

Red McKenna

version 2

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by C.G. Masi

EXT. MIAMI BEACH YACHT CLUB MARINA - EARLY MORNING

RED, a six-foot, three-inch redheaded woman in her early twenties exits a cabin door onto the gunwale catwalk on a 100-plus-foot motoryacht headed for the gangway. She wears shorts, a tee shirt, and sneakers. She wears her wavy hair longer than shoulder length - down to the bottoms of her shoulder blades in back. Her build is athletic, with long, well-developed muscles. Medium size breasts. She is trailing a large suitcase on rollers, which she is having trouble controlling because she is distracted by her emotional state. She is obviously furious, talking to herself in an angry tone as she fights the suitcase down the gangway.

RED

(Harvard accent)

That bastard! Thinks he can control
MY life does he? I'll show him!

She drags the suitcase along the dock to the parking lot, all the time gesticulating with her free hand and mouthing obscenities to herself.

RED (CONT'D)

... set me up with some goddamn
pencil neck he knows from work ...

She drags the suitcase to a pink 1965 Ford Mustang convertible, opens the trunk, throws in the suitcase, and slams the lid. Then, she starts the car, lowers the convertible top, and squeals tires driving out.

EXT. BREAKDOWN LANE ALONG A SUPERHIGHWAY - LATE MORNING

RED's Mustang is now broken down beside the road. She is sitting in the driver's seat with the door open, feet outside on the pavement, elbows on knees, face buried in hands, sobbing.

DOC (O.C.)

(nondescript American
accent)

You look like you're having a bad
day.

RED looks up to see DOC, a tall, muscular man in his mid-twenties wearing dark sunglasses, black leather pants, boots and motorcycle jacket, and carrying a half helmet with gloves stuffed into it. His dark brown hair is shaggy and he has a full beard cropped 1" long. A large, yellow touring

motorcycle is visible behind him.

RED

My car broke down.

DOC

Obviously. What happened?

RED

I dunno. It was running fine, then all of a sudden it quit.

DOC

What did it sound like?

RED

Just started rattling and banging, then quit.

DOC

Pop the hood and let's see what's wrong.

RED reaches under the dashboard to pop the hood. Steam immediately escapes from under the hood. Doc steps to the middle of the car's front and reaches in for the hood latch. Making wry faces while trying to find the latch, and moving it in different ways to get it to open, DOC almost gets RED to smile for the first time. Finally getting the hood up, he takes his sunglasses off to peer under the steam deep into the engine.

DOC

Aha! You've managed to blow not one, but BOTH head gaskets. I can see steam spurting out from under the cylinder heads.

RED

Is that bad?

DOC

Well, it ain't good! Luckily I know a mechanic who has a shop about a mile from here, and owes me a favor. C'mon, I'll ride you over and he can haul it in.

RED
 (suddenly wary)
 I don't know....

DOC
 It's either that or you start
 thumbing through the phone book, and
 you've got no phone book.

RED
 (distrustingly)
 Well, ...

DOC
 I know you've only my word on this,
 and you don't know me....

RED
 (laughing ruefully)
 But, you've never steered me wrong,
 either.
 (making a sudden decision)
 Okay, I'll take a chance. Let me get
 my bag.

EXT. BILL'S REPAIR SHOP PARKING AREA - MINUTES LATER

Bill's Auto Repair is housed in a building clearly re-purposed from a gas-station franchise to an independent repair shop. Several cars are parked around the old gas-pump islands awaiting repair. A sign on the building next door proclaims it to be Harriet's Diner. DOC, riding the yellow touring motorcycle with RED on the back, pulls into the lot next to a pickup truck, whose rear end is suspended from an old tow-truck's crane. Blue light flashing underneath the pickup's rear end signals somebody using an arc welder underneath. The welder's legs are sticking out from under the truck.

DOC
 Blown up any good gas tanks, lately?

The legs pull the overall-covered body of the welder, BILL, who is laying on a rolling creeper, out from under the truck. BILL sits up and raises his welding mask to reveal a curly reddish-yellow beard surrounding a big smile.

BILL

Aww, Doc. You know I always stuff wool blankets around the gas tank when I'm weldin'. This guy got drunk and banged over one too many curbs. Broke a leaf spring. Hey, I thought you'd pulled out, already. What're you doin' still here?

DOC

Ran across this stray up on the highway. She managed to blow both head gaskets on her '65 Mustang. I said you could fix 'er up.

BILL

Sure. That's what we're here for. I'm almost done with this job, but I can send Bob out with the hauler to bring it in.

(yells over his shoulder)

Bob! Can you drop that tuneup and go rescue this lady's Mustang?

BOB (O.C.)

Be right there!

BILL

(eyeing RED appraisingly)

Bob's my little brother.

(turning to address DOC)

He's turned out to be a real good mechanic. Good for business, as you can see.

DOC

(nods toward RED)

Ahh, let's not talk business right now.

BILL

(surprised and not knowing why he shouldn't talk business in front of RED)

Ohh-kayyy.

BOB, a gangly sandy-haired teenager who looks like a younger, slightly taller version of BILL exits the building through an open roll-up door, wiping his hands on a rag.

BOB

All done, and ready for you to
check.

When BOB catches sight of RED, he stops, blushes, and tries simultaneously to stare at her and drop his eyes in embarrassment.

BILL

(to RED)

Where's your car and what does it
look like?

RED

It's a pink 1965 Mustang convertible
parked on the northbound side of
Route 95 with the hood up, about
half a mile south of the exit. Will
you need the keys?

BILL

Bob'll need to take off the brake
and put it in neutral, so if it's
locked, yeah.

RED

(hands BILL the keys)

Here they are.

BILL tosses the keys to BOB, who snatches them out of the air, and sprints off to where the hauler is parked behind the building.

DOC

I think I'll take Red, here, over to
the diner for lunch while we're
waiting. She's had a busy morning.

INT. TYPICAL DINER - NOON

DOC and RED sit across from each other at one of the diner's booths. The booths are over half full of customers, and all the counter stools are filled.

RED

Judith.

DOC

What?

RED

My name is Judith McKenna. I thought you should know, but I don't mind your calling me "Red," either.

DOC

(Evasively)

Folks just call me "Doc."

RED

(Prying for information)

Why "Doc?"

DOC

I guess I'm sort of a know-it-all. Whenever somebody has a question, they seem to ask me, and most of the time I know the answer.

RED

That sounds like a good thing.

DOC

Well, I suppose. Sometimes it gets embarrassing, though. And, some people get their noses out of joint. I try to keep my mouth shut, but once in a while I forget.

RED

(changing the subject)

Ahh, will you excuse me for a minute? I have to find the ladies' room.

DOC

(points over her shoulder)

Oh, sure. It's right back there.

As she reaches the ladies' room door, RED turns and sees a waitress, HARRIET, arrive at their booth with menus. HARRIET appears about the same age as BILL. She smiles familiarly to DOC, then sits down to start a conversation.

INT. TYPICAL DINER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

RED comes back to their table to find HARRIET gone and DOC talking on his cellphone. When DOC sees her approaching, he hurriedly ends the call and looks up at her, guiltily.

DOC

When people expect you to be
someplace, and you don't show up,
it's just polite to call them and
let them know.

RED

(sitting)

You told them about me?!

DOC

Why? What's the problem?

RED

(slightly embarrassed)

Well, there are people I don't want
to have find me.

DOC

That sounds sinister. I hope it's
nothing illegal.

RED

No, I just don't want my stepfather
to find me.

DOC sits patiently, waiting for further explanation.

RED (CONT'D)

I don't like him.

DOC continues waiting, expectantly.

RED (CONT'D)

He keeps trying to be nice to me.

DOC

Are you trying to tell me he's
hitting on you?

RED

No, no! He pretends to be nice so my
mother will like him.

DOC

Aha! You're jealous. You think he'll
come between you and your mother.
Kind of an odd take on an Oedipus
complex?

RED

No, well, I guess. He wants to be my father, but I already have one.

DOC

Where *is* your father?

RED

He disappeared, but I know he'll come back when he can.

DOC

But, your mother's remarried. How long has he been gone?

RED

Ten years.

DOC

That's a long time to be missing. Maybe he's not coming back.

RED

(Suddenly upset)

He's not dead. He's *not*!

I know where he is. They just don't want to believe me. I was on my way to find him when my car broke down.

RED finds her eyes filling with tears, but fights them down. Wiping them away, and raising herself to her full seated height, she becomes imperious.

RED

That's all you need to know.

DOC

Hmmm.

EXT. OUTSIDE PATIO OF A MEXICAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

RED and DOC are finishing up dinner while a mariachi band blares nearby - too loudly for conversation. RED is not listening, but sitting with knitted brows, clearly thinking hard. After the mariachi band moves off to blare in somebody else's face, RED seems to have come to a decision.

RED

So, it's going to take two weeks to get my car fixed.

DOC
(absently)

Uh, huh.

RED
So I could stay here twiddling my
thumbs for two weeks, or ...

DOC
Or, ...?

RED leans forward conspiratorially.

RED
You said you're on vacation, so
there's no place you have to be for
a couple of weeks, right?

DOC
Well, I should go back to Arizona
next week, but I suppose the company
could get by without me for a while.
What are you cooking up?

RED
You could drive me to Nevada on your
motorcycle to find my father. That's
where he was when he disappeared.
He's a geologist trying to find a
mineral deposit there. I don't know
what happened to him, but that's the
place to start looking. My car's out
of commission for a couple of weeks.
By that time you could drive me
there, and we could find him. It
wouldn't cost you much more than
you're already spending on your
vacation, anyway. I'll be saving
money by not driving my car, so I
could pay you a hundred dollars a
day to help me.

DOC
(looking amused by the
offer)
How are you planning to pay for this
little jaunt, anyway? I never asked
because I didn't need to know. Now
that you're inviting me along, it
would be better if I did.

RED

(smiling proudly)

I have an American Express gold card. It's how I get my allowance.

Her face falls, realizing that sounded a lot less worldly and independent out loud than it did in her head.

DOC

Your allowance?

RED

Yes. It's one of the ways my step father has of trying to make us like him. I wish I didn't have to take it, but I'd have to live in a dorm, otherwise.

DOC

Let me get this straight. You're running away from home because you hate your step father, who has enough money to live in Miami Beach...

RED

(sheepishly)

On a yacht.

DOC

... in Miami Beach on a yacht ...

RED

Only during the boating season. He has a condo in D.C. and a ranch in Texas.

DOC

... on a yacht in Miami Beach when not at his condo in Washington, or on his ranch in Texas, and cares enough about you to pay your way through college in Cambridge, Massachusetts...

RED

Harvard, actually, but I have a scholarship that pays the tuition.

DOC

Yeah, but I know how much it costs to live off campus in Cambridge.

RED

My apartment's across the river in Boston.

DOC

Oh? Where in Boston?

RED

Beacon Hill.

DOC

Ohh-kay! ... pays for you to have an apartment in absolutely the most exclusive part of Boston, so you won't have to live in a Harvard dormitory, and gives you an American Express Gold Card to boot.

Do you know how that sounds?

RED

(Abashed)

Pretty ungrateful, I guess.

DOC

Yes. There are tens of millions of people - no, hundreds of millions of people, and maybe billions - who would cheerfully give up important body parts to have your life.

RED

But, I know my father is alive! I want to go to him! Please help me.

DOC

Since you put it that way, okay, but I want you to know what you're doing. Don't tell anyone else this story. Nobody would understand. They'll think you're nuts.

RED

Do you think I'm nuts?

DOC

I'm reserving judgment, but I also have to work hard to keep my reserved seat in the Crazy-But-Not-Stupid section.

DOC (CONT'D)

So I have to be careful about throwing stones. By the way, where does American Express send the bill?

RED

Oh! To my step father!

DOC

If you want to keep what you're doing under wraps, maybe I should pay the bills, and you should reimburse me later.

RED

"Reimburse?" You know, you don't sound like what I expect a biker to sound like.

DOC

What do you mean?

RED

Most people think bikers are loud, swear a lot, and don't have much of a vocabulary. Sometimes you sound like a college professor.

DOC

Contrary to what most people think, there are all kinds of bikers. I know bikers who are college professors. If you want, I can swear like a sailor for you.

RED

You didn't sound like a college professor with Bill.

DOC

I generally talk to people the way they talk to me. Bill has a trade-school education, so I talk to him in a way he is comfortable with. You, on the other hand, have what turns out to be an Ivy League education, so I speak accordingly.

RED

So, you have a college education?

DOC

I read a lot.

RED

What's that supposed to mean?

DOC

It's the best way to build a vocabulary.

RED

That depends on what you read.

DOC

Point taken. I read everything from candy wrappers to the classics. Now, do we have a deal or not?

RED

Yes. In the interests of secrecy, you'll cover out-of-pocket expenses, and I'll pay you back, plus one hundred dollars a day, at the end of the trip.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

DOC keeps his motorcycle, with RED on the back, now clad in head-to-toe red leather with a matching red full-face helmet, in the third of four lanes moving North. His bike moves slightly faster than most of the traffic, especially the big semi-trailer rigs. Most drivers slow down to creep fearfully past these rigs, but DOC keeps his speed constant, and even speeds up a little to get by them as quickly as possible. Occasionally, faster drivers pass him. The fastest are small groups of motorcyclists zooming noisily by. RED notices that he holds the handlebars with only his right hand, and that very loosely with just his fingertips.

EXT. OUTSIDE PINKY'S ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

CHOPPER DAN parks his bike at the end of the third row of motorcycles parked in front of the roadhouse by a canal. CHOPPER DAN is in his thirties, medium-tall, fattish, with beyond-shoulder-length, straight hair and beard to the top of his beer-belly. He wears faded jeans, square-toed boots, black Harley-Davidson tee shirt, black leather vest, and black Nazi-style helmet. His motorcycle is a cheaply customized Harley-Davidson FX with flat-black paint and rusted/pitted chrome. It has extended forks, high handlebars

and sissy rail, bobbed rear fender and no front fender. The roadhouse building is large, with cedar-shake siding and a tin roof. Vegetation around it signals it is in the Deep South bayou country. Several small tourist cabins of similar construction stand nearby. CHOPPER DAN is unsteady getting off, signaling that he's already full of booze and drugs.

INT. PINKY'S ROADHOUSE - SAME TIME

CHOPPER DAN pushes his way through the crowd just inside the entrance and up to the bar, which is a four-sided rectangular affair set out into the room. Several women, including RED, are line dancing between the bar and the bandstand. CHOPPER DAN waves to DAVE, the bartender, who finishes pouring a drink, gives it to his customer, then moves unhurriedly down to CHOPPER DAN.

DAVE

What'll ya have, Dan?

CHOPPER DAN

(Ignorant, redneck drawl)

Tha's *Chopper* Dan. Ah'll have a Bud,

'cause it's the King of Beers, and

Ah'm the King of Bikers

(laughs stupidly)

DAVE goes to the other end of the bar, pulls four beer bottles out of a cooler and deftly pops the top off each with a bottle opener. Then, he distributes the four bottles to different customers, including CHOPPER DAN last.

CHOPPER DAN

Who's the new redhead?

DAVE

Stay away from her. She's with the owner.

CHOPPER DAN

Awww. Pinky ain't so tough. Maybe Ah should show her what a *real* man can do!

DAVE just looks at CHOPPER DAN sadly, as if he can see the future, and it won't be pretty. Then, he walks off to serve another customer. The band's set ends, and RED walks to the side of the bar opposite CHOPPER DAN, stands next to DOC, and calls to DAVE.

RED
I'd like another, please.

CHOPPER DAN hears her Harvard accent and growls.

CHOPPER DAN
Damn Yankee bitch. Ah'll show her!

DAVE
Another Guinness, comin' right up!

CHOPPER DAN
Damn limey beer!

CHOPPER DAN starts working his way around the bar to where RED is standing. He is oblivious to the angry stares of everyone around him as he pushes them out of his way. He elbows past DOC to get to RED. DOC instantly comes on alert, but says nothing. DOC moves in directly behind where CHOPPER DAN stands to address RED.

CHOPPER DAN
Dave, put that on mah tab!

DAVE rolls his eyes and shakes his head as if he wouldn't run a tab for CHOPPER DAN on a bet and wouldn't put RED's drink on it if he did, and continues pulling RED's pint of Guinness from the tap.

RED
Thanks, but I'm okay.

CHOPPER DAN
No, Ah'm buyin' you a drink!

RED
I'm with someone else.

RED sees DOC standing behind CHOPPER DAN, and gives him a "help me" look. DOC looks stone faced. CHOPPER DAN grabs RED's right wrist in his left hand, pulling her off balance.

CHOPPER DAN
NO! Y'all with *me*!

RED
(Yells in CHOPPER DAN's
face)
NO!

CHOPPER DAN

Ah'll teach you, Yankee bitch!

CHOPPER DAN's right hand winds up for a roundhouse slap, but just as his hand starts forward, DOC's right hand grabs CHOPPER DAN's right wrist in an iron-like grip, stopping it. CHOPPER DAN tries to look around to see who's holding him, but can't because DOC grabs his left wrist, too.

DOC

(deep, menacing voice)

I don't think so.

DOC raises CHOPPER DAN's wrists up in the air, while changing his grip on the left one to reach a pressure point. Suddenly, CHOPPER DAN screams like a girl and involuntarily lets go of RED's wrist. His right hand, released by Doc, reaches over to grab his left wrist.

DOC

(his voice now soothing)

That's right, squeeze it and rub it.
In a few minutes the pain will go
down. In a while, you'll be able to
use it, again. By tomorrow it will
be fine.

DOC now pulls CHOPPER DAN backward, and sits him in a chair. Two bouncers help CHOPPER DAN, whimpering, out to his bike, and stand over him until he starts it, and leaves.

INT. PINKY'S ROADHOUSE - SAME TIME

RED sits at the bar, shaking. DOC comes up beside her and hugs her 'til she quiets down.

RED

Once again, you saved me from a fate
worse than death. I tried to
remember what my karate instructor
told me to do, but it just wouldn't
come fast enough.

DOC

Karate can help you avoid losing a
fight, but you both would have been
damaged. I didn't want that. Nobody
ever really wins a fight. It's
better to stop it before it starts.

RED

So we didn't win?

DOC

No, we just didn't lose much. We were having fun until that bozo showed up to ruin it. To stop him, I had to cause pain for another creature, which is always unpleasant, even when it's a piece of shit like that one.

Dave, who was that guy, anyway? We should probably try to keep him out. He acted too stupid to live, but we don't want him dying here.

DAVE

He calls himself "Chopper Dan." He lives around here someplace, and comes in a couple of times a week. I've had to shoo him out for mouthing off too loud, but this is the first time he's actually tried to hit anyone. Usually, by the time he's drunk enough to want trouble, he's too far gone to pull it off. This was different.

DOC

He looked high on top of the booze. Could have been downers. They can make you feel like a tough guy if you've had enough. He was too easy to handle for it to have been PCP.

DAVE

How about if I warn him next time he comes in that we'll bar him if it happens again.

DOC

If you think you can keep him from hurting anyone. That's bad for business, but you know more about what you're doing than I do.

DAVE

I'll tell him the owner wanted to call the cops, but I stood up for him, but I can't do it again if he starts a fight. That should work.

RED

The owner? Is Pinky here? Who is he - or she?

DOC and DAVE look at each other and laugh.

DOC

There is no Pinky, or at least not anymore. Dave and I are partners in this bar. I put up the money couple of years ago to buy the place. Dave runs it for his share of the profits, and a salary. We kept the name "Pinky's Roadhouse" because it sounds cool.

DAVE

Chopper Dan doesn't know the difference.

DOC and DAVE laugh again.

RED

(suspiciously)

Did you do the same thing with Bill and his garage?

DOC

Yes, and Harriet's diner.

RED nods her head as if she'd just received the solution to a mystery.

INT. CABIN BEHIND THE ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

RED is staying alone in the cabin. Country and western music from the roadhouse can be heard in the distance. She is having trouble settling down for the night. She turns on the tiny television set, but can't find anything not totally boring. She watches a few minutes of the weather report, then shuts the set off, strips down to her underwear, and goes to bed. Tossing and turning, she starts to masturbate.

RED
(reaching orgasm, murmurs)
Oooh, Doc!

She falls asleep.

INT. RESTAURANT - MORNING

The restaurant is a little hole-in-the-wall on the main street of a small town. RED sits at a table near the window so she can watch passersby and be watched by them. She's found that she enjoys the attention of total strangers staring at her. She's started doing things, like unzipping the front of her leather jumpsuit a little too low, to encourage this attention.

RED
(to herself, amused)
Judith, you're getting to be quite
the little exhibitionist!

DOC enters the restaurant carrying a Wall Street Journal newspaper. RED smiles to him. She has ordered orange juice and coffee for him, which are already on the table in a place she's reserved for him opposite her.

RED (CONT'D)
I see you found your newspaper.

DOC
Yeah, the newsy down the street had
only one, and didn't want to sell it
to me. We practically had to arm-
wrestle for it. Guess he's got a
local reader.

RED
I see you won.

DOC
(changing the subject as
he sits)
Red, do you mind if we add an extra
day to our trip?

RED
(pleased by the idea)
What do you have in mind?

DOC acts as if he thinks he still needs to sell the idea of extending their trip to her.

DOC

Well, I usually take a day off in Austin, Texas to relax and have fun. Austin's a great town for relaxing and having fun. I made a reservation at the Driskill months ago, before I knew you were coming along. If we're not going to make it, I really have to call them right away to cancel. Otherwise, they'll hit me for the first night, and it's a pretty expensive hotel. If you've never been to Austin before, I'd like to show you around a little. My treat.

RED

(pleased)

Sounds like fun. I've never been there, but I hear it's a real party town.

DOC

Yes, it's a party town, and the Driskill is a short walk from party central. It's a ten-hour ride from here, so it'll be early evening when we get there. If you'd rather skip it, we could stay the night between Houston and San Antonio.

RED

No, I want to do it. Maybe we could stay up later tonight, and sleep late tomorrow. Then, play tourist all day, get a good night's sleep, and hit the road in the morning on the next day. That'd be fun!

DOC glances at the waitress, who has just arrived to take their order, then back to RED.

DOC

Then, we'd better skip the made-to-order breakfast, and just grab some donuts and coffee, then head out.

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL LOBBY - EARLY EVENING

DOC strides purposefully through the elegant lobby in his road-stained leathers. RED takes one look at the ambiance and is intimidated by appearing there in her equally travel-stained motorcycle garb. She grabs DOC's arm. As they walk along the immense lobby, we hear the clip-clop of her boots and the squeak-thump of his. Bellmen and clerks all smile and wave as they pass by. DOC acknowledges the attention by smiling and nodding back. They reach the registration desk at the far end.

DESK CLERK

Hello, Dr. Manchek, we're very pleased to see you again.

Already intimidated by the lobby, and feeling under dressed in her motorcycle leathers, RED looks frightened and confused.

DESK CLERK (CONT'D)

We have our Governor's Suite ready for you.

Desperately pulling herself together, RED decides to take charge.

RED

(interrupting)

Yes, that would be perfect. Doc and I have recently been married.

DOC's head snaps around to look at her in surprise.

RED (CONT'D)

(now confident)

Hello, I'm Judith Manchek, but my friends call me "Red."

(extends her hand across the counter)

I hope you will be one of my friends.

Surprised, DOC says nothing, just hands over his credit card.

DOC

We'll be staying two nights this time. Will that be possible? I think the reservation was just for one.

DESK CLERK

(reading from his monitor
and tapping a few keys)
Yeasss. That will be fine. I'll have
the bellman bring up your bags
immediately.

RED

(interrupting again)
I'll go up with him. My husband has
to run out to park our motorcycle
before coming up.

(turning to DOC)

Now, run along, and I'll meet you
upstairs.

Smiling broadly, DOC turns to make the long walk along the
lobby corridor back to the main entrance.

INT. THE GOVERNOR'S SUITE AT THE DRISKILL - EARLY EVENING

DOC enters to the suite from the hallway to find RED striking
an odalisque pose on the sofa opposite the door. She is
wearing only a string of unopened condoms that she has pulled
out of their box, and wrapped around her neck like a scarf.

DOC

(surprised)

Hello, naked lady!

RED

I got tired of jacking myself to
sleep every night thinking of you,
and decided to do something about
it.

DOC

When? ...

RED

When I woke up this morning. Then,
you suggested taking a day off here,
and my plans just fell into place.
You don't mind, do you? I took a
chance that you'd want me.

DOC

I remember a line from a song:
"She's so fine there's no telling
where the money went."

DOC (CONT'D)

That, now that it's out in the open,
is how I feel about you. Whatever
you want, just let me know. It's
yours.

RED

Ohhh! I like that! But don't break
your budget. This place is
expensive. Can you afford it?

DOC

It's one of the indulgences the
company allows me. There won't even
be a problem with the second night.

RED

(mock-dominatrix tone)

Enough! Mistress Judith demands
obedience!

RED grabs DOC by the belt buckle and begins stripping his
clothes off. Smiling, he submits passively, neither helping
or hindering.

INT. NOISY BILLIARDS PARLOR AND RESTAURANT - LATER

DOC and RED sit, as usual opposite each other, at a table
while waiting for their dinner to come.

RED

To change the subject, what was the
desk clerk doing calling you "Dr.
Manchek?" I thought "Doc" was just a
nickname.

DOC

Well, it is.

RED

A nickname for what? I don't even
know your first name!

DOC

Michael.

RED

"Doc" is not a nickname for Michael.
You said you just read a lot.

DOC

Well, I read a lot when I was in college, too.

RED

What college?

He hesitates, realizing that she is about to pry information out of him that he'd planned to keep hidden a little longer. There is little he can do at this point, though.

DOC

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

RED

(surprised)

M.I.T.!

She decides to continue playing the game of prying information out of him, now that she's found some purchase for a lever.

RED (CONT'D)

(suspiciously)

Did you graduate?

DOC

Yes.

RED

With what degree?

DOC

Well, I did get a Masters in Physics.

RED

Now, we're getting somewhere!

She hesitates, then adds, distrustingly.

RED (CONT'D)

Is that the highest degree you got?

DOC

(sheepishly)

Ah, no. I did get a Ph.D., too.

RED

Ohhh, now it comes out! You got a Ph.D. in what?

DOC

Well, I got one in aerospace engineering.

(in a small voice he adds)

And one in astrophysics.

RED

(Yelling)

You son of a bitch! You lead me on thinking you're some kind of motorcycle bum. Now, I find you have not one, but *two* Ph.D.s from one of the most prestigious engineering universities in the world!

DOC

(lamely)

I got 'em both at the same time!

RED

(still angry)

No wonder you knew what I was talking about when you were quizzing me about my courses. You probably could teach the damn courses!

DOC

I used to. My thesis adviser insisted. Said I needed to get over my shyness.

RED

Shyness! You creep! You sure got over that! Leading me on like that. You should be ashamed of yourself. What were you thinking?

DOC

Hey, now, wait a minute. If I told you I'd started college at the age of sixteen, and had earned two doctorates before I reached twenty, you wouldn't have believed me. They think I'm bullshitting. You probably think that now.

RED

No I don't. I've seen you in action. All that malarky about not liking chess because you don't like calculating moves that far ahead. You probably can't find anyone to give you a challenge.

DOC

Not true! There are lots of chess players better than me.

RED

Creep!

DOC

Does that mean you don't love me anymore?

RED

No. I'm just mad at you for making me love you under false pretenses.

Leaning over the table, she wags her finger under his nose, and warns

RED (CONT'D)

I forgive you this time. But, don't do it no more!

(changing her tone)

C'mon lover. Mistress Judith wants you to take her home, ply her with brandy, and give her sloppy seconds.

MONTAGE OF SCENES FROM RED AND DOC'S DAY PLAYING TOURIST AROUND AUSTIN.

Scenes include:

- * RED wearing her leathers to breakfast in the hotel's cafe;
- * RED and DOC on a shopping spree at a Western Wear store;
- * RED wearing flamboyant cowgirl outfit with lots of jewelry while they visit the monuments outside the State House;
- * RED and DOC lunching at a bohemian cafe;
- * RED and DOC visiting art galleries.

Montage ends with DOC and RED entering a downtown blues bar.

INT. BLUES BAR - NIGHT

RED, wearing cowgirl outfit with lots of jewelry, dances

energetically on the dance floor, while DOC sits quietly at a nearby table and listens to the music. RED and another woman are competing to come up with the most seductive movements.

MANDY, a young woman somewhat older and a foot shorter than RED, enters the bar, clearly looking for someone. She spots DOC, who sees her and waves her over to his table. On the way, she has to pass by RED who dances with wild abandon. MANDY carefully skirts around her to avoid being stepped on. When she reaches DOC's table, she tries to start a conversation, but can't make herself heard over the band. DOC waves her to an empty seat to his left at the table, and motions that she should just sit down until the set is over. The band is playing a version of *Lady Marmalade*, and soon settles into an interminably repeated refrain: *Voulez vous coucher avec moi, se soir*, which the whole audience takes up, turning it into a chant. RED leaves the dance floor, and, clapping her hands above her head, chants the refrain as she wiggles seductively up to DOC, who looks amused. Upon reaching their table, RED sits straddling DOC's lap facing him.

DOC

*Mais oui! Je t'aime toujours, mon
bel amante*

RED

What?

DOC

Ooops! I thought you understood French and were just being catty. Do you know what you were chanting?

RED

It means something like, "Do you love me tonight," doesn't it?

DOC

Not exactly. It literally means "Do you want to fuck me tonight?" It's what a streetwalker yells to a passing john. The song is about a prostitute.

RED

That means what we were all doing ...

DOC

... was inviting each other to a cluster fuck!

RED

So, what did you say to me in French?

DOC

"Oh, yes. I love you forever, my beautiful lover."

RED

Ohh! I like that.

All this time, MANDY sits quietly, not quite sure what to think of RED.

RED (CONT'D)

(looking at MANDY)

So, who's your new friend?

DOC

Our new friend is Mandy. She's in the marketing department of one of our technology suppliers. She's been trying to find us all day to tell us about a new robotics technology that one of their partners is introducing, which might be useful in your quest.

Without getting up or letting go of DOC's body, RED turns to face MANDY with a look of laser-focused attention. MANDY realizes it's her time to launch into her spiel, but is distracted by the erotic way RED is sitting on DOC's lap.

MANDY

Ahhh. ... This is about a technology developed by one of our customers, Robotics Concepts in Santa Clara, California.

DOC

Those are the worm-like robots made up of independent modules that basically snap together.

He reaches around RED to make a motion behind her back with

his two hands like pushing modules together. The action pulls her body more tightly to his, pressing her breast against his cheek. RED takes no notice, being fixated on what MANDY has to say.

MANDY

Right. Each module has its own computer brain. When they snap together, they automatically check to see who else is in the assembly, and coordinate their actions to move around, and basically do whatever needs to be done. We figured you guys at Scottsdale Systems Technology get into all kinds of applications that could use Robotic Concepts' robots.

RED

(excited, to DOC)

We could use them to go into my father's old mine shafts to see what happened there!

DOC

Exactly what I was thinking.

MANDY

That's just the kind of thing they were designed for.

RED

How do you control the robot once it's in there?

MANDY

Well, it's smart enough to explore a jumbled, chaotic environment on its own, and report back what it finds. What I'd really like to do is connect you guys up with Greg Michels, who's their Chief Technology Officer.

DOC

How about we set up a conference call with the RC guys tomorrow morning.

DOC (CONT'D)

We'll start by signing some non-disclosure agreements, and then they can tell us what we need to know to see how we can use their technology.

INT. DINING ROOM IN GOVERNOR'S SUITE - MORNING

DOC, wearing a hotel robe, is digging into bacon, eggs, and sausage while RED, also wearing a robe, daintily unwraps the coils of a danish pastry with the tips of her fingers. Both wear robes loosely, showing nothing worn underneath. Red's robe is open and barely hides her nipples.

RED

So, what did you think of Mandy's robots?

DOC

We'll know a lot more in a couple of hours, after we've had our conference call with Robotics Concepts. But, so far it looks interesting. I think it's exactly what you need to explore your father's mines.

RED

(as if checking a conclusion she's already drawn on her own)

What makes you think that?

DOC

Okay, when your father first disappeared, did they look in his prospect holes?

RED

Most of them, but they didn't fully explore three of them.

DOC

Why?

RED

They said those holes were choked with unstable debris. They were too dangerous to enter.

DOC

Do you know how engineers decide if a particular application is a candidate for automation?

RED

Are you changing the subject?

DOC

No, and answer the question.

RED

No. I thought they just put it in wherever they could.

DOC

Automated systems cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to install. Nobody makes that kind of investment unless they're sure it'll be worthwhile.

The first thing they look at is the three Ds of robotics: dull, dirty or dangerous. If a potential project gets a hit on any one of those, there's a good chance automation can help. If they get a hit on two, it's pretty sure. If they hit all three, it's pretty much a lock.

RED

So, having my father's mines flagged as dangerous means robots probably can help.

DOC

More specifically, Robotics Concepts' Worm robots can probably help.

Now, when we get on the conference call, I'll be representing my company, Scottsdale Systems Technology. You introduce yourself as representing the "Project Principal."

RED

What?!

DOC

We do it all the time. We do aerospace research on a contract basis. The "Project Principal" is whoever hired us to do the research, and most of the time they want to be anonymous. Often, just having it known that they hired us affects their competitive position. Keeping client secrets is a major part of our corporate culture. Mandy's used to this, and if the Robotics Concepts guys have a problem with it, they'll be out of business fast.

RED goes quiet, thinking carefully.

RED

I can't afford to get involved with this stuff. State-of-the-art robots; research companies; what are you getting me involved in?

DOC thinks hard about how to respond.

DOC

Look, this technology is going to be really important to my company, and your project will be a really good showcase for it.

He hesitates some more, trying to figure out how to say what he wants to say.

DOC (CONT'D)

If it'll make you feel any better, I know that the company has an opening for a research analyst with just your qualifications.

RED

I haven't even graduated, yet. They wouldn't want to hire me.

DOC

Sure they would. You'll finish your degree in a couple of months. Then you'll have a degree in applied math with database-analysis experience.

DOC (CONT'D)

And, you're bringing in a job that will be a good showcase for us. As a research analyst, you can lead the team that does it all. You won't have to pay for it, just do it. It'll all be covered.

RED

(looking frightened)

How can I do that? I have no experience. I haven't even graduated, yet.

DOC

Believe me. You'll have all the help you need. From talking to you these past few days, I know you have the smarts and the background that they're looking for. All you have to do is apply for the job.

RED looks searchingly at DOC, then comes to a sudden decision.

RED

Okay. You haven't steered me wrong, yet. I'll apply for a job with your company, and let them pay me to do what I want to do, anyway.

DOC

Good girl!

MONTAGE OF HIGHWAY TRAVEL THROUGH THE SOUTHWEST DESERTS

Locations traveled through:

- * Central Texas
- * West Texas
- * New Mexico
- * Arizona

Montage ends with RED and DOC riding his bike into a parking garage through a gate controlled by an RFID card. The garage comprises the lower two floors of a high rise building that looks like an office block.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

DOC pulls the motorcycle into a parking space next to two other motorcycles. Also parked nearby are Jaguar and Ferrari

sports cars, an SUV, and a pickup truck. RED glances at all of them appreciatively.

DOC

Leave your stuff here. Just take your pocketbook.

DOC leads RED to the elevator, and pushes an illuminated UP button. When the doors open, he uses his RFID card to activate the button for the top floor. When they reach the top floor, they exit into a small foyer dominated by a black-lacquered table with a red and gold Chinese-looking inlay, and a large, ornate vase containing an artfully arranged group of sticks instead of flowers. The light comes on automatically, then SAM, an athletic-looking man in his thirties wearing black slacks, a black tee shirt, and black sandals, comes in.

DOC

Sam, this is Red. Red, this is Sam. He keeps this place from falling apart.

SAM

Good evening Ms. McKenna.

RED shows surprise that SAM already knows her full name, even though DOC used just her nickname.

SAM

How was your trip? Have you had supper, yet?

DOC

Excellent, and no, we haven't had supper. What's in the pot?

SAM

May I suggest a nice steak sandwich? Or, you could have spaghetti with meat sauce.

DOC

Red, what would you like?

RED

(looking around in wonder)
The steak sandwich sounds good.

DOC

I'll give Red the twenty-five cent tour while you get it ready.

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT - EVENING

DOC leads RED through the foyer and into a large, open-plan living area. Furniture runs to chrome and glass and leather. Groupings of furniture and area rugs break the space into living, dining, and entertainment areas. Two of the four exterior walls are glass, showing a wrap-around patio with the Phoenix skyline beyond.

DOC

This is the main room. The kitchen is through that archway.

(points)

DOC leads RED through a door to a medium-large bedroom, and turns on the light. It contains a desk with a laptop computer, a wardrobe, and a standard-size double bed. One wall is all glass, showing a continuation of the patio with the skyline beyond.

DOC (CONT'D)

This'll be your space. There's a computer for you to use, with access to the Internet and SST's intranet. There's a key card to get in and out, and a set of keys to the Jaguar. Phoenix is a driving city, so I figure you'll need it. The Jag has GPS to help you get around.

DOC notices RED has stopped listening, and is staring at the bed with a disappointed look. Her eyes are starting to fill with tears.

DOC

(realizing what's
bothering RED)

This is your space to work in. I hope you'll sleep with me in my bedroom next door. This is just so you have someplace to work by yourself. My workspace is in the library.

RED pulls DOC into an embrace, and kisses him.

RED

I thought you were trying to get rid of me.

DOC

Never! Let's go look at the library.

DOC leads RED to the library. The room is thirty feet long, and twenty feet wide. The far half is dominated by free-standing bookshelves. Two of the walls are glass, again showing a continuation of the patio with the skyline beyond.

RED

(sudden realization)

You have the whole top floor of this building to yourself!

DOC

Well, yeah. Other people live on other floors.

RED

How much a month does this place set you back?

DOC

Nothing. I own the building.

RED

You *own* the *building*?!

DOC

Yeah. It was an underused office building until I bought it and condo converted it a couple of years ago.

RED

So, how many tenants do you have?

DOC

The building has six floors above the parking garage. I have the top one, and Sam lives in the fifth one, along with laundry and workshops. The other floors are divided into two condos each. Three have been sold, and the rest are available for lease. I think two are empty.

RED

You *think*? You don't even know who lives in your own building?

DOC

I'd have to check with the property manager, which is a real estate company that handles all that stuff.

RED

So, let me get this straight. Now you're rich, too?

DOC

Well, I do all right. Almost anything you do has a potential to make a profit. I just try to have a winning percentage.

RED

(suspiciously)

You don't happen to own that research company you want me to work for, do you?

DOC

Well, yeah, but its really a small operation ... for a research company.

RED

Oh? How many employees?

DOC

Four hundred.

RED

Oh, shit! What kind of annual sales do you have?

DOC

A few hundred million.

RED

You son of a bitch! No wonder you didn't bat an eye about buying me all that stuff! You're rolling in it!

RED falls silent, standing with her head bowed, arms crossed,

and her right hand covering her mouth.

RED (CONT'D)

No wonder you were so confident I could get that job. You're the one deciding who gets hired!

RED pauses again, hand to mouth. Then makes a decision.

RED (CONT'D)

Okay, buster. I'm gonna take that job, even if it *is* a put-up job. And, I'm gonna be the best damn employee you've got. And, if anyone claims I got the job by screwing my way to the top, they're going to have to eat their words!

DOC

(embracing her)

Thanks.

EXT. MAIN GATE OF SST BUILDING - MORNING

Scottsdale Systems Technology is headquartered in a hangar complex on the flight line at the Scottsdale Airport. The main gate has a guard shack controlling visitor access with a second lane for employees having a key card. RED drives DOC's Jaguar into the key-card lane, using his key card to open the gate. DOC, in the passenger's seat, exchanges waves with the security guard. RED drives to DOC's reserved spot in the employee parking lot. They enter the building through the employee entrance.

INT. PAT'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

PAT is a small, thin lady in her sixties with long, straight gray hair tied back in a pony tail. She wears a loose paisley-print shirt, unbuttoned, over a tie-dyed tee shirt. A mass of what could only be described as love beads hangs around her neck. A pair of half-frame glasses dangles by a lanyard at her neck. She could best be described as somebody's grandmother, who is also an unreconstructed hippie. RED is now wearing a visitor's pass hung from a lanyard around her neck.

DOC

Pat this is Red. She's coming on board as a research analyst grade four.

DOC (CONT'D)

She'll be project manager on project "McKenna." I also want her to be lead developer on Wavelet.

PAT

And, good morning to you, too, Doc!

DOC

Sorry, Pat. I'm a little distracted this morning. I'll leave Red in your hands, and run off to do something useful.

DOC leaves. PAT steps up to RED, and reaches up to inspect first one side of her face, and then the other. Then she takes a step back.

PAT

I can see why Doc has such a case on you. We'll start with paperwork, and any questions you have, then we'll find out what's bothering you.

RED shows surprise at what PAT says, especially the last part. PAT indicates that she should sit at a round table in front of a stack of forms. RED shows dismay at the size of the stack until she realizes that most of the blanks have already been filled in. She looks up at PAT in surprise.

PAT (CONT'D)

We took the liberty of filling in the forms with what we already knew about you.

RED

Wha? When?

PAT

You don't think we'd let our most important asset go traipsing around the country with some girl without knowing everything about her, first, do you? Just check it over, and initial each page at the bottom.

INT. PAT'S OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

RED has worked her way through the stack, and is now ready for the job interview. PAT is sitting in a chair opposite her

across the pile of papers. A secretary, BONNIE, comes in and collects the papers, then leaves.

PAT

The job you're applying for is a research analyst position grade four. Grade four salary starts at one-hundred-thousand dollars a year.

The salary offer floors RED, but she says nothing.

PAT (CONT'D)

Every project we work on starts with some goal. Whether it's building a better mousetrap, or answering some question. The research analyst takes all the information available, figures out what new research needs to be done, and packages it in a way the engineers can act on to achieve the goal. It requires a self starter willing to make decisions and having a solid technical background. You qualify on all those points, which is why you're here.

RED

Doc explained all that, but I still have some questions. He said he wants me to be lead developer on "Wavelet." I don't know anything about that.

PAT

Wavelet is the name of a computational fluid dynamics program that solves fluid-flow problems by adding up pressure and shear waves instead of solving the Navier-Stokes equations directly.

RED

Oh! I've heard about that, and Doc and I talked about it on the road. He neglected to tell me you guys were doing the development work. I've always wanted to meet the guy who figured out the physics for it. I heard he was some M.I.T. whiz kid with a brain as big as a house.

PAT

You've been sleeping with him all week.

RED

That ... He's done it to me, *again!* There I was, spouting off about how I'd improve the interface to make it more user-friendly, when I was talking to the guy who'd written it in the first place. He just sat there, letting me rattle on!

PAT

Now, he wants you to do what you said. But that has to wait. First you have to put your research-analyst hat on for the McKenna-Project kickoff meeting.

RED

What, exactly, *is* the "McKenna Project?"

PAT

(sarcastic)

My dear, it's *your* project. You want to find out what happened to your father, right? Along the way, you want to validate his idea about mineral deposits near Carson City, right? Finally, you want to secure any rights for his heirs, which includes you and your mother, right? Any of this sound familiar?

RED

That's just the problem. I can't afford to pay for all that stuff. Even the salary wouldn't cover it. But, Doc just says not to worry. It's all taken care of. I want to know how it's being taken care of. Who's footing the bill?

PAT puts on a stern face, then picks up the phone and punches a speed-dial number.

PAT

(into phone)

Doc! You inconsiderate, unfeeling, self-centered son of a bitch, get your ass in here right now, and explain to this poor girl what's going on. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! What were you thinking, keeping her in the dark like that?

Seconds later, DOC shows up in PAT's doorway looking contrite.

DOC

I've been trying to break it to her for days, but there's a problem. She really has issues with her step father. I'm afraid she'll blow up when she finds out.

PAT

Quit stammering, you big lummoX. She's sitting right there. Just blurt it out. She's a big girl. She can take it.

DOC looks at RED with fear and anguish in his face. He looks her square in the eyes.

DOC

Your step father set this whole thing up. That day you ran away from Miami, thinking he was trying to set you up on a date with, quote, some pencil neck from work, unquote, what he was trying to do was get you to meet with me, so I could help you track down your father.

He knew your obsession with your father was wrecking your life, and he didn't want that to happen. We were supposed to talk about starting a search as soon as you graduated. But, you wouldn't listen. You blew your top, jumped the gun, and ran away. I found you by the side of the road that day because I was looking for you.

RED jumps up out of her chair, red faced and angry.

RED

So, it really was a set up all along! You don't care about me. Getting me in the sack was just to keep me happy, so you'd have your research project. You really are a son of a bitch!

PAT steps between them, facing RED, and reaches up over her breasts to poke her in the sternum.

PAT

Hey! You just get down off your high horse, young lady. A lot of people have gone very far out of their way to help you, when they had very little reason to do so. They did it because they care about you. Doc cares about you. I care about you. Your mother cares about you. And, whether you want to hear it or not, your step father cares about you. Now, you go into that office over there with this man, and you work with him to finish what you started.

I don't care if you two are cooey and dovey on your own time, but you turn yourself around right now, and act like the professional you should be.

(turning to DOC)

And, you. Get in there and give this woman the information she needs to do her job. You've got about forty-five minutes before she has to turn a bunch of research assistants into a functioning team.

Chagrined, DOC and RED turn to leave through the door. PAT calls to them.

PAT (CONT'D)

Remember, you two, I'll be in there watching. You make me proud!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

SST's main conference room is an amphitheater-like space. A large display covers the far wall. The team's private detective, TOM, stands at a lectern below the screen facing the audience. He has the fattish physique of a man in his late fifties who had once kept in good physical shape, but is now losing the fight with too many doughnuts, and too much time sitting at a desk or in a car. He is presenting to the half-dozen attendees, who are scattered around long tables arranged in tiers along the sides and across the back. RED and DOC sit at the back table on the lowest tier, facing the screen. RED is still friendly with DOC, but all signs of intimacy are gone. Now working as RED's assistant, BONNIE sits next to her. PAT sits close to the screen in one of the upper tiers to observe the people more than the presentations. A two-man film crew has set up cameras in strategic locations to record the event. Documentary film maker TAMARA supervises them.

TOM

Basically, my assignment was simple: use all means available to discover the whereabouts of James McKenna. I approached the assignment by listing all the possible ways a man in James McKenna's position could disappear. Here's the list.

(cues powerpoint slide)

There are four possibilities: The obvious simple fatal mining accident, which is what you folks are wisely concentrating on; An accident or illness not related to his mining activities; Foul play; and the possibility that he simply wanted to disappear, and did so. I've arranged them in descending order of likelihood. Willful disappearance is something we must consider, even though there is no indication that he would want to do it. Foul play is also a low-probability scenario. It has happened that people camping in the wilderness have been killed for their equipment. It's rare, but there are examples on record.

TOM (CONT'D)

Far more likely, however, is the possibility that he fell victim to some accident - and I put attack by a wild animal in this category - that prevented him from returning from the wilderness.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

The lecturn has been replaced by a table supporting a Worm robot, which looks like a cross between a giant lobster, and a centipede. GREG, a tall, thin man with round, wire-rimmed glasses stands over the Worm robot, explaining its features.

BONNIE

(whispering to RED)

He's a dreamboat.

Red puts her index finger vertically across her mouth in the universal shushing sign, but whispers herself, anyway.

RED

I know.

BONNIE

(still whispering)

He's not married.

RED smiles, then puts on a stern look, which fools nobody. GREG is even taller than DOC, but thin and patrician looking, with round, wire-rimmed glasses. He begins his presentation, pointing out features on the robot with long, thin fingers.

GREG

The Worm robots are designed to be highly flexible. They are made up of five different kinds of modules, which you can mix and match to create any configuration needed. There are locomotion modules with paired legs - one to each side, and manipulator modules with pincers to grab and hold things. There are also communication modules that allow the robot to communicate with its handlers via radio, fiber optic, ultrasound, and copper wire, as well as regular sound through the air.

GREG (CONT'D)

The fourth type of module carries sensors. These include small video cameras the size of the cameras in your cellphones, as well as temperature, pressure, and other sensors. Virtually any sensor made can be installed on a Worm robot. The fifth module type carries machine intelligence. It has a multicore processor and lots of memory. These processor modules provide command and control, and problem-solving functions.

A major upgrade since we first introduced this technology is what we call "vocal programming." The processor has enough power to decode human speech. Programmers and handlers can now speak to Worms the way you speak to a dog. In fact, the commands are based on the commands people use to train dogs.

The plan is for the Worm to climb down a rope suspended from a support - basically a log laid across the mouth of the mine shaft - until it reaches the wreckage of the original derrick jammed part way down the shaft. At that point it will have to let go of the rope, and explore the wreckage before you can make a plan for going further.

RED

Greg, it's a marvelous piece of engineering, even if it looks like a monster from a sci-fi movie.

Several people laugh at RED's sci-fi-movie crack, including GREG. RED notices and realizes that means he has a sense of humor as well as intelligence. She is becoming interested in him.

RED (CONT'D)

But, is there any reason to make the poor thing climb down a rope?

RED (CONT'D)

Couldn't we rig a new derrick and lower it down. Then, it could keep the lowering line attached to use as a safety line. If that wreckage breaks loose and drops down the shaft, I'd hate to see our little monster take the fall with it.

GREG

Well, yes, but what happens if that safety line gets snagged?

DOC

I agree with both of you. Let's combine the ideas. Have some kind of trapeze affair that the Worm can hold onto while being raised and lowered. Then, have a separate safety line. If it gets snagged, the Worm can detach it, and go back to the drop line.

RED

That would work. ... I like that plan!

RED turns to another attendee, STEVE, who is the team's mechanical engineer.

RED

Steve, how long will it take to build the equipment?

STEVE

We may have to work through the weekend, but we should have it ready by next Monday for your move up to Nevada.

RED

Good. That keeps us right on schedule.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

RED and GREG are sitting in comfortable club chairs in a corner having a get-acquainted conversation.

GREG

I'd like to pay for the drinks.

RED

Nonsense. You're a guest of Scottsdale Systems Technology. I'll pay for them with my SST credit card, and let Tightwad Manchek foot the bill.

GREG

I though you were actually footing the bill. Isn't that what the "Project Principal" title is all about? How does that work?

RED

Oh, that's got to do with my step father, Mark Shipton.

(gathers her thoughts)

Mark set this whole thing up. It's embarrassing, but I used to dislike him. It turns out he's really a nice guy. He's paying for this whole project for me. Between Mark and Doc Manchek, I'm getting a crash course in project management. I couldn't do it without them. I thought I could, but I was wrong. When I started out, I didn't know what I was doing. Doc says: "Everything looks easy to the person who doesn't know what she's doing." That used to be me. I got nowhere until they jumped in to show me the way. Now, I've got a whole team of experts and the resources of two corporations to help me. I owe my stepfather a lot, as well as Doc.

GREG

I hear you and Doc are an item.

RED

Not anymore. We're still friends, and work really well together, but as a romantic interest, no. He's too focused on his company. A man having a good income is important, but no girl wants to play second fiddle, even to a successful company. Frankly, this is a dream job for me. I'm not going to jeopardize it by playing footsie with the Boss.

RED (CONT'D)

I don't want to talk about him. Tell me more about you. How did Robotics Concepts get started?

GREG

Dave Forster and I knew each other in college. Back then, cybernetics - what people are now calling "robotics" - looked like kinda the wave after next. We knew we wanted to start our own company, so we went in that direction. When we went looking for a high-profile project to demonstrate the technology, Mandy introduced us to you folks.

RED

Yeah, she caught Doc and me partying hearty in a bar. God knows what she must have thought!

GREG

She said you two were the smartest people she'd ever met. She said you'd been drinking and partying, but still picked up on the technology right away. Then, you just went back to partying. I guess you had her join in.

RED

Well, not in *everything*! I'm not that open minded, and I wouldn't be willing to share.

GREG

Is that the kind of scene you and Doc were getting into?

RED

I told you. I'm not willing to share. I'd have been more likely to claw her eyes out if she'd so much as wiggled her fanny at him. Doc, however, tends to make up his own rules, then toss them aside.

(smiling wistfully)

I never know what he'll do.

GREG
(disappointed)
You still like him.

RED
(putting her hand tenderly
on his)
Greg, I'm sitting here with you, not
him. And it's by choice, okay?

INT. SST HANGAR B - DAY

A small propeller-driven transport plane is parked in the hangar, being loaded with equipment to move up to the team's staging area in Nevada. On their lunch break, RED, STEVE, and GREG are sitting around a folding table eating sandwiches from a cafeteria-style spread nearby. RED is wearing bulky yellow coveralls with an SST logo embroidered on the front, and "RED" embroidered above the left breast. She's also wearing large silver hoop earrings and a necklace.

GREG
Is that a new fashion statement?
Rumpled, bulky coveralls along with
hoop earrings and mascara? I don't
know how well it'll sell in Omaha,
but it might fly in San Francisco.

RED
Very funny. Wait until you get a
load of the fly on the pressure suit
underneath. It'd probably get me
gang banged in San Francisco! No,
you're looking at SST's newest test-
pilot-in-training. Doc found
something else to Shanghai me into.
I didn't find out about it until I
got here this morning. Now I know
how the Congolese tribesmen felt
after being "pushed from behind"
into the hold of a slave ship!

STEVE
Speaking of Doc, where is he? I
expected to see him in here
pestering everyone about progress.

RED

He's probably next door playing with his new plane. That's why he stuck me in this outfit. I'm to ride with him as observer as he flies the thing up to Carson City.

STEVE

Oh-ho! Wait 'til you see that plane. Very Star Wars. It's not classified, which is why he can fly it out of here. It incorporates a few aerodynamic tricks that are already public knowledge, but put together in a civilian-jet package. We'll use it as a test platform when he's done playing with it.

RED

What do you mean, "civilian-jet package."

STEVE

Most one- or two-person jets are military aircraft. They have to carry a lot more electronics, weapons, and ammunition than civilian planes do, so they're much bigger and heavier. Aircraft for civilian use can be much smaller and lighter -- with smaller engines -- for the same performance.

RED

So, Doc's built himself a supersonic private plane!

STEVE

Well, not supersonic. It's illegal to break the sound barrier over most of the United States. Too many people complained about rattling windows in the nineteen-fifties.

RED

Well, supersonic or not, Doc's using the trip to Carson City as an excuse for a joy ride, and he's dragging me along.

STEVE

It's actually a good idea. It'll take us hours to fly up in *that* bird,

(points at cargo plane)

whereas you can take off after we leave, and still get up there long before we arrive. That gives you a chance to supervise loading here, then get to Carson City in plenty of time to make sure arrangements are okay for when we arrive.

EXT. B-ROLL OF PLANE FLYING OVER DESERT - DAY

DOC's plane is a variation of Shirl Dickey's E-Racer design modified with a jet engine. B-roll shows aircraft flying rapidly over a desert landscape at high altitude. Loud jet-engine sound. NOTE: use CGI image of plane green-screened over footage from aircraft flying at high altitude over desert landscape. Total 5 sec.

INT. OFFICE IN CARSON CITY HANGAR - DAY

ZEKE leads DOC and TONY into an office area built into one side of an empty hanger. ZEKE is a large black man who looks like an ex-football linebacker. First impression is of a physically fit construction worker, but his movements and expressions are those of a corporate executive - someone used to being in charge. TONY wears a Park Ranger's uniform.

ZEKE and TONY walk over to a lounge area, and sit on benches similar to those installed in airport departure-gates. Two benches are installed facing each other across a long coffee table, like sofas in a living room. A console television sits off one end. Past that, against the end wall are a credenza with snack items and a coffee maker, as well as a standard-size refrigerator. At the other end of the room is a desk with a laptop computer. All looks worn and second hand.

DOC carries a yellow SST flight bag, which he sets on the coffee table. The flight bag has "Judith McKenna" stenciled on it in inch-high letters, and "RED" hand printed in three-inch-high letters.

DOC

Is there anyplace I can find a bottle of water? I'm parched.

ZEKE

There's some cold in the refrigerator.

DOC walks over to the refrigerator, gets out a bottle of water, and opens it as he turns back to them.

DOC

Red wants me to sit in while she talks to you guys about something before the plane lands with the team members and equipment. Meanwhile: introductions.

(to TONY)

I'm Mike Manchek, but everybody just calls me "Doc." You are ... ?

TONY

I'm Tony Edmunds, with the National Park Service. They sent me over to help you guys avoid getting lost in the woods. I've lived in this area most of my life, and have experience exploring caves and mines.

DOC

While we're waiting for Red to get out of the ladies room, do you have any questions about who we are and what we're doing around here?

ZEKE

Doc is CEO at Scottsdale Systems Technology, so if there are any questions I haven't answered for you, he's the one to ask.

TONY

Zeke has told me that SST is trying to help Ms. McKenna find out what happened to her father. The story's well known around here, but I've never heard of your company.

DOC

That's not surprising. This project is a little atypical for us. Most of our work involves testing aerospace systems for the military.

DOC (CONT'D)

We also develop custom data acquisition and test systems for private clients. It just happens that we have the right expertise to pull this off. Red's father - actually her step father, Mark Shipton - owns a little oil company called "Gulf States Petroleum." It's privately held, so when the owner's only daughter wants to know what happened to her natural father, things happen. Mark and I are friends, so when he needed the kind of help SST could provide, he came to me.

TONY

This is just an outing for an oil millionaire's daughter? How's that interest the National Park Service?

DOC

There's more to it than that. There's also the work James McKenna was doing out here. It has the potential to advance underground exploration in a major way. That interests Gulf States Petroleum, the Department of Energy, and your boss, the Department of the Interior. Also, if McKenna was right, you're sitting on, or near, an enormous mineral deposit bigger than the Comstock Lode. That interests the Department of the Interior again. Finally, that young lady isn't just some spoiled heiress. She's a budding mathematician with just the right talents for SST. That makes it *our* business.

On top of it all, this will be the first major demonstration of Robotic Concepts' technology, which has all kinds of search and rescue applications. That interests the Department of Homeland Security. Are you starting to get the picture?

TONY

All that swirling around one college girl. How does she cope?

DOC

She's a very exceptional college girl. Also, she's got quite a few of us running interference for her. To some of us, she's more important than all the rest.

ZEKE

(looking up)

And, here she comes now.

RED enters the room, carrying a pressure suit, which she's been wearing under her coveralls since leaving Scottsdale, and has now stripped off. Seeing them, DOC says.

DOC

That's why you were taking so long. I was running out of lies to tell about what a superwoman you are.

RED

This pressure suit's not very comfortable, which you should know, since you're still wearing yours.

DOC

I'm heading right back as soon as you let me go, so let's talk.

RED

Doc, why don't you stay here overnight? That hotel is full of rooms. You can get a good night's sleep, then file a flight plan, and head out in the morning. I'd love for you to join me for my dinner meeting.

(to others)

Dinner with your family lawyer to talk about estate planning. Now, doesn't that sound like a fun time?

All laugh.

RED (CONT'D)

(mock sternness)

Mistress Judith commands that you stay here tonight! Don't disappoint Mistress Judith!

DOC

Yes, Mistress Judith, your whim is my command.

RED

(girlish excitement)

It's settled, then? You'll stay?

DOC

Beyond the fact that I've never been able to say "no" to you, and don't expect I ever will, your suggestion makes the most sense of anything I've heard today.

RED

Oh good! Now, where did you get that water. I'm parched.

Doc points at refrigerator.

DOC

Right over there.

Red gets a bottle, opens it, and gulps down about half standing before the refrigerator. Then, she walks back to the seats.

RED

Now, Tony, what do people around here think happened to my father?

TONY

The intelligent ones think, just as you do, that he was killed in that prospect shaft you're planning to go into. They think that something happened to the derrick, and he was either killed outright, or trapped down below, and died of exposure. In any case, he died, and his body is still there.

RED

You say "the intelligent ones." What about the not-so-intelligent ones?

TONY

There are all kinds of ghost stories, which is not unusual in areas like this. Out in the woods at night, people hear all kinds of noises. A gust of wind makes one branch rub against another, making an unearthly sound. Campers sitting around a campfire tell ghost stories. Then, suddenly a branch breaks with a loud crack. You get the picture.

RED

So, what ghost stories surround my father's disappearance?

TONY

It's not just your father. Several others have disappeared as well. I say "several," but there have been only, maybe, five incidents in ten years, which is a lot, but not ridiculously so. Lots of people, especially tourists, come to grief over that period of time. I doubt that it's statistically significant, but people like to talk. What makes these incidents unusual is that nothing was ever found. No bodies. No campsites. No equipment. They just vanished.

RED

Did it start with my father, or were there incidents before?

TONY

It started with your father. Then a family about a year later. Two college kids disappeared six months after that. Then about a year and a half passed before a minister and his wife on a retreat disappeared.

TONY (CONT'D)

The last incident involved a couple of college girls three years ago. They went out camping. About a week later, one of them came back starved, beaten up, and half crazy. She had some story about being captured by a hermit, and kept prisoner. Before anyone could follow up on her story, she disappeared in the middle of the night. She checked herself out of the hospital, and ran off into the woods. Nobody found a trace of her after that.

RED

Is there anyone around here that would fit the description of a sociopathic hermit?

TONY

No. That's the thing. Sure, there are people who go off to live by themselves in the woods all over the country, but we know about them. We keep tabs on them because once in a while one turns out to be dangerous, like the Unabomber. There's nobody like that around here for hundreds of miles. We figure the girls were probably using drugs, became disoriented, and got trapped in an abandoned mine for some time. The hermit might have been a hallucination. I think the one who came back had gotten out, went looking for help, then went back to find her friend.

DOC

I smell a rat.

RED

An unmistakable odor!

DOC

Had the girl who came back been sexually molested?

TONY

It was hard to tell. She could have been wandering for days, so there'd be little or no evidence. The doctor who examined her said she hadn't been a virgin for years. There were signs of partially healed trauma in her vagina, but that could have been the result of the girls playing rough with each other, or even self inflicted. There was no way to tell. Do you guys have some kind of theory about this?

DOC

Not really. We're just free associating off of new information. Or, at least new to us.

TONY

If you find any new ideas, please let me know. One of the most important parts of a Park Ranger's job is keeping tourists safe - often despite themselves.

RED

You'll be the first to know. Have you told Tom Devore any of this?

TONY

Who?

DOC

I guess not. Tom's a private detective we've hired to look into Jim McKenna's disappearance. Foul play was one possibility, but it was low on his list. This new information moves it up higher.

RED

I hope he already has this information, otherwise, maybe we chose the wrong detective.

DOC

There are any number of reasons he might have not said anything about it, if he knew. Better get on it first thing tomorrow. If there was foul play, somebody's going to resent our poking into it. Tony, did the news story about Red's search get picked up around here? I wouldn't be surprised, since it has a local hook.

TONY

Yeah, it was all over the news. Started people telling ghost stories all over again.

DOC

That makes us a target. Zeke, make sure everyone on our team keeps their heads down. Better get reinforcements, too. Call Mark Shipton. Tell him what we've learned here, and tell him we need some of his pajama-clad buddies up here on the QT. Low profile. Invisible, in fact. We don't want to create problems if there aren't any. If there are, we don't want to alert the baddies that we're onto them. That'd make them harder to find. If they're out there, let 'em come to us.

RED

You really think we're in danger, don't you!

DOC

I don't know, which means "yes." I don't want to learn we have a problem by finding you in an alley with a bullet in your head. Don't like that idea - at all! Grrrr!

RED

Why call Mark?

DOC

Your step daddy does business in lots of countries, like Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil, that are unfortunately infested with unsavory characters who'd like nothing more than to grab what he's got. He's survived by being better prepared than the baddies.

Doc hangs his head silently for a short time, thinking.

DOC (CONT'D)

I think I'm going to stay here longer than overnight. Red, you're going to have to put up with my company until I'm convinced there's no danger. SST can survive without my gentle ministrations.

INT. CARSON CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

The cargo plane has arrived and sits in the middle of the hangar floor waiting to be unloaded. DOC has assembled everyone on the team, and is addressing them. The assembled team includes DOC, RED, STEVE, GREG, BONNIE, ZEKE, TONY and two technicians, ALAN and TED, and documentary film producer TAMARA. The two pilots stand with the group.

DOC

We just found out that there is a possibility, and it's a possibility *only*, that Jim McKenna might, and I repeat *might* have been the victim of a serial killer who may have been operating in this area for ten years. There have been half a dozen suspicious disappearances in that time. We may be being overly paranoid about this, but I've found that paranoia pays. We'll have extra security up here in the morning, but for tonight, please don't go out alone. If there *is* a killer, and we come up here stirring things up and threatening to get to the bottom of Jim McKenna's disappearance, we'll be courting retaliation.

GREG

How credible is this threat?

DOC

I don't really know, yet, but I want you to bunk in with RED. She's at the center of all this, and I don't want any adolescent skulking around to interfere with protecting her.

GREG

What can I do? I'm not a fighter. I'm not trained for that stuff.

DOC

But, you can scream as well as anybody else. I just want somebody watching her back at all times. She *is* trained. If you see anything suspicious, warn her. But, then step back. She'd hate to accidentally catch you with an errant leg kick. I'll try to get the room next door to be on hand, just in case.

GREG

Okay, if Red doesn't mind. I promise to be a perfect gentleman.

RED

(punching GREG's shoulder)
You'd better NOT be! I'll want lots of cuddling to keep the bogeyman away.

INT. DOC'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

RED is sitting on the sofa, watching a news program on Doc's television. Again, she wears a hotel bathrobe, but it is now closed demurely. She sits with her feet curled under her.

NEWS ANCHOR

(on TV)

Now we have a live report from Phoenix Channel Five reporter Eve Salazar with a breaking story.

TV cuts to close up of EVE. She is a beautiful, relatively tall hispanic woman with dark brown shoulder length hair. She wears a professional-looking suit over a blouse that is open

at the neck to display some cleavage, but not too much. A small pendant on a light, gold chain hangs at her neck.

EVE

I'm on location in Carson City, Nevada, where a team of researchers has uncovered a ten-year old mystery involving disappearances of some dozen people.

RED

(yells)

Doc! Did you tell Eve what was going on here?

DOC enters from bathroom drying his hair. He has put on jeans, but not yet a shirt.

DOC

I just called to tell her I couldn't pick her up to fly her up here. I said something came up that might be interesting from her point of view. I said she should take a commercial flight up in a couple of days.

RED

Well, that must have been enough! She didn't wait. She's already here covering the disappearances story. I like that girl! Reminds me of me.

On TV, shot widens to include Luthor TODD, who is a thin, wiry, middle aged man wearing old, rumpled khaki pants and shirt, and a camouflage baseball cap.

EVE

(On TV)

I'm here with local guide and tracker Luthor Todd, who has his own theory. What do you know about these disappearances?

TODD appears reasonably intelligent, but uneducated. His expression is shifty.

TODD

In 1851 there was this miner named Wilbur Phipps who come into Carson City with a big haul o' nuggets.

TODD (CONT'D)

He wouldn't tell anyone where he'd gotten it. He was afraid of some guys who'd gone out to other miners' claims and killed 'em for their gold. The gang captured Phipps and tried to torture the location out of him. He wouldn't tell 'em. Just died. Now Wilbur's ghost thinks any strangers campin' around here are part of that gang what killed him. He attacks 'em and carries 'em off.

EVE

What do you think that has to do with Judith McKenna's search for her father?

TODD

I don't think nuthin', 'cept he was one of 'em what was taken. He was up here pokin' around Wilbur's claim, and he was taken. Now this McKenna girl is up here pokin' around, same as her father.

RED

He's lying! And, he knows entirely too much about my father's disappearance for the good of his hide. If he did something to my father I'll have his liver for breakfast!

DOC

The Lord Buddha prohibits cannibalism on Wednesdays. Tomorrow we put the Worm into the hole to see what's there, *then* we think about what to do about it.

EXT. SHAFT SIX BASE CAMP - DAY

Shaft Six base camp is atop a high mesa in the mountains north of Carson City. The shaft itself is on a shelf two hundred feet below the mesa top. Several engineers and technicians busy themselves with preparations for sending the Worm robot into the mine shaft. DOC stands in conversation with EVE and GWEN, describing the workings of an elevator system overhanging the edge of the mesa to lower equipment to

the shelf. GWEN is a spectacularly beautiful blonde twenty-one-year-old woman. She wears jeans and sneakers, and a "Carson City" tee shirt obviously just bought at a hotel gift shop. She and EVE stand close together. EVE has one arm around GWEN's waist. Seeing what is going on, RED, with a stern expression on her face, signals for DOC to meet her out of earshot for a private explanation.

RED

You're a bad influence!

DOC

(mock surprise)

A bad influence? *Moi*?

RED

You take a highly professional, hard nosed newswoman like Eve out on a date, and she comes back with a beautiful, blonde lesbian lover, whom she obviously doesn't want to keep her hands off. What's wrong with you?

DOC

Je suis innocent!

RED

I've heard that one before.

DOC takes on an attitude reminiscent of Tom Sawyer explaining to his mother what he and Huck Finn have been doing that got them into trouble.

DOC

We just went to dinner, and I asked her what she wanted to do next, and she said she wanted to visit a strip club.

RED, hands on hips, taps her foot in an exact imitation of Tom's mother.

RED

A strip club.

DOC

Yes, a strip club, and she found Gwen - her stage name is Blythe.

RED
(sternly)
I don't care about her stage name.

DOC
Eve found Gwen particularly
attractive, so I bought her a lap
dance.

RED
(too loudly)
A lap dance!

Some heads of others around the camp turn to look at them,
sensing some fun is afoot.

DOC
Yes, a lap dance, after which Eve
said that Gwen said she was free
after ten o'clock.

RED stops tapping her foot, lowers her eyes, and starts
rubbing her forehead.

RED
Oh, no!

DOC
Well, Gwen put in an extra-special
performance in the next set.

RED
Dare I ask for details?

DOC
(mock indignation)
A gentleman does not tell!

RED
I assume this extra special
performance was aimed at Eve.

DOC
There was audience participation

RED
(renewing the forehead
rubbing)
Oh, shit!

DOC

So, Gwen decided she'd done enough for the audience that night, and blew off the rest of the performance.

RED

And, she accompanied you two to a hotel.

DOC

Well, the park would have been uncomfortable.

RED

I understand. Then what did you push them into?

DOC

Eve wanted to take a bath.

RED

Humph!

DOC

Gwen decided to join her.

RED

Double humph!

DOC

So I went off to take a shower. I was all sweaty, and grimy from climbing up and down that cliff yesterday.

RED

Of course.

DOC

And, they were afraid I'd get lonesome.

RED

So, they decided to join you.

DOC

I didn't really mind.

RED

So, you kindly condescended to blow a load in Eve's vagina. I know she's on the pill, and I know why.

DOC

Well, Gwen helped.

RED

I'm sure she did! Do I have to ask what became of the load you left in Eve's cunt?

DOC

Be nice. Gwen sucked it out.

RED

And swallowed it, right?

DOC

Well, half of it. Eve got the other half.

RED

I take it you did not, like a good gentleman, offer Gwen a ride home.

DOC

Better. I offered her luxurious accommodations in a bed of her choice.

RED

Which happened to also include you and Eve, right?

DOC

That was the bed she chose.

RED

How much did this deal set you back?

DOC

Well, counting the money Eve stuffed in Gwen's crotch during the performance, and a few beers, and the bribe for the bouncer who let Gwen leave early, plus the overnight rental on Gwen's virtue, about four hundred fifty dollars.

RED

She saw you coming.

DOC

No, I did it in Eve's vagina -
completely out of sight.

RED

That's not what I meant, and you
know it.

DOC

She did not see us coming. We were
already there when she came on
stage. ... That didn't come out right.

RED

That's not what I meant, either.

DOC

I consider it an excellent
investment. Well worth every penny.

RED

It's not usually considered an
investment.

DOC points to the couple who are still standing close
together, smiling and talking intimately.

DOC

Look how happy they are!

RED

So, the three of you spent the night
cuddled up, right?

DOC

Well, they cuddled up with my lap
for a pillow.

RED

I'll bet that broke your heart.

DOC

(ignoring the comment.)

In the morning, they woke up, and
found that they'd fallen in love.

RED

So, what's a hooker doing in my camp?

DOC

Uh, oh. I couldn't see any harm. Eve wanted her to come. She's staying with Eve in her hotel.

RED

Eve can't afford her.

DOC

Gwen took a little vacation. They're in love!

RED

This sounds like one of your harebrained schemes!

DOC

Well, I did suggest it.

RED

What's your part in all this?

DOC

I made arrangements so Gwen could get away.

RED

Arrangements with whom?

DOC

Gwen's employers.

RED

You maniac! I suppose you think Gwen's going to give it all up to play house with Eve in Phoenix.

DOC

Not me! Eve hopes she will.

RED

Did you explain to her how stupid that is?

DOC

Of course, you should have seen them. They were practically in tears!

RED

Now you've got me in tears. Look in my eye. Wet as the Arabian Desert.

Suppose the unthinkable happens, and Gwen really does go home with Eve. What will her employers think about that?

DOC

They'll give her their blessing, of course.

RED

And if they don't?

DOC

I'll hurt them.

RED

(looks at him hard)

I believe you would. That's what Mark meant when he called you a pirate. You'll do it, and not give a shit, won't you. You'll go look up "Ninja Assassins" in your little black book, and arrange for Gwen's employers to wish they'd been more cooperative. What do you have in mind? A traffic accident?

DOC

Something like that.

RED

Don't leave 'em alive.

DOC

I don't plan to. It would be counterproductive.

RED

Does Pat know what a vicious viper you are inside?

DOC

Who'd ya think taught me?

RED

Doc, I know you're supposed to be the ultimate authority on esoteric Zen philosophy, and I should never question your authority, but aren't we supposed to be all kindly, and non-violent?

DOC

Tell that to the victim of a samurai. Besides, I don't see you turning the other cheek to Luthor whatshisname - Todd.

RED

Touche!

DOC

Look, I'd like to have Gwen's employers be nice, understanding people with only goodness in their hearts, but odds are that they're vicious, brutal scum. I like Gwen, and I think she's got it really tough. You should see the fear in her eyes when she thinks about those jokers. If, and I mean *if*, she wants out, why shouldn't I give her a hand? Maybe she'll be back with another circus full of clowns in six months, anyway. Maybe Eve will make the difference. You know what they say about the love of a good woman.

RED

It's not supposed to be for another woman.

DOC

So, the fuck, what!

RED

And, what becomes of Eve through all this?

DOC

Maybe they'll give her an award. It worked for Saffron Burrows.

RED

I don't know how pleased Saffron was about it, though.

DOC

Eve will be okay. Besides, its what she wants.

RED gives him a critically judgmental look.

RED

I think you're nuts, but it's one of the things I like about you. I'll give you my blessing, my support, and anything else that's needed.

DOC

(indicating the lovers)

Give it to them. They're the ones who need it.

RED

Good idea. Let's take them to dinner tonight. Show 'em that when they join our strange little family, they're never alone. You pick the place.

DOC

I dunno, the last time I went out for dinner, I came home with a stray cat. I'd hate to make the same mistake two nights in a row.

RED

Mistress Judith says no strip clubs, and no stray cats.

Nodding, DOC walks off toward the headquarters trailer, while RED walks over to where EVE and GWEN are talking.

RED

Gwen, if you get bored watching us bolt things together, Doc will be in the headquarters building twiddling his thumbs. There's not much for him to do. He's not really supposed to be here, anyway. Tell him I said to teach you to meditate. That oughta wind him up.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HEADQUARTERS TRAILER - DAY

GWEN finds DOC sitting on a wooden bench looking at the scenery beyond the mesa's rim. She sits down on the bench next to him. He appears to ignore her.

DOC

(to GWEN without looking
at her)

They're all pretty busy over there,
aren't they?

GWEN

(West Texas accent)

Red said you should teach me
meditation. She said it would wind
you up. What did she mean by that?

DOC

(chuckles)

I once told her I wasn't a Zen
master because I didn't take on
students. A few days later, she'd
mastered Zen's central mysteries.
So, she thinks I lied, and took her
on as a student, anyway.

GWEN

Did you?

DOC

No, and yes. If somebody comes to me
and asks the way, I'm willing to
point. If they're ready, they'll
find it for themselves.

GWEN

So, why does Red think you taught
her?

DOC

What she fails to consider is how special she is. She did it all herself, but gives me credit.

GWEN

Am I special?

DOC

Of course, but in different ways.

GWEN

In what ways?

DOC

In a few ways that I know about, but many more that I don't.

GWEN

You mean that I'm a good fuck.

DOC

Well, that's one of them, but most people are good fucks if they want to be. It's built in. Millions of years ago, the bad fucks didn't get laid, so they had no babies, and all died out. We're descended from the good ones. If you do better than most, it's because you're willing to try harder.

By the way, why'd you pick Eve?

GWEN

Who says I picked her?

DOC

I do. I was there, remember?

GWEN

The way she looked at me. Don't ask me to explain. I can't.

DOC

You don't have to explain. I just wanted to know that you knew.

They both sit quietly, enjoying the scenery.

GWEN
It's quiet over here.

DOC
Does that bother you?

GWEN
No, I like it.

They sit quietly in the sun for a few more minutes.

DOC
Have you met Walter?

GWEN
Who?

DOC
He's the star of this little show.
C'mon, I'll introduce you.

INT. HEADQUARTERS TRAILER - DAY

DOC leads GWEN to WALTER Worm's charging table in the headquarters trailer. WALTER is the Worm robot introduced by GREG to the team in the SST conference room. WALTER is curled up on a square table about three feet on a side.

DOC
Gwen, this is Walter Worm. He's charging up right now. Under the table is an electromagnetic field generator that couples electrical power into his batteries.

GWEN
I don't know what that means.

DOC
Basically, the table's a radio transmitter for electricity. It's like a refueling station for his batteries.

GWEN
Ah! So, he goes up there to recharge. I get it. Why do you call it "him?" I thought it was just a machine.

DOC

It's a way of making it seem less intimidating. It looks pretty alien, so we give him a funny name, and a little personality to make him more approachable. It's a marketing thing. Walter, wake up.

WALTER's head comes up, and points toward DOC to show he is paying attention.

WALTER

(pleasant, slightly
mechanical male voice)

Good morning, Doc.

DOC

Gwen, this is Walter. Walter, this is Gwen.

WALTER

Is Gwen someone I should recognize?

DOC

Yes, Walter, recognize Gwen.

WALTER

Good afternoon, Gwen.

DOC

(whispers to Gwen)

Say: "Walter, good afternoon. I'm Gwen."

GWEN

Walter, good afternoon. I'm Gwen.

WALTER

What a pretty voice you have, Gwen.

GWEN

What? How could it ...

DOC

Walter, stop. We precede every command with Walter's name, so that he'll know we're speaking to him, and that it's a command. Telling him to stop keeps him from responding to anything, but his restart command.

DOC (CONT'D)

The reason he complemented you on your voice was to signal that he formed a memory of what it sounds like, and noted that you were a female and relatively young. Had he detected signs of maturity in your voice pattern, he would have said you had a "nice" voice instead of a "pretty" one.

GWEN

What if I get a cold?

DOC

You're catching on. He also formed a visual memory of your face. So, if you come up to him, and your voice sounds different enough that it's hard for him to recognize, he'll ask you what's wrong. You'd then say something like: "Walter, I have a cold." He would then add an alternate voice pattern to recognize as you.

GWEN

It's complicated.

DOC

Yes, but each little piece is simple, and logical. It's also very stylized. We call it vocal programming. Would you like to try it?

GWEN

(enthusiastically)

Okay, yeah!

STEVE has taken an interest and is standing by, listening to the conversation.

DOC

Steve, this is Gwen Petersen. She's visiting today, and maybe tomorrow. Could you help her imprint Walter with her voice pattern? So we can show her how to program Walter, maybe at authorization level one.

DOC (CONT'D)

Gwen, this is Steve Michels.
Walter's his baby.

STEVE

Sure. Gwen is it? For Walter to understand what you say, he has to be able to translate your spoken words into written program code.

GWEN looks confused by what he said. STEVE notices and starts over.

STEVE

It's like reading, only backwards. When you read, you recognize written words, and say the words in your head, right?

GWEN nods understanding.

STEVE (CONT'D)

That's because you think in spoken words in your head. Walter has to do the reverse. He hears spoken words when we speak, but he thinks in written words. So, when he hears you say something, he has to write down the words in his head to understand them. Does that make more sense?

GWEN

It's better.

STEVE

Here, let me show you.

Moving over to a desk near the charging table with an oversize flat-panel display on it and a wireless keyboard and mouse, he taps at the keyboard, and a window opens with what looks like lines of dialogue.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Here's what Walter was thinking when you and Doc were talking to him. See, he starts each line with his name for the person who's speaking. He thinks your name is spelled G O O E N.

GWEN

I see he's got everything Doc said perfectly, but he's messed up some of the things I said.

GWEN

Exactly. He's been trained to understand Doc's voice, but not yours. So, when Doc speaks, he gets it right almost every time. When you speak, he's more or less guessing at what you're saying. We're going to change that.

GWEN

Why's he spell my name with small letters, and Doc's with capitals?

STEVE

He's recognizing that Doc is an authorized programmer, and you aren't. He's been trained to recognize and understand Doc's voice, and we've loaded Walter's memory with a list of things Doc's authorized to tell him to do. He's been trained to recognize your voice, but there's no list of things you're authorized to tell him to do. So, the next step in getting you to program Walter is to imprint him with your voice pattern, so he understands what you say as well as he understands Doc.

GWEN

Okay. It's starting to make sense in a bizarre sort of way.

STEVE pulls out a spiral-wound book, which is the Worm Programming manual, and opens it up to a certain page, which he points out to GWEN.

STEVE

We imprint him with your voice by having you read these words to him in this exact order. Speak in a natural voice, the way you'd talk to a child, or a dog. Don't speak extra loud, or soft.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Remember, Walter will respond to the sound of your voice. He has no idea what you actually mean until he writes it down.

(speaks to WALTER)

Walter, wake up. Walter, listen to Gwen.

STEVE signals to GWEN that she should begin reading the list, the first line of which is a command.

GWEN

Walter, learn my voice.

aardvark

GWEN looks up to STEVE in surprise at the word, which has no apparent meaning in the context. STEVE nods encouragingly that she should continue reading the list.

GWEN (CONT'D)

able
amulet
apple ...

Camera fades out, then back in to indicate a few minutes have passed during which GWEN has read off a list of about a hundred words.

GWEN (CONT'D)

zebra
zydeco

Walter, stop.

STEVE directs GWEN's attention to the computer screen.

STEVE

See, this is what Walter was thinking as you read off the list. It's perfect because he knows exactly what you're supposed to say. The list of words contains all the sounds we use to make words in English.

STEVE pushes the programming manual aside, then lifts the wireless keyboard and places it on his lap ready to type on.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Now, we have to authorize you to teach him commands. I'll start by fixing how he spells your name.

STEVE starts typing. The camera shows the result on the computer screen: WALTER REPLACE SPELLING HANDLE GOOEN WITH HANDLE GWEN.

STEVE (CONT'D)

We always end a typed command with a period, so we can run a long command onto another line without confusing the computers.

Now, I'll authorize you to program Walter at level one. Basically, that lets you teach him new basic commands, and string together commands he already knows.

STEVE types a few keys, then manipulates a wireless mouse that sits on the desk. The result opens a dialog box on the screen in front of him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

This dialog box lets me put information uniquely identifying you into the system, and authorizing you to do certain things with Walter. This top box, marked "HANDLE" is the name Walter will associate with your image and voice. It doesn't have to be unique, because your voice pattern is unique. There might be more than one "GWEN" in the system, but that will be okay. Now, your full name is?

GWEN

Gwendolyn Alana Petersen. That's spelled P E T E R S E N.

STEVE

You appear to be female.

GWEN

Was there ever any doubt?

STEVE

We must look beyond surface appearances.

GWEN

Is that supposed to be a pass?

STEVE

(startled)

NO! I'm married.

GWEN

(amused smile)

Gee, a man who thinks that makes a difference. Cute!

DOC

(interrupting)

We don't need her address and contact information right now. As the "in case of" put Eve Salazar. Let me get her phone number.

DOC pulls out his phone, and looks up EVE's number.

DOC (CONT'D)

four eight zero, five five five, seven eight two one.

STEVE

Social Security number?

GWEN

(suspicious)

Is that necessary?

DOC

No, but if you want a job as a Worm programmer, we'll need it.

GWEN

You're giving me a job?

DOC

It's a possible option. Giving us your social now saves us having to fix up the records later. If you don't end up joining our team, we'll wipe this off the system, anyway. It won't go anywhere else.

GWEN looks into DOC's eyes, which tell her neither yes, nor no. He is just awaiting her answer. She makes a sudden decision to trust him.

GWEN

Nine-one-five-oh-five-one-one-two-oh

STEVE

(absently)

Okay, I'll just give her authorization level one.

STEVE uses the mouse to click a check box in the dialog box, then strikes the ENTER key with a loud clack. DOC moves off to type rapidly on another terminal some distance away.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Now you have your very own profile. Next, we have to associate it with your voice in Walter's memory.

STEVE uses the mouse to bring up another dialog box in another window. This has several blank boxes. He types "GWEN" into one of them, a date and a time into others. Then, he copies a number from the upper left of GWEN's profile window into a box on the new window. Then, he hits the ENTER key. Suddenly the new window changes. It is the same form, but now all the boxes are filled in.

STEVE (CONT'D)

This new window is associated with Walter's memory of your voice training session. The information in these boxes is diagnostic of how the training session went. This number, for example, is a score indicating how hard it was for Walter to understand you. I've now associated that training with your profile. The next time you train Walter on your voice, he'll recognize your voice as belonging to your profile, and automatically connect that new voice training session with this session, and to your profile. Walter now recognizes you, in his own way, as a real person whom he should listen to. Before, he didn't care if you were the Phantom of the Opera.

DOC

Let's have her program Walter with a new command.

GWEN jumps, startled by DOC's suddenly appearing at her shoulder.

DOC

Sorry, Honey.

(to Steve)

Let's have her teach Walter a new command, then take a break. She's had a lot to take in at once. Has anyone taught Walter to wag his tail?

STEVE

No, I'm pretty sure nobody has. You're the only one who thinks of things like that, anyway.

DOC

Go for it.

STEVE

Okay, Gwen....

STEVE hesitates, thinking about what he would have her do, and the steps she'd have to perform to accomplish it. He pulls over a tablet of white-lined paper, and writes on it. Then, he leads GWEN around the console to the charging table, carrying the tablet with him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What we're going to do is put Walter in a mode to learn a new movement. I'll tell you the command to use, and you say it to him, then grab the tip of his tail, hold it a little bit up in the air, and move it from side to side three times, then put it down flat again.

He demonstrates the action by picking up WALTER's tail and waving it in the air three times, then laying it down flat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Got that?

GWEN

Yes. I'll say the command you give me, then lift Walter's tail a little bit, and wag it back and forth for him three times, and put it back down flat.

STEVE

Exactly. Now, take your time. There's a tendency to be nervous the first time, which makes it harder for Walter to understand what you're saying. Here, I've written down the command.

(shows her the top sheet)

Just say it after I've woken Walter up.

No! I've an idea. You wake him up. You've heard Doc do it a couple of times.

GWEN

(nervously)

Walter, wake up.

WALTER lifts his head and turns it to point directly at GWEN.

WALTER

Good afternoon, Gwen.

GWEN

(reading the command)

Walter, learn motion WAG YOUR TAIL
THREE TIMES.

WALTER

Yes, mistress.

We hear a chortle of laughter, from RED, who has come in unobserved with EVE and is standing nearby. RED recognizes the programmed response as DOC's work, wags her finger at him, and silently mouths: "Naughty boy!" EVE, standing next to her, does not quite understand what's going on.

STEVE

Go ahead, Gwen. Move his tail.

GWEN does as she's been instructed. Then STEVE points to a second instruction on the paper.

GWEN
(reads)

Walter, stop.

RED
(laughing, to Doc)
You bad boy. You made him sound like
an S&M slave.

EVE
(suspicious)
What are you guys doing to my girl?

GWEN
(happily excited)
They've been showing me how to train
Walter.

STEVE
Okay, now, tell him to wag his tail.

GWEN
Walter, wag your tail.

Nothing happens. Gwen looks crestfallen.

STEVE
You forgot to wake him up first. Try
again.

GWEN
Walter, wake up.

WALTER lifts his head, again, pointing it at Gwen.

WALTER
Good afternoon, Gwen.

STEVE points out the command to GWEN on the paper.

GWEN
(reads)
Walter, wag your tail three times.

WALTER lifts his tail, and wags it three times. GWEN is
delighted.

STEVE
Okay, now, tell him to wag five
times.

GWEN

Walter, wag your tail five times.

WALTER lifts his tail, and wags it five times. GWEN is delighted, again.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Wow!

STEVE

That's why I had you include the "three times" when you taught him the command. We call it a compound command, which includes what he should do, along with a modifier that gives him more detail.

GWEN

What if I don't tell him how many times to wag?

RED looks up at DOC in surprise at the perceptiveness of GWEN's question. She'd quickly assimilated new data, used it to draw a conclusion, then concieved of a possible exception. DOC smiles knowingly back at RED, and nods in GWEN's direction, signaling that he'd noted that perceptiveness before.

STEVE

Try it.

GWEN

Walter, wag your tail.

Walter raises his tail, wags it once, then puts it down. Gwen smiles at her own success.

DOC

(interrupting)

Walter, sleep.

DOC yells toward the other end of the trailer, where TAMARA has set up a small video-production studio.

DOC (CONT'D)

Tamara, did you get all that?

TAMARA

(yells back)

Yup!

DOC

Please dub a copy for Eve, in case she wants to use it. Leave out the part about setting up the profile, and associating it with the voice pattern.

TAMARA

Got it!

DOC

Eve, you now have a video of a new Worm programmer being trained. And, you have access to the new Worm programmer, who might consent to give you an interview, if you kiss her right.

Surprised, GWEN looks from DOC, to EVE, to DOC again with her mouth open, searching for some sign as to what she is supposed to do. Seeing her confusion, RED, who is standing beside her, gives her a friendly hug to get her attention.

RED

He's just opened a door for you. My advice is to walk through.

EVE

(smiling invitingly)
Ready to do an interview?

GWEN

(smiling happily)
Yes!

EVE and GWEN move off toward the video studio.

RED

How long have you been planning this?

DOC

I didn't plan it. It just grew.

RED

More detail. I'm curious.

DOC

Well, I've been probing her brain since I saw how she was responding to Eve. She listens well. Takes instruction. Responds well to positive reinforcement. Understands numbers, though she's no mathematician. Uses fuzzy logic well to get answers in uncertain environments. Makes decisions almost as well as you do. Has great survival instincts, so she doesn't panic in stressful situations. Um, can sit still and wait for the next thing to happen.... And, so forth. You get the idea.

RED

And, you just dropped it all into that neural net between your ears, turned the crank, and out came "Worm programmer" as her ideal job title.

DOC

Pretty much.

INT. HEADQUARTERS TRAILER - DAY

STEVE, GWEN, ALAN, and TED sit at a long control console in front of a large flat-panel display. On the other side, WALTER lies curled-up on a square table. GWEN wears a wireless headset with a microphone positioned next to her mouth. She looks nervous, like it's her first day on a job she's not quite sure she can do. RED stands behind them addressing DOC, ZEKE, GREG, TONY, team geologist PETE, and ex-cop/detective TOM, who stand farther back from the console. The only sounds are clicks and beeps from the equipment, and a mechanical sighing sound from cooling fans.

RED

We're about to send our Worm robot, code named "Walter" into my father's prospect shaft six. We'll be able to watch progress through several cameras, including those on the robot, on pop-up windows on this display.

RED (CONT'D)

This window shows us Walter's mental image of his surroundings. It shows a wire-frame model of objects he can see, color coded to reflect how important he thinks they are. For example, when he gets outside the ground will be represented by a light green mesh. The cliff edge, which he wants to avoid, will show as a red line. His goal, which will be the elevator we take down to the shelf on which the mine's entrance actually sits, will be highlighted yellow. This one other window shows a visible-light image from Walter's main visual sensors.

Gwen, our operator trainee, will control Walter under direction of Steve Michels, while Alan and Ted control the support equipment.

STEVE

Go ahead, Gwen.

GWEN

Walter, wake up.

WALTER

(through console speaker)

Good morning, Gwen.

GWEN

Walter, proceed to the elevator.

WALTER creeps off the table, opens the door to go outside, and skitters through. The window display on the right shows a visible-light image from WALTER's perspective as he moves to the elevator platform built out over the edge of the mesa. The left-hand window shows a cartoony version of the same scene color coded to highlight important features, and showing the path Walter plans to follow as a white line.

WALTER

Gwen, I've reached the elevator.

GWEN

Walter, proceed to center of the elevator platform.

The displays show WALTER's POV as he proceeds to the center of the elevator platform.

WALTER

Gwen, I've reached the center of the elevator platform.

GWEN

Walter, stay.

STEVE

Ted, please lower the platform.

TED flips a toggle switch down, which starts the elevator descending to the shelf. A few seconds later, he flips it the other way to stop it.

TED

It's down.

The visible light display shows a large tent. The other display shows something similar, but schematically. The ground shows as a green grid.

GWEN

Walter, proceed to the tent opening.

The tent opening appears highlighted in yellow. WALTER proceeds to the tent opening and sees a large square opening in the ground about ten feet across with a derrick consisting of four uprights holding a bridge crane eight feet in the air. They are barely visible because it is dark in the tent.

STEVE

It's pretty dark in there. Ted, please turn on the derrick lights.

TED flips a switch, and flood lights mounted on the derrick go on.

GWEN

Walter, go to the shaft opening.

WALTER proceeds to the edge of the opening, and stops.

STEVE

Alan, please lower the drop and safety lines.

ALAN holds two rocker switches down for a few seconds. The displays show the drop line and safety lines lowering from

the bridge crane half way to the ground.

GWEN

Walter, attach your safety line.

WALTER rises up on his lower segments and uses pincers attached to his second segment to move a fitting attached to the safety line's end into a socket on his first segment.

WALTER

Gwen, I've attached my safety line.

GWEN

Walter, grab the drop line.

WALTER reaches up with one pincer to grab the drop line above a hard rubber ball fixed to its end.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Walter, freeze.

WALTER becomes rigid.

STEVE

Alan, please lift him up and position him over the opening and start him down. Ted, please switch on his rear camera.

TED presses a button and the visible-light view switches to one looking downward from WALTER's POV. As WALTER is moved to the center of the shaft opening, what looks like a shadowy jumble of boards clogs the shaft about sixty feet down. After centering WALTER in the opening, ALAN begins sending him down the shaft. The jumble of boards takes more coherent shape as it comes closer. When it's about ten feet away, ALAN stops the movement.

ALAN

We're there. We're ready to do a nine-view scan to map that debris, so we can find a way through.

TONY

Wait a minute. If you look at that, you can see the whole thing's held up by those two beams jammed across the hole from upper left to lower right.

TONY (CONT'D)

That leaves big triangular holes in the upper right and lower left. The one in the lower left looks a little bigger. Could we drop through it and look up to see what's holding the whole thing up?

STEVE

That's not part of the test protocol.

DOC

It might advance us more than a nine-view scan of the top, though. Let's do it. We can always come back and look at the top. Just, keep Walter as close as you can get to the wall to make sure we don't dislodge any of the wreckage.

STEVE

Okay, Alan have the computer calculate a movement profile that will put Walter in that lower-left corner, no closer than one foot from the wall.

ALAN takes a keyboard off the desk in front of him and, laying it on his lap, begins rapidly tapping some keys, watching the results on a small window positioned directly in front of him on the flat-panel display. When he is satisfied, he clacks the enter key noisily. The visible-light display begins shifting slowly as WALTER moves toward the lower left, and suddenly stops.

STEVE

Okay, drop him down through.

ALAN presses the rocker switch to lower WALTER through the hole, then stops it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Ted, please switch to Walter's front camera.

TED presses the camera switch again, and the visible light display becomes flooded with bright light.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh! Turn off the upstairs lights!

TED flips the derrick-lights switch to off. The visible-light display goes dark.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Gwen, have Walter turn on his front L.E.D. lights.

GWEN

Walter, turn your headlights on full.

The visible-light display brightens up to show an over-exposed view of the wreckage underside.

STEVE

Gwen, knock that light back to fifty percent.

GWEN

Walter, set your headlights to fifty percent.

The visible light display darkens to properly exposed.

STEVE

We want him to look at the lower end of that beam. How to describe it to him?

DOC

He understands the corners of the shaft, right?

GREG

Right.

DOC

So, let's have him look at the highest point of the shaft corner visible from his vantage point.

STEVE

Gwen, did you get that?

GWEN

I think so. Walter, look to your right at the highest point in the corner of the mine shaft.

The visible light image shifts to look at the lowest point of the beam holding up the wreckage.

STEVE

That worked! Good girl.

PETE

That's what's holding it up! McKenna left a big nodule of rock sticking out in that corner. It was obviously a hard spot and not worth taking out. When the beam hit that, it just jammed across the opening.

RED

How stable will that be?

PETE

It's not going anywhere without breaking that thing off, and it ain't a-gonna break that off!

RED

So, this shaft would NOT be dangerous for somebody to climb into to inspect?

TONY

Not any more than climbing down into any mine shaft. I wouldn't do it for fun, but it would be reasonably safe.

RED

So, who said it was dangerous?

TONY

The only guy who climbed down here ten years ago: Luthor Todd.

RED

That bastard! Lets go down and see what Luthor Todd didn't want us to see.

DOC

Okay, but first take a still picture of that nodule holding the wreckage up. We want to be able to prove it wasn't dangerous!

STEVE

How deep is this shaft?

PETE

We don't really know. It's at least two-hundred-fifty feet. McKenna's notes from the previous season say he got that far. No telling how far he got before he stopped.

GREG

Use Walter's laser rangefinder in his tail. That's what we put it there for.

STEVE starts leafing through the programming manual to find the right command, then shows it to GWEN.

GWEN

Walter, point your laser ranger directly down.

WALTER

Gwen, my laser ranger is pointed directly down.

GWEN

Walter, take a measurement with your laser ranger.

WALTER

Gwen, my laser ranger finds three hundred fifty seven feet.

DOC

Okay, send him on down!

STEVE

Alan, how deep does that make it?

ALAN pulls out a pocket calculator, and makes a calculation.

ALAN

Four hundred twelve feet.

STEVE

Okay, run him down fast to four hundred feet, then slow him to touch down easy. Maybe have the computer do it?

ALAN

Yeah.

ALAN pulls his keyboard out, again, and taps rapidly, then, again, clacks the ENTER key hard. The depth monitor on the console begins showing a rapid descent, then slows when it gets to four hundred, then slows to a stop at four-hundred-twelve.

RED

So, where's Walter now?

STEVE

He's lying stretched out on the floor at the bottom. What we should do is have him stand up and look around. Gwen, have him stand up, then look down forty five degrees, then do a three-hundred sixty degree panorama at fifteen degree intervals. That'll give us twenty four views of the floor of the shaft all around the place.

STEVE shows GWEN the commands she needs to use in the programmer's manual.

GWEN

Walter, stand up.

The visible light monitor shows WALTER's POV rising up until it looks at the wall four feet above the floor.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Walter, look down forty five degrees.

WALTER's POV points down to where the floor intersects the wall. The floor is more or less flat, but rough, with rocks and pieces of debris strewn around. A pickaxe and shovel lay near the wall.

PETE

I can't believe those were the tools he was using. He should have had a pneumatic jack hammer. Where is it?

DOC

It went with the rest of his gear that disappeared from the mesa top.

TOM

Somebody took 'em.

GWEN

Walter, shoot a three-hundred-sixty-degree panorama right with fifteen-degree intervals.

Starting from his initial position, WALTER begins sending up still images spaced fifteen degrees apart, which appear at the bottom of the display. The images are sized and arranged to fit five rows of five images across the display. Earlier images remain while each new image is added at the end. The fourth image shows where half of the floor is broken up into loose rock. The sixth image shows the toes of a skeletal foot. The seventh shows skeletal legs and a crushed pelvis. The eighth shows a broken and dislocated spine and a ribcage, the back of which was crushed. The body is lying face up on the pile of broken-up rock.

GWEN

Where are his clothes?

TOM

He was stripped before he fell down the shaft.

The ninth image shows the upper body and broken shoulder blades. The tenth shows the skull, with its back flattened. It shows a perfectly round hole nearly one-half-inch in diameter punched through the forehead.

RED staggers and collapses into DOC's arms. DOC hands her off to GREG, who leads her away.

TOM

This is no longer a research project. It's a crime scene.

TED

Why?

TOM

(pointing at tenth image)
Because THAT, young man, is a bullet hole.

INT. HEADQUARTERS TRAILER - DAY

The team has cleared out of the trailer. Sheriff's DEPUTY sits at the Worm control console, taking notes in a small

notebook. The tenth image is blown up on the screen. DOC sits nearby answering questions.

DOC

Until today, all we had were suspicions. We had no information you hadn't had in your possession for years. So, we kept our ideas to ourselves until we had something concrete to add. Then we called you guys right away.

DEPUTY

What's this about having a private army out here combing the woods?

DOC

It's hardly an army. This camp contains some expensive state-of-the-art equipment and a large staff. That, plus the possibility we might be invading territory frequented by a serial killer, made it seem prudent to secure the area.

DEPUTY

I understand there are personal bodyguards, too.

DOC

They are here to protect Judith McKenna. As you know, she is the step daughter of Mark Shipton, who owns Gulf States Petroleum. It would be worth a lot of money for someone to kidnap her for ransom. They are there for her personal protection, and have nothing to do with this project, or McKenna's murder. If she came here to go skiing, they'd be here.

DEPUTY

Why are they undercover?

DOC

Would you like to have a gang of thugs hanging around you all the time? Would you do that to your daughter?

DOC (CONT'D)

They stay undercover to give her some kind of normal life.

Perhaps if I told you what we learned in my own way, then you could ask questions, and we'd make more rapid progress.

DEPUTY

Okay, go ahead.

DOC

A lot of this you already know, but there may be some pieces I have that will help things fit together. There are others here who can fill in more details. My role is as a corporate-level manager. I have to understand the overall picture, find the right people to handle the details, then stay out of their way. So all I can give you is an overview. You'll have to get the details from people more immediately involved.

Based solely on my interpretation of the facts we have so far, it appears that some person came into James McKenna's camp in late summer ten years ago, looked at what he had, and wanted it for himself. So, he abruptly shot McKenna in the head, stripped the body, and dumped it down the shaft. If the bullet didn't kill him, the fall would. He then proceeded to strip the camp, and throw the derrick down the shaft to hide the body. I say "he" because the physical strength this scenario implies makes it more likely to be a man than a woman. My favorite candidate is Luthor Todd.

DEPUTY

Luke Todd! Why?

DOC

Several bits of circumstantial evidence point in his direction. I'll start with the least important and work up.

As a wilderness guide, he certainly had opportunity and means. As for motive, that could have been a simple matter of theft. McKenna's outfit could certainly have been sold off piecemeal for a considerable sum. The most damning evidence that points to Todd is that he had the most opportunity to cover up the crime. He was hired, I believe it was by your department, to check James McKenna's prospect holes. He reported that three of them were too dangerous to enter, and so they were not fully checked, but were blocked off. We now know that at least this one was not as dangerous as he claimed, and contained McKenna's body.

Now, we enter the world of pure speculation, and I'm probably stupid to say this in front of you, but color me stupid.

Anyway, I'd bet a box of doughnuts and a gallon of coffee that Luthor Todd shot and killed James McKenna as I have described, and sold everything he could find in his camp. Furthermore, I think he was so pleased with the results that he repeated the crime on a number of occasions, hiding the bodies in McKenna's other prospect holes.

I'll bet a particularly big, juicy jelly doughnut that if you search his place thoroughly, you'll find one or two souvenirs to connect him to McKenna's murder and other mysterious disappearances.

DEPUTY

Unfortunately for your theory, all of that is, as you say, speculation. There isn't even enough to get a warrant to search his place for those souvenirs. Luke Todd may be a thoroughly unpleasant character, but the only thing you have that actually points to him is that it was his report that caused us to miss finding McKenna's body in the first place. There's nobody who could prove that it wasn't an honest mistake.

INT. DOC'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

RED

I will NOT leave, and you can't make me!

DOC

I can and I will. You're done here. You've found your father. The police will find his killer. You have a life to restart, and I won't let you blow it by trying to chase down some piece-of-crap killer who's not worth one of your fingernail parings.

You're going immediately back to school. You will not pass "GO." You will not collect two hundred dollars. In fact, I'm tempted to tie you up, and shove you into the luggage compartment of my plane and fly you up to Logan Airport, then transfer you to the trunk of a limo trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey, and not untie you until you're sitting in front of your home computer, doing your homework. And, I know some ex-Navy SEALs working for your step father, who would be only too happy to stand around holding your nose directly to the grindstone.

RED

No! No! No! You know the police will never be able to prosecute based on the evidence they have or that you can pull out of those holes with your Worm robots. They'll be able to prove everything, but who did it. The only way they can prosecute the guy is with a confession.

DOC

I forbid your mucking about here, getting yourself into trouble messing with this thing. You let the police take care of it. You have to go back to school right away. It's what all the people who care about you want. It's what I want; It's what Mark wants; It's what your mother wants; and it's what your father would want.

RED

That's unfair!

DOC

It was meant to be.

RED

I have one more thing to do, and you know it. It has to be done, and I have to do it.

DOC

(Sighs)

Yes, I know it. As usual, I can't say no to anything you really want. Okay, against my better judgment, I'll give you two weeks. Then, you go back to Boston, no matter what.

RED grabs DOC with both arms, and hugs him happily, then kisses him on the mouth. Then, she stops and holds him at arms length.

RED

Do you really think he's that stupid?

DOC

I have no idea. You have two weeks
to find out.

INT. TODD'S CABIN - DAY

RED wakes up groggily. She has trouble focusing her eyes.

RED

Owww!

She tries to reach her right hand up to the painful spot on the back of her head, but finds she can't because her right hand is chained to the wall. She tries her left hand, and finds that chained to the wall, too.

TODD

You're even prettier than on TV. I
oughta screw you good before I give
you up. If I give you up.

RED

(trying to hide her fear
with bluster)

You and whose army?

TODD

Your step daddy won't mind if he
gets you back pregnant and a little
beat up, as long as he gets you
back.

RED

He's not the one you have to worry
about.

RED is still trying to work her hand around to feel the
painful spot on the back of her head.

TODD

Oh? Who is?

RED

There's me.

TODD

What could you do?

RED

Hunt you down to the ends of the Earth, then cut off your balls, and shove them so far down your throat you'd choke to death. That's after I rip your dick off by the root, and shove it so far up your ass, shit would come out of your eyes.

TODD

Oooh! Feisty. I like that.

RED

You won't when it happens.

TODD

What if I fixed it so you couldn't pursue anyone anywhere ever again?

RED

Then, you'd have to deal with Doc Manchek.

TODD

He don't give a shit about you. He's off screwing starlets in Reno. He gets plenty of pussy. He don't need you.

RED

He's my best friend. He's like my brother, you asshole.

RED finally gets her fingers up to the back of her head where she feels a lump the size of a golf ball.

TODD

What're you doin', anyway?

RED

Checking to see if you shot me, like you did my father.

TODD

Naw. I just beaned you with a baseball. I want you in good enough shape to sell back to your step daddy.

RED

How long have I been out?

TODD

Not long. Ten minutes or so. Don't worry, you'll still have all your marbles. I just rung your bell pretty good.

RED

Who are you, anyway?

TODD

You know.

Recognition dawns on RED's face.

RED

Luthor Todd! I saw you on TV, too. You're a lying motherfucker!

TODD

Leave my mother out of this, but you're right.

RED

About your lying?

TODD

About my mother. She was pretty good in bed.

RED

Ugh! You remind me of the joke about the fastidious man.

TODD

What's that.

RED

His mother was fast, and his father was hideous.

TODD doubles over in laughter.

TODD

That's a good one!

RED

You mean you've never heard it? I can't believe even a lummoX like you is that ignorant!

TODD

I'm gonna go up, now, and clean up your camp. Don't you go fallin' asleep, y'hear? Them concussions can be tricky. You might not wake up. Then, where'd I be?

RED

(cheefully)

Right where you are now: screwed, blued, and tattooed. I'll just spend the time thinking of juicy ways to torture you. You shouldn't have done it, you know.

TODD

Shouldn't a done what?

RED

Killed my father, or any of the others.

Without responding, TODD walks out and slams the door.

INT. TODD'S CABIN - LATER

Shadows have moved, signaling the passage of an hour. TODD returns.

RED

I have to pee.

TODD

So, pee!

He waves his hand to indicate she should do it right where she sits.

RED

Thanks, Galahad.

RED looks at the chains shackling her to the wall.

RED (CONT'D)

Where'd you get these shackles?

TODD

I put 'em up for them college girls I took a coupl'a years ago. There's another set right next to yours. Kept 'em nice and close. Made 'em put on a show before I balled their brains out right where your sittin'. Two or three times a day for a week. I do believe they were beginnin' to like it - toward the end.

RED

How'd the one escape?

TODD

Her hands were smaller than I figured, so she slipped out in the middle o' the night. It took days to track 'er down. By then, she wuz in th' hospital.

RED

What made her leave the hospital?

TODD

I tapped on th' glass. Scared bejeezus out o' her. Had to do it two or three times before she panicked and tried to run away. When she got out, I herded 'er toward the woods. Then, I had 'er. It was just a matter of time. I tracked 'er down, then brought 'er back here.

RED's face takes on a look of horror. She's fascinated to know what happened after that, but doesn't really want to know. But, TODD tells her, anyway.

TODD

I duck-taped them bitches together with their legs kinda forked.

TODD demonstrates what he means using the fingers of his two hands.

TODD (CONT'D)

Left 'em like that for a coupla' days so they pissed and shitted all over each other.

TODD (CONT'D)

By then, it was getting kinda stinky in here, so I shot 'em so's I could clean up.

Instead of making her sick, the story makes RED angry. Now she wants to punish him for what he did to those girls. She knows what she has to do now.

RED

(hateful sneer)

When are you going to make the call?

TODD

What call?

RED

The ransom call. A few million dollars, and a helicopter ride to Mexico. Someplace out in the Sierra Madre, where you can just disappear. Then, you tell 'em where to find me. More likely, you lie to them and leave me here to rot. That sounds more like your speed.

TODD

I won't do that 'til tomorrow. Let 'em sweat a bit.

RED

Jesus, stupid! They already know you did it. They just don't know where to find you. If you give them enough time, they'll figure it out, and then come storming in here. Then, no millions of dollars, no Mexico, no disappearing. If it's my stepfather's goons that get here first, they won't be handing you to the cops. They'll find a nice cave someplace to hang you upside down. Then, they'll wall up the entrance. You'll die of thirst, screaming into the dark.

TODD

They'll give me what I want. I have you.

RED

Humph!

TODD

Anyway, they won't know anythin's wrong 'til your two girlfriends bring you supper, like every night. Maybe I ought to grab them, too. Bring 'em back here for a party.

RED

If you do that, who's going to tell Doc that you have me?

TODD

Why tell Doc? It's your stepfather who has the money.

RED

Mark's in Florida. He'll just call Doc, who'll make all the arrangements. It'll probably be Doc flying the helicopter. He can, you know. You'll end up dealing with him, anyway. Might as well do it from the start. You'd be better off, anyway.

TODD

Why?

RED

Doc's a pacifist. Violence is against his religion. He'd rather pay you off and help you get away, than to let Mark get ahold of you - or for me to. I once saw him grab a drunk and hustle him out of a bar to protect him from me.

TODD

You?

RED

Hey, buddy. I'm over six feet tall. I've muscles from working out every day. I've a black belt in karate. Take off these shackles and I'll let you see what broken bones feel like.

RED (CONT'D)

The drunk didn't know that, and tried to slap me. Doc saved him, like he'll try to save you. I told you what Mark's goons would do to you. Doc wouldn't want that to happen, so he'd try to help you get away. You'd still spend your life running from the cops, but you have to lie in that bed, anyway. Make the damn call!

TODD

Nah! Ah'll wait 'til after dark. Then they'll know for sure yer gone. Then, I'll claim a prize for givin' ya back.

RED

Stupid! Make the damn call, or are you too much of a pussy to do it? It's easy to rape chained-up girls, but when it comes to dealing with real men, you're a chickenshit.

TODD

Who're you callin' chickenshit?

RED

I'm calling *you* chickenshit, Mr. Chickenshit! If you had a hair on your ass, you'd pick up the phone, and call Doc to get your money. What're you waiting for? Scared he'll yell at you? Stupid killer's afraid of Doc?

TODD

Watch it, you. I'll call when I'm good and ready.

RED

What are you waiting for? Every minute you spend dragging your chickenshit feet is another minute you'll spend being poor.

TODD is angry and confused. He doesn't like being pushed, but can't find a flaw in her logic.

TODD

I been waitin' for you to gimme his number.

RED

(laughing in his face)

You really are incompetent, aren't you. It's 480-555-1313.

TODD dials it into RED's cellphone.

DOC

(on phone, cheerfully)

Manchek here. What can I do you out of?

TODD

I got that McKenna broad ...

DOC

Luthor! I know you have her. I've been waiting for your call, buddy. What took you so long?

DOC's jovial attitude has TODD completely confused.

TODD

I want ... I want ...

Realizing that he's never thought out exactly what he wants, TODD is dumbstruck.

RED

(rolls her eyes)

Fifteen million dollars.

TODD

Fifteen million dollars! Or, I'll ...

DOC

Yeah, you'll mail the girl back to me in little pieces. Say, have you told her you killed her father, yet?

TODD

Naw, she kep' askin' but I didn't say nuthin'. Why?

DOC

Well, she's not entirely rational when it comes to her father. If she knew you'd killed him, she might hurt herself killing you. Are you sure she doesn't know?

TODD

I thought she knew already. That's why I wun't tell 'er.

DOC

Okay, Luthor. I've got fifteen million in the back of a chopper. Just leave the girl there, and come up to her camp, or where her camp was before you hauled it off. I'll meet you there with the chopper.

TODD

How d'ya know I kin trust ya?

DOC

You mean, "How do you know you can trust me," don't you, Luthor? Take a deep breath, and calm down. We'll get you through this. You know you can trust me because I need you to tell me where the girl is. The deal is that I fly you where you want to go. Then, you tell me where the girl is, right? This isn't rocket science, you know.

TODD

Don'cha want to know if she's okay?

TODD is getting more and more confused. This isn't going at all like he thought it would, but it seems to be working, anyway.

DOC

Fine. Put her on the phone.

TODD puts the phone in RED's manacled left hand.

RED

(yelling into the phone)
 Would you quit kucking around, and
 come and get me? This craphead made
 me pee my pants! If you don't come
 and get me, I'm gonna kill him right
 now, and have done with it!

DOC

(To someone on the other
 end of the line)
 She's madder than a wet hen, so
 she's alright.

TODD

Hello?

DOC

Luthor! You heard her, quit kucking
 around, and get your butt out here.
 Time's a wastin' boy!

TODD shuts off the phone, and steps through the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE CABIN - DAY

TODD takes two steps past the doorway, then stops dead as
 four heavily armed men in jungle fatigues step out of the
 bushes in front of him. Then, the two similarly-dressed men
 who have been lurking on either side of the door take him
 from behind, and push him to his knees, holding his hands
 behind his back. Then, DOC, wearing a black cowboy hat, jeans
 and a black tee shirt, steps from the trees and confronts
 TODD.

DOC

You didn't think we were going to
 leave a beautiful woman like that
 laying around loose for a jerk like
 you to just waltz in and drag off,
 did you?

(to the others)

Get this moron out of here.

DOC steps through the cabin door, and uses a pair of bolt
 cutters he has in his back pocket to cut RED's chains, pulls
 her close and hugs her. She hugs him back. They kiss
 passionately.

RED

(finally admitting it)

I love you.

DOC

I've *always* loved you.

FADE OUT