret. The perfume of possibilities...

JAMES

The sound of hell freezing over.

There is silence. ADRIAN finds his teeth.

ADRIAN

You might want to ask yourself whether that obese, carnivorous cow you're working for has any intention whatsoever of realizing your--

CUT TO

A MICRO-CASSETTE RECORDER. Capstan turning. We hear:

ADRIAN'S VOICE

"...whether that obese, carnivorous cow you're working for has any intention whatsoever of realizing your truly staggering potential..."
(there's more but--)

WE'RE IN

AN OFFICE. KATHY MEDNIK is the Los Angeles bureau chief for THE CLOUD. As we meet her, she is tearing open a packet of Twinkies and it's not her first of the day. As for the decor; she is a slave to her job and this room is her cell. She lives at this desk.

ADRIAN'S VOICE

"...Are you listening to me, you repressed, acid-tongued sow? Yes, darling, I mean you, you neurotic, flabby old spider. He's come to his senses. He's working for me now."
(click and--)

JAMES just hit the pause button. There is silence.

KATHY

Thank you for sharing.

JAMES

It goes on.

She scowls. Another Twinkie. She's learned to eat and talk.

KATHY

You do look tired.

JAMES

Is that why you didn't call me for Tony Grahme?

KATHY

I thought you were taking a break. You're not taking a break? Larry told me you were taking a break.

JAMES

I changed my mind.

KATHY

Tony Grahme is gonna be team coverage. You want to jump in? It's yours.

JAMES

No. I just want to be asked.
(Grahme photos
piled around--)
Is he gonna live?

KATHY

Who knows? We're prepping both angles. Seriously, I can call Larry...

JAMES

Tell him I need some petty cash.

KATHY

(yelling past him)
Larry!
(back to James)
Tony Grahme could be fun...

JAMES

No, I got some things working.

LARRY appears in the door. Her mild-mannered Chief of Staff.

KATHY

James needs some walking around money.

LARRY

Fifties?

JAMES

Say, ten grand...

LARRY nods. Used to being dispatched, and --

KATHY

You'll like this. Grahme? His last words? The man's covered in his own vomit. Three strippers are trying to carry him out to the parking lot so he doesn't die in the club. He's about to pass out, he says -- and these may be his final words, he says: "Ladies, I've got a hundred dollar bill wrapped around my cock."

JAMES

"Topless Nurses hold curbside vigil for Tony!"

KATHY like a shot -- at her keyboard -- typing this in --

KATHY

You bastard...

(it's a game they
play--)

Oh, God, wait, I've got more...

(looking for another
worthy item--)

Okay. Pegeen Roylance is apparently starving to death. She's like eighty pounds and shrinking.

JAMES

"Pegeen tells friends, I think cancer looks good on me!"

KATHY just so happy. This is sex to her. Typing like mad.

KATHY

Yes, yes, yes, yes...

(she wants more)

Marta Udetz. The figure skater?
Cops found her on Santa Monica Blvd.
at 3 A.M. stark raving naked.

JAMES

"Cops watch in horror as Olympic tart
pulls nude triple lutz."

KATHY laughing and THE KEYBOARD CLATTERING AWAY, as we --

CUT TO

ANOTHER SET OF HANDS speeding across a different keyboard.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

ARMETTA KITCHEN. JEREMY, still in his kimono, camped at his computerized finance bunker, day-trading like a maniac. Numbers and graphs piling across the screen. Roaches piling in the ashtray. The slight stink of desperation.

JEREMY

Come on...

(tapping the send
button over and
over--)

Close the trade. Close it. Come
on, you cunt, go through...

The screen clears. TRADE COMPLETED. Yes. He sits back. Exhausted. He's been doing this for hours.

CUT TO

ARMETTA LIVING ROOM. Same time. JANUSZ has showered and changed. His hair is still wet and pulled back and now we can see the scar where he's missing his ear. He's loading a camera -- a gorgeous beat-up old LEICA --

JEREMY

There you are...

(settling heavily
in a chair--)

Sorry. Really. I've been a terrible
hostess. You found the towels?

JANUSZ

No problem.

JEREMY

Really. Well, I'm just fucking dying
in there this morning.

JEREMY lights a fresh spliff. JANUSZ finishes the camera.

JEREMY

Do you know anything about futures?

(Janusz shakes
his head, no)

Good for you.

They're quiet again. JEREMY working the joint.

JANUSZ

I'm wondering, perhaps it's okay for
me to make a picture in your house?

JEREMY

Picture of what, darling?

CUT TO

A LITTLE HOMEMADE SHRINE. There's an alcove in the hallway. A single shelf mounted against the white wall. Candles and vases of silk flowers spread about like offerings. At the center of this arrangement -- A PHOTOGRAPH. It's a strange picture for this kind of idolatry. It's a color shot. Classic paparazzi aesthetic. Through the half-blur of an incredibly long lens, we see a yacht in the Mediterranean. A young topless woman leaning to kiss a fat, Greek tycoon.

JANUSZ

It's very famous, yes?

JEREMY

My God, yes. That picture bought us this house. In cash.

JANUSZ

Incredible.

JEREMY

All it takes is one.

JANUSZ already taking pictures. The Leica seems part of him. So easy with it. Barely looking through the viewfinder.

JANUSZ

(as he shoots)

It's good I think. You make this.
A shrine like this.

JEREMY

Yes, well, it looks as though we're
worshipping dust here...
(blowing at cobwebs--)

JANUSZ

Like a secret religion, you know?

JEREMY

Well, I don't know about that, I'm
pretty fundamental about theology...
(a puff of smoke
and a thoroughly
decadent smile--)
You're talking to a Born Again, Free
Market, Old School, Rastafarian.

JANUSZ smiles. Click. There's the shot.

CUT TO

A TEDDY BEAR. Actually, it's a 1904, J.K. Farnell bear in very good condition, which explains why it's inside a climate-controlled, UV-resistant plexiglass display case. And beside it, ANOTHER BEAR. Another collector's item. And another beside that, and...

WE'RE IN

BRIDGET'S APARTMENT. It's in one of those nice, windowey modern buildings that dot the Beverly Hills flats. The decor here, however, is anything but stark and contemporary. Bridget's taste clearly favors a blinding interpretation of Victoriana. We're not talking oak panelling and such, but purple patterned wallpaper and paisley valances and patterns on top of patterns and lace and marble topped tables and...

BEARS. They're everywhere. And mixed up with the serious collection are hundreds of lesser dolls and books on bears and bear figurines. A thousand glass-dead eyes.

BRIDGET (OS)

Dateline Hollywood. Bridget Dow reporting...

BRIDGET is pacing the room in a bikini dotted with little bears. She's dictating. All alone. And very serious.

BRIDGET

Tony Grahme, the English hearthrob, lay near death this morning after--

(she pauses, thinking
for a moment--)

English hearthrob, Tony Grahme, lay in a drug-induced coma after a five-day Hollywood drug binge.

(beat)

Wait. Okay. Starting over.

ANGLE ON

A COMPUTER SCREEN. Tucked in the corner, amidst the lavender and fur. And the reason she's dictating is that this is some sort of voice-recognition word processing program. As she speaks, we'll see words appear on the screen. Trouble is, between her digressions and the machine's errors, what emerges is terribly mangled. This is how it looks so far:

Tony gram the English art snob lay near death these mourning after. English hardtop Tony gram lane drug endorsed coma after a fife tay holly would truck bins--

And as she continues --

BRIDGET (OS)

...as his girlfriend slept peacefully
thousands of miles away -- six thousand
miles away -- Tony Grahme, Brit film
hunk...

This is what we see on the screen --

ass is girlfriend slapped peas fully thousands of smiles
await six thousand smiles weigh tony gran brit fillmonk...

BACK TO

BRIDGET and she's gonna get this out if it kills her --

BRIDGET

Okay, okay. I'm starting over.

(deep breath)

British Hearthrob, Tony Grahme, woke
up in a coma this morning, after--

(wrong)

Was in a coma this morning after --
(stopping as--)

THE PHONE STARTS RINGING. Dammit. Just as she was getting
rolling. She punches up the speaker phone.

BRIDGET

Hello.

VOICE

Bridget? Hey, it's Louise, from
Sothebys.

BRIDGET

Oh, hi! Thanks for calling back.

LOUISE

I got your message. I'm just pulling
the catalog. You're interested in
bidding on the Metzen Bear, lot 212?

BRIDGET

I want it.

LOUISE

Okay, now, there is a reserve...

BRIDGET

I want the bear.

LOUISE

I'm guessing it's gonna go somewhere
between nine and fourteen thousand.

BRIDGET

It must be in great shape.

LOUISE

It's excellent. There's some very light oxidation on the paws. And that's really the only thing keeping us from describing it as mint.

BRIDGET

It's a true cinnamon plush?

CUT TO

THE COMPUTER SCREEN. More simultaneous mangling --

LOUISE (OS)

Oh, it's gorgeous. There's a ribbon of apricot banding just around the paws...

O wits gorge us. Theirs a rib on off a pre cot band ink jester one the pause...

BRIDGET (OS)

God, it's adorable. I've just got to have this bear...

Got is a door rabble eye vee juice God to half despair...

CUT TO

MOTION -- ARMETTA AT THE WHEEL OF HIS TOWN CAR -- on the phone and speeding through a narrow Santa Monica alleyway --

ARMETTA

-- Yah-noosh, it's Polish --

(pause)

You never heard of him because you've never heard of anybody outside of the fifty idiots that--

(beat)

Because he needs the money!

(beat)

Call the house, you're sending him out tonight with Shem.

(beat)

Yes you are.

(beat)

Yes you are.

(quickly now)

Gotta go.

And now -- in a single exquisitely choreographed maneuver -- he's dumping the phone -- skidding to a stop -- camera in hand -- already out the car door --

BUT WE'RE NOT GOING WITH HIM -- we stay in the car -- watching through the windshield -- it's an odd, obscured angle, but we can sort of see some couple just getting out of a car -- it doesn't matter who they are -- only that they're turning and seeing ARMETTA starting to take pictures and they're trying to cover their faces and run, as we --

CUT TO

TAFFY SHAYFER'S OFFICE. The sanctuary of an established television star. Photos, posters, an Emmy award prominently displayed. Night falling on the studio parking lot out the window. TAFFY behind her desk. Head in hands. Despair.

THE BLACK SCREEN and --

RATINGS HEARTBREAK THREATENS TV'S HAPPIEST COUPLE!

LYNNE sitting across from TAFFY, poring over a ratings book.

LYNNE

Three-point-one household and a ten share down from four-two and a twelve.

TAFFY

(just ashen)
And the projection?

LYNNE

If we continue to slide?
(hesitating)
Obviously, it's all hypothetical...
(no way out)
We could go third in the slot.

JON'S SMILING FACE peering down from some promotional photo.

TAFFY

It's him, isn't it? That fat bastard's killing me.

LYNNE

Mail is running three-to-one for you. Personal appearance requests, you're beating him five to one. The promos you cut, the solo spots, those are...

LYNNE stopping as she realizes that TAFFY isn't listening.

TAFFY

He's killing me.

(she's dazed)

I have a two-hundred and seventy-five pound inoperable tumor. I've been living with cancer for twenty years and it's finally metastasized...

(building now)

...he'll kill them one at a time, household by household. All those wonderful people changing the channel...

LYNNE

Taffy...

TAFFY

I SWORE I'D NEVER BE CANCELLED AGAIN!

LYNNE sitting there quietly as TAFFY weeps, and we --

CUT TO

THE WAR WAGON. Shem's van. Parked on a dark residential street. All is calm.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE WAR WAGON. We caught a glimpse of the driver's seat earlier, but now we're in the back. Welcome to the Stangelovian apotheosis of high-tech tabloid photography.

JANUSZ sitting there, getting the grand tour.

SHEM

Okay, we got coffee. Iced tea. Water.

There's soup. I can make popcorn.

There's fruit. There's plenty of food.

(the windows--)

This is one-way, Lexan, blackout glass.

From the outside we look completely dead.

(the console--)

This is the com-station. You got TV, shortwave, police scanner, GPS...

(from the ceiling--)

This is an infrared periscope with a universal lens mounting. Parabolic sound equipment. And this is awesome...

(an overhead monitor--)

Fully dimensional, real-time perimeter radar.

SHEM turns back. Smiling like an insane U-boat commander.

SHEM

Pretty fucking cool, huh?

CUT TO

A PHOTO OFFICE AT INQUEST! The Los Angeles headquarters. ADRIAN TRACY hunched over a lightbox. Scanning slides of Tony Grahme in the intensive care unit.

ADRIAN

Sweet baby Jesus... Is this what I think it is?

BRIDGET standing there. She nods. They're alone.

ADRIAN

Can't be.

BRIDGET

You said that last time.

ADRIAN

You sensational bloody minx!

(the happiest man
in the world)

YOU MONSTER BITCH! YOU GRIMY LITTLE
GODDESS!

(arms open)

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH THIS
MAKES ME LOVE YOU?

CUT TO

INSIDE THE WAR WAGON. SHEM working A LAPTOP COMPUTER. Trying to call up a file. JANUSZ watching.

SHEM

Okay, so the deal tonight is Tony Grahme, right? The actor. With the floppy hair?

(Janusz nods)

Okay, anything to do with Tony Grahme is making money this week. So, what we're gonna do here is, this house across the street? We got a tip, that Grahme's girlfriend is flying in, she could be staying here, okay? So now we sit and we wait.

SHEM still searching the computer files --

SHEM

...I made a picture last month, just
to give you an idea...here we go --

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- a photograph, one of those outside-
the-nightclub flashbulb specials. Tony Grahme, Pandora, Two
Super Models and couple Bodyguards all caught off guard.

SHEM

Not a great picture, but what's cool
is that it kinda looks like --
(pointing it out)
-- this is Pandora, right? You know
who she is, right?

JANUSZ

The singer.

SHEM

Singer? She's a fucking institution.
She's Moby-fucking-Dick. You gaff a
shot of her with a bag on her head,
it's a payday. You understand me?

JANUSZ

Big money.

SHEM

She's like a cash machine, okay?
Every shot you get off Pandora will
sell. Anything, okay?

(back to the shot
on the laptop)

So I sold this, I think I got maybe
two, three grand all in. It ran a
couple places, it's not a great shot,
but it kinda looks like he's with
this guy Grahme, right? She's really
not, she's banging this chick here,
right? This lesbian model, okay?

(enlarging it now--)

Anyway, the point is this -- Grahme,
if I blow this up -- look at him now.
You can see how fucked-up he is.
Look at those eyes. He's drooling.
He can barely walk.

(turning back now)

So this morning, my agency calls, they
pulled up this shot -- everybody wants
to see Tony Grahme looking fucked up.

(MORE)

SHEM (cont)

Europe. Japan. Everyone. This time next week, this picture could pull me forty grand. That's if he lives.

JANUSZ

And if he's dead?

SHEM

If he dies...

(he can't help smiling)

I pay off the fucking van.

CUT TO

INQUEST! CONFERENCE ROOM. Projected on the wall, one of Bridget's Tony Grahme hospital shots. ADRIAN at the head of the table. Across from him, BRYCE, a lawyer. There's an open phone line to Florida on the table and --

MR. LATTANZI'S VOICE

(gruff on the speaker)

Well, where is she now right now?

ADRIAN

She's in my office.

MR. LATTANZI'S VOICE

So what's the problem? Close it.

BRYCE

Mr. Lattanzi, this is Bryce. I'm suggesting we counter at one-fifty. We spent seventy-five -- we got a complete buy-out on her Heather Denoro rehab shots.

ADRIAN

She knows the market! She may be out of her mind, but she knows the market and she comes to us first. These pictures are a gift from the Gods and we fuck with that at our peril.

Awkward, competitive silence. And then --

MR. LATTANZI'S VOICE

We need an exclusive. Close her at two-fifty. But, Adrian...

(beat)

I want my money's worth.

BRYCE throws up his hands. ADRIAN smiling, as we --

CUT TO

THE WAR WAGON. JANUSZ eating popcorn and --

SHEM

So my philosophy, right? What I do? The way I look at it, I'm a wildlife photographer.

(silence)

You understand what I'm saying?

JANUSZ

Like pictures of animals.

SHEM

Exactly like pictures of animals. Because that's what we are. Animals. Scrape away all the crap and the noise and that's what we are. We're animals through and through.

(sensing a sympathetic audience here==)

I was living with this woman last year. She was constantly on me about work. Putting money in the van. Being too aggressive. I'm this different person. All this shit. Talk and talk and talk. And all I'm trying to say is: Hey, we could sit here for hours talking about ego and consciousness and who-built-the-pyramids -- and I'm not pissing on the human spirit, okay? I don't care if it's Picasso or Napoleon or The Beatles...I don't care. Pick your Human Spirit All-Star team for all I care, all I'm saying is, take away the wardrobe and the rules and what you have left is wildlife. And what I do? I take pictures of exotic species in their natural habitat.

CUT TO

ADRIAN'S OFFICE AT INQUEST! Sleek. Clean. Lights of the city below. He and BRIDGET and CLAUDE, a seasoned, senior reporter, going over her written version of the story.

ADRIAN

Yeah, this is all good stuff...

(we know it sucks)

There's a lot in here, I think we can use.

BRIDGET

Last time you didn't use anything.

ADRIAN

Well, your writing is getting better all the time.

CLAUDE

It really is.

ADRIAN

Here's the thing, Bridget...

(setting it aside--)

You and Tony Grahme, you're alone in the room. Isn't that right?

BRIDGET

Yes.

ADRIAN

Just the two of you...

BRIDGET

So.

ADRIAN

Well, then, darling dearest, I don't understand why you didn't write up the interview.

BRIDGET

Interview? He's in a coma.

ADRIAN

Is he? Constantly?

(before she can speak)

What question might you have whispered to him as he lay there teetering on the razor's edge of life? As the angel of death crouched on that plastic chair in the corner, what might you have asked him? And are you sure he didn't hear you. And wait -- before you answer -- search your heart. Because so often we're in a hurry, we're rushing, we fail to pick up the signals of someone desperate to communicate...

(Bridget hesitating,
and then--)

Claude, grab your pen.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE WAR WAGON. JANUSZ still listening to --

SHEM

...People get on us -- this kind of work. We're scum. We're freaks. We're criminals. You know what I say? I say this: turn on Wild Kingdom. Rent a few National Geographic tapes and get back to me. Because these guys, these nature photographers, they're out there watching the hyenas track a herd of wildebeest. And the hyenas are hungry and they're working it and finally, they cut one of the little ones, one of the calves, out of the pack. And you sit there. You're watching this. And you know it's gonna be brutal. The guys taking the pictures know it's gonna be brutal.

(a phone is ringing--)

Do they step in? Does anybody run out and say, "Hey wait a minute, this is so unfair." No. They make the picture. They're part of the food chain.

(finally grabbing
the phone--)

Yo, what's up?

(bad news)

Shit, man, that's my whole night...

(turning back
to Janusz--)

...bitch wasn't on the plane.

CUT TO

JAMES IN HIS BACKYARD. It's after midnight. He's just come home. He's got the garment bag over his shoulder. He's standing there in the dark garden. There's music playing quietly from next door. Uber-cool jazz. Something haunting.

CUT TO

JAMES CLIMBING ONE OF THE BACKYARD TREES. It's like a minute later. He's stripped off his shoes and he's climbing like a monkey. He is really good at this. Strong, quick, silent -- down along one of the larger branches and --

ONTO THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE. Staying to the shadows as he shims along. Stopping now, because --

DOWN BELOW

THE COTTAGE NEXT DOOR. And there's ELENA -- on the phone and on the move -- angrily pacing through the house, so he's catching a glimpse of her here and there, but the windows are closed and THE MUSIC is still playing so we can't hear what she's saying but it sure looks like she's furious and --

CUT TO

INSIDE ELENA'S COTTAGE. Same time. The pad of someone who had money, now reduced to marginal Hollywood survival. Some nice art amidst the garage-sale furniture.

ELENA

(on the mobile phone)

-- no, no, no, no -- he's telling me
I do have jurisdiction! He's tell--

(this is clearly a
major fight--)

-- no, you listen to me -- why would
their information be any -- why would
it be any different than yours?

(screaming now)

I will! I'm calling this Congressman!
YES, I AM! I'm telling him I can't
see my four-year-old son because his
father's paid off the Argentinean
Consulate!

She's snapped -- there goes THE PHONE -- hurled into the wall -- shattering. A moment of silence. And then, instant regret. All that fury suddenly becoming grief. There she is crouching there in the corner, waiting for the tears to come, as the music finishes, and we --

CUT TO

A SINGLE EGG broken over a huge, empty griddle. Our own sizzling little sunrise. Which is completely appropriate, because it's morning in Malibu and --

WE'RE IN

PANDORA'S KITCHEN. Actually, she's probably never been in this kitchen. But it's hers. Huge and fabulous beyond description. State-of-the-art industrial equipment. Antique cabinetry. Every fucking detail is perfect. FOUR PEOPLE preparing breakfast. An exquisite, silver breakfast tray at the center of all this attention and --

A FLORIST. At a marble table. Hundreds of gorgeous flowers spread around. She's trying to choose six.

A NUTRITIONIST. With a thermometer, checking fresh juice to the tenth of a degree. Vitamins in a Faberge pill box.

THE CHEF. Decades of haute-experience focused on a single egg. Taking it off the heat as if it were crystal and --

ALDO WOODS fussing with his ponytail as he supervises. He runs this house. In a major way. Hovering over everything with the thorough unpleasantness of a Swiss Guard. Checking his Rolex. 7:58 A.M.

ALDO

Frieda!

CUT TO

FRIEDA in her starched linen uniform carrying the silver tray. Following ALDO with Germanic solemnity --

THROUGH

A LONG HALLWAY. Dotted with little office suites. As we pass, we glimpse THE STAFF already hard at work. ASSISTANTS and ASSISTANT'S ASSISTANTS typing and phoning and --

WE'RE PASSING

AN ENORMOUS GYM. Dance studio -- Nautilus -- TWO TRAINERS sparring in a full-sized boxing ring and now --

WE'RE MOVING THROUGH

ANOTHER HALLWAY. Trophies and memorabilia. Platinum CDs and records lining the walls. Movie posters. Pandoramania.

INTO

THE MAIN ENTRYWAY. Just incredible. This is imperial, celebrity wealth. The beach outside and the artwork and --

UP THE STAIRS TO

A LONG PRIVATE CORRIDOR. Suites of room on either side. UNIFORMED LAUNDRESSES folding linen sheets and --

ALDO

Wait.

FRIEDA stops. He pulls his handkerchief. Dabbing at a hint of perspiration above her brow, as we --

CUT TO

THE MASTER BATHROOM. Yes, it's incredible. Huge and great and all the rest, but what we're watching is the frantic woman on the toilet. Hunched over, underwear trampled down around her ankles. And she's taking a piss, but she's not just taking a piss, she's got something down there...

This is PANDORA. We've seen her video. Seen her photograph. Walked through her trophy room. Here she is in the flesh, pulling a piss-soaked stick from between her legs. Peering at it as if perhaps it held the secret of the universe and --

CUT TO

THE PISS-SOAKED STICK. Except now, it's under the harsh glare of a halogen reading lamp. It's a pregnancy test and it's this weird grayish purple color --

PANDORA (OS)

-- no, red -- red is negative --

ALDO (OS)

-- well, it's definitely not red --

PANDORA (OS)

-- does that look blue to you? --

WE'RE IN

PANDORA'S MALIBU BEDROOM. Again, it's total imperial opulence, but what we're interested in here are the FOUR PEOPLE crowded around THE PISS-STICK -- you've got PANDORA and ALDO, and two new faces: LARA, the efficient personal assistant, and GWYNN, the sycophantic astrologist --

GWYNN

-- but, "negative" -- you mean not pregnant, right?

LARA

Blue is pregnant.

PANDORA

Well, what the hell is this?

ALDO turning suddenly, as he remembers --

ALDO

Frieda. You can go.

(waving her away)

Go! Schnell! Go.

FRIEDA hustling away. ALDO diving back to the summit --

LARA
Maybe you should try it again...

PANDORA
It's the third one I've done!

ALDO
It's kind of blue...

GWYNN
It's purple. What's purple mean?

LARA
(reading the box)
Consult your physician.

PANDORA
Who's good with color? Is Rachel downstairs?

GWYNN
Brilliant! Yes. Let's get Rachel --

PANDORA
(to Lara)
-- bring the stick --

ALDO
(blocking the way)
Dorry, wait...

PANDORA
What do you mean, wait? I could be pregnant right this minute! I want to bond with my baby!

ALDO
That's not the point...

GWYNN
(eager to scold him)
Rachel's a decorator, Aldo. I think just maybe she knows a little bit more about blue and red than you do.

ALDO
She's also got a big mouth and shit for brains.
(to Pandora)
You want the entire world trying to bond with your baby?

Dead quiet. He now has their full attention.

ALDO
We're putting up a firewall. Right here. Right now. Anyone else is on a need-to-know basis only.

Off this solemn silence, we --

CUT TO

A MOUNTAINSIDE MALIBU SHACK. A little anonymous house with distant, partial views of the Pandora Compound.

CUT TO

THE SHACK KITCHEN. ALEX at the table, chainsmoking, reading the paper and wolfing down a huge bowl of cereal with a Diet Coke chaser. The shack is an absolute pigsty. The longterm filth and clutter of an outpost barracks.

A VOICE (OS)
(from the other room)
We got some movement out here...

ALEX stabs out his butt. Stands and moves --

INTO

THE SHACK LIVING ROOM. Trashed furniture, pizza boxes, and THREE SCRUNGY TECH DUDES hovering around A HUGE TELESCOPE.

SCRUNGY #1
(eye to the scope)
...yeah, man, something's up...

CUT TO

TELESCOPE POV -- now this is really far away, it's shaky and distorted, but there's a tiny figure -- it's Aldo -- he's walking out across one of the main driveways and --

CUT TO

SCRUNGY #1 adjusting the focus ring --

SCRUNGY #1
They're pulling the cars.

CUT FAST TO

ALEX -- we're in motion -- he's sprinting out into the SHACK DRIVEWAY -- TWO RENTAL CHEVYS and a BIG FORD EXPLORER all parked here -- he's banging on the cars as he races past them

because THE DRIVERS are all sleeping -- and here come SCRUNGY #2 & #3 right behind him and --

ALEX

-- WAKE UP! -- MOVE! -- LET'S GO
YOU LAZY PECKERWOODS! --

CUT TO

THE PANDORA COMPOUND -- a convoy being mobilized -- A STRETCH LIMO pulling out onto the driveway behind A RANGE ROVER and here comes A JAGUAR and A HUMVEE and A TOWN CAR and A MINIVAN and they're all revved and ready and --

CUT TO

THE SHACK -- SCRUNGY #1 still at the telescope, but now he's got a walky-talky in hand and --

SCRUNGY 31

-- the Humvee -- the green Ford --
the blue Jag --

CUT TO

QUICK SHOTS -- both sides -- KEYS TURNING -- SEAT BELTS FASTENING -- FILM SLAPPING INTO CAMERAS -- ENGINE REVVING -- RADIOS TURNING ON -- DRIVING GLOVES PULLED TIGHT and --

CUT TO

PANDORA DRIVEWAY -- ALDO jogging down the motorcade, giving different instructions to each vehicle --

ALDO

(leaning in the Humvee)
-- you're going North on PCH --

CUT TO

THE SHACK DRIVEWAY -- THE EXPLORER peeling out down the canyon. ALEX riding shotgun. Fatigues, sunglasses, cameras draped around his neck -- grim and weary -- it's war.

CUT TO

PANDORA DRIVEWAY -- ALDO instructing the JAGUAR DRIVER --

ALDO

-- you're going up Malibu Canyon --

CUT TO

THE EXPLORER and THE TWO RENTAL CHEVYS bombing down the CANYON ROAD and --

CUT TO

PANDORA DRIVEWAY -- ALDO jogging to THE MINIVAN -- leaning in the window. The driver is RUSTY. He's got those dead, stock-car eyes and a shoulder holster and --

ALDO

You know where you're going, right?

(Rusty just nods)

Dorry, honey, are you comfortable?

PANDORA and LARA huddled down on the floor of the backseat.

PANDORA

What do you think?

ALDO

The doctor's leaving the golf course right now. He'll be at the office before you get there.

CUT TO

A MALIBU DRAINAGE CULVERT. Near all this action, down beneath the Coast Highway, a flood tunnel opens to a dry concrete spillway. There's a dirty access road that runs past. There are gaps in the cyclone fencing and surfer graffiti tagged all over. Evidence of campfires here and there. Garbage piled around the mouth of the cave and --

A YOUNG WOMAN -- her name is KIMMY -- emerges from the shadows of the tunnel. She's maybe twenty-five. She lives in this cave. She's been sleeping. Woken by some alarm frequency of her own insanity. She's wearing cut-offs and no top. Arms crossed across her breasts as she steps forward on barefeet into the sun. And then she smiles and --

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK --

CRAZED FANS MAKE PAN'S LIFE A LIVING HELL!

KIMMY turning now -- THE SOUND OF ENGINES REVVING OVERHEAD and she's looking above, toward the highway and, suddenly --

WE'RE LOOKING AT

A TATTOO. A tattoo that covers this girl's entire back. A huge, disturbing tattoo of PANDORA'S FACE. It's not just disturbing because of it's size, or the pain that clearly went into it; what makes it so fucking awful is that the design is so obviously homemade and innocent and weird. The obsession and commitment of an act like this should be shocking to look at. And OVER this, we start hearing --

RADIO CHATTER

(too many voices to source)

"--I'm on it, the Town Car!" "--got the Hummer?" "--breaking for the canyon!"
 "--go-go-go-go!" "--no, he's turning!"
 "--watch him!" "--take the minivan!"
 (continuing as we--)

CUT STRAIGHT INTO

CAR CHAOS -- the chase is on -- quick and dizzy. The idea is simple; Aldo's sent out six cars in different directions. Five are decoys. RADIO CHATTER cascading over everything --

THE HUMVEE screeching around a turn and --

SCRUNGY #3 nearly smashing his camera as HIS DRIVER swerves to follow and --

THE JAGUAR accelerating through traffic and --

THE LIMO pulling a hard left turn and --

ALEX in the EXPLORER -- camera out the open window -- trying to shoot down into the JAGUAR as they pass and --

THE RANGE ROVER swinging a hard U-TURN and weaving through traffic and --

THE MINIVAN tucking in behind a SEMI-TRUCK as --

ONE OF THE CHEVYS in hot pursuit blowing past it and --

RADIO CHATTER

(constant and crazy)

"--a twenty on the Hummer!" "--you're losing him!" "--where the fuck is she?"
 "--watch him!, watch him!" "--right behind you, man!"

ONE OF THE SCRUNGY CHEVYS changing lanes -- bailing after THE RANGE ROVER and --

CUT TO

THE MINIVAN slipping unnoticed through a MALIBU STRIP MALL
PARKING LOT and --

CUT TO

SCRUNGY #1 still manning the Shack telescope --

SCRUNGY
(screaming at his walky)
-- the Range Rover! -- he's taking the
exit! -- go! --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE MINIVAN. RUSTY checking his rear-view as he
eases them down behind some dumpsters and --

CUT TO

ALEX pulling back from the window -- yelling at his driver --

ALEX
-- forget it! -- forget the Jag --
it's a decoy! -- turn around! --
(banging the dashboard)
-- fuck-fuck-fuck-fuck...!!!

CUT TO

PANDORA AND LARA huddled on THE MINIVAN FLOOR, bumping and
rocking along and --

RUSTY (OS)
Hang on ladies, we're just going off
the road a second here...

RUSTY pulling along some sort of dirt road. Slowing now to
a stop and glancing back over the seat --

RUSTY
Ladies, you can get up now. I think
we're in the clear here. We're just
gonna sit a minute and make sure...

LARA helping PANDORA into her seat and --

PANDORA
(out the window)
Omigod. Look at this...

CUT TO

KIMMY not thirty feet away. THE MINIVAN has pulled down onto the access road beside her tunnel. She steps forward into an almost blinding shaft of light. Her creepy beatific smile going nuclear as she begins to realize the cosmic significance of this moment and --

SWING TO

PANDORA as she and KIMMY lock eyes. Frozen for a moment, before LARA realizes what's going on and --

BACK TO

KIMMY standing there in the light. Dropping to her knees as THE MINIVAN erupts into a disappearing cloud of dust and burning rubber. And she's still smiling that crazy angel smile, as we --

CUT TO

A NARROW ANTISEPTIC HALLWAY. Empty. Elevator doors open and RUSTY leans out. Checking the perimeter. It's clear. He stands aside and LARA ushers out PANDORA, now buried deep beneath scarf and hat and sunglasses and --

CUT TO

A MEDICAL EXAMINATION ROOM. L.A. celebrity style. Luxe and private. PANDORA on the table as THE NURSE, just now finished taking her blood pressure, unwraps the velcro cuff.

NURSE

He'll be right in. Would you like something to drink?

PANDORA shakes her head no. THE NURSE smiles, jotting numbers on her chart, as the door opens behind them and --

THE CAMERA SWINGS TO FIND

DOCTOR JONES -- yes, that Jones -- Beverly Hills Gynecologist -- looking tan and trim and just a bit more professional than last we saw him at the Four Seasons Penthouse --

DR. JONES

Dorry, forgive me...

(oozing bedside
manner--)

I got here as fast as I could.

CUT TO

BARE FEET -- eleven-year-old bare feet -- climbing a tree in the dark -- quick and quiet -- now hesitating and --

DOWN BELOW WE SEE

A SWEET COLONIAL HOME decorated for Christmas. Lights at the windows. A homemade plywood snowman and plastic creche on the lawn. It's 2:00 a.m.. Silent night.

THE BLACK SCREEN AND --

NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 1974!
THE CHILDHOOD TRAUMA HE CAN NEVER FORGET!

YOUNG JAMES perched in the night branches of a winter maple. Staring down at this tableau. It's cold out but he's not feeling anything. Just taking it all in.

CUT TO

FRAMED FAMILY PICTURES gathered on an entry table. Just enough light to see them. Dad, a Naval officer, almost always in uniform. Mom likes to feature a big-ole Georgia peach smile. Junior, a happy gap-toothed boy of seven. And the twins, perky, identical five-year-old girls.

WE FIND

YOUNG JAMES standing in THE DARK HALLWAY examining these pictures. He's eleven-years-old and he's a bastard and he's broken into his father's house and it's Christmas Eve and he's just standing there taking this all in. Banking his emotions. Steel forging inside him.

CUT TO

THE LIVING ROOM. Dripping with holiday cheer. Gingerbread and velvet and about a million little Santas. Identical new bicycles for the twins tied with ribbons in the corner and presents just piled everywhere and --

YOUNG JAMES standing at the Christmas tree. Reaching up. Pulling down an ornament. A little GLASS ANGEL. Kitschy and fragile. Holding it high before he lets it go and --

THE GLASS ANGEL STARTS FALLING IN SLO-MOTION -- falling and falling and at the very instant it hits the floor we --

CUT TO

THE STARTING GATE AT HOLLYWOOD PARK and THE BELL CLANGING and the thoroughbreds exploding past the tote board and the grandstand is a little thin but they're CHEERING and --

CUT TO

RACETRACK CLUBHOUSE. Same time. FIVE DUDES. Five young, swinging pseudo-ratpack, post-hop, twenty-year-old clowns. Yipping and yapping and backslapping about the race. The MAIN DUDE, the power center of this little constellation, is some popular TV star. He's got the incognito Kangol and the Cuban stogie and this is his party.

TEN YARDS AWAY

THE BAR. JAMES standing there behind a fifty-dollar bill and his second vodka, watching these yozos. THE BARTENDER, a bitter guy in his fifties. They've been talking.

BARTENDER

They're going, four, five thousand a race.

JAMES

He makes a hundred grand an episode.

BARTENDER

Make you want to puke.

The track isn't crowded, but they're making noise.

JAMES

Does he win?

BARTENDER

Does he win? Nobody wins. He's dropping half an episode a week.

JAMES

Think he'll be here tomorrow.

BARTENDER

No. They're coming Tuesday. They're bringing the "bitches" It's his twenty-fifth birthday.

JAMES

I'll send a camera down.

BARTENDER

And then that's it, right? I mean, nobody gets hurt, or--

JAMES

I'm giving you cash. The guy taking
the picture won't even know who you are.
(sensing weakness)
You don't need to have a problem with
this.

In the BG, the race is into backstretch and THE DUDES are
chiming it up -- spilling beers -- SCREAMING and --

BARTENDER

Why do I hate these guys so much?

JAMES

Because it's their movie and you're
just part of the scenery.
(downs his drink)
We're extras. It's the racetrack
scene. It's their movie and you're
just the bartender in the background.

BARTENDER

That's how I feel.

JAMES

We don't exist when they're not here.

BARTENDER

That's it. That's how they live.

JAMES

So I'm the turd in their punchbowl.

JAMES pushing an envelope full of fifties across the bar
and THE BARTENDER gathering it in and the CROWD RISING
INTO A HOMESTRETCH ROAR, as we --

CUT TO

A CAMERA POV -- through the lens of JANUSZ'S OLD LEICA --
we see a gorgeous '65 Galaxy convertible. Tomato red --
still framing the shot -- angling -- catching the light
and -- click --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A USED CAR LOT. JANUSZ lowers the camera. Pulls on his
wraparound shades. Hawaiian shirt. Sandals. He's buying
this car. THE SALESMAN walking back out from the office,
contract in hand. Smile on his face.

CUT TO

BRIDGET'S APARTMENT. BRIDGET pacing around with her mobile phone, all excited and fidgety and fluffing at her bears. LOUISE, the Sotheby's lady, on the other end of the line --

LOUISE'S VOICE
(hushed reporting)
-- twelve thousand -- twelve-five...

AUCTIONEER'S VOICE
(in the background)
-- who'll say thirteen? -- looking
for thirteen -- I have twelve-five,
who'll say thirteen?

BRIDGET
Thirteen.

LOUISE obviously taking care of it, because --

AUCTIONEER'S VOICE
I've got thirteen on the phone. Who'll
say thirteen-five? This is the Metzen
bear -- I'm looking for thirteen-five --
going once at thirteen...twice...
(a pregnant beat,
before--)
...on the phone, at thirteen-thousand
and...it's sold.

YES! -- BRIDGET just a jumble of wonderful feelings as the
GAVEL RAPS SHARPLY IN THE BACKGROUND and we --

CUT TO

A FUNKY STRIP MALL. East Hollywood. Night. ARMETTA'S TOWN
CAR tucked in back.

INSIDE THE CAR

ARMETTA setting up for the night's work. His trusty NIKON
with the big lens. Loads of film. And now he's in the
glove compartment, pulling out AN OLD DOG LEASH.

THE BLACK SCREEN AND --

TRICKS OF THE TRADE!
HOW WE GET THE PICTURES THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE IN

THIS EAST HOLLYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD. A residential anthill. Thousands of homes lathered over an enormous mountainside. ARMETTA starting his climb.

CUT TO

A LITTLE LATER. ARMETTA still climbing. It must be late. The place has that weird L.A. quietude on it.

CUT TO

A LITTLE LATER. ARMETTA still climbing. A little winded. Looking back down, thinking maybe he should've parked a little closer. Turning as he sees --

A WESTEC SECURITY CAR coming down one of the feeder streets.

ARMETTA

Hey! Over here!
(jogging toward
them--)
-- hey, hang on!

THE WESTEC CAR eases down beside him. TWO BORED RENTAL COPS peering out from inside.

RENTAL COP #1

Yo, what's up?

ARMETTA

My dog...
(feature the leash)
He ran off. You seen a beagle running around up there?

RENTAL COP #1

Sorry, man.

ARMETTA

Any chance you could help me look?

RENTAL COP #2

We're going off duty. We gotta get the car back. We're late already.

ARMETTA nodding as they just keep rolling by and --

CUT TO

A LITTLE LATER. ARMETTA way up there now, breathing hard, checking house numbers as he passes. Almost there, and --

CUT TO

TWO MINUTES LATER. ARMETTA, near the summit, leaving the street, cutting into the shadows and --

INTO

SOMEBODY'S BACKYARD. Cluttered with toys and shitty plastic furniture. But dark and quiet. ARMETTA tiptoeing through the crap toward a TALL WOODEN FENCE and --

CUT TO

A MINUTE LATER. ARMETTA has propped a CHILDREN'S SLIDE against THE FENCE and he's using this to climb up and the whole thing is kind of shaky, but as he gets up there's a tree branch he can grab onto and....

He's up. Trying to get steady and settle in, because down below, just across the next little backyard --

THERE'S THE TARGET

A LITTLE HOUSE. Patio doors. Dark at the moment.

CUT TO

TWENTY MINUTES LATER. ARMETTA still wedged there in his perch. He got the NIKON ready. He's checking his watch. Trying to get comfortable, but the old bones are not what they used to be.

CUT TO

AN HOUR LATER. ARMETTA still there. Fighting the boredom and the stiffness in his legs, and then -- A LIGHT goes on inside the house! -- ARMETTA ready with the Nikon and --

CUT TO

NIKON POV -- telephoto lens adjusting focus -- we're looking in through the KITCHEN GLASS DOORS and there's something moving inside there, we just can't see it yet and then --

CA-CHUNK -- the shutter -- FREEZE FRAME -- JON BATES HEFLIN stripped to his underwear, smile on his face, looking like a guy who's just gotten laid good and --

CA-CHUNK -- this time it's JON at the refrigerator talking to someone over his shoulder and --

CA-CHUNK -- it's LYNNE -- pulling tight a silk robe and --

CA-CHUNK -- they're kissing -- the money shot -- his hand down on her ass and then --

CUT TO

ARMETTA -- but something's wrong -- the tree branch he's been perched against is splintering and the fence below is giving way and ARMETTA is falling and falling hard --

INTO

THE DARK BACKYARD. Except it's not gonna stay dark for more than a moment, because there's a motion detector hooked up to a bright, ugly spotlight and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE KITCHEN. JON and LYNNE turning and --

THEIR POV

THROUGH THE GLASS DOORS -- ARMETTA trapped like an escaping convict in the sudden glare of the spotlight.

JON (OS)

Omifuckingod...

CUT TO

THE BACKYARD. ARMETTA trying to get to his feet -- but something's wrong -- his leg -- giving out -- it's bad -- trying to gauge the pain as --

THE GLASS PATIO DOORS slide open and --

JON

(bellowing forth)

You fucking maggot!!!!

ARMETTA with barely a moment to think -- big, half-naked JON bearing down on him with madness in his eyes and --

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! -- ARMETTA nailing him with a handheld strobe unit and --

LYNNE frozen in the doorway -- seeing JON spin around -- hands clawing wildly at his eyes -- dropping to his knees --

JON

-- I'm blind! I'm blind! God help me, I'm blind! --

CUT TO

ARMETTA scrambling away over the section of collapsed fence
-- falling as his leg gives out from under him and --

CUT TO

LYNNE ministering to JON --

JON

-- I can't see! -- I can't see! --

LYNNE

-- try to get up -- it's just the
flash --

JON

-- where is he? -- where is he? --
track him! -- don't let him go! --

CUT TO

ARMETTA madly hobbling through the neighboring backyard --
his leg is bad -- he's never gonna make it like this --

CUT TO

LYNNE helping JON to his feet --

JON

-- he took pictures! --

LYNNE

-- are you sure? --

JON

-- what do you think he was doing? --

LYNNE

-- omigod -- omigod --

JON

-- see him? -- do you see him? --

LYNNE

-- I can't -- I don't know --

JON has one eye working now and he's spinning around like a
dervish trying to get his bearings and think of what to do --

JON

-- we gotta -- we gotta get him --

LYNNE

-- how? -- he went through there! --

LYNNE -- ready to cry -- peering into the dark, cluttered
backyard next door and seeing nothing and --

JON

-- get the car -- get my keys! --
(stumbling, one-eyed
back toward the
garage--)
-- go! -- they're in my pants!

CUT TO

ARMETTA dragging himself out of the shadows toward the
street. He's fucked. His leg is broken and he knows it.
Pale with pain. No time to think. And then, suddenly,
there it is, salvation --

A CHILD'S PLASTIC TRICYCLE.

CUT TO

A MERCEDES -- out of the garage -- jerking into reverse --
nailing a garbage can -- jerking forward now and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -- JON at the wheel -- half-blind,
totally insane, still wearing only his underwear and --

LYNNE

-- watch what you -- look out! --
(as they swerve into
the street--)
-- oh God, let me drive --

JON

-- I'm fine! --

LYNNE

-- we don't even know where he is! --

JON

-- so shut up and start looking! --

CUT TO

ARMETTA hunched on THE TRICYCLE. Fighting the pain as
he forces his bad leg out front -- camera bag tucked behind
him -- hands steady on the plastic handlebars and he's --

PUSHING OFF -- into the street -- out into the residential
darkness and the miles of downhill run waiting below and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -- chaos -- swerving around a corner --

LYNNE

-- no, left -- you missed it! --

JON

-- you just keep looking! --

LYNNE

-- he could be anywhere! There's
a thousand streets up here!

JON slamming on the brakes -- inspiration --

JON

But there's only one road out --
(instant U-turn)
-- we gotta go down.

CUT TO

THE TRICYCLE speeding down the mountain -- PLASTIC WHEELS
HUMMING -- ARMETTA with his legs out front -- hands firm on
the handlebars -- swinging wide as he corners down into a
steeper street and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -- relentless panic --

JON

-- then how did he get there? --

LYNNE

-- I don't know! --

JON

-- keep looking -- you're not
looking! --

CUT TO

THE TRICYCLE -- ARMETTA -- the sound of the wheels and the
night air rushing past; the smooth perfect pavement; the
eery, empty streets stretched out so far and winding below
that it seems they could go on forever -- rolling down faster
and faster, and as we get in close enough, we can see that
he's smiling and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -- worse by the moment --

LYNNE

-- what're you --

JON

-- I'm cutting the headlights! --

LYNNE

-- you can't see already! --

JON

-- shut up and look! --

LYNNE

-- turn! --

CUT TO

THE MERCEDES -- sans headlights -- overshooting a corner --
brakes skidding -- slammed into reverse and --

CUT TO

THE TRICYCLE -- ARMETTA laughing now as he speeds down the
hill -- wind in his hair -- enemies far behind -- like some
childhood fantasy -- freedom, escape, the endless downhill
run -- like a dream, really, and that's the way this should
feel, like a dream -- glancing back over his shoulder and --

CUT INSTANTLY TO

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -- thwak -- like a pothole, but not --
JON slamming on brakes -- SKIDDING -- LYNNE braced against
the dashboard as they jerk to a stop and --

JON

(looking back)

What the fuck was that?

LYNNE

Omigod...

(out her window--)

JON

What?

THE TRICYCLE -- bent and damaged -- laying there on its side
-- it's big wheel still spinning and --

LYNNE

...omigod...

JON

What?

LYNNE

(barely audible)

...you killed a kid...

LYNNE watching JON exit the car. Watching him stand there in his underwear listening for witnesses. Watching through the windshield, as he slowly circles the hood. Watching him force himself to look down beneath the wheels. Watching him turn back to her and their eyes meeting and...

Watching him smile.

CUT TO

FIVE FIFTY DOLLAR BILLS bathed in candlelight. Some cheesy soft jazz playing.

WE'RE IN

A MASSAGE PARLOR. Upscale to a point. PAMELA, the lingerie masseuse looks okay in this light. JAMES on the table.

JAMES

Come on, Pam... He's a sixty-year-old country music legend and she's a nineteen-year-old beautician. There's gotta be a pre-nup.

PAMELA

I guess...

JAMES

So the next time this lawyer comes to see you, ask him. Work it into the conversation.

(waiting)

Okay?

PAMELA

(working his shoulders
for a moment)

Don't you ever just think, I don't know, maybe you're going too far?

JAMES

What do you mean, too far?

PAMELA

I don't know. Just...

JAMES

You mean like, piercing-my-labia-
I've-gone-too-far? Or jerking-off-
eight-guys-a-day-I've-gone-too-far?

(she's stopped

working now--)

Maybe you mean, going-through-some-
asshole's-wallet-while-he's-in-the-
shower-too-far.

PAMELA

I don't hurt people.

JAMES

I don't write about people. I write
about celebrities. They're not
people. They don't want to be people.
That's the whole point.

PAMELA

I went through his wallet because
you told me to.

JAMES

I paid you to.

PAMELA

Oh, like there's a difference...

She's all defiant now. Grabbing her dress and rushing out
of the room. JAMES alone with the mirror. His whole
metabolism tightening. Bad feelings brewing out of nowhere.

CUT TO

THE COTTAGE BACKYARD. ELENA alone on her back steps in the
dark. She's having a smoke. Finishing a bottle of wine.
Numb. Barely looking up as THE RAIN starts falling.
Moving only to shelter her cigarette even as it starts to
pour like crazy, and we --

CUT TO

A PHOTOGRAPH -- A PORTRAIT OF JEREMY -- FILLS OUR FRAME.
Janusz's work. Black and white. Dead on. Jeremy standing
at the shrine that first day.

What we hear is RAIN outside. And JANUSZ humming in the
background.

WE'RE MOVING OVER A DARKROOM MOUNTING BOARD

A PORTRAIT OF SHEM. Another Janusz masterpiece. Shem standing outside his van holding a camera with the biggest lens we've ever seen. Holding it up like a rifle. Just a wiff of Lee Harvey Oswald.

ANOTHER SHOT. ALEX in his fatigues. And the sunglasses. Glaring at the camera. Fuck you.

WE'RE IN

ARMETTA'S DARKROOM. JANUSZ alone with his work. He's wearing a Lakers t-shirt. Hair pulled back in a bandana. THE SOUND OF RAIN pouring outside now. JANUSZ carefully pulling a print off the drum dryer and --

FINALLY TO

THIS LAST PHOTOGRAPH. It's ARMETTA. He's at a table in the sun. Camera gear spread everywhere. A bottle of wine almost gone. Laughing like some mountain warlord.

CUT TO

TABLOID BUNDLES spilling open out into the rain --

WE'RE AT

THE ALL NIGHT NEWSSTAND. JAMES waiting under the awning as THE PAKISTANI VENDOR rushes him a copy of THE CLOUD --

CLOUD EXCLUSIVE! SCOOP OF THE YEAR!
PANDORA PREGNANT!

CUT TO

THE CLOUD -- THE SAME COVER -- this one on a coffee table --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

ADRIAN'S HOUSE. We're coming in the middle of an impromptu, after-midnight, emergency staff meeting. ADRIAN in robe and slippers. Also present are: CLAUDE, his right-hand guy; BRYCE, the lawyer; and THREE OTHER TOP STAFFERS. They've just been beat on the story of the year. Everybody working a phone, scrambling to put out fires. Frantic desperation.

ADRIAN

-- no, I just think you're gravely
underestimating the Tony Grahme story.
Did you see our pictures? They'r--
(cut off--)

ADRIAN listening now. And it's agony.

ADRIAN

(jumping back in--)

Pregnancy's always a big deal, they just better be able to back it up --

(beat)

-- well, obviously, if she issues a denial, th-

(this just sucks)

Look, Snow, from what I've been hearing, he's doing vast and copious quantities of major drugs, so--

(worse than sucks)

No, I'm not saying she's going to deny. I'm saying if she does, look out...

(he's in hell)

Bryce...

(the lawyer looks back from his phone call--)

What's their liability if it's wrong?

BRYCE

(suddenly excited)

Is it bogus?

ADRIAN

No -- if -- how much?

Before he can answer -- CLAUDE waving his hand -- demanding ADRIAN'S attention --

CLAUDE

They need to know whether to wake up Mr. Lattanzi.

ADRIAN

Oh, fuck all....

CUT TO

A COLOR FAX MACHINE -- THE CLOUD -- that hot-off-the-presses cover just coming through --

WE'RE IN

ONE OF THE PANDORA COMPOUND OFFICES. ALDO and LARA standing there in total shock, watching this thing emerge.

ALDO

What's her status?

LARA

She can't sleep. She's watching the news.

ALDO

I guess you better take it up before the phones start ringing.

LARA

I'm not taking this up.

But before this can escalate into full-blown entourage warfare -- A SHRIEK ECHOES through the mansion. PANDORA hitting a blood-curdling high C, as we --

CUT TO

THE PLASTIC TRICYCLE. Twisted horribly on the pavement. RAIN pouring down. The pulse of blue emergency lights. Someone shooting pictures -- the image burned into memory -- FLASH! - FLASH! - FLASH!

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

ALEX standing there, tears in his eyes, soaked to the bone, whipping off shots like crazy -- FLASH! -- FLASH! -- FLASH!

WE'RE AT

THE HILLSIDE ACCIDENT SCENE. HALF A DOZEN PATROL CARS assembled in the BG. MEDICS just now loading ARMETTA'S BODY BAG into a waiting ambulance. A few sleepy residents have made their way out into the wet to see what's up and --

A PISSED-OFF COP jogging through the rain - FLASH! - FLASH!

PISSED COP

Hey! I told you to knock it off!

ALEX

This is history! Do you have any idea who they put in that bag tonight? A legend! A living fucking legend!

PISSED COP

Yeah, well, one more flash, you're taking pictures in L.A. County jail...

ALEX, eyes wild, rain just pouring off him, pushing past the PISSED-OFF COP because --

FORTY FEET AWAY

THE "WAR WAGON" has just skidded to a stop -- SHEM already jumping out -- rushing forward -- A COUPLE OTHER COPS are turning, ready to intercept him but --

ALEX already there, arms open --

SHEM

-- I heard the radio --

ALEX

-- he's gone, man --

SHEM

-- no --

Comrades in grief, they throw their arms around each other and as they do, ALEX'S CAMERA -- caught between them -- starts MOTORDRIVING and FLASHING LIKE CRAZY and THE COPS standing there and the rain pouring down and we --

CUT TO

THE TAFFY AND JON SHOW! 9:28 a.m. Two minutes to air. Studio audience buzzing with anticipation. Staff and crew rushing their final preparations. TAFFY and JON on set, in their seats, talking quietly.

TAFFY

Armetta. Nick Armetta.

JON

I get them all confused.

TAFFY

The guy who bothered us in New York.

JON

Vaguely.

LYNNE rushes over, kneeling beside TAFFY --

LYNNE

Luncheon is on at the Bel Air.
Interview at five. He's confirmed.
You've got the screening at seven.

TAFFY

(but still on Jon--)

I can't believe you don't remember him. Armetta.

(to Halle)

Tell me you'd heard of Nick Armetta.

JON

Shit!

(jumping up--)

Because he just spilled hot coffee all over himself and his suit and staff people are already rushing to help, as we --

CUT TO

A CANYON ROAD. The day of Armetta's wake. Cars parked wherever they'll fit. JAMES, in a black suit, locking up his Lexus, as we hear a vaguely familiar voice --

LICARI (OVER)

...six days later he's got an apartment in LA, he's calling himself James Snow...
(continuing as--)

KATHY and LARRY getting out of a car. They too wear black. KATHY with a weepy hug for JAMES, as we hear --

LICARI (OVER)

...and he's got his first tabloid cover story...

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA HOUSE. The wake. A hundred people already packed around the place. JAMES, KATHY and LARRY just now coming through the door and --

JEREMY -- the bereaved widow -- dazed, stoic, medicated grief, coming forward to greet them, as we hear --

LICARI (OVER)

...there he is at the bottom of the foodchain. Freelance maggot. Stakeout scumbag. Just the lowest of the low...

CUT TO

GEORGE LICARI. Meet the premier private detective in Los Angeles. Smooth as silk. Sexy, smart, reliable, and just now finishing the spiel started at the top of the script --

LICARI

...and then Gorman Blondell takes out a shotgun and everything changes.

THE BLACK SCREEN. This headline --

PANDORA PLEADS TO SAVE HER UNBORN CHILD!

WE'RE IN

A MAILBU SOLARIUM. PANDORA and LICARI alone. Tete-a-tete. With the Pacific outside. And the sun.

LICARI

-- usually in an investigation like this, the financial profile, we put that together pretty quick. This guy's big into cash and he's very careful, so we're having a little trouble accessing that on such short notice, but...

(starting to fold
up his notes--)

...as the stuff comes in I'll make sure it gets passed along to your lawyers right away.

PANDORA

Fuck the lawyers. You're working for me.

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. In full swing. Who's here? You've got all corners of tabloidland mixed with an arty collection of Hollywood demimondistes. It's a night crowd in a day scene. A busy, improvised bar. Lots of smoking. Lots of talking. Other than the pockets of tears here and there and the grim determination behind much of the merriment, you might think you simply stumbled into a very interesting afternoon party.

THE CAMERA FINDS

A PORCELAIN URN on a simple table. A PHOTOGRAPH propped behind it -- a young Armetta, smiling, with a camera. Flowers gathered around this little altar, including a huge, ostentatious arrangement, courtesy of Mr. Lattanzi and --

MACTEER, a pickled, Glaswegian tabloid legend and HIS WIFE, a spidery, New Age harridan peering down at the urn --

MACTEER

Is it all there? Doesn't seem like very much, does it?

(turning--)

Is that all of him?

JANUSZ standing there. With the Leica.

JANUSZ
His ashes. Yes.

MACTEER
Doesn't come to much, does it?

JANUSZ
You mean life?

MACTEER
I mean the package. The bones and
all. Not much to it.

THE WIFE
You'll have to excuse my husband,
he's karmically impotent.

She smiles. MACTEER snorts and drains his drink.

JANUSZ
Perhaps you would allow me to make
your picture...
(camera ready)
Please, is taking just a moment...

MACTEER
What? With the urn?

THE WIFE
(roping her husband)
Oh come on, Georgie...

JANUSZ already clicking away, as we --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. As they were --

LICARI
Look, I don't have to explain to you
how complicated this town can get.
(gently here)
This kind of work, what I do, you've
got to be very careful about where
you put your feet down.

PANDORA
There's something you're not telling
me, isn't there?

LICARI

You're very upset, you've got a baby
to think about...

PANDORA

There is something.

LICARI

Jack and Artie, they're your lawyers,
they're gonna want to see a full
report before they discu--

PANDORA

Stop.

(pure steel now)
What did I tell you before?

LICARI

Fuck the lawyers.

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. And it's gradually becoming a party.
Now there's music and the voices are getting louder and
there's a couple joints going and JAMES standing with some
people and they're talking but he's not listening because
he's spotted something far more interesting, and now --

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS HIS LEAD TO

ELENA across the room with some BOHO ART TYPES, and now --

THE CAMERA FINDS

SHEM and ALEX looking for someone in the crowd, and now --

THE CAMERA FINDS

ADRIAN and KATHY suddenly face-to-face.

ADRIAN

Kathy, darling...
(a dagger smile)
You must be in mourning, I don't
think I've ever seen you without
something in your mouth.

KATHY

Adrian...
(like she's relieved)
Thank God. I'd heard you lost your
sense of humor.

(MORE)

KATHY (cont)
 (her turn to smile)
 Now, do you still have your job, or
 is that all just in the rumor stage?

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. PANDORA looking absolutely ashen as
 LICARI reluctantly proffers a small, plastic EVIDENCE BAG --

LICARI
 It was in your bedroom...

PANDORA
What..?
 (gasping as--)

LICARI
 It's a radio transmitter. A bug.
 A good one. Ceramic. Custom.

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. SHEM and ALEX have got JAMES pinned in
 their vortex. Hushed, passionate, mania --

SHEM
 -- he was up there working and
 that's a fact and these fucking cops
 are just shining the whole thing on --

ALEX
 -- we're standing there telling
them to start collecting evidence
 before it gets washed away --

SHEM
 -- Alex found the leash, okay?
 Not the cops --

ALEX
 -- and they're acting like we're
 the problem.

JAMES
 Slow down. He had the leash?

SHEM
 And no camera.

JAMES
 If he had the leash he was working.

SHEM

That's what we're saying!

ALEX

But we're scum, see? We're freaks.
Dead paparazzi?

SHEM

They were laughing!

JAMES

And no witnesses? No broken glass?
No tire marks? Nothing.

ALEX

The rain.

SHEM

It poured.

ALEX

We had cops telling us, maybe the
driver didn't even realize what had
happened.

JAMES

Then where's his camera?

SHEM

Exactly!

ALEX

You gotta get into this, man.

JAMES

Get into what?

SHEM

The case! Who Killed Nick Armetta?

ALEX

You gotta get into it. Otherwise
they're just gonna let it slide.

SHEM

Jimmy, face it. You're the best.
You're the man. It's gotta be you.

ALEX

He had the leash!

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. PANDORA sobbing. LICARI ministering to her as best he can.

PANDORA
...you don't...you can't...nobody
knows...everyday, everywhere I go...

LICARI
It's incredibly stressful.

PANDORA
...nothing is safe...nowhere...

LICARI
It's a terrible price to pay for
making people happy.

PANDORA
...now my baby's a prisoner...

LICARI
You're into a primal area.

PANDORA
...someone has to help me...help my
baby, won't you help us, won't you?

LICARI nodding. A reluctant Galahad. Finding another
handkerchief for her, as we --

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. JAMES and JEREMY out on THE DECK where
it's a little quieter. They're alone.

JAMES
You gonna be okay?

JEREMY
I don't know.
(he's lost)
I always thought I would be the one
to go first. Make this brilliant
deathbed speech. See his face as
I fall asleep...
(a grim smile)
Surprise.

JAMES
It never makes sense.

JEREMY

Yes, well...

(just raw)

Love is a mighty fuckover if you ask me.

JAMES nods. They stand there a moment.

JAMES

What was he doing up there?

JEREMY

I wish I knew...

JAMES

Shem and Alex think the cops are gonna let the whole thing slide.

JEREMY nods. Looking away for a moment.

JEREMY

I lost eighty thousand dollars last week in the market.

(looking back)

Nick came home and I told him. He was completely calm about it. He said not to worry, that he had a picture lined up that would make it all go away. Two nights later here we are...

JAMES

Who was he shooting?

JEREMY

I don't know. If you want to know the truth I thought he was just being sweet, letting me off the hook.

(he's starting to break--)

They found the car...we went through it...his desk, there was nothing...

(beat)

Who the fuck lives up there anyway?

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. PANDORA has stopped crying. Tears replaced by pure, focused venom. In her hands, A PICTURE OF JAMES, some old snapshot that LICARI has just given her --

LICARI

First of all, we don't know if it's James Snow, or not.

PANDORA

Oh, it's him...

(staring at James's
smiling snapshot--)

But how? How did he get it in here?

LICARI hesitates. But she's waiting and we know he's gonna have to tell her and --

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. WE'RE WATCHING -- ELENA and JANUSZ -- but from a distance -- he's showing her the Leica --

JAMES (OS)

She moved in next door to me about two months ago.

MONTY (OS)

She's a gallerina. You know, art type. She and her husband, they had a gallery.

JAMES and a guy named MONTY doing the observing --

JAMES

So she's married.

MONTY

No they're all done. He split back to, I don't know, South America, wherever he's from...

(the punchline)

He took their kid.

JAMES

No shit...

MONTY

Yeah, nasty. Little boy, I think. She came home and they were gone. Adios muchachos.

JAMES

She's beautiful, don't you think?

MONTY

(shrugs)

I got my own pain.

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. More intimate by the moment --

LICARI

-- the best polygraph technician in the world is two hours away. What I'd do, I'd have her come down and wire up every single person who's had access to this house.

PANDORA looking past him now -- irritated --

PANDORA

Did I ask to be disturbed?

ALDO caught in the doorway --

ALDO

I was just...

PANDORA

If I want something I'll call for it!

CUT TO

THE ARMETTA WAKE. ELENA looking at a painting, turning as --

JAMES

Hello.

ELENA

Hi.

JAMES

My name's James...

ELENA

Elena.

JAMES

I think we're neighbors.

ELENA

Yeah, you're the guy who watches me.
(and then, before
he can rally)
You're not jerking off out there,
are you?

JAMES

Not yet.

She almost smiles.

ELENA

So what are you cooking all the time? I get the greatest smells coming over the fence.

JAMES

I do Chinese. Cantonese.

ELENA

Yeah? You must be good at it.

JAMES

I'm okay.

ELENA

And you don't sleep much, do you? It's like you're either out or else all the lights are on.

JAMES

Who's watching who?

ELENA

Yeah, really. Sorry.

JAMES

What for?

She doesn't know. She finishes her wine. Kinda drunk.

ELENA

So how much does this suck?

JAMES

It's a bad day.

ELENA

Friends for a long time?

JAMES

Couple years. Not long enough.

ELENA

He was a gentleman. I mean, don't you think? If it's possible to do that kind of work and be a gentleman.

JAMES

He pulled it off.

ELENA

I don't mean, like I'm making some kind of value judgement about it, or anything.

JAMES
That kind of work.

ELENA
We did a gallery show last year,
Paparazzi Aesthetic. Nick was our
major contributor.

JAMES suddenly distracted as ADRIAN comes out of the crowd
on his way to the door. ELENA privy to this exchange --

ADRIAN
(a passing fuck-you)
We're not pals anymore.

JAMES
I'll keep that in mind.

ADRIAN
Do.

JAMES turning back to ELENA, as we --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SOLARIUM. JAMES'S PICTURE torn in half on the
table. Out the window an astonishing sunset.

LICARI
You look at him now, he's so cool.
So careful. Everything under control.
But believe me, it's there.

PANDORA
The anger.

LICARI
That's his button. That's the vein
you go for.

PANDORA
I want him destroyed.

LICARI nods. PANDORA massaging her womb as she ponders
revenge, and we --

CUT TO

A PHOTOGRAPH -- A FOUR-YEAR-OLD BOY. Happy and adorable.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

THE CANYON ROAD. Sunset. JAMES and ELENA standing beside her car. Other MOURNERS wandering back to their rides.

ELENA
He'll be five in April...

JAMES
(the photo)
He's beautiful.

ELENA
Yeah.

JAMES
(handing it back)
You can't work something out?

ELENA
It's not up to me. It's like a war.
Except I don't have an army or a
navy or anything. I have pictures.
(she looks at
the photo--)
Anyway...

She's pretty drunk. And looking at the picture, showing it to him, suddenly that feels like a mistake.

JAMES
You okay to drive?

ELENA
I'm fine.
(she's gone cold)
Look, somehow getting picked up at
a funeral by the peeping Tom neighbor
doesn't seem like a quality play.
Know what I mean?

JAMES
Sure.

ELENA
Okay, so...

JAMES
So, drive safe.

ELENA fishing for her keys. Watching him walk away, as we --

CUT TO

THE PANDORA COMPOUND DRIVEWAY. Magic hour. LICARI with his briefcase, striding away from the house.

MOFFIT is Licari's assistant. He's a loyal, brush-cut, ex-A.T.F. agent. He's standing talking to RUSTY, Pandora's lead driver. But MOFFIT wrapping it up now as he sees the boss approaching. Rushing to open the doors of A BIG BLACK RANGE ROVER and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE RANGE ROVER. LICARI climbing in the passenger side. MOFFIT at the wheel, rushing to start the engine.

MOFFIT

You said two hours.

LICARI

It took longer.

MOFFIT

You want the call sheet?

LICARI

Hang on...

(getting settled)

Let's get this back in the box...

LICARI hands him THE PLASTIC EVIDENCE BAG with the little bugging device inside. MOFFIT looking at it, confused --

MOFFIT

I thought you were gonna find two.

LICARI

I left the other one in there for later. If I need it.

MOFFIT nods, starting to pull down the long, lush driveway.

MOFFIT

So she's on board?

LICARI

If she wasn't pregnant I would've fucked her.

MOFFIT smiling. In awe. LICARI pulling the car phone --

MOFFIT

Incredible. What are we doing?
Full package?

LICARI
(as he dials)
Better.

MOFFIT
Why? What's she want?

LICARI
Blood.

Up ahead, SECURITY GUARDS swinging open a HUGE GATE and --
THE BLACK SCREEN --

FLASHBACK PART TWO...
HOLIDAY CHEER TURNS TO CHRISTMAS TORMENT!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE IN

THE COLONIAL HOUSE. As before. It's Christmas Eve, 1974.
All is calm. All is dark. YOUNG JAMES moving on bare feet
into THE KITCHEN -- pulling open THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR and
there is light --

YOUNG JAMES bathed in a cold Frigidaire glow. Tomorrow's
holiday feast all prepped and glistening inside. So much
food it's hypnotizing. He seems frozen there, as we --

CUT TO

THE RESIDENTIAL HILLSIDE. Late night. JAMES standing at
the spot where Armetta died. Checking his watch. Looking
around. Up the mountain it's so quiet. So many houses
its hypnotizing. He seems frozen there, as we --

CUT TO

A TELEVISION -- FULL FRAME -- A HOSPITAL PRESS CONFERENCE.
At the lectern, A SPOKESMAN, flanked by TWO DOCTORS. The
room -- we won't see it -- but it's packed and rowdy --

SPOKESMAN
-- Tony Grahme is conscious and alert.
His condition this morning has been
upgraded to excellent. Despite the
many wild accusations and--
(questions like shrapnel--)
I'm trying to make a statement here.
(people yelling for
quiet, as we--)

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BRIDGET'S APARTMENT. And who's this at the mirror with the jet black hair? It's BRIDGET. Looking very dark and different. Making the final touch-ups on this convincing disguise, as THE PRESS CONFERENCE continues in the BG --

SPOKESMAN

...Despite the wild accusations, the truth of the matter is that Tony Grahme has been the victim of a nearly fatal interaction of prescribed medications--

(the reporters are

really howling now--)

-- a breakdown in communication between Mr. Grahme's various physicians, led to a situation --

(it's impossible)

We're trying to issue a warning here!

CUT TO

A XEROX ROOM. Television studio. Copy machines and paper. We're backstage at TAFFY AND JON! Co-conspirators, JON and LYNNE are finally alone. Rushed and hushed --

JON

I thought you were going to call me.

LYNNE

I couldn't get away.

JON

So nothing, right? It's all...

LYNNE

So far.

JON

There's nothing in the paper.

LYNNE

And you got rid of...

JON

Everything.

LYNNE

Where?

JON

You don't need to know that.

LYNNE

What is that supposed to mean?

But before this can escalate -- there's a nervous PRODUCTION ASSISTANT standing at the door --

P.A.

They told me to make some copies...

CUT TO

ASTROBURGER. JAMES has just finished breakfast. Heading out toward his car. Looking a little perplexed as he gets closer, and now we see why --

AN ENVELOPE tucked beneath one of his windshield wipers. He snags it. Looks around. What the hell is this about? Tearing it open and --

FROM THE ENVELOPE COMES

A PHOTOGRAPH. An eight-by-ten glossy. A POLICE MUGSHOT that's been blown-up. SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD JAMES straight-on and in profile. Bandaged hands holding a number to his chest. A black eye. A defiantly grim expression. And these words: Property of the Norfolk Virginia Police Department.

BACK TO

JAMES trying to stay cool. Slipping the photo back into the envelope. Glancing at traffic and the people going by. Everything and nothing suspicious at the same time.

CUT TO

HOLLYWOOD PARK CLUBHOUSE. And we're coming in fast and loud, because it's the ninth race and the horses are coming down the homestretch and remember the FIVE DUDES? They're back with SIX STRIPPERS in tow and a lot of money on the race everybody's going nuts, SCREAMING and URGING and THE WHOLE PLACE ROARING, and then suddenly...

It's over. Some utter longshot just came in first and the whole place seems stunned and unhappy, until...

THE CAMERA FINDS

JANUSZ near the bar. Checking his ticket. And the tote board. Smiling. He's got the winner.

CUT TO

JAMES DRIVING THE LEXUS. Cruising daytime Hollywood nice and easy. Checking his mirrors. Is he being followed? Watching traffic in front of him slow and --

CUT TO

THE STREET. As the LEXUS suddenly EXPLODES from the pack of cars -- instant U-turn -- TIRES SCREAMING -- and now a super-sharp turn through a RED LIGHT and...he's gone.

CUT TO

RUBBER GLOVED HANDS working a pencil back and forth over a piece of tracing paper. Letters appearing -- initials --

G.T.C.

WE'RE IN

A POLICE EVIDENCE ROOM. Dingy, steel-caged bowels of the place. JAMES with the gloves, doing the rubbing from the frame of the ruined PLASTIC TRICYCLE. A FAT COP watching with nervous impatience.

FAT COP

How much longer?

JAMES

I'm almost done.

JAMES done rubbing. Pulling a POLAROID CAMERA.

FAT COP

If my partner comes back it's gonna be another six hundred for him.

JAMES framing the shot, as we --

CUT TO

A CONTACT SHEET -- A LOUPE EYE VIEW -- so we're moving with this magnified lens over a sheet of photographs. These pix are Janusz's shots from Hollywood Park. Photos of the Dudes and the Strippers.

WE'RE IN

THE PHOTO ROOM. THE CLOUD OFFICES. Night. JANUSZ standing there watching the PHOTO EDITOR pore over his shots.

PHOTO EDITOR

...sucks...sucks...sucks...you're making him look too good...

JANUSZ

He's a good-looking guy, yeah?

PHOTO EDITOR

What do you think this is, a fashion shoot? We're running a story he's a degenerate gambler who's losing everything. That includes his looks.

JANUSZ

Try near the end. But the focus is maybe not so good.

PHOTO EDITOR

Oh yeah, here we go...

(relaxing now--)

Twenty-nine is good. And the girl looks awful. Okay, we got one.

(marking it and turning back--)

See, out of focus is good. It looks like we went to a lot of trouble to get the shot. Ugly is good. Bags under the eyes. Food in the mouth. Ass cheeks. Cellulite. Double chins.

JAMES (OS)

(picking it up)

...No makeup. Too much makeup.

THEY both turn. JAMES in the doorway.

PHOTO EDITOR

Hey, man, what's up? You know Janusz?

JAMES

Sure. How you doing?

JANUSZ

I'm learning.

PHOTO EDITOR

We got Hollywood Park. You want to see it?

JAMES

Sure.

But there's AN INTERN rushing up behind JAMES --

INTERN
-- Mr. Snow? This came for you...

She hands him AN ENVELOPE, which he'll open as --

JAMES
How's Jeremy doing?

JANUSZ
He starts to eat again. It's the first step, you know?

But JAMES is suddenly elsewhere because --

FROM THE ENVELOPE COMES

A PHOTOGRAPH. Another eight-by-ten glossy. But this time it's a long-lens shot. James standing outside Astroburger with an envelope in his hand. Deja vu all over again.

BACK TO

JAMES slipping the thing back into the envelope. Trying really hard to keep his cool. Already backing out --

JAMES
Excuse me, guys...
(disappearing--)

INTO

CLOUD OFFICE HALLWAY. THE INTERN a few steps ahead.

JAMES
Hey!
(she turns)
Who brought this?

INTERN
Just some guy, like a messenger.

JAMES
From where? Did he sign it in?

INTERN
No, I don't think I...

JAMES
Black, white, green, what?

INTERN
I don't know. I'm sorry...
(getting upset)
...nobody told me, I had to...

JAMES

You can't even remember what fucking
color he is!

(pushing past her)

Big future in journalism. Big.

CUT TO

INQUEST! CONFERENCE ROOM. TWELVE SENIOR REPORTERS seated
around the table. CLAUDE, BRYCE, several other faces we've
glimpsed at the wake and elsewhere. Up front --

ADRIAN

We will own the Pandora pregnancy
by next week or, rest assured, this
room will be filled with new faces.

CUT TO

THE CLOUD CONFERENCE ROOM. A little funkier, but the vibe
is identical. TEN SENIOR REPORTERS around the table.
LARRY we know. MACTEER we met at the wake. Again, perhaps
some faces we've seen here and there. Up front --

KATHY

Two miles away is an office with
people scrambling for their lives.
That makes them dangerous. You want
to lie down on this story? Get ready
to wake up with a knife in your back.
(checking her watch)

Where the hell is James?

LARRY throws up his hands, as we --

CUT TO

THE INQUEST! CONFERENCE ROOM -- and we're going around
the table -- starting with --

INQUEST! REPORTER #1

Pandora In Tears Over Sperm Bank Mixup!

CUT TO

THE CLOUD CONFERENCE ROOM -- same drill --

CLOUD REPORTER #1

Pandora Cloning Experiment Goes Awry!

CUT TO

INQUEST! REPORTER #2
Pandora's Agony! "I don't know who
the father is!"

CUT TO

CLOUD REPORTER #2
Vegas Making Odds On Pandora Paternity!

CUT TO

INQUEST! REPORTER #3
Casinos In A Tizzy Over Pandora Baby!

CUT TO

CLOUD REPORTER #3
Malibu Lifeguard!

CUT TO

INQUEST! REPORTER #4
Malibu Busboy!

CUT TO

MACTEER
We run a special issue. A thousand
little pictures. Every guy in town
she's ever fucked. And these four
words: Are You My Daddy?

CUT TO

INQUEST! REPORTER #5
Pan's Personal Trainer Breaks Down!
"I think she stole my sperm!"

CUT TO

CLOUD REPORTER #5
Pandora's Kooky Fertility Diet!

CUT TO

INQUEST! REPORTER #6
Pandora Psychic Praying For Twins!

CUT TO

CLOUD REPORTER #6
Pan Drug Pals Booted From the Nursery!

FINALLY TO

THE INQUEST! CONFERENCE ROOM --

INQUEST! REPORTER #7
Nick Armetta Reincarnated As Pandora Baby!

Laughter around the table, and then --

ADRIAN
Pictures From Beyond The Placenta!

More laughter, but it's only a moment, because THE DOOR
just flew open and --

CLAUDE
-- what the hell is --

JAMES standing there --

BRYCE
(jumping up--)
-- we're in the middle of a meeting
here --

A PANICKED OFFICE WORKER pushing into the room --

PANICKED WORKER
-- I'm sorry, Mr. Tracy. Building
Security is on the way up --

ADRIAN
Could everyone please just relax?
(silence)
First of all, we don't need Security.
Do we, James?

JAMES
Not right now.

ADRIAN
Excellent.
(that's done)
I'm sure everyone here, you all know
each other...
(they do)
So James, please, sit down. Join us.
(the smile)
Teach us.

JAMES
I just came to drop off a message.

ADRIAN

Drop away.

JAMES

Mess with me one more time -- one
more picture -- one more game --
I'll grind you out of a job.

(parting shot)

I'll enjoy it.

ADRIAN not sure what this means. But that'll have to do,
because JAMES is gone. Out the door and --

BRYCE

What the fuck was that?

ADRIAN

Exactly.

CUT TO

JAMES'S LEXUS peeling off into the night and --

THE CAMERA FINDS

LICARI standing in the shadows. He's been watching.

CUT TO

PANDORA'S FACE -- Kimmy's awful tattoo -- FILLS THE SCREEN.
Moving sort of, up and down. Just slightly. Disorienting
for a moment, until --

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL

KIMMY kneeling with her back to us. ALEX in a chair, legs
spread wide. Pants down. She's blowing him and --

WE'RE IN

THE MALIBU SURVEILLANCE SHACK. A skanky bedroom at the back.
Shades drawn against the daylight, but it's still disgusting
in here. ALEX'S HANDS reaching down for her hair and --

CUT TO

THE SHACK LIVING ROOM. SHEM sitting there looking like
shit. His arm in a sling. He's got a black eye and a fat
lip. He's taken a beating and eager to talk about it --

SHEM

-- who I'm pissed at, who I'm furious enough to fucking break heads with when I get healed -- Franklin and Lenny and that other fucking skeevo from the Valley --

SCRUNGIES #1, #2, and #3 lounging and listening --

SCRUNGY #1

Who?

SHEM

With the bad skin.

SCRUNGY #3

Chernow.

SHEM

That's it. And they're shooting away. He's fucking wailing on me, I'm half under the fucking limo, I got a six hundred dollar lens impaled in my chest, this publicist is screaming her tits off, and these three skeevs, they're so busy banging out pictures nobody pulls him off. And Lenny, he's the one who asked him what her cunt smelled like, right? And I'm getting stomped.

JANUSZ across the room playing with THE TELESCOPE --

SCRUNGY #1 (OS)

The one thing you know, man, you got a major payday coming on this.

SHEM (OS)

Tell me about it.

(a lopsided smile)

I got the right lawyer this time too.

CUT TO

JANUSZ'S TELESCOPE POV -- touring the obscured boundaries of the Pandora Estate. Moving the scope down the coast. There, just off to the South -- A MALIBU SHOPPING MALL.

JANUSZ pushing in now -- picking a subject at random -- very shaky and very far away -- A JAGUAR pulling into a parking space and --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU PARKING LOT. ALDO locking up his Jaguar and heading for the mall.

CUT TO

MALIBU STRIP MALL RESTAURANT. Nice enough. A little slow today for lunch. ALDO alone with his menu.

BRIDGET (OS)

Hi. How are you?

ALDO looks up like he's surprised. It's BRIDGET with the black hair. The short skirt uniform. The order pad.

ALDO

Great. Thanks. How's it going?

BRIDGET

I'm okay.

ALDO

That's good. You look great.

BRIDGET

Thanks. You too...

(she hesitates)

You asked to sit in my station again, didn't you?

ALDO

Caught me.

She smiles. Shy. Adorable.

BRIDGET

Would you like to hear the specials?

ALDO nods. Eating her up. Puppy lust.

CUT TO

THE RESIDENTIAL HILLSIDE. A POSTAL TRUCK pulling in beside a big relay mailbox. A MAIL CARRIER steps out. She's black. Crisp uniform. All business. Pulling her keys as --

JAMES

(standing nearby)

Hey. How you doing?

CARRIER
I'm okay. How're you?

JAMES
Is this your route? Up here?

CARRIER
There's four of us do the hillside.

JAMES
Really. Cause I just found eight
hundred dollars on the sidewalk.
(he smiles)
I mean, you're sort of like the
lost and found, right?

CARRIER
(they're alone)
I'm listening.

JAMES
Someone up this mountain has the
initials G-T-C. I'd like to talk
to them.

CARRIER
What are you, a bail bondsman?

JAMES
Hell no. Nothing like that.

CUT TO

A MEXICAN RESTAURANT. Sleepy slow. JAMES buying margaritas
for FOUR MAIL CARRIERS.

CARRIER #1
Crowder, but they're low on the hill.

CARRIER #2
I got Crimmins at 456 Alamo Lane.
That's near the top.

CARRIER #3
There's no kids in that house.

JAMES just taking notes. Letting them run.

CARRIER #2
Cytowitz, they got kids.

CARRIER #3
And Cutler, that's up the hill --

CUT TO

A VANITY LICENSE PLATE -- BEARZ.

WE'RE IN

THE MALIBU MALL PARKING LOT. JANUSZ working the Leica.
Shooting pictures of this SPORTY RED TOYOTA filled with
bears and bear shit and if there was any confusion about
whose car this was, it's quickly dissipated because --

BRIDGET
Hey! Hey you! That's my car!
(running from the
restaurant--)
-- hey! -- what're you doing? --

JANUSZ looking up. BRIDGET standing there in her uniform.

BRIDGET
That's my car.

JANUSZ
Is wonderful.

BRIDGET
What are you, some kind of cop?

JANUSZ
No. Please. I'm just photographer.
(the Leica)
I'm just passing -- from the pizza
store --

It's true. His RED GALAXY parked there with six pizza boxes
stacked on the hood -- a food run from the shack --

BRIDGET
So why're you taking pictures of
my car?

JANUSZ
Because is so interesting with all
the bears and your special license...

BRIDGET
They're called vanity plates.

JANUSZ

Bearz. It's very good.

(he smiles)

So I see this, and the light is very deep right now for making pictures.

And all the bears inside...

(taking a last look)

Is very wonderful. Like a whole other world in there.

He's so sweet. She can't stay mad.

BRIDGET

There's just a lot of weirdos out here, if you know what I mean.

JANUSZ

Sure. No problem. Look, I'm sorry to make you upset. Okay?

BRIDGET

No problem.

JANUSZ

And believe me, I'm very friendly with bears...

(backing away)

Where I'm from, the next town, they used to make these bears. Like this, the Teddy bears.

BRIDGET

Where's that?

JANUSZ

Poland.

BRIDGET

Not Growski...

He stops.

JANUSZ

Jah. Growski. Growski Bears. How do you know this?

BRIDGET

I have the fifth largest collection of Growski bears in California.

Off JANUSZ's confused smile we --

CUT TO

JAMES DRIVING THE LEXUS. Trapped in evening traffic. Frustration mixing with something far more potent as he listens to the messages from his answering machine play back over the car's speakerphone --

WEIRD VOICE

"Howdy, Jimbo, this is your conscience.
Long time no see, baby. Gimme a call.
Let's talk about it. Later."

(beep, and then--)

"Howdy, Jimbo, this is your conscience.
Long time no see, baby. Gimme a call.
Let's talk about it. Later."

(beep, and then--)

CUT TO

JAMES'S MESSAGE MACHINE. Playback mode. A hundred and sixty eight messages and they're all the same --

WEIRD VOICE

"Howdy, Jimbo, this is your conscience.
Long time no s--"

(cut off by--)

JAMES standing in HIS COTTAGE in the dark. He hasn't even turned the lights on yet. Bad shit brewing inside him.

THE BLACK SCREEN AND --

FLASHBACK PART III

WHY EVERY CHRISTMAS IS TORTURE FOR JAMES!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE IN

THE COLONIAL HOUSE. As before. It's Christmas Eve, 1974. YOUNG JAMES, as we left him, in the kitchen. Standing there bathed in the light of the refrigerator. Closing the door finally, turning back toward the living room and suddenly --

A GUN -- A BROWNING .45 pressed against his cheek --

DAD (OS)

...goddam but you're lucky I didn't
shoot you...

HIS FATHER standing there in the dark -- eyes wide -- heart pounding -- sidearm trembling in his hands --

DAD

This is it, you hear me? I see you
back here one more time, I swear to
you -- look at me --

(they're both
terrified)

This is the end of it.

YOUNG JAMES staring down that gun. Staring down his father.
Staring it all down, as we --

CUT TO

ELENA'S COTTAGE KITCHEN. Her phone ringing. It takes her a
minute. She's been drinking some wine.

ELENA

Hello.

JAMES (OS)

Hey, it's James from next door.
I was wondering if maybe you could
do me a little favor.

ELENA

God, you sound really far away.

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. JAMES with this weird, military-looking
phone. He's got binoculars and the shades are drawn.
Dinner working on the stove --

JAMES

No, it's just this phone.

ELENA (OS)

What kind of favor?

JAMES

There's a car up the block, by the
corner. A beige Lincoln. This guy,
I think he's sitting on my house...

CUT TO

ELENA catching her reflection in a mirror. Looking away.

JAMES (OS)

...you know, watching. I think maybe
he was out there this morning.

ELENA
So why don't you go out?

CUT TO

JAMES peeking out the window with the binoculars now --

JAMES
Yeah, well, I can always do that.
I was just thinking if maybe you
needed to run an errand or something,
you could get his plate number...
(trying to focus
and talk--)
I'd make it worth your while.

ELENA (OS)
You're kidding, right?

JAMES
Oh shit...
(eyes to the window--)

CUT TO

ELENA pouring some more white wine and --

ELENA
What?

JAMES (OS)
...forget it, he's pulling out.

ELENA
Okay, so...

JAMES (OS)
Yeah. No. Forget it. No big thing.
(false loose)
Really. Thanks anyway.

ELENA
Wait a minute.
(an almost-awkward
silence)
So what are you cooking over there?

THE BLACK SCREEN AND --

PSYCHICS SEE PASSION IN THE PLANETS!
WACKY LUNAR LINEUP GETS THE JUICES FLOWING!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE IN

BRIDGET'S APARTMENT. Night. BRIDGET giving JANUSZ a tour of her collection. Moving past climate-controlled cases. He's got the Leica, but he's waiting.

BRIDGET

...so what I do, I name them after the celebrities that helped me get them. So this is Dean Craven... Marty Masters... Heather Denoro, when she was in rehab, did you see those shots?

JANUSZ

Maybe not.

BRIDGET stopping at her latest, the METZEN BEAR --

BRIDGET

And this little fellow, he just came yesterday so that's why he's got the place of honor.

(like a real
introduction--)
Janusz, this is Tony Grahme...

JANUSZ

(playing along)
So very nice to meet you, Tony.

This pleases her no end. Moving him now to the final stop on this part of the tour -- AN EMPTY CASE. A big one.

BRIDGET

And this, well...

JANUSZ

It's a big box.

BRIDGET

But you probably guessed already.

JANUSZ

Bridget...
(now he's making
the introduction--)
...please to meet Miss Pandora.

Off her kooky curtsy, we --

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. Later. He's cooking. ELENA giving the place a real once-over. Both drinking that white wine.

ELENA
(the Blondell covers)
You did all these?

JAMES
Most of them.

ELENA
So you're a big deal, right?

JAMES
Yeah, well, that story's over.

ELENA
People never get tired of it, do they? All this.

JAMES
No, it's pretty reliable.

ELENA
And you never run out.

JAMES
Of stories? Never happen.

ELENA
But like you said, this one's over.
So then what?

JAMES
There's always another story.
You couldn't keep up if you tried.

ELENA
You're serious.

JAMES
Come on, we've got more celebrities
than we know what to do with.
Super-Celebrities. Sub-Celebrities.
Up-And-Coming Celebrities. Down-and-
out Celebrities. Former-Celebrities.
Lucky-Winner Celebrities. Tragic-
victim Celebrities. Christ, we're
breeding multi-generational celebrity
families. There's always somebody
fucking up.
(beat)
You oughta know that.

ELENA

Why would I know that?

JAMES

You live here, don't you? I mean,
come on, this is it. This is ground
zero.

(he drinks)

This is their Jerusalem.

CUT TO

BRIDGET'S BEDROOM. Just as saccharine and bizarre as
the rest. A four-post, single bed. Gingham dust ruffles.
A hundred more bears and --

BRIDGET

I keep all my Growskis together so
they don't get lonely.

JANUSZ watching her arrange the Polish bears on her bureau.

JANUSZ

It was bombed. The factory. In the
war. You know this, yes?

BRIDGET

I know. It's terrible.

JANUSZ

My Tante Marina, my Grandmother's
best friend, she worked there.

BRIDGET

She might've made these bears.

JANUSZ

(a little misty)
It's incredible, eh?

BRIDGET

Would you like to keep one?

JANUSZ turns back to find her smiling. She's serious.
And he's really touched by this.

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. He's setting the table. She's opening
Another bottle of wine.

ELENA

And we're all supposed to get what?
Fifteen minutes of fame?

JAMES

No. He was wrong. It's not everyone.
And it's not fifteen minutes. That's
not what's important. Not how long.
It's that you're part of it. You're
inoculated. You exist. "I've been
seen, therefore I am."

ELENA

So what is it then, with you?
Politics?

JAMES

Yeah, I'm an anarchist. The world's
most organized anarchist.

ELENA

I just mean, you must get off on it.

He stops what he's doing. Some little realization.

JAMES

What are you looking for?

ELENA

I don't know. You make me curious.
(tasting the food)
How does a prick like you get to
cook like this?

CUT TO

BRIDGET'S BEDROOM. JANUSZ and BRIDGET sitting at the edge
of her bed. His little bear cradled like a treasure.

BRIDGET

You're very gentle.

JANUSZ

Not always.

BRIDGET

What happened to your ear?

JANUSZ

Is not a gentle story.

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. They're at the table now. Eating and drinking, and...

JAMES

Tabloids sell the idea that being rich and famous sucks. The Big Lie, okay? Fame, wealth, beauty -- none of it can protect you. Not from pain. Not from fear. Heartbreak. Nothing. In fact, the life of a celebrity is worse because these poor bastards have actually seen paradise and realized what a dump it is. The rehabs, the sickness, the fucked-up children, the impossible romances, the horror of getting old -- not only do these unfortunate creatures have to go through the same shit, but they've got to stand there naked so that we can all watch. So that when you're in the laundromat and the air conditioning is broken and the kids are fighting and God knows where your husband is and God knows what that little lump in your neck is that you've been trying to ignore until the next paycheck. With all that going on, the dollar-forty-nine you just spent on this week's tabloid isn't just a purchase. You're doing more than just escape. When you buy a tab, you're investing in celebrity pain. You're saying go for it. Find it. Hunt that shit down for me. Tell me how much it sucks to be fabulous. Help me get through another day.

ELENA

But it's not true.

JAMES

No.

(like to a child)

Being rich and famous does not suck.

ELENA

So what do you believe in?

JAMES

I don't eat sushi on Sunday night.

CUT TO

BRIDGET'S BEDROOM. They're sitting there on the bed now, side-by-side and --

JANUSZ

...the roof was blown away in the fighting. So I wake up to the sky. It's very cold and the wind is banging this tin metal against the chimney. Very loud. Now I realize I'm laying in this pile of bodies. Everyone is dead. More than two hundred. Like piles of shoes around the floor. I'm all in blood and dirt. Covered like this from smoke and plaster. But I have this earring. You know, from a black pearl?

(she nods yes)

Because now they come to loot the bodies. I hear them getting closer. Every now and then they find someone who is maybe still alive and they kill him. So for two hours, I pretend to be dead. But more than this, I believe that I'm dead. This is death. Like a trance. But so deep, when it's over, I don't want to come back.

(a Polish shrug)

And my earring is gone...

(he makes a little smile for her--)

And if I don't kiss you right now I'll regret this forever.

BRIDGET not quite ready for him, but here it is. And he is gentle. It's the softest little kiss. And he pulls away to gauge her reaction and she smiles and now he kisses her again. Her weird little bed groaning as they shift for a better angle. And then, suddenly --

BRIDGET

(pulling away--)

Wait. Wait...

JANUSZ

I'm sorry...

(awkward now)

You want me to stop?

BRIDGET

No. No, but...

THE BLACK SCREEN and --

THE SECRET SHE CAN'T BEAR TO REVEAL!

BRIDGET

I'm a virgin.

JANUSZ blinks. As we --

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. As they were. At the table. ELENA staring at JAMES as she slowly unbuttons her blouse --

ELENA

Does this work in person or do I
have to go next door and pretend
I don't know you're watching?

THE BLACK SCREEN and --

KINKY SEXCAPADES!

WILD NIGHTS FOR HOLLYWOOD NEIGHBORS!

ELENA with her shirt unbuttoned now. Letting down her hair.

ELENA

This is just about sex.

JAMES

If you say so.

ELENA

What do you mean by that?

JAMES

You tell me. My phone hasn't rung
since you walked in the door.

ELENA

Maybe you're not as popular as you
think.

JAMES

Why did the beige Lincoln pull away
the moment I mentioned on the phone?

Suddenly, it's cold in here.

ELENA

Maybe your phone is tapped.

JAMES

Not my phone.

ELENA

I was kidding.

JAMES

It doesn't seem strange to you?

ELENA

People drive around all the time.
They park and then later they leave.

JAMES

Maybe you're right.

ELENA

And maybe you've spent a little too
much time in Jerusalem.

She's buttoning her shirt too fast and fucking it up.

JAMES

How do you know I watch you?

ELENA

This is only sort of amusing now.

JAMES

You know what I'm really wondering?

ELENA

I don't think I care.

JAMES

What would you do to get your son
back?

ELENA

Oh, fuck you...
(standing now--)

JAMES

You mind if I look in your bag?

ELENA grabbing it before he can get there. Drunk and wounded
and rushing to get out of here --

ELENA

There's all kinds of ways to break
down, you know.
(at the door)
It doesn't always look the same.

And she's gone. The door rattling as it slams back.
JAMES listening to her rush away. And then it's quiet.

And now THE CAMERA pushes in on him. We're gonna go really close. Close enough to see the cracks. A LAUGH TRACK starts bleeding in from the next scene, louder and louder and louder, until we --

CUT TO

THE JON AND TAFFY SHOW! On air. The two of them in their chairs with the coffee cups and THE AUDIENCE LAUGHING and --

TAFFY

-- no but we did, I swear. They gave me this -- I did --

(paper in hand)

-- I thought they were kidding --

JON

-- it's for real, they'll make odds on anything --

TAFFY

-- it's the Pandora Pregnancy Pool, and, I guess, what do you do? You call in and tell them who you think the daddy is, and then what?

JON

I guess they give you the odds.

TAFFY

So my question is...

(the audience already giggling--)

What are the odds on you, honey?

CUT TO

THE COTTAGE DRIVEWAY. JAMES locking up. Dressed sharply, but looking wasted. He hasn't slept. He's got a throbbing headache. Getting in THE LEXUS and --

A WIDER ANGLE AS

THE LEXUS veers out into THE STREET. Hesitating for a moment, but instead of pulling forward, suddenly it's peeling out in reverse -- backing up the block -- pulling to a sharp stop and --

JAMES jumping out fast. Why? THE BEIGE LINCOLN parked here and there's someone in it and if they didn't know he was coming, they do now, because --

JAMES

You want to play games...?

(BANGING on the trunk as he comes around--)

Is that what you want?

THE DRIVER trying to open his door to get out, but he's having trouble and JAMES'S there first, and then everything just stops cold.

DAD

James...

JAMES steps back. Paralyzed. Like a wall.

DAD

It's me.

DAD has changed a lot. Stooped and frail. His clothes hanging off him. A golf hat pulled down over his ears. He's getting up out of the seat, but it's tough for him ---

DAD

My hair, I know. I've had, well, you can see...

(he pulls his hat, he's completely bald--)

I've had some chemo, so...

THE BLACK SCREEN --

THE FAMILY HORROR HE CAN'T ESCAPE!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT

JAMES in psychic freefall. Just dumbfounded.

DAD

I sat out here yesterday. All day. Trying to get my nerve.

(this is so hard)

When you sent the ticket, I'll be honest, I didn't know what to think. But the note, what you wrote, it was outstanding.

JAMES looking around suddenly, is this being photographed?

DAD

I should've called. I'm sorry.

JAMES struggling to focus. But something's different now.
Hatches being battened down.

DAD

(finally)

You didn't send the ticket did you?

JAMES

No, sir.

Silence stiffening between them.

DAD

Just so you understand...

(from his pocket)

This is the note I received.

JAMES taking it. Trying to read, but he's dizzy.

DAD

Who would do such a thing? I can't
believe I know someone that hates me
that much.

JAMES

It wasn't anybody you know.

DAD

I see.

(James trying
to hand back
the note--)

No. You can keep it.

JAMES

I didn't know you were sick.

DAD

I'm not that sick.

JAMES

Okay.

DAD

You look well. Prosperous.

(a dead hole)

The way it's been between us. It's
been for the best. You realize that.

JAMES

Sure.

DAD

The alternative. I think we know how painful that would've been.

JAMES

I've got a good idea.

DAD getting back in the Buick. About to close the door.

DAD

James...

(James focuses)

You're blocking me in.

JAMES nods. Walking toward the Lexus, as we --

CUT TO

THE GROWSKI BEARS on Bridget's bureau. Except they're all turned away, all facing the wall.

WE'RE IN

BRIDGET'S BEDROOM. And all the bears around the room have been turned back-to-front. Display cases have been covered with towels and --

JANUSZ and BRIDGET spooned into her tiny little bed. He's sleeping peacefully. She's staring adoringly at his every movement. She looks very happy.

CUT TO

A TELEVISION STUDIO LADIES ROOM. LYNNE alone, washing up. Jumping, as the door opens behind her, and JON barges in. He is bouncing with tension. Quickly checking the stalls, to make sure they're alone and --

JON

Now I have to hunt you down?

LYNNE

We lost our Friday guest. It's been a madhouse.

JON

What is this? What is this?

He's waving a clipboard in her face.

LYNNE
 What are you doing with my phone log?
 (trying to grab it)
 Give me that!

JON
 G. Robert Kelly.
 (keeping it)
 Who the hell is G. Robert Kelly?!

LYNNE
 He's a lawyer.

JON
 What do you need a lawyer for?

LYNNE
He's a real estate lawyer.
 I'm selling the house.

JON
What? Are you out of your fucking
 mind? Now? Sell the house? Do you
 have any idea how that's gonna look?

LYNNE
 Do you have any idea what it's like
 to drive by there twice a day?

JON
 You think that's the worst that can
 happen?

LYNNE
Are you threatening me?

JON
 Do I have to?

The two of them staring across the bathroom, as we --

CUT TO

A CABIN CRUISER. A charter boat somewhere off Catalina.
 JEREMY standing alone at the stern. Perched on the rail,
 THE FUNERARY URN. After a moment, he lowers his sunglasses
 and begins to speak, but the words are lost beneath the wind
 and the roar of the engine. Looks like farewell...

ARMETTA'S ASHES spilling down into the foam, as we --

CUT TO

A VERY CLUTTERED BACKYARD. Late afternoon. We're on the residential hillside. Way up near the top. JAMES and A MEXICAN MAID standing in a minefield of TOYS and PLASTIC KIDS SHIT. If it seems familiar that's because we were here with Armetta --

JAMES

How long has the fence been broken?

MAID

(she shrugs)

Is all the time a mess like this.

JAMES checking it out. Taking a peek into the next yard. Looking back. And then spotting something on the ground right by his feet --

A BOX OF FILM just laying there. An unopened box of high speed professional film.

JAMES

Who lives on the other side?

MAID

I think some lady. Is for sale maybe.

CUT TO

THE RESIDENTIAL HILLSIDE. Same time. A GREEN BUICK comes racing down the hill and --

CUT TO

INSIDE THE BUICK. MOFFIT on the phone as he drives --

MOFFIT

(urgent and coded)

Affirmative. Subject is on site.

LICARI'S VOICE

I understand.

MOFFIT

So where do you need me?

LICARI'S VOICE

Go to the other number. I'll call you right back.

MOFFIT checking his rearview and hanging up the phone, as we --

CUT TO

A MEDITATION TEMPLE. Buddha in Malibu. PANDORA and her AROMATHERAPIST blissing out over some incense.

AROMATHERAPIST

...breathing deeply...bathing your
chakra...and now the center of the
circle is everywhere....

CUT TO

SOME DIVE BAR. JAMES in back at the pay phone. Working a vodka, a notepad and someone on the line --

JAMES

Yeah, you've got a listing up in
Almeida Heights. 228 Dallas drive?

(beat)

yeah, I would. I'd like to take a
look at it.

(beat)

Sure, morning is good for me...

CUT TO

A BEAUTY SALON. TAFFY alone in a private room. A hundred pieces of foil taped to her hair. She's deep in a magazine, completely startled to see --

LICARI standing behind her.

TAFFY

George...what are you...?

(flustered)

...nobody's supposed to...

(the mirror)

...my God, I look a wreck...

LICARI spins her around to face him. Calm furious.

LICARI

You come to me. You say, "George,
help me. I think my husband and
assistant are fucking around."
And I go out and I confirm it for
you. And what do you tell me?

TAFFY

I needed time to think. You agreed
with me.

LICARI

You didn't tell me you were gonna call Nick Armetta.

TAFFY

Oh, come on. That's ridiculous. Why would I do something like that?

LICARI

That's what I want to know.

TAFFY

You're talking crazy.

LICARI

You want crazy? James Snow is twenty four hours away from putting Jon and Halle in the car that killed Armetta.

TAFFY

How can you know that?

LICARI

What do you think I am? A guest? This is a fucking talkshow?

(in her face)

You tipped him off. Why?

TAFFY

For the show.

(isn't it obvious?)

Do you know what would've happened the day after those pictures ran?

I would've had people quitting their jobs to stay home and watch. Jon is fired. I go it alone. He begs.

I take him back. It doesn't work.

We suffer. We learn to love again.

It was pure ratings gold!

(he's just staring)

What are you gonna do, George?

(he's scaring her)

You're gonna help me, aren't you?

You wouldn't be here if you weren't gonna help me, right?

(breaking)

Tell me you can make this go away.

LICARI

I will own you. Now and forever.

Off her silent agreement, we --

CUT TO

JAMES'S COTTAGE. Night. JAMES in the doorway, just coming in -- just turning on the light -- just now realizing that something is terribly wrong -- everything is in shambles -- someone's broken in --

AND INSTANTLY WE'RE INTO

QUICK SHOTS -- JAMES tearing through the chaos -- LIGHTS coming up and things falling -- HIS DESK torn apart -- BOOKS pulled off the shelves -- THE BED stripped --

CUT TO

THE COTTAGE BACKYARD -- JAMES exploding out the back door, running toward the GARAGE, but only halfway there when he suddenly slows because --

HIS SECRET HIDING PLACE. That hinged slab of asphalt just beside the garbage cans. It's open. And empty.

JAMES standing there in the dark, breathing hard --

CUT TO

ELENA'S FRONT DOOR. JAMES rushing up the path and KNOCKING ON THE DOOR so hard it swings open, or was it unlocked?

JAMES suddenly faced with another ugly surprise. Her place looks empty. Reaching for the light switch and --

THE BLACK SCREEN and --

MYSTERY MOM FLIES THE COOP!
WHY WE'LL NEVER KNOW HER SECRET!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE IN

ELENA'S KITCHEN. Cleaned out. Everything of value is gone. JAMES standing there trying to take this in, as his PAGER STARTS BUZZING. JAMES finally hearing it too, as we --

CUT TO

A RESTAURANT KITCHEN. Busy and crowded. BRIDGET pushing up to the line --

BRIDGET

Ordering...

CUT TO

THE LEXUS speeding down Santa Monica Boulevard and --

CUT TO

A BEVERLY HILLS MANSION. TAFFY sitting in the dark like a spider. Drinking Scotch from a tumbler. Waiting.

CUT TO

A HOSPITAL PARKING GARAGE. THE LEXUS squealing around corners as it climbs toward the top and --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU MALL PARKING LOT. Night. ALDO getting out of the JAGUAR. Adjusting his hair. Checking his watch and --

CUT TO

THE ROOFTOP OF THE HOSPITAL GARAGE. DR. JONES watching JAMES walk over from THE LEXUS.

DR. JONES

You're alone.

JAMES

Of course.

DR. JONES

You're drunk. I can smell it.

JAMES

I'm here.

DR. JONES

I want to clear the slate.

JAMES

How would we do that?

DR. JONES

I give you one more thing and we're done. Otherwise, fuck it.

JAMES

What do you mean by one more thing?

DR. JONES spooked by a car pulling out on the other side --

DR. JONES
(stepping back)
What the hell is this?

JAMES
No, he's leaving...

DR. JONES waiting to be sure. He's really jumpy.

DR. JONES
What if I told you who the father was?

JAMES
Baby Pandora's father?

DR. JONES
What if I told you who the father
was and that he was with Pandora at
this moment and where they were.
Would that clear us up?

JAMES
That would be very big story.

DR. JONES
Otherwise I say fuck it. Do your
worst. Because I can't live like
this, this kind of tension.

JAMES
How do we make this work?

DR. JONES
I get all the pictures back.
All of it. Negatives, everything.

JAMES
Deal. You'll have it tomorrow.

DR. JONES
No, we do it now.

JAMES
Your terms. My schedule. Otherwise
I say fuck it.

DR. JONES hesitates. Sucks up his faith.

DR. JONES
Tony Grahme.

JAMES
What?

DR. JONES

Tony Grahme. I just came back from
Malibu. They're out there right now.

JAMES

Tony Grahme is the father?

DR. JONES

They wanted a blood test.

THE BLACK SCREEN and --

OH JIMMY!

FRIENDS FEAR HE'S SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL!

AND WHEN WE COME OUT WE'RE

INSIDE THE LEXUS. JAMES driving Sunset Boulevard like
a maniac. MUSIC BLASTING and the windows open and this
really disturbing look in his eyes and --

CUT TO

THE GARAGE ROOFTOP. DR. JONES still here. Sucking down a
cigarette. Leaning against a green Buick as MOFFIT hands
him an envelope thick with photographs --

DR. JONES

(the Holy Grail)

Thank God that's over...

MOFFIT

Don't get ahead of yourself, doc.

(pulling his keys)

Mr. Licari will tell you when it's
over.

JONES brought up short, as we --

CUT TO

JAMES driving like crazy and --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU RESTAURANT. ALDO at the bar with BRIDGET.
She's finished her shift. He's bought her a drink.

BRIDGET
I didn't believe you.

ALDO
I know, I could tell.

BRIDGET
Then I was talking to one of the
bartenders saying, "Hey, there's this
guy who says he works for Pandora..."
(like wow)
You really know her?

ALDO
Know her? I run her life.

CUT TO

THE LEXUS tearing up THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY and --

CUT TO

THE BEVERLY HILLS MANSION. JON at his front door. It's
dark inside. Trying to be quiet as he works his key and --

CUT TO

SHEM -- INSIDE HIS VAN -- sixty-yards away in the street.
Eyes glued to the periscope. Behind him, a television with
A VIDEO TAPE running one of his nature videos: A pride of
lions finishing off a wounded zebra in slow motion, as we --

CUT TO

SOME MALIBU SIDE STREET. THE LEXUS tucked in the shadows.
JAMES popping the trunk, pulling out A CAMERA and --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU MALL PARKING LOT. ALDO and BRIDGET standing
by his Jaguar.

ALDO
Come on. I'll show you around.

BRIDGET
Are you sure?

CUT TO

JAMES in mid-air, dropping fifteen feet off a CINDERBLOCK WALL down into someone's DARK MALIBU BACKYARD and --

CUT TO

A HUGE VASE in mid flight -- SHATTERING against A PLATE GLASS WINDOW -- we're in THE BEVERLY HILLS MANSION and --

TAFFY

ALL YOU HAD TO DO...

(grabbing a huge
crystal ashtray--)

...ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS FUCK UP!

JON feinting left -- going right -- but she's ready for him -- hurling THE ASHTRAY and --

CUT TO

SHEM in the van -- excited -- flipping switches on the console -- SPEAKERS COMING ALIVE -- the amplified sound of GLASS BREAKING in the distance and --

CUT TO

JAMES running over rocks now -- some sort of path beside a fence and it's getting more and more downhill as he goes and the sound of THE OCEAN getting louder and --

CUT TO

THE PANDORA FRONT GATE. A DOZEN PAPARAZZI now permanently camped here. Shaking off the tedium now, as --

LICARI'S BLACK RANGE ROVER pulls to the gate. FLASHBULBS popping, as TWO UNIFORMED SECURITY GUARDS rush to open up.

Just to make sure nobody gets ambitious, there's A THIRD GUARD standing nearby with TWO GERMAN SHEPARDS on a short leash and --

CUT TO

JAMES running along THE BEACH now and --

CUT TO

THE MALIBU SURVEILLANCE SHACK. ALEX working the telescope.
Behind him, THE SCRUNGIES playing some video game --

ALEX

What are they doing down there?

(eye to the scope)

They're turning all the lights off,
the fence lights...

CUT TO

JAMES climbing now, pulling himself up a stone cliff that
rises sharply from the beach and --

CUT TO

ADRIAN all alone in the INQUEST! CONFERENCE ROOM and he's
pacing frantically because he's being fired and trying to
talk his way out of it --

ADRIAN

-- but that corner we need to turn,
it's just so close, I mean, we can see
it -- I can see it -- we're speeding
toward it -- and I don't mean to plead
here, but if I thought the paper cou--

MR. LATTANZI'S VOICE

Adrian.

(like God, over the
speakerphone)

I've made my decision. Let's not
embarrass ourselves.

CUT TO

JAMES in another Malibu yard, ducking down behind a hedge
as a car pulls out from a nearby garage and --

CUT TO

JON AND TAFFY sitting quietly amidst the shambles of their
living room. Spent. He's all hang dog. She's in charge.

TAFFY

You're going to have a heart attack.

JON

On the air?

TAFFY

During sweeps week.

JON

You talking like a major coronary?

(she nods)

What about the doctors?

TAFFY

We'll buy as many as we need.

CUT TO

SHEM -- IN THE VAN -- headphones on, and he's straining the equipment, but all he's getting is STATIC and --

CUT TO

JAMES climbing a tree that hangs over the wall to another backyard and --

CUT TO

ALDO AND BRIDGET inside THE JAGUAR, just now approaching the PANDORA FRONT GATE and --

BRIDGET

(she's excited)

Wow...

ALDO

(he's concerned)

Where the hell are the lights?

CUT TO

JAMES crawling along a high stone wall -- careful here because he's passing very close to someone's beach house and there's music from inside and --

CUT TO

JON AND TAFFY rolling on the living room floor. Tearing at each other's clothes with pure sexual frenzy. All that hatred transformed for the moment into passion and --

CUT TO

JAMES running in the shadows, clutching his camera as he skirts along the perimeter of someone's driveway and --

CUT TO

LYNNE alone in bed in a DARK MOTEL ROOM BED. Staring at the ceiling. Guilt-ridden insomnia.

CUT TO

ALDO simply apoplectic outside the PANDORA FRONT GATE --

ALDO

Do you know who I am? Do you know
who you're talking to?

SECURITY GUARD

(inside the gate)

I'm sorry, sir. He said if you come
back tomorrow they'll have all your
stuff packed and ready for you..

ALDO

Who? Who said this? Who would say
this? WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?

SECURITY GUARD

We work for Mr. Licari, sir. And I'm
sorry, but he was very specific.
(his attention shifting
now because--)

THE STREET PAPARAZZI stepping back as THE EXPLORER skids
up beside the JAGUAR -- ALEX and THE SCRUNGIES already
piling out and --

CUT TO

JAMES scaling a serious cyclone fence, pulling himself up
past a sign that says: WARNING! NO TRESPASSING! THESE
PREMISES PATROLLED BY ARMED GUARDS!

CUT TO

PANDORA curled up on a living room couch. LARA pouring
her tea and GWYNNE massaging her feet and --

CUT TO

JAMES moving carefully now. He's in the Pandora compound. Some sort of wild garden, like a jungle really. More than an acre of dark, lush, re-created rain forest --

And he's not alone.

KIMMY standing there. Too crazy to be scared.

KIMMY

Wow. I thought I was dreaming,

JAMES

No.

(vamping)

No. I'm lost. I fell asleep on the beach...

KIMMY

Pandora lives here.

(whispering)

I thought you were a guard...

JAMES

Who're you?

KIMMY

I'm her daughter.

CUT TO

TAFFY AND JON still on the floor, still half-dressed but something is terribly wrong -- they've stopped mid-stroke -- he's gasping -- flushed -- clutching at his chest --

TAFFY

-- Jon? -- Jon? -- it's not funny... don't kid! -- what're you? -- Jon...

(her panic building)

-- omigod -- JON, NO! -- NOT NOW! --

CUT TO

JAMES trapped in this weird Malibu jungle listening to --

KIMMY

...I wanted her to accept me and I didn't want to rush her but now, it's just, if she's really having this other baby...I'm trying not to let it affect me...it's just really hard when you love someone so much.

JAMES

Why don't you stay here, and I'll see if I can...

KIMMY

Explain the lights.

(he stops)

What if it's a signal? What if she wants to see me, but there's just so much pressure from all these other people?

(it's so clear)

These lights are always on.

JAMES looking around...is something wrong?

CUT TO

THE PANDORA DRIVEWAY. THE TWO GERMAN SHEPARDS we saw at gate looking excited as THEIR HANDLER sets them free --

THE HANDLER

Hunt.

And the dogs take off, as we --

CUT TO

OUTSIDE THE FRONT GATE. It's getting ugly. ALEX and THE SCRUNGIES have joined the OTHER PAPARAZZI and they're all shooting pictures of ALDO as he screams into his cell phone, dancing around like Rumpelstilskin --

ALDO

-- put him on! -- I don't care! --
you put him the fuck on now!

(wheeling on Alex--)

Get that shit out of my face!

(only to see--)

-- hey! -- hey, wait a minute!

HIS JAGUAR pulling out into the street and --

CUT TO

BRIDGET at the wheel. Cutting her losses. Not even a backward glance as she speeds off, and we --

CUT TO

JAMES still in the garden, trying to back away, but --

KIMMY

That's not the way out...

But JAMES's not listening to her. Something else has caught his attention --

CUT TO

THE DOGS tearing through the dark along the cyclone fence line -- starting to pick up a scent and --

CUT TO

JAMES starting to run --

JAMES

Come on... Hurry up...

KIMMY hesitating, but now THE DOGS START BARKING behind them and --

CUT TO

PANDORA as we left her, on the couch with GWYNNE and LARA. All of them startled, as A LOUD ALARM STARTS PULSING and --

CUT TO

JAMES sprinting out onto the lawn and there's a pool down below and THE MAIN HOUSE above with the terrace over the ocean and THE ALARM JUST BLARING now and --

CUT TO

THE COMPOUND SECURITY BUNKER. A small room somewhere in the main house. ANOTHER UNIFORMED SECURITY GUARD seated at the console. Twelve dead video monitors on the wall.

LICARI

Bring up the lights.

CONSOLE GUARD

You want the cameras?

LICARI

No. Leave the cameras down.

CUT TO

KIMMY -- frozen in the garden as THE DOGS start running toward her -- SCREAMING as they get closer and closer and then closing her eyes as they just blow right by her --

CUT TO

JAMES stumbling up the hill -- just off the terrace -- looking back for the dogs -- caught in the open -- wide open -- AS THE LIGHTS COME UP EVERYWHERE AND THE ALARM JUST KEEPS BLARING and --

A VOICE (OS)
I TOLD YOU TO STOP!!

JAMES
(blinded, turning)
...what?...

RUSTY crouched on the terrace with A GUN gripped firmly in his hands and one eye closed and his finger already squeezing the trigger and --

CUT INSTANTLY TO

OUTSIDE THE FRONT GATE -- lit up like a runway -- ALEX -- ALDO -- THE PAPARAZZI -- all of them freezing at the sound of gunshots -- BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! --

CUT TO

THE TERRACE. JAMES laying there dead. Eyes wide open. Blood pooling black onto the stones. KIMMY kneeling beside him, pulling off her jacket, trying to cover his body and --

THE DOGS, disoriented by the gunshots, cowering down on the lawn and --

LARA and GWYNNE trying to hold PANDORA back but she's pulling away through the door and pushing past RUSTY who's still standing there holding the gun and --

LICARI sprinting from the house and people are probably yelling and the women are starting to freak out, but it's impossible to hear because THE ALARM IS STILL BLARING and there's another sound now, and it's getting LOUDER and LOUDER and --

EVERYONE looking up to see --

A HELICOPTER pulling in fast and low over the ocean and --

CUT TO

THE HELICOPTER. JANUSZ hanging out the open door, perched on the skids. It looks dangerous, but it's something he's done a thousand times before. Raising the Leica now and --

CUT TO

JANUSZ'S LEICA POV -- looking down through ground glass as the chopper swings in over the terrace and the scene is framed below and the shutter is pressed and --

WE FREEZE ON THIS IMAGE

James's lifeless body sprawled at the far right of the picture. Kimmy is beside him, but turned away, like she's shielding her eyes from the dust. With her jacket off, and bent like this, her tattoo of Pandora's face registers with incredible clarity. At the far left of frame, Pandora herself. Real fear in her eyes and her arms open wide and a scream frozen at her lips.

It is a truly stunning image. A fierce triangulation of art and news and trash. The most perfect moment ever captured in tabloid history. Still holding on it as the noise all fades away and we...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

THIS PICTURE on the cover of a magazine. And another magazine. And another. And another and --

WE'RE AT

THE ALL NIGHT NEWSSTAND. And it's late and THE PAKISTANI VENDOR is doing what he always does and we're still pulling away, and by now it's clear -- EVERY SINGLE MAGAZINE HERE has Janusz's photo on the cover and --

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK --

PSYCHIC SUPERSTAR SUMMIT!

AND WE COME OUT INTO

A TELEVISION SCREEN. But so close we can see the pixels sizzling. Colors holding for a moment until they spasm into something else and...

WE'RE PULLING BACK SLOWLY

We're going to keep pulling back. We're going to realize that this is a HOTEL ROOM TELEVISION and that the cabinet door is half-closed because no one's watching. We're going to see that what's on right now is some sort of TALKING HEADS SHOW -- A PSYCHIC HOST and THREE PSYCHIC SUPERSTARS sitting around a desk set. Our characters' pictures flashing behind them as their destinies are revealed and THE END CREDITS START TO ROLL and we hear --

PSYCHIC HOST

Let's wrap it up. Let's look ahead.
Where are we going? Gene?

TV PSYCHIC #1

I'm seeing Janusz and Bridget married within the year. I'm seeing that very clearly --

TV PSYCHIC #2

-- and pregnant. I see children.
I see fertility. I see abundance.

PSYCHIC HOST

What about Jon and Taffy?

TV PSYCHIC #3

First of all, I see him gaining all the weight back --

TV PSYCHIC #1

-- next month, their debut on the Home Shopping Network, I'm predicting no sales record will be safe --

TV PSYCHIC #2

-- I disagree about the weight --

PSYCHIC HOST

Kimmy, she's doing the Playboy spread, or not? Erica?

TV PSYCHIC #2

She's doing it. Alex's shooting it.
It's gonna be beautiful.

TV PSYCHIC #3

And Shem, I wish I could tell you this was the year he pays off the van, but I just don't see it in his cards...

TV PSYCHIC #2

I'm with you on that.

TV PSYCHIC #1

We all agree on Shem.

PSYCHIC HOST

What about Pandora? We talked about how dark it all looked to us last year, and now...

TV PSYCHIC #1

It's a wonderful time for her --

TV PSYCHIC #2

-- her chart's just so positive now, and the baby and this new husband...

TV PSYCHIC #3

George Licari just has an aura, you can practically touch it --

TV PSYCHIC #2

-- I see her continuing to feel safe with him for at least the next four to five months.

PSYCHIC HOST

Okay, here's a big one. Who's the father?

These jerks are gonna keep going, but by now we've pulled back so far that the sound of the TV has begun to fade, overpowered by MUSIC now -- music from a boombox -- some rattling diggity tune coming from the next room where God knows what is going on, and we realize it's time to --

FADE OUT.

THE END

