

Latent Image

By

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FADE IN:

TITLES

MONTAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHS BEING PRINTED - Rolls of 35mm film.
Processed, rinsed, cut.

Contact sheets! Chaotic news events from around the world
printed as 8x10s, immersed in developer, dunked into the
stop bath and then fixed.

The red safety light and the various tubs of liquid combine
to make shimmering, wavering images of the submerged
photographs.

EXT. INDIA - DAY

BRAD KIVEAT, photojournalist, mid-thirty, perpetually
boyish. He wears utility clothes and carries a camera bag.
But he clearly knows what to carry and what not to, to
avoid looking like an Eddie Bauer tourist.

He takes pictures of daily routine in India. He's very
good. Every composition he makes is interesting and
somehow revealing.

INT. EATERY

Reporter EZEKIEL "ZEKE" SOUTER walks in. He is a big guy,
and Brad's partner. Zeke is not really a "Zeke." That's
why people use the diminutive with him. He's also more
sober than a "Zeke."

ZEKE

Have a seat.

Brad walks in, behind him and sits down at a table. Zeke
goes to the counter and speaks with two young Indian men,
college students. They join Brad at the table.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Brad. Narendra and Ravi.

Zeke points at the two young men, NARENDRA, a skinny and
very dark-skinned Indian, and RAVI, also skinny, taller,
not so dark. They're both nice guys. Brad nods at them.

BRAD

Brad Kiveat.

ZEKE

I get the words. He gets the
pictures.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The young men smile. Zeke looks around at the basically empty restaurant. The PROPRIETOR and his WIFE, an older Indian couple, are working.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

They tell me that a protest is planned for later today at the government palace.

BRAD

Will you be there?

RAVI

We helped plan it.

Zeke and Brad are impressed.

ZEKE

Aren't you guys scared of reprisals?

They shrug seriously.

NARENDRA

This is important.

ZEKE

Well, we're going to be there to report on it.

Brad holds up one of his cameras.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

What if you're identified at the protest?

RAVI

That is a risk we must all take.

NARENDRA

This is important.

BRAD

You said that.

Brad stands and starts taking pictures of the two of them. While shy they abide his photography. Brad steps back from them to get a better shot.

ZEKE

The protests haven't produced any results as yet. Do you think this one will be different?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARENDRA

Eventually our message will get through. This could help.

Ravi steps forward, holding his hand up to Brad's camera.

RAVI

Please, no.

BRAD

I thought you didn't mind.

ZEKE

What's the problem?

Ravi points at the establishment and the wall behind them. It's distinctive.

RAVI

These are our friends. They've been very helpful.

NARENDRA

But they're not willing to be so...open.

RAVI

It would be most sad if our actions somehow hurt them. I don't want that.

NARENDRA

That would be bad.

Brad hesitates and then drops his camera on its strap.

RAVI

If those photos were to fall in the wrong hands....

ZEKE

We understand.

BRAD

You have my word. These pictures will stay with me.

Ravi seems to want another solution but relents.

RAVI

Thank you.

EXT. GOVERNMENT PALACE, COURTYARD - DAY

Another photographer, ERICA OTTO, an intense thirty-something woman, notices Brad and Zeke in the growing crowd and walks up to them.

ERICA
Hey, when did you get in?

Brad looks up from taking photos.

BRAD
Erica. When did I get in? When did you get in?

ERICA
I've been here since it started. What's your excuse?

Brad smiles and jabs Zeke.

BRAD
Zeke and I were in the hills with the Sikhs.

Erica smiles, competitively....

ERICA
We'll see who gets the first picture.

Brad smiles and squints his eyes at her.

BRAD
Well I know who'll get the cover...

ERICA
You're on.

She starts to walk away to get another vantage point.

BRAD
Hey. What room you in?

ERICA
(turns around)
225.

BRAD
225.

She winks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZEKE

Why don't you just marry her?

BRAD

Whose pictures would go on the walls?

Military troops are lined up opposite the protesters. Tempers are high on the part of the protesters.

Brad and Zeke struggle to the front edge of the thick crowd as the military starts to advance in lock step to disperse the protest.

The situation becomes more tense. Brad takes a breath and calmly takes pictures of all around him. Zeke pauses and notices how calm Brad is.

ZEKE

We better move to the side.

The crowd shuffles backwards as the troops advance but then the crowd stops. Chanting increases as the troops get closer.

Suddenly THREE RIFLE SHOTS are heard in succession. The realization ripples through the crowd as do the SHRIEKS and CRIES.

And then the crowd starts to move.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

This is the part I hate!

The protest becomes a riot. Part of the crowd panics and stampedes to get away from the shooting.

More SHOTS ARE HEARD.

Brad and Zeke run to a lamppost. Brad climbs the lamppost, taking shots of the action. He sees the line of troops and spots some soldiers firing into the crowd.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

They firing rubber bullets?

BRAD

Don't know.

In one swift motion Brad removes one lens from his camera, drops it into his bag, takes out a huge zoom lens, and attaches it without once looking at the camera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad scans...the stampeding crowd. Blurs, blurs, focus. Blurs, blurs, focus. Blurs, blurs...

He tracks with one group of college students. As he FOCUSES, faces become recognizable.

Narendra, from the eatery, is running in that group. Brad CLICKS off several shots.

He focuses on another student. It's RAVI.

People run past Brad. Zeke looks for cover.

SHOTS RING OUT. Brad follows Ravi as he arches his back with a strained expression on his face. Brad follows Ravi as he collapses to the ground.

An older woman, running beside him, hesitates, grabs his hand and pulls. Realizing he's hurt worse than she thought she kneels beside him. People stumble over them.

She props him up and starts crying. Brad continues shooting pictures. Zeke sees what he's taking pictures of.

The mother shrieks for help from people running past. One person tries but is scared off. She tries picking Ravi up to get him to move but something stops her.

She clutches him, yelling at him as he sags in her arms. Her eyes widen and she lets out a wail as Ravi dies.

Brad has captured the whole event on film. His jaw clenches from his determination.

Zeke hears SNAPS and asphalt CHIPPING. He sees little puffs near them, on the ground.

ZEKE

Shit. Brad!

Brad glances at Zeke. HIS BLOOD PRESSURE SHOOTS UP. The blood is POUNDING in his ears. He turns to the right and sees the soldiers. One soldier fires a few rounds, turns and is aiming right at them.

Brad becomes STEELY CALM as he aims his camera.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

They're shooting at us.

The soldier fires THREE ROUNDS as Brad fires off THREE EXPOSURES. One of the bullets SMACKS against the lamppost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Those are not riot rounds!

Zeke pulls Brad down from his perch and they join the stampede. But Brad keeps taking pictures of what's happening around them.

Zeke (CONT'D)

This way!

He grabs Brad's field vest and drags him.

EXT. RIVER

The escaping crowd is moving towards the banks of a river that cuts through the city. Zeke sees a bridge he'd prefer to be on but the current of the crowd has taken them this way.

However, the river is densely populated by an assortment of rickety piers, houseboats, boats, skiffs and anything else that floats. Some people just wade in to swim across.

Zeke leads Brad over walkways, in between houseboats. A clot of protesters keeps them moving, to keep from being trampled.

BRAD

They're still shooting.

Brad photographs the river bank and the street level as people stream towards the river. Soldiers are also streaming over, chasing the protesters. There are also clusters of fights as some protesters engage the troops.

Brad and Zeke make it two-thirds across the river where they meet a bottle neck. The way across is over several boats tied together.

People push forward and clamber across the boats. Others wade across, pulling themselves alongside the boats.

Brad and Zeke climb down to the boats and make their way across. As they climb out on the other side they're on a rickety pier on the verge of being overwhelmed.

Zeke is leading the way. Brad loses his balance and goes into the water, along with several others.

Brad thrashes about trying to get a hold of something in order to climb out of the river. He gets close to another houseboat. He gulps for air, but swallows water. He's becoming a frantic as he splashes in the water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He has a FLASHBACK to a time when he was a kid, looking up through water at sky and trees and a figure.

VOICE (O.S.)

Brad!

Brad thrashes about. Suddenly a hand grabs one of his sleeves and then his hand and pulls him up.

ERICA

Brad! Climb up!

Erica has grabbed a hold of him and helps him out of the water. Brad coughs and wipes water out of his eyes as he hangs on and catches his breath.

BRAD

(coughing)

Erica!

ERICA

No time to swim pal.

Brad coughs again and gets a better hold of the flooring around the houseboat and pulls himself out of the river. He sits on the edge catching his breath for a second and then he and Erica continue on.

Zeke has been watching from the riverbank which is only a few yards away.

More people run by.

INT. HILTON HOTEL

A cluster of Westerners walks into the lobby, Brad and Erica among them. Brad is soaking wet.

ERICA

You owe me one.

Brad glances at her with a hurt expression on his face, which she notices immediately. But he looks away and hides it before looking back at her, smiling uneasily.

BRAD

Yeah, right. Put it on my tab!

ERICA

That was close.

BRAD

I should learn to walk upright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He smiles at her, totally disguising his previous discomfort.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM

Brad, dripping wet, followed by Erica, walks into what is the temporary Press headquarters for the different news organizations.

There are computers set up in one corner, banks of phones, monitors and television sets, and laptops, all on long linen-covered banquet tables and people milling about.

Brad has rewound the film in all his cameras and taken it out. He walks over to a man and taps him on the shoulder.

BRAD

Peter. Here's my film. I fell in the river, so it's all wet.

PETER turns around notices Brad is dripping wet.

PETER

I see what you mean. Okay, I'll take care of it.

Brad takes several forms from nearby, fills them out quickly and hands them to Peter with the different rolls of film. He holds up one roll for Peter to see.

BRAD

This roll. From fifteen to the end or so. Very important!

He holds Peter's gaze.

PETER

Got it! This roll. I'll process it and send it off.

Erica does the same sort of thing at another table handing over her film rolls.

INT. ROOM 225

The room is a mess. Brad's sopping wet clothes, and Erica's, are scattered on the bathroom floor. And the sound of sex is plainly evident.

Brad and Erica are having sex in her hotel bed. Brad climaxes exhaustedly and slumps on top of Erica.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD
That was good.
(pause)
It's good to be alive.

ERICA
Beats the alternative.

She climbs out from under him and grabs a liter water bottle from the nightstand. Brad rolls onto his back and props his head on his arm. He closes his eyes.

BRAD
When I was a kid I almost drowned once.

Erica is gulping water. She stops and looks at him.

ERICA
Really? How old were you?

BRAD
Little. Eight or so.

She becomes more interested. She fluffs a pillow and uses it to prop herself up.

ERICA
What happened?

BRAD
Nothing. It was a camping trip or something. Fell in the river.
(pause)
My parents said it was an accident.

ERICA
Was it scary?

Brad is thinking. His face tenses up and then he opens his eyes.

BRAD
No.

He sits up and leans into her.

BRAD (CONT'D)
It was nothing.

He kisses her in a prolonged way.

ERICA

Water?

He takes the bottle and takes a swig.

BRAD

Hate the stuff. Don't you have a
real drink?

ERICA

I dunno'. Look in the fridge.

They kiss some more until he breaks away and gets up.

BRAD

I'm going to get in the shower.

ERICA

Finally.

He winks at her and pads into the bathroom.

BRAD (O.S.)

I think I've got a cover in one
of those rolls!

ERICA

Bullshit.

Brad turns on the water.

BRAD (O.S.)

Really. Don't believe me.

She crawls across the bed to lie on top of it with her head
facing the bathroom, still holding the water bottle.

ERICA

So? I think I have one too.

BRAD (O.S.)

Not like this one.

ERICA

What is it?

BRAD (O.S.)

One of the protesters got shot in
the back and his mother held him
as he died.

Erica freezes. Her playful mood is gone.

(CONTINUED)

ERICA
That's horrible.

BRAD (O.S.)
Yeah. I got the whole thing.
Then they started shooting at us.

Brad climbs into the shower stall.

BRAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Probably the same son of a bitch
who killed the kid.

Erica seems saddened by the story as she thinks about her own day. Brad starts showering in earnest.

BRAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did someone say Pulitzer?

Erica is still thinking. Finally...

ERICA
I didn't say it...

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - MORNING

Erica is conferring with a NEWS DIRECTOR at a computer terminal. She has a stack of contact sheets made from her rolls of film.

NEWS DIRECTOR
Did you hear about Brad?

ERICA
No.

NEWS DIRECTOR
He got a cover. Two actually.
Time and Newsweek are both
running it.
(pause)
Some Indian kid dying in his
mother's arms. You know. The
riots?

Erica frowns.

ERICA
He mentioned it.

She looks at her own images again and frowns more.

INT. AIRLINER - DAY

Brad and Zeke are sitting side by side. Zeke opens his carry-on and surreptitiously pulls out an issue of Time magazine which he drops in Brad's lap. Brad snatches it up.

BRAD
Sneaky devil.

ZEKE
I asked Josie to bring it from
Japan.

Brad looks at his photograph of Ravi's grieving mother holding her dying son, printed full page. Her anguished expression screams out at him.

Behind her, a few yards it seems and out of focus, is a LITTLE GIRL standing stock still staring at them.

The composition includes all of the mother, the boy and the little girl in the background. The arms and legs of people running by can also be seen in the composition.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Congratulations again, buddy boy.

Brad stares at the photo.

BRAD
Thanks.

He stares at the little girl in the background.

ZEKE
What's the matter?

Zeke waits for Brad to come back to attention.

BRAD
This girl. I...don't remember
her being there.

Brad glances at him.

ZEKE
We were being shot at. Remember
that? I'm surprised you got it
in focus.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

I don't mean that. I'm...
positive she wasn't there when I
took the picture.

ZEKE

After witnessing that, and being
shot at by crazy soldiers, I'm
surprised you can still remember
your name.

BRAD

No, I'm serious. She wasn't
there.

He looks at Zeke and Zeke stares back, at a loss for
anything else to say.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I know it was a hairy situation.
But she wasn't there.

ZEKE

What are you saying?

Zeke squints at Brad and then at the magazine and then back
at Brad.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what's weird. That
was the same kid we talked to
when we first got to the protest.
Ravi, remember?

Zeke watches Brad pore over the photo.

BRAD

I know.

Zeke frowns at him and shakes his head.

ZEKE

I've got to find another career.

Brad looks back at him, but not with understanding.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Have another drink, relax and
shut up. She's in the picture
now!

Zeke calls a flight attendant and scowls at Brad. Brad
just sits unhappily, holding the magazine, studying it.

(CONTINUED)

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Another round of drinks arrive and Zeke hands one to Brad. Brad takes it as he studies the images in the layout inside the magazine.

He's still confused.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Where's Erica?

BRAD

Uh, she said she had to go to Munich, for a story, then New York.

Zeke snatches the magazine away from Brad and very pointedly stuffs it back in his bag. Then he settles into his new drink.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Brad's home is a combination photography studio and apartment space above it. His walls are covered with his photographs from all the different assignments he's worked on.

There are so many pictures. They're all framed economically, with CLIP-FRAMES instead of actual frames.

Brad arrives with his luggage. As he passes his framed photos he stares at them oddly.

They're all of tumultuous events around the world. There's a series of photos of dead "campesinos," just executed, taken in Central America.

There's a photo of a man falling or jumping from a burning building in Brazil. Another is of a starving Ethiopian mother lying on a mat.

On one wall, almost enshrined, he has framed and signed prints of EDDIE ADAMS'S picture of the execution, of a Vietcong prisoner, by Saigon's chief of police and HUYNH CONG UT'S picture of the Vietnamese girl running naked from a napalm bombing.

He putters around dropping off luggage, jacket, shoes, and starts to unpack. He glances at the piles of mail left for him on a table. He picks up a note and mumbles through it.

BRAD

Paid, paid, paid. Right.

But then he stops and thinks and seems very disturbed.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Brad is sitting at a table with his bow-tie and seersucker talent agent, JERRY CAMARATA, having cocktails. The TIME and NEWSWEEK issues, with Brad's cover, are sitting on the table in front of them. Jerry stares at him, mouth agape.

JERRY
Impossible.

BRAD
Why?

JERRY
That's the picture.

BRAD
She's not supposed to be there.
I distinctly remember that she
was not in the background when I
shot the picture.

JERRY
Of course she was.

Brad frowns at him.

BRAD
You weren't there.

JERRY
What are you saying? Someone
retouched your photograph?
Sabotage?

BRAD
Why not?

JERRY
That's ridiculous. No one's
going to doctor a picture to make
it more dramatic.

BRAD
More dramatic? What do you mean?

Jerry flattens the magazine on the table, emphatically.

JERRY
Well, look at it. That little
girl makes all the difference in
the world.

Brad looks at him, startled.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY (CONT'D)

I mean, it makes it so poignant. This "Pieta" in the foreground and this "innocent" witness to it... It's fantastic. Why do you think you got a cover? Two covers!

Brad looks nervous.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You're just in shock.

BRAD

What about the O.J. cover, when they darkened his skin?

JERRY

That didn't make it more dramatic. Anyway, my point is... Oh, I don't know what my point is.

Jerry stares at Brad.

JERRY (CONT'D)

The point is, you've got a cover! Maybe somebody could alter it somehow. But, they'd have to be at the agency headquarters or something. And, if someone did that to a news photo, and it got out, there'd be so much shit flying.

BRAD

That's what I'm worried about. This is my reputation.

Jerry stares at Brad seriously.

Jerry's mood lightens up. He gestures to Brad and takes a gulp from his drink.

JERRY

Weren't you being shot at when you took this picture?

BRAD

Afterwards.

JERRY

Well, isn't it possible you thought she wasn't there? I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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JERRY (CONT'D)

mean, it's already a pretty intense image, this miserable woman with her dying son.... Come on.

Brad's not convinced but he keeps quiet.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Do you wear a hat when you go on assignment?

He looks at Brad dubiously. Brad shakes his head smiling.

BRAD

I just think it's weird.

JERRY

Just concentrate on your work. You still need to get some more stuff going before I can get you in the big leagues.

Brad stares at the magazines.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad is sleeping. Dreaming. Restlessly.

He's thrashing in water. Advancing film. RAVI gets shot in the back and collapses. Focusing. Ravi's mother shrieks. Shooting. The soldier aims his rifle at the camera. Looking. And fires. Staring.

Brad rolls over and wakes up suddenly. He's sweaty.

He looks around his apartment apprehensively. Subtle sounds from the street drift in. Streetlight shines in through the windows illuminating the darkened apartment.

He glances in the corners of the room. He feels a PRESENCE. He LISTENS. His eyes widen as he CONCENTRATES on the sound.

He turns on the lamp on his nightstand. His TIME cover is sitting beside the lamp. He gets up and grabs a heavy-duty flashlight next to his bed.

He walks out to the hallway that leads to the rest of the apartment, turning lights on as he goes. Troubled.

He looks in the LIVING ROOM. He looks in the BATHROOM. He looks out the WINDOW towards the street. The nightlife is going about its business.

There's nothing out of order.

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Brad heads back through his apartment turning lights off. As he gets back to his bed his bare feet step in a wet spot on the floor. He looks down at it, puzzled, and steps off of it. He squats down, touches the puddle.

The part of the puddle not stepped on looks like a SMALL FOOTPRINT. He looks around quickly, looking for more footprints leading to or from somewhere. Nothing.

He heads back out to the hallway, turns on the light again. No wet footprints. He even crouches down to catch the glare. He runs his hand on the floor to feel for wetness.

He heads to the bathroom. Checks for any source of wet footprints. Checks the faucets. The tub. The kitchen.

Nothing.

Back at the bedroom he stares at the puddle. It could be a footprint, but then again....

He sets the flashlight aside and grabs a T-shirt. He notices a 35mm camera lying on his nightstand.

He takes the camera, sets the flash, and takes a picture of the puddle. Then he drops the T-shirt on the puddle and wipes it up.

He gets in bed, reaches over his TIME cover, turns off the lamp and tries to go to sleep.

INT. ASSOCIATED PRESS/ART DEPARTMENT - DAY

Brad walks in, talking to a production assistant.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

You took that picture? It's great.

The P.A. is leading Brad around the office to the computer bay.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

I want to be a photographer. I'm taking some courses at NYU.

Brad abides his chatter. They arrive at a computer, the P.A. sits down and opens up his picture document.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Well, this is the original, that was e-mailed from India. I did the distribution around the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
country and I didn't do anything
to it.

The computer opens up several images from Brad's roll. Brad leans in to look. The whole series is there of Ravi being shot, falling, the mother running to him and the subsequent shots of the soldier shooting at Brad.

The P.A. toggles between images.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
Did he really shoot at you?

Brad is studying the images.

BRAD
Can you go back to the cover
shot?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Sure.

It's the same as all the covers, with the little girl in the background.

BRAD
Could Peter, in India, have
retouched it?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
I think he'd know how. But the
log says that you gave him the
rolls, he developed them and
immediately posted them to us. I
doubt it.

Brad looks at the monitor again.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
He wouldn't have had the time.
(pause)
Plus, he would have to have a
picture available, or stock
pictures. You know, of the
little girl.

Brad looks at him grimly, nods.

BRAD
Alright. Thanks. I guess that's
it.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Sure thing—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad shakes his hand and turns to leave.

BRAD

Thanks for your help, Jim.

The P.A. watches him leave.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Joel...!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Brad is in a huge crowd that is protesting against the National Transportation Safety Board.

People are holding signs saying; "Information now," "NTSB protects corporations not passengers," "Survivors have rights!," etc. Brad is photographing the confrontation.

Police have barricaded the entrance to the federal building, housing the NTSB. So far, the protest is confined to one side of the barricades.

Zeke is also in the crowd. He approaches Brad as Brad heads for a higher vantage point, outside of the crowd.

ZEKE

Brad.

Brad notices him.

BRAD

Hey. Whattaya' got?

Zeke holds up his steno pad.

ZEKE

Not much. The press conference has been delayed. They said they're going to hand out a flyer, explaining that they're afraid to hold it with this crowd out here.

BRAD

I don't blame them.

ZEKE

Did you see your picture?

BRAD

Which one?

(CONTINUED)

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Zeke points at the protesters. Some of the signs have a blow up of a photograph of a crash site.

ZEKE

Flight 404.

Brad squints in the noonday sun at the signs. He nods, recognizing it. Zeke smiles mischievously.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Ironic, ain't it?

Brad continues to shoot pictures.

BRAD

What is?

Zeke looks at him blankly.

ZEKE

Well, you shot that picture and now you're shooting these people hopping mad at the Safety boys. Kind of a "before and after."

BRAD

Yeah.

Brad looks at the people he's photographing. Not through his camera, although he holds it close to his eye for the next opportunity.

There are a lot of angry people shouting epithets at the building entrance. There are some people openly crying, silently holding their protest signs.

He stares at a woman who is blowing her nose and wiping tears from her face.

He stares at a BUSINESS MAN who is standing still, dressed in office clothes, holding a sign. The man's expression is grim.

Brad looks through his camera and zooms in on the man's face. Up close, he can see that the man's face is wet— He's weeping quietly.

Brad clicks a few frames. He stops to assess the situation.

ZEKE

Well, I'm going to go back in. Catch you later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zeke weaves through the crowd.

INT. BRAD'S STUDIO - DAY

Brad arrives and finds JASON, his assistant, shuffling papers and things.

JASON

Hey, I've got your prints done.

BRAD

Thanks, Jason. Did you do this morning's as well?

JASON

Yeah, everything you said.

BRAD

Thanks.

JASON

A.P. sent your India rolls though. I didn't get a chance to do those.

BRAD

Oh? Where are they?

JASON

In the darkroom. Do you want me to—

BRAD

Nah, that's okay. I'll take care of them. You can go.

JASON

Alright. See you next week?

BRAD

Yeah. Bye.

Jason leaves and Brad goes over the piles and prints that he left him.

Brad runs a hand through his hair, thinking.

He walks over to an open area in his studio. Jason has strung up 8x10 prints to dry and display for Brad. There are specific frames, printed as full 8x10s, and proofsheets of all seven of the rolls he shot earlier that day.

Brad goes into the darkroom and comes back out with a lupe and a grease pencil. He starts by looking at all of the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

prints in a cursory way, starting at one end, stepping to the other. He starts over and looks more carefully.

The photographs are of the front of the federal building with the protesters outside.

Angry protesters shouting.

Protest signs, a sea of them, and individuals.

Police standing, barricading the entrance.

There's ONE PICTURE of the crowd, with ZEKE walking through it towards the camera, smiling. Brad smiles, pulls it off and sets it aside.

There's an 8x10 of the BUSINESS MAN weeping quietly, holding his protest sign.

Brad steps closer to the print, looking it over. Then he raises the lupe and studies the image very closely. He goes from left to right, top to bottom, stopping periodically at specific details.

He uses the sunlight streaming in from the windows, behind his desk to his side, to see the prints.

Periodically, he looks at the print without the lupe, taking into consideration how a certain detail affects the whole composition. Then he returns to the close-up.

With his right hand, the man in the photograph, holds his sign. His cheeks are wet with tears, that show up nicely, thanks to the lighting at the moment the photograph was taken.

If it weren't for the tears you wouldn't know from the man's grim expression that he was crying. But the combination of the two makes for a very moving and sad image.

Brad trails down the man's left shoulder with the lupe. The left arm ends behind a round shape. Brad looks at it without the lupe. He tries the lupe again. He can't tell what the shape is.

Jason printed the single 8x10s with the edge numbers showing, he didn't crop them cosmetically.

Brad circles the frame number, 17, and then grabs the proofsheets with that image. The right end of the second-to-last row of exposures has frame 17.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just glancing at the proofsheets, one can notice the difference from exposure to exposure, where Brad zoomed, in or out, to get a certain composition.

Brad slides his gaze down to the last row, left-hand side. Frame 18, 19 and 20 are wider.

Brad uses the lupe to look at them.

He stops cold and jerks his head away from the proofsheets. He takes a step back.

His eyes are wide open as he stares at the proofsheets. Anxiously, he peers at the three frames, without getting closer.

G r a d u a l l y

he approaches the proofsheets, with the lupe again, and looks.

INT. DARKROOM

Brad dashes inside and locates the page of negatives that contain 17 through 20. He yanks a strip out and loads frame 18 into the enlarger. He closes the darkroom door, flips on the safety light and grabs some paper.

He frames the paper in the easel and presses the timer. The enlarger projects the image onto the paper. He stares at it.

The business man, holding the protest sign while quietly weeping, is standing with a little girl holding his left hand. She's slightly blurred from moving her head at the instant the photograph was taken.

It is her head that blocked the man's arm in the previous frame.

Brad processes the print through the developing baths.

LATER

Brad is printing more pictures. He circles in red different areas of the prints once they're dry, which he yanks off of a clothesline strung across the darkroom.

THEN

He grabs the package of negatives and contact sheets from A.P., that he took in India.

He prints more pictures from those rolls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he enlarges each image, some blurred or out of focus version of the little girl is apparent in each picture.

INT. BRAD'S STUDIO - CONT'D

A MANIACAL LOOK is on Brad's face as he holds his head in his hands.

He's printed a lot of pictures. He's sitting at a table piled with prints, some dry, some wet. All of them are circled and marked in various ways.

Directly in front of him is the photograph of the businessman and the series of photographs of Ravi dying in his mother's arms... WITH THE LITTLE GIRL.

All the other photos are different close-ups and isolating croppings and enlargements of the little girl in different exposures, surrounded by protesters and police and protest signs.

BRAD

(whispered)

What the fuck is going on?

BRAD DOESN'T REALIZE that even the photograph of Zeke, that he set aside, has the little girl in it, looking at the camera from behind a group of people.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Brad, on his sofa clutching some of the prints in his hand, meditates on all of it for a while.

BRAD

It can't be.

He glances over to his television set in the corner of the room. It's off. The screen reflects a warped view of the entire room.

Behind him, in the reflection, Brad thinks he sees a little girl standing still,...

...looking at him.

VOICE

(whispered)

Help me.

Brad's eyes are saucer-like, round and wide open. He slowly sits up and very, very gradually turns around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There's NO LITTLE GIRL standing in his living room. He glances around, and then back at the reflection on the TV screen. Now there's nothing there as well... maybe an odd shape he mistook for someone.

He looks around, breathing again, and realizes that his hand is TIGHTLY CLENCHED around the crumpled photographic prints.

He angrily THROWS THE PRINTS across the room and then buries his face in his hands, rubbing his eyes frustratedly.

BRAD
(whispered)
How can it be?

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Brad has changed into nicer clothes. In the bathroom he splashes water on his face and towels it off.

The rest of the rooms are empty. No one is in the apartment.

The television is off. The telephone is silent. Brad casually turns around in the bathroom. He looks behind himself...paranoid.

Even though he's standing in front of the mirror. He looks around the bathroom as if he had heard something or seen something out of the corner of his eye.

He listens.

As he goes through his apartment he casually looks around.

He stops in the hallway and looks down the length as if expecting to see someone at the end. He sways to the side peeking obliquely into other rooms. Looking.

Nothing.

He walks into the living room and looks around. It's empty. He walks over to the windows, to check if one is slightly open, maybe letting street noise in. There's nothing on the coffee table.

Behind him, at the door to the living room, stands a man. It is one of the dead "campesinos" from Brad's framed photographs.

Unaware of him, Brad finishes checking the windows and turns around to grab his jacket from his sofa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

No one's there.

He puts his jacket on. He has a very troubled expression on his face, almost saddened.

He heads out.

EXT. STREET

Brad comes out of his studio and onto the street looking for a cab. After a few cars pass, a cab shows up.

As he's getting in, Brad looks back up at his apartment windows. He left lights on, like a good urban dweller.

But he still feels uneasy.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A speaker is giving a presentation, in a rented banquet hall, to a small networking gathering. The speaker has slides and is droning on about journalistic integrity.

Brad is sitting with his arms crossed at the same table as Zeke. He looks around the room.

SPEAKER

Ever since the technology of photography made it possible to rely on the photographic image, world politics have been influenced by the pictures.

Brad spots Erica, sitting across the room at another table with some of her colleagues. She notices him looking at her and smiles and waves. Brad smiles at her, surprised to see her.

SPEAKER (CONT'D)

In some very memorable instances, wars have come to an end because of a photograph.

(pause)

And, of course, many more have been started because of them.

Erica points out that he should turn back and pay attention. He smirks at her and THEN NOTICES SOMETHING behind her.

He cranes his neck to see the back of the room better. She doesn't get what he's doing. He gets up abruptly and goes to the back of the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the crowd of people in the back there are lots of faces paying attention to the presentation. Except for one. A sad woman stares at Brad from between heads and shoulders.

BRAD

What the...

He gets a CLEAR GLIMPSE of the woman. It looks like the STARVING ETHIOPIAN WOMAN from his framed photographs at home.

She disappears in the crowd. Brad barges through and into the rest of the building.

But she's gone.

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE

Brad is nursing a drink at the bar, boring a hole in space with his eyes.

It's a big restaurant and a big cocktail lounge. There are a lot of people conversing over cocktails. One of Zeke's friends, PETER, is talking to a group of listeners. Zeke is shaking his head.

Brad is not really following the conversation, slightly separated from the group.

PETER

But if it weren't you, it'd be someone else.

ZEKE

Bullshit. I by virtue of my humble uniqueness, make it different from what someone else would do. I'm not saying there aren't market and social forces that pull people along. But I don't think that we're that insignificant.

PETER

What then?

ZEKE

We completely mold our stories. We control the perspective of our stories. And that also means we have an important responsibility.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Erica walks into the bar. The debate continues unaffected by her walking in. She notices Brad and joins him at the bar. She interrupts his solitary staring contest.

BRAD

When did you get in?

ERICA

Two days ago.

She looks great, dressed in a sexy black dress, but she's not exactly happy. They hug quickly.

BRAD

Why haven't you called me?

She studies him with a scorching glare.

ERICA

Why haven't you called me?

She has a point. He gives up.

BRAD

Did you like the talk?

ERICA

Scintillating.

Brad smiles, nodding.

PETER

Brad, do you mold your photographs? The perspective?

Brad turns around a little surprised. Erica chuckles, realizing that there's a great philosophical debate going on. The bartender takes her order.

ZEKE

Well, see, we disagree on this.

BRAD

I photograph reality.

PETER

But if it weren't you, would someone else take the photographs you take?

Brad shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

I don't know about that. I just know that I document reality. I don't "interpret."

ZEKE

Nah. Anytime you make a choice you are "interpreting," on some level. When you choose to point in one particular direction. When you decide to zoom in or out. When you decide to click the shutter.

BRAD

But that sort of "interpretation" doesn't make any real difference. I'm still documenting.

ZEKE

But where does it start and stop?

BRAD

I don't tamper with the subject matter. It's not fashion photography.

PETER

So, because you don't move the starving Ethiopian woman's hair out of her eyes, it's reality? And, because Helmut Newton moves Jerry Hall's hair into her eyes, it's fashion?

The party chuckles. Brad gulps and, snatching his drink from the bar, rushes away to a booth.

PETER (CONT'D)

(drunkenly)

Hey! Here's your hat, what's your hurry?

Everyone laughs. Peter takes a drink. Erica gets her drink and walks over to Brad.

PETER (CONT'D)

But, seriously Zeke. Brad's saying that he just shoots what's there. I'm saying that people just want to read what matters to them. We don't determine that.

(CONTINUED)

ZEKE

What about the Bosnian or Central American guerrilla who sees a photojournalist and says "You want a picture? I'll give you a picture." And takes some poor guy and shoots him.

PETER

Well...what would you do Brad?

Brad's too far away.

PETER (CONT'D)

Oh, whatever.

ZEKE

According to Brad's theory, if a woman's being raped in the alley outside and you walk by, because you have your camera with you, you're just gonna' take pictures.

Peter drunkenly reels from the harsh example.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

We can't claim, so cavalierly, that we're not involved or that we don't affect these situations.

PETER

So, by extension, you're saying we create demand by virtue of what we choose to cover?

ZEKE

Basically.

Erica slides into the booth beside Brad.

ERICA

Who'd you go chasing after?

He doesn't respond. She's a bit startled by his reaction.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Hey! You alright?

He's almost scowling. Then he snaps out of it.

BRAD

Huh? Oh. Um.

CONTINUED:

She's getting more concerned. She tries to locate what he might be upset about.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I just thought I...saw something.

ERICA

Something?

BRAD

Someone.

He turns to Erica, a little disturbed and embarrassed.

BRAD (CONT'D)

It's nothing. I thought I saw someone I...know.

ERICA

Don't you know everybody here?

BRAD

Yeah. I guess you're right.

He glances around the room, then back at Erica.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hey! What are you up to tonight?

She looks at him blankly.

BRAD (CONT'D)

You mind if I come over?

ERICA

No. That'd be fun.

BRAD

Cool.

(pause)

You want to take off soon?

ERICA

Yeah.

Zeke saunters over to them. He always carries a beat up valise, ever the reporter.

ZEKE

Hey Erica! You back?

ERICA

Hi, Zeke.

(CONTINUED)

ZEKE

Is it true what I heard?

Zeke is looking at her mischievously and she is being coy.

ERICA

What did you hear?

Zeke is coaxing it out of her. She reluctantly nods.

ZEKE

Our Erica here just got a cover.

Brad starts, spilling some of his drink. He looks at her for confirmation. She's embarrassed.

ERICA

Yeah, it's true. I just heard today.

ZEKE

Congratulations. A toast.

(pause)

To Erica and many more covers.

BRAD

Why didn't you say anything?

ERICA

I figured you'd find out soon enough.

Brad frowns at her and then gives her a hug.

BRAD

What for?

ERICA

The Holocaust anniversary.

She frowns and shrugs at him.

BRAD

Aren't ya' happy?

ERICA

Well it's nice, but...

BRAD

But what?

ERICA

I'm not so sure it's particularly good journalism.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERICA (CONT'D)

(pause)

It's just more "flies on the mouth" stuff.

Brad's face sets. He resents the remark. She, however, isn't ashamed of saying it.

BRAD

It's accurate reportage, ain't it?

She looks at him as if he's a naive person.

ERICA

Eighty year old survivors, crying their eyes out,...it's not "news."

Brad hesitates.

BRAD

Well, it's good for your book.

She hides in her drink.

ERICA

Yeah, it's a good thing.

Zeke slides into the booth, facing them. He opens his bag and pulls out Brad's by-now-famous Time magazine. Brad averts his gaze a bit.

Zeke opens it to the cover article spread, which has the photo of Ravi and his friends taken at the eatery, and taps it with his finger.

Brad studies the image. It's been cropped but he thinks he spots an odd smudge or blur on the edge of the frame. Erica looks at it and becomes a little stiff.

ZEKE

Indian police rounded up the owners of that place.

Brad glances up at him.

BRAD

How do you know?

ZEKE

Connections.

Erica sighs.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

It was news.

ZEKE

I think we made it news.

BRAD

What do you want me to do?

ZEKE

You told him you weren't going to
release these pictures.

BRAD

You saying, I killed that kid?

Zeke frowns at him for being argumentative.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Look. It sucks that... that kid
died.

ZEKE

Ravi.

BRAD

Whatever—

Brad stops in mid-sentence staring at something. Erica and
Zeke notice.

Brad stares between the crowd, at a distance, at a man who
looks like the PROPRIETOR of the eatery, where they met
Ravi and Narendra.

But it's unclear.

Brad starts to shove Erica out of the booth.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here.

ERICA

Easy there. I want another
drink.

BRAD

Somewhere else!

He manages to get her on her feet. Zeke smiles at Brad's
histrionics.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZEKE

Alright, alright. I'm sorry I brought it up. Stay, stay.

Brad leaves. Erica smiles at Zeke and shrugs.

ERICA

See ya.

INT. ERICA'S APARTMENT

The lights are out. Erica and Brad are in bed. She's sleeping with her head on his shoulder.

Brad, however, is wide awake. He carefully extricates himself from Erica's slumbering embrace and goes out to the hallway, closing the bedroom door slightly.

He turns on the light and goes down the hall, to the bathroom. He turns on the light and looks at himself in the mirror. He looks a bit sleep deprived.

He urinates and then turns on the faucet, washes his hands and pours a glass of water from the tap.

As he takes a drink he feels something near him. He pauses from drinking. He looks around, behind his back.

He turns back to the mirror, tips the glass all the way back, finishing the water. He notices something again. He doesn't hear anything, per se. He doesn't see anything.

In the mirror, he looks from himself to the bathroom doorway. He looks obliquely down the hall, narrowed in by the jamb and his p.o.v. Down, next to the door jamb on the hallway floor.

WATER. A puddle.

SHOES. Little girl shoes. Legs with stockings. The hem of a dress. As if a little girl is HIDING JUST AROUND THE WALL.

Brad stares at the feet, in the mirror. He's leaned forward and raised himself on tiptoe to see.

He's STOPPED BREATHING, licks his lips. Thinks. Staring.

BRAD

Hello?

His eyes are riveted to the image in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns around suddenly and lunges out of the bathroom door.

There's NO ONE IN THE HALLWAY.

He stalks down the hallway, searching, frantically. With each new possibility occurring to him his head turns, investigating each room and closet.

Nothing.

He's turned on all the lights in Erica's apartment except for her bedroom where she's sleeping.

He starts breathing again. Rapidly.

THEN

Brad is in the bedroom, using the light spilling in from the hallway to find his clothes. He quietly slips out of the bedroom again.

THEN

In the kitchen, Brad starts to write a note on a dry-erase board Erica has on her refrigerator. He can't think of anything to say that would make sense.

So he leaves quietly.

EXT. STREET

Brad climbs out of a cab and looks up apprehensively at his apartment, as the car drives away.

He decides to go inside anyway.

He takes his keys out and reluctantly opens his front door.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

Brad climbs his stairs to his apartment, by-passing his studio.

As Brad reaches the landing he opens his apartment door and discovers...

All of the drawers in the living room are pulled open, all the way.

It startles him, and immediately CROUCHES as if suddenly aware of being very vulnerable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He glances around for SOMETHING HEAVY. There's nothing appropriate nearby so he CLENCHES HIS FISTS and holds them up tentatively.

He steps quietly through the living room towards the hallway and other rooms. His eyes dart around, looking for an explanation.

As he enters the other rooms he discovers every drawer, cupboard, closet, hutch— anything that can open— wide open.

Since he doesn't find any intruders he relaxes a bit. He grabs a frying pan from the kitchen anyway.

He investigates the entire apartment. The back door and windows are secure and locked. There are no telltale signs of breaking and entry, no broken glass, nothing forced. He turns on the lights as he walks through.

He takes a closer look at the gaping drawers and such. Nothing seems disturbed, ruffled or out of place.

THEN

Brad goes about slamming everything closed in each and every room in his apartment.

THEN

In the living room, Brad sits down on his sofa, exhausted by the fright.

He notices his TIME magazine sitting on his COFFEE TABLE. He picks it up. He can't remember placing it there.

He studies the image with a sickened expression on his face. It almost echoes the look on the Indian mother's face, shrieking for her son's life.

He studies the Ravi's face, his head hanging backwards as his body is held up. Brad turns his head slightly and then starts to turn the magazine to see the boy's face sort of right-side-up.

He hears something and looks up. There are French doors in his living room that separate it from the dining area. He CATCHES HIS BREATH.

Brad sees a young man standing, reflected in one of the doors. Brad's stock still, not daring to move.

The person in the reflection looks familiar. It looks like Ravi. Without moving, Brad glances down at the cover.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad thinks that the reflection blinks. He starts to shift his weight to turn and see where this person is standing, leading with his eyes...

He turns to look behind himself...

No one is there.

Brad lets out a moan. He gets up and instinctively backs up into a wall, keeping the whole room in his sight.

He realizes he's still holding the magazine and throws it across the room. He's also still holding the frying pan, which he clutches as he slides to the floor.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Brad is curled up on his sofa, asleep. The PHONE RINGS, waking him up. He looks around desperately as he remembers the night before. He grabs the phone.

BRAD

Hello?

ERICA (O.S.)

Hey! What gives? Was I snoring?

BRAD

Hey, no. Sorry. Uh, it's nothing like that. I just...

He looks around.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I just wanted to get home...for some reason.

He gets up and walks around.

ERICA (O.S.)

I was surprised when I didn't find you here. I thought you were in the other room or something. I even called out for you.

BRAD

Yeah, sorry.

He sits down again.

BRAD (CONT'D)

...have you ever...seen a ghost?

(CONTINUED)

ERICA (O.S.)

A ghost?

Brad is still nervously looking around.

ERICA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

That's funny. What, did you see one here?

BRAD

Have you?

ERICA (O.S.)

Just on my Grandpa's farm, as a little kid.

He seems to be about to ask her directly about her apartment but then he chokes that off, scrunching his face at the thought.

BRAD

Hhmmm. Well, it's nothing. Can I call you back? Later?

ERICA (O.S.)

Sure. Did you see something here?

BRAD

No. I didn't. I was just curious. Anyway, let me call you back.

ERICA (O.S.)

Alright. Later.

BRAD

Yeah. Bye.

He hangs up and thinks while holding the handset. He picks it up and dials.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hello. Zeke?

ZEKE (O.S.)

Yeah? What's up?

BRAD

Let me ask you something.

ZEKE (O.S.)

Shoot.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

What do you know about ghosts?

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT

Zeke is in his kitchen with a cup of coffee in his hand.

ZEKE

Ghosts! Why? You got a problem?

BRAD (O.S.)

No, no. Just, what do you know about them?

ZEKE

Seriously?

BRAD (O.S.)

Yeah.

ZEKE

Uh, well. They're usually spirits of dead people who have unfinished business here.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

Brad is listening closely.

ZEKE (O.S.)

Some people say they're stuck between here and there, whatever there might be. Heaven, another life, who knows.

BRAD

What else?

ZEKE (O.S.)

I don't know. Unlike in the movies, they tend to be benign. Mischievous is all they are. I think poltergeists are exactly that, a spirit that's kind of pulling pranks and shit. Breaking stuff, making things fly, you know?

BRAD

Yeah.

ZEKE (O.S.)

I had a friend who had a ghost recorded on a tape. A little

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ZEKE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
micro-cassette he was recording
on. It's as clear as day, this
young woman's voice. He was
speculating if it was an ancestor
of his.

BRAD
Recorded? How?

ZEKE (O.S.)
Well, I don't know exactly. I
think it has to do with the fact
that we only see things in a very
small slice of the light
spectrum. The same thing is true
for sound.

BRAD
Yeah?

ZEKE (O.S.)
Well, maybe there's tons of stuff
happening around us every minute
that, if we saw a wider range of
light and heard a wider range of
sound, we'd know about them.
(pause)
I wonder what dogs see.

Brad is frowning, listening to Zeke.

BRAD
That's weird.

ZEKE (O.S.)
Why do you ask? Have you seen
one?

BRAD
No. I'm just curious. I was
listening to a program and I was
wondering if there was a story in
it...

ZEKE (O.S.)
A story, huh?

BRAD
Yeah. Well, I guess that's it.
You going to the office later?

ZEKE (O.S.)
I'm going now.

BRAD
Maybe I'll see you there.

ZEKE (O.S.)
Alright.

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT

Zeke is listening dubiously.

BRAD (O.S.)
Thanks. Bye.

He hangs up the phone and shakes his head.

ZEKE
A story.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

Brad hangs up and paces around his living room. He finds the magazine thrown in the corner. He picks it up.

He contemplates the magazine.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Brad is equipped with all his camera gear. He's walking around the city taking pictures.

As he frames an image he carefully studies the elements of the composition. He picks a simple tableau of a few people, a wall, nothing fancy. He takes his time and takes a picture.

He spots a bus stop with a man dozing on a bench. He looks at everything around the bus stop to make sure there isn't anything he hasn't noticed. He squats a bit and takes a picture.

EXT. CITY

Brad goes to different spots around the city, taking pictures carefully. He makes sure to look at every detail of the composition before releasing the shutter.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Brad has been wandering about, taking pictures, for a while. He's walking past a school playground, full of kids during their recess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad stops and watches them. They're all rambunctious kids chasing after each other, SCREECHING and HOLLERING, playing games, having fun.

It's a joyous image of all the children playing. Brad raises his camera to his eye to frame another picture. As he watches them through the lens he's put off by the different children's faces.

Out of context, their expressions are disturbing.

He studies the elements of his composition but it's like a stormy sea, constantly shifting and changing.

All the kid's voices echo off the buildings, in that particular inner city way. As Brad tries to settle on a composition for a photograph he starts to discern a SINGLE CHILD'S VOICE in the cacophony.

It separates itself slowly from the OTHER KIDS who are SCREECHING and SCREAMING and HOLLERING and LAUGHING.

The voice is HOLLERING too. Actually it's SCREECHING.

And it lifts away in clear contrast to the background sound of the playground.

VOICE

Help me! Help me!

Brad can hear it clearly as it frantically repeats its plea. He lowers his camera.

He searches the crowd for a child in distress, or adults who may have noticed. But he doesn't see anything. Nothing seems out of place, no group of kids standing around a crisis.

A child's voice has that uncanny, DNA programmed way of sending adults over the edge.

Brad gets weirded out and starts walking away, quickly. He runs away.

INT. BRAD'S STUDIO

Back at his studio, Brad develops his film and prints the pictures in a frenzy.

As he impatiently dries the contact sheets he carefully looks at them. Although at first it seems like there's nothing strange in the images, he finds in every frame a SMALL ANOMALY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He goes into the darkroom again and tediously prints an 8x10 of each frame.

THEN

He comes out of the darkroom with a slew of wet prints which he sets out to dry. He grabs a hairdryer and starts drying them off.

As he dries them, he finds a shadow here, a blur there, in every picture. He finishes setting them all out. He stops drying as he LEANS IN CLOSER, troubled by the anomalies.

Using a lupe, he scours the pictures, studying every square inch. Each photograph, that he so carefully composed so as to not be surprised by some detail, has some new DEVELOPMENT.

He studies one picture, the picture of the bus stop with the man sleeping, and can't find anything out of place, until he looks at it without the lupe.

He's startled to find what looks like an "OVER THE SHOULDER" vantage point. There's a blurred head, neck and shoulder, as if he had taken the picture over a little girl's shoulder.

Brad steps back horrified.

THEN

Brad rushes into the darkroom with old binders in his arms. They're all labeled as old binders of negatives and photographs from his college and high school days.

He starts making fast contact sheets of all of the old negatives. He has the ORIGINAL OLD CONTACT SHEETS which he compares to the NEW ONES he's making. Each image is DIFFERENT from the way it was before.

With the lupe, he looks at all of them. The last ones he looks at are an original of A DOG ON A SIDEWALK, taken as a student project probably, and the same, newer version, with someone else in it.

THEN

Brad is making another enlargement. As the enlarger turns on, it is the old picture OF A DOG ON THE SIDEWALK. The enlarger cuts out and Brad takes the print through the developer baths.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the image develops, Brad's expression becomes grim. He finishes the process and then takes the picture out of the darkroom.

He looks at it in bright light. Now it is a photograph of the same dog on the sidewalk clearly looking at a very clearly photographed little girl standing in the background.

WAS THE DOG LOOKING AT HER BACK THEN?

Brad is sickened by the image. His face is drawn in terror.

THEN

Brad rushes to a bookshelf. He finds a dusty old photo album.

He takes it to a table with the wet print. He leafs through the old pictures. They are all old Ecktachrome prints of family pictures, slightly tan and greenish.

He turns pages quickly and then slows down. He's found something.

There are several photos of Brad, supposedly, as a child... And a LITTLE GIRL.

Brad clenches his jaw staring at the old pictures and the wet print in his hand.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, GRAMERCY - NIGHT

It's raining and Brad is at the front door of an old but ritzy apartment building standing next to the doorman's station, waiting. The DOORMAN is on the telephone.

DOORMAN

Mr. Camarata. There's a Brad Kiveat to see you.

Brad can hear the buzzing voice on the handset.

DOORMAN (CONT'D)

Certainly.

The doorman hangs up and turns to Brad.

DOORMAN (CONT'D)

Please, follow me, sir.

INT. JERRY CAMARATA'S APARTMENT

Brad enters Jerry's apartment. Brad looks wet and disheveled.

JERRY
Don't you call? You look like
hell.

Jerry's in a robe. Brad looks at him quizzically.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I was going to jump in the shower
when Stanford called.

BRAD
Sorry.

JERRY
You okay?

Jerry's more concerned now.

BRAD
Uh, kind of.

JERRY
What? You get mugged?

BRAD
No.

Jerry leads him into the living room, to a wet bar.

JERRY
You want a drink?

BRAD
Yeah.

Jerry pauses, looking at him. He opens a little bar refrigerator, pours some vodka. He hands the drink over.

JERRY
Sit down.

Brad sits, takes a breath.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What is the emergency?

BRAD
Something strange is happening.

(CONTINUED)

Jerry stares at Brad.

BRAD (CONT'D)
It's hard to explain.

Jerry steps closer and sits adjacent to Brad.

JERRY
Go ahead.

Brad looks at Jerry uncertainly.

BRAD
I think I have a ghost in my
photograph.

Jerry looks at Brad without saying anything. Then he picks up the phone and starts dialing.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Who, who are you calling?

JERRY
Bellevue. You're obviously off
your rocker.

BRAD
Put that down. This is not easy
for me. I need you to help me
here!

Jerry replaces the receiver, a little mollified. He takes a breath and a gulp of his vodka.

JERRY
What's going on?

Brad is not light and casual about it which makes Jerry more concerned.

BRAD
The cover photo? My cover photo.

JERRY
Yeah?

BRAD
That little girl in the
background.

JERRY
Oh, come on. We went over that.

BRAD

I'm certain now. I was pretty sure before, but I listened to you and my own doubts. But I knew she wasn't there when I took that picture.

JERRY

What are you—

BRAD

(interrupting)

All these years that I've been taking pictures, I've always had a pretty damn good memory of what it was I shot.

JERRY

Maybe it's Post Traumatic Stress Syndr—

BRAD

(interrupting)

I've just spent the last two days studying nearly every fucking picture I've ever taken and in each one...

Jerry stares at him, frightened by the intensity of Brad's emotional state. Brad forces himself to calm down, or slow down, at least.

BRAD (CONT'D)

She's in each one.

Jerry stares at Brad and then glances at Brad's drink. Brad gulps down a third of it.

BRAD (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

I even dug out my old school photos.

He digs into his pocket and takes out the dog picture with the little girl now in it. He also has his old contact sheet. He hands both over, pointing it out.

BRAD (CONT'D)

It's impossible. But she wasn't there before, fifteen, nearly twenty years ago,...and now she's there.

Brad seems weak, almost weepy.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

This is crazy. I don't understand.

Jerry's obstinacy surprises Brad.

BRAD

She's NOT SUPPOSED to be in the PICTURE! She WASN'T THERE!

JERRY

How can that be?

BRAD

How the hell should I know?

Jerry shakes his head. Brad stares at him.

JERRY

There's got to be an explanation.

Brad reacts as if Jerry hasn't been listening.

BRAD

She's a ghost. That's the only explanation.

JERRY

Somebody's pulling a joke. Somebody must have retouched—

BRAD

(interrupting)
All my photographs? For what purpose? When?

JERRY

I don't know.

BRAD

She's different in every frame. Some are close, some are far. Blurry here, in focus there. This is not some casual prank. I couldn't pull something like this if I had a year to do it in.

Jerry steels himself.

JERRY

It's nonsense. There's got to be another explanation.

BRAD

Like what?

Jerry puts his drink down and hands the prints back.

JERRY

I don't know, Brad. But you're asking me to believe that there's some mumbo jumbo ghost haunting you, haunting your photography? That's nuts.

BRAD

It's real.

JERRY

Take a break, Brad. You've been pushing yourself too hard. Relax.

Jerry takes Brad's drink from his hand and leads him to the door.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Maybe you need a little vacation, something to take your mind off of things. But, right now, go home and take a hot bath and forget about it.

Brad turns on Jerry, faces him.

BRAD

You're not listening.

JERRY

You're right. I'm not. It's too ridiculous to listen to.

(pause)

I'm doing you a favor.

Brad attempts to say something.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Go home, give it a break.

He ushers Brad out the door.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Stanford can get you a cab.

Brad stares at him. Then he shakes his head, disappointed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY (CONT'D)

Good. Remember, home and a hot bath.

Jerry closes the door on Brad. Brad stares at the door.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

As Brad starts to climb the stairs he notices that the door to his apartment is ajar. He peers at it, trying to remember if he left it that way—

It closes slightly.

But, not completely. Brad goes into his studio and grabs a heavy flashlight.

He climbs upstairs and kicks the door open.

BRAD

Who's there?

He turns on lights as he goes. Desperately.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I've got a gun.

The same as before, he doesn't find anything out of place, no forced entry.

He looks around his apartment, exhausted and angry.

In the living room, he reaches in to turn on a floor lamp. As he turns the switch, it SHOCKS him, KNOCKING him off his feet, THROWING him against the wall.

FLASHBACK: Brad is a child of eight, thrashing, nearly drowning in a river, or lake, as a little girl desperately tries to help him. He can SEE HER THROUGH THE WATER, looking up at her.

LATER

Brad comes to and grabs the back of his head that hit the wall and shakes his arm out.

He stands up gingerly.

BRAD (CONT'D)

God damn it.

He flicks on an overhead light and looks at the floor lamp. A whisk of smoke is curling up from the bulb.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The floor lamp is standing in a puddle of water.

Brad runs off and comes back with a towel to drop on the puddle. But there's no water to mop up. He scowls at it.

LATER

Brad is on the phone angrily waiting for it to pick up on the other end.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hello? Mr. Farnsworth? This is Brad Kiveat. I've just nearly been KILLED here. I tried to turn on a light and I just got shocked. Something's wrong with the wiring in this place and I need you to call me and to send someone to check it out at your earliest convenience.

He slams the phone down.

Frustrated, Brad picks up the offending lamp, yanks it out of the wall outlet...

EXT. BACKYARD

...and throws it away violently.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Brad is following his landlord around his apartment building. Brad looks horrible, dark rings under his eyes, as if he's been up for days.

FARNSWORTH

I've had the electrician look at the wiring and he says there's nothing wrong with it.

Brad just stares at him. Farnsworth looks at him with pity.

FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)

I don't know what to tell you. You got rid of the lamp that shocked you?

BRAD

Yeah, I chucked it.

(CONTINUED)

FARNSWORTH
I think that's probably all it
was.

BRAD
Maybe.

Farnsworth can't avoid the obvious.

FARNSWORTH
You look like you've been through
the wringer. You okay?

Brad stares at him, trying to figure out what to say.

BRAD
I've had some late nights.
Working. Otherwise, I'm alright.

Farnsworth nods but doesn't quite believe it. He picks up
a bag and a flashlight he brought along and slings it over
his shoulder.

FARNSWORTH
Well, I'm off. I don't think
there'll be anymore problems, but
if there are, give me a call.

BRAD
Fine.

FARNSWORTH
I'm sorry you had a jolt.

BRAD
Thanks.

FARNSWORTH
House current can throw you for a
loop.

Farnsworth makes his way to the door, opens it and waves
goodbye.

The phone rings, distracting Brad for a second.

FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
You better get that.

BRAD
Yeah.

Farnsworth leaves. Brad answers the phone.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. JERRY CAMARATA'S OFFICE

Jerry is sitting at his desk, fidgeting with a pen.

JERRY

Well, now you've done it.

BRAD (O.S.)

What?

JERRY

Did you talk to somebody at A.P.
about this ghost of yours?

BRAD (O.S.)

No. Not exactly.

JERRY

I just got off the phone with
John who says that you went by
there and talked to someone in
the art department about whether
or not someone retouched your
picture.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - (CONTINUOUS)

BRAD

I was checking—

JERRY (O.S.)

John says that they're
investigating now because they
looked at the dupe negs and they
don't see the little girl in the
background. So they want to
cover their asses in case the
picture's been faked.

BRAD

Does he think I did it?

JERRY (O.S.)

I talked him down from thinking
that. I told him "Why would you
be asking, if you'd done it?"

BRAD

Right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY (O.S.)

Yeah, but now you've got them
wondering. Congratulations!

Brad stammers.

BRAD

I told you something was going
on.

JERRY (O.S.)

What's going on is that you've
just made it a lot harder to
enter that cover in the
Pulitzers.

BRAD

I didn't fake it.

JERRY (O.S.)

But you told them that the
background isn't the way you shot
it. How smart was that?

Jerry hangs up abruptly. Brad holds the phone angrily.

INT. BRAD'S STUDIO

Brad sits down at his computer and fires it up. He looks
upset and determined.

He gets on the internet and looks up parapsychology and
ghosts and such. He narrows his search to items
originating from New York. He finds a series of articles
which he prints out.

Through his browsing he finds a name — DR. ANDROS
PARNASSUS. Some of the articles he finds are by the doctor
and his name and picture appear in several of the other
websites.

EXT. STREET

Brad gets out of his car and walks to a storefront. He
hesitates, looking at the storefront, building, and doors
leading into it.

There's a door with a directory of tenants and an intercom
next to it, beside the storefront. There are offices
upstairs somewhere.

It starts RAINING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad frowns and finally makes up his mind to go in. He steps up and finds the doctor's name on the directory. He presses the button and waits.

INT. DR. PARNASSUS' OFFICE

Brad opens the door and steps in.

Dr. Andros PARNASSUS is a youngish North American with an obvious ethnic heritage, but not as obvious as his impressive name.

He's a very academic looking man. In his clothing he makes an attempt at being traditional establishment but his true allegiances show through.

BRAD

Dr. Parnassus?

The doctor stands up from his desk as Brad enters, extending his hand.

PARNASSUS

Andy. The doctor stuff is for those who don't believe.

They shake hands. Brad nods at him, nervously.

BRAD

My name is Brad Kiveat. I was wondering if I could talk to you.

PARNASSUS

Sure. Have a seat.

Parnassus sits down again. Brad hesitates, thinking. He finally spits it out.

BRAD

Do you deal with ghosts?

Parnassus looks up at him, questioningly.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I mean, can you get rid of them?

PARNASSUS

Ghostbusting? It depends, but yes...

Brad sits down.

The doctor listens intently.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

I have no explanation for it.
All I know is that there's a
strange apparition in my
photographs.

Brad takes out some photos from a manila envelope he's brought along.

The doctor watches him with a dispassionate interest. He takes the photographs and without really looking at them...

PARNASSUS

Have you retouched these?

BRAD

No! Not at all!

Parnassus looks him in the eye. Brad doesn't look away.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Why do you ask?

PARNASSUS

Well, in my line of work I get a lot of skeptics who try to test me.

(pause)

Just before you came here I had a visitor who was trying to get me making a fool of myself on a hidden camera he brought in.

Brad kind of understands.

BRAD

No. It's nothing like that. In fact, I'd like to prove that I didn't retouch these, but...

PARNASSUS

But, what?

BRAD

Well, since I didn't, there's nothing to show for it.

PARNASSUS

It's hard to prove a negative. I understand.

Parnassus looks at the photographs, finally. He studies them at length. Periodically he looks at Brad, to make sure he's not being set up for a practical joke.

(CONTINUED)

He speaks to Brad as he studies the pictures.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
Do you believe in ghosts?

Brad shrugs and stammers. Parnassus takes out a magnifying glass and uses it.

BRAD
I don't know much about it.
(pause)
I don't know what to believe.

Parnassus looks up.

PARNASSUS
Well, although these all could be retouched images, they seem unlikely images to retouch or fake.

He sees that Brad doesn't quite follow.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
Most fakes you tell are fakes because of the choice of images people use. They're obviously staged. Posed.

Brad nods.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
These are very naturalistic. If they're fakes they're very good. The other thing I usually consider is that most people don't have the attention span to spend the required time to make really convincing fakes.
(pause)
Usually they just make one fake picture. Or they make it in an obvious setting. Or they use obvious "spooky" symbols and icons.

Brad listens closely.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
These would take a lot of work.

Parnassus stares at Brad. He's still skeptical about Brad.

(CONTINUED)

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

Are you sure they're not just
double exposures?

Brad stares back at him. He finally smiles and chuckles,
shaking his head.

BRAD

I...I'm a professional
photographer. I've been taking
pictures since I was a kid. I
don't think I've ever taken an
accidental double exposure
since...since my first
photography class.

Parnassus still stares at him, pleasantly.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Plus, cameras don't let you make
double exposures. Unless you
rewind the film and reload it—

PARNASSUS

(interrupting)

How do you think I can help you?

BRAD

I don't know. I was kind of
hoping you could maybe come see
my studio space and my apartment
and tell me... if you notice
anything.

PARNASSUS

I don't usually do much
"ghostbusting." I've done some
of it. But, not much.

BRAD

Well, how does it work?

(pause)

Do you need a down payment, a
retainer?

Parnassus looks at him for a moment.

PARNASSUS

Are you serious about this?

Brad looks very serious about it.

BRAD

Absolutely.

(CONTINUED)

Parnassus thinks for a moment.

PARNASSUS

Well, hold onto your money. I can look at your place first, before we decide if anything else actually needs doing.

BRAD

That...that sounds good.

PARNASSUS

When would you like me to stop by—

BRAD

(interrupting)
Tonight, right now?

This surprises Parnassus. He smiles at Brad.

PARNASSUS

Right now? Okay. I guess I can do that.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

Brad is standing with his arms crossed and frowning nervously as Dr. Parnassus walks around his studio first.

PARNASSUS

You say you've had materializations? Material objects that seem to appear. Something you know you didn't place there...

BRAD

Yes. That last one was a puddle of water under a lamp I had. I got an electrical shock from it. Knocked me on my ass.

Parnassus looks at him, interested. He decides that Brad's survived so far.

PARNASSUS

What happened to the water?

BRAD

...disappeared.

PARNASSUS

What about the lamp?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAD

In the dumpster, out back.

Parnassus continues looking around. He has an electrical meter measuring MAGNETIC FIELDS. He holds it in different areas of the rooms looking for spikes or drops.

He sees something in a corner of the studio, but he doesn't let on to Brad, yet.

PARNASSUS

I may want to look at it.

Brad nods silently. The rain is coming down heavily. Sheets of water are coating the windows.

LATER

Brad and Parnassus make their round of the apartment. They wind up in the living room. Again, Parnassus has seen something, but he's not telling. He looks at the chairs in Brad's living room.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

Have a seat here, opposite me.

BRAD

Sure.

They sit down. Parnassus is formulating his conclusions. He seems a bit surprised.

PARNASSUS

Normally ghosts are tied into a geographic location or a structure. For instance where someone died or where they lived, a plot of land, a house, you know...

Brad listens closely.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

What I feel here is somewhat different.

BRAD

How?

PARNASSUS

It's tied...to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad blinks. He stares at Parnassus. Parnassus isn't sure of what to make of the whole situation. He stares back waiting for Brad's reaction.

BRAD

What do you mean "tied to me"?

PARNASSUS

I felt an energy when you came to visit me in my office. You can't always be sure about that stuff. It could have been your own energy.

(pause)

I can feel it now.

BRAD

And?

PARNASSUS

It isn't attached in any way to the building, or the land it's built on, as far as I can tell.

He gestures, indicating everywhere he looked. He holds up the meter.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

I didn't get anything on this either.

(pause)

Except from you.

Brad stares at him with an almost angry expression on his face.

BRAD

What does that mean?

Parnassus can tell that Brad is having a hard time assimilating this information.

PARNASSUS

Well. Place your hands palms up, on your knees. And close your eyes.

BRAD

Why?

PARNASSUS

I want to see if I can get a better read on the spirit. It's kind of like meditating.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad reluctantly follows the directions.

Parnassus hovers his hands over Brad's. He closes his eyes to concentrate.

Something reveals itself to Parnassus. He opens his eyes slowly.

He sees something near Brad that unnerves him. He swallows and tries to figure it out.

Brad opens his as well, impatient for a conclusion.

BRAD

So?

Brad's eyes widen as he notices that Parnassus has seen something.

BRAD (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Parnassus watches him closely, trying not to look at it.

PARNASSUS

Is there something you haven't told me?

Brad stares at him more apprehensively.

BRAD

What do you mean?

Parnassus is having a hard time trying to articulate what's going on. Brad's reluctance isn't helping.

PARNASSUS

I've felt several spirits here.

Brad stares. Parnassus glances to Brad's side.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

But there's one in particular...
Is that what you've noticed?

Brad nods and ever so slightly shies away from whatever Parnassus is looking at.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)

I feel this spirit... knows you.

BRAD

What does that mean? Who is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Parnassus looks him in the eye.

PARNASSUS

Do you know who it is?

Brad is frightened. Parnassus is trying to be sensitive.

BRAD

Know? That's why you're here!

PARNASSUS

Well—

Parnassus looks at it again.

BRAD

(interrupting)

Who is it? What does it want?

PARNASSUS

I...I don't know who it is?

Brad stands up. Upset. He looks around the room.

BRAD

What does it want? Can you see it right now?

PARNASSUS

I...I uh...

BRAD

Can you tell what it wants?

Parnassus nods slightly. He's surprised by Brad's reaction, he moves closer.

PARNASSUS

I think so.

BRAD

What is it?

Parnassus grabs one of Brad's wrists. At first Brad resists but Parnassus insists delicately. He closes his eyes again and concentrates.

He sees something and slowly opens his eyes and looks at Brad. Brad's staring at him. Parnassus looks and can still see it standing nearby.

(CONTINUED)

PARNASSUS
It's not clear, but...
(pause)
It wants you to...

Brad listens closely, impatiently.

BRAD
What?

PARNASSUS
She... wants you...

Brad leans in.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
...to pay...

Brad grabs Parnassus by his coat and lifts him off the sofa.

He drags him to the door.

PARNASSUS (CONT'D)
Hey! Hold on. Relax!

BRAD
Get the fuck out of my house!

PARNASSUS
I'm sorry. But that's what I see...

Brad herds Parnassus downstairs and out to the street.

EXT. STREET

PARNASSUS
I know this is upsetting. But,
we can do something about it—

BRAD
(interrupting)
Get the fuck out of here!

It's raining heavily and Parnassus hunches over to ward off the rain.

PARNASSUS
I didn't mean to upset you. But
you do have an occurrence!

BRAD
Just get out of here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad stands in the rain getting wet. He's upset and angry.
And frightened.

Parnassus walks away.

INT. CAR

Parnassus takes shelter in his car and catches his breath.
He looks back the way he came.

He's thinking about the ramifications of what he
experienced in Brad's presence. But he can't do anything
about it without Brad's cooperation.

He almost shudders and then gives up, turning the ignition
and heading home.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Brad is sitting at a bar getting drunk. He finishes a
scotch and raps the glass on the counter to get the
BARTENDER's attention.

BRAD

Barkeep!

The bartender sees him and waves him off to wait.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Fucking guy. I don't need him.
I'll figure my way out of this.
I've done it before, I'll do it
again.

The bartender arrives. Brad looks up at him, drunkenly.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Fillerup.

BARTENDER

I'm cutting you off pal. I can't
serve you any more.

Brad has that lazy, wavering quality of drunkenness. He
processes what the bartender just told him and decides he
doesn't agree.

BRAD

Fuck that. Fillerup. I don't
need you...

The bartender leans in.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER

Be a good guy and head on home,
friend. I can't serve you—

BRAD

Serve me? I'm barely buzzin'.
Probably watered down all my
Scotch...

The bartender takes offense.

BARTENDER

You've got to be going. Now.

Brad takes out some more money, flattens it out on the
counter.

BRAD

There. Happy now? Another
double Scotch.

The bartender immediately comes from around the bar to show
Brad out.

BARTENDER

Take your money, sir, and leave
now.

The bartender watches Brad until he takes his money back,
at which point he grabs Brad's shoulders and pulls him off
his stool and directs him to the door.

BRAD

Let go of me, you motherfucker.

BARTENDER

Let's go. Sorry!

BRAD

What the...

The bartender pushes Brad out onto the sidewalk.

I/E. BARNEY BILLSON'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Brad and Zeke are reporting on a politician making his last
week's push to the elections.

Brad takes pictures of the volunteers and campaign workers
and the candidate, despite the fact that he looks like
shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All of the pictures are fairly typical, nothing fancy. The subjects in all the photos are pretty clearly and simply framed and documented.

Brad winds up by taking pictures, up close and personal, of the candidate shaking hands with supporters crowding outside.

EXT. STREET - THE NEXT DAY

Brad is dressed in his casual clothes, not his working vest and camera gear. He's walking fast and looks stern as he heads into a skyscraper.

INT. ASSOCIATED PRESS/RECEPTION AREA

Brad is pacing in the waiting area. The receptionist periodically looks up at him, a little annoyed that he isn't sitting down.

Brad checks his watch.

PETER, the assistant editor from the press headquarters in the hotel in India, comes out to speak with Brad. He's carrying a manila folder.

Brad turns, noticing him.

BRAD

Peter! What gives?

Peter looks serious.

PETER

John's not too happy with you.

BRAD

Happy? Why?

PETER

He said to tell you, "if you don't want to take pictures for us, just say so. Don't make a photo essay out of it."

He hands him the FOLDER.

Brad opens the folder and finds a STACK of photographic PRINTS. They are the photos Brad took of candidate BARNEY BILLSON'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

They all have a BLURRED HAND BLOCKING THE LENS, clearly saying "no pictures."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad leafs through all of the prints as Peter watches him, frowning. In some of the photos he can see a bit of the person whose hand is blocking the lens, but it's still unclear.

Not a single picture has a clear usable, PRINTABLE, image in it. The last pictures of Billson shaking hands are obliterated by the hand blocking the lens.

Brad looks up from the stack at Peter.

PETER (CONT'D)

There's nothing we can use.

BRAD

I...I don't understand.

Brad shakes his head slowly.

PETER

John's pissed off. He thinks you did it on purpose, for some reason.

BRAD

On purpose?

PETER

He told me to give these to you.

Brad stares at Peter, horrified by this development and embarrassed.

BRAD

I didn't do this. It's not a joke.

PETER

Tell it to John.

Peter shrugs, frowns, turns on his heels and heads back into the offices.

Brad just stands there, dumbfounded.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

Brad comes in, dragging himself dejectedly. He plops down on his sofa holding the folder of prints in his lap. He just stares into middle space...

The phone rings. He snaps out of it and sets the folder aside to answer the phone.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD

Hello?

JERRY (O.S.)

Brad? It's Jerry.

(pause)

I just got a call from John, from AP.

Brad grabs his forehead, rubbing his temples.

BRAD

Yeah?

INT. JERRY CAMARATA'S OFFICE

Jerry is rubbing his temples as well and pinching the bridge of his nose.

JERRY

He told me about some prints that got fucked up or something.

BRAD (O.S.)

Yeah! It's some screw up--

JERRY

Well, he says you don't have to go on your next assignment.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT

JERRY (O.S.)

He says until they figure out what you're up to, you're suspended from Agency assignments.

Brad opens his eyes to fully understand what's happening.

BRAD

What do you mean I'm suspended?

JERRY (O.S.)

What do you mean? You want me to explain it to you? First you shoot your mouth off about your picture being fucked with. Now you deliver an entire roll of unusable exposures.

BRAD

I don't know how that happened.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY (O.S.)

It doesn't really matter.

BRAD

It's an accident. The film must have got fogged or something.

JERRY (O.S.)

John says it looks like you're pulling a joke.

BRAD

Look! I don't know what happened, but I don't deserve to be suspended. It's only temporary.

JERRY (O.S.)

I already tried to talk him out of it.

BRAD

You've got to talk to him again. I'll make it up to—

JERRY (O.S.)

(interrupting)

It's too late. You'll just have to wait it out.

(pause)

Sorry, buddy. Listen I've got to deal with some other stuff right now, but he called me to tell you. So, there it is.

Brad tries to think of something to say.

JERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Think of it as vacation.

Jerry hangs up the phone, again leaving Brad holding the dead line, frustrated and angry.

BRAD

God damn it!!

INT. BRAD'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Brad DRUNKENLY stumbles through his front door, having difficulty opening it.

He leans on the counter of the kitchenette in his studio and thinks. He's swaying back and forth as he leans there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks up and sees the table full of the prints he made. He stares at them, frowning angrily.

BRAD

I'll show you....

He stumbles to the table and finds his photo album with the old pictures in it. As he flips through the pages he rips out those with the EARLIEST CHILDHOOD PICTURES on them.

He grabs a garbage bag and angrily stuffs it full of the pages from the photo album and the rest of the prints he has piled on the table.

EXT. STREET

Brad is zigzagging down the street carrying the garbage bag and something else.

BRAD

Fucking thing...I'll show you.

He finds a dumpster in a gas station on the corner. He hoists the lid up and throws it back letting it crash obtrusively.

He takes the garbage bag and tosses it inside and opens the top.

The other thing in his hand is a bottle of lighter fluid. He pours the whole thing into and on the garbage bag in the dumpster. He tosses in the empty lighter fluid bottle.

He takes out a matchbook and strikes a match.

He tosses the match in and the bag ENGULFS in bluish flames that instantly turn golden.

The dumpster's other contents start to burn as well, producing an acrid column of black smoke. Brad stumbles backwards coughing from the smoke.

Suddenly bright lights illuminate Brad from behind.

He turns around and sees a patrol car pull up to him.

POLICE OFFICER

(over loud speaker)

Stay right there!

Two officers get out of the car and flank Brad.

Brad looks at them drunkenly and decides to run for it. But he decides too late, giving them time to grab him.

INT. POLICE STATION

Erica is at a cashier window at the police station. The cashier hands her some papers and she steps away as Brad is brought out from the jail and handed over to her.

JAILER
He better sleep it off.

ERICA
Thanks.

She stares at Brad who looks terrible.

ERICA (CONT'D)
What's going on Brad?

BRAD
Oh God. Get me outta here.

ERICA
I'll take you home.

The jailer leaves them after looking over Erica's paperwork.

BRAD
No, I don't want to go home.

ERICA
You need to sleep, Brad.

They start to head out.

EXT. STREET

Erica is half carrying, half leading, Brad to the street to hail a cab.

BRAD
No. I'm serious. I don't want to go home.

ERICA
You've got to go home, Brad.
You're wasted. You need to recuperate buddy.

Brad shakes his head sleepily.

BRAD
No. Take me home. Take me to your place.

(CONTINUED)

ERICA
My place? You're not up to your
best there, pal.

BRAD
I'm telling you. I don't want to
be home right now.

A cab pulls up as Brad stops Erica to look her in the eye.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Can you do that?
(pause)
Please?

ERICA
Okay.

INT. ERICA'S APARTMENT

Erica drops Brad on her bed.

ERICA
You're not going to puke are you?

BRAD
I'll be alright.

She undresses Brad and rolls him under the covers and he
curls up.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Sorry, about this.

ERICA
No problem.

INT. ERICA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Erica is in her kitchen, drinking coffee. Brad walks in,
from the dead. He can barely open one eye to check on the
world.

ERICA
Good morning.

BRAD
What's so good about it?

ERICA
You're alive. You remember last
night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad glares at her. She's got her field gear gathered and is wearing her field clothes.

ERICA (CONT'D)

What happened?

Brad doesn't respond. She studies him.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Not only was the charge public intoxication, but you're also charged with a misdemeanor arson.

Brad looks up at the mention of arson.

BRAD

I don't want to talk about it.

ERICA

Talk about what? What's going on that you had to set fire to it?

BRAD

It's nothing. Where are you going?

ERICA

Well, it's enough for you to show up in court a month from now.

Brad hugs himself. She's concerned and staring at Brad. Brad thinks.

BRAD

I'll deal with that next month.

ERICA

What did you burn up?

BRAD

Some pictures.

Her eyes narrow.

ERICA

Pictures? What was in them?

BRAD

Nothing. Don't worry about it. It's nothing.

ERICA

I'm not worried about it. I'm worried about you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad frowns.

ERICA (CONT'D)
You haven't seen yourself.

Brad glances at her.

ERICA (CONT'D)
You're a mess.

BRAD
Well, forget about it. I've just
had some stuff on my mind. I've
let it get to me.
(pause)
All I need is to get back to work
and clear my mind.

Erica watches him giving his self-diagnosis. She nods.

ERICA
I've got a job to do.

Brad looks up at her.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Zeke and I are covering some
floods, up North.

Brad shakes his head.

BRAD
I need to go home to get my
stuff.

ERICA
What for?

Brad glowers at her.

BRAD
I'm coming with you.

ERICA
You're on suspension.

He shakes his head exasperatedly.

BRAD
I'm okay. I need to get back to
work.

ERICA
Look at yourself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAD

I'm okay.

ERICA

No you're not! You won't tell me what's bothering you but you're not well.

She finishes her coffee and rinses her mug in the sink, leaving it there.

She gathers her things and starts to head out.

ERICA (CONT'D)

You can stay here as long as you want. I'll let you know when I'm heading back.

Brad follows her out of the kitchen and down the hall into her living room.

BRAD

I'm better now. I just need to get back to work.

Erica picks up a coat, thrown on her couch, and turns towards the apartment door.

She stops in her tracks staring at Brad who's followed her into the living room.

He's standing stock still, frighteningly so. His face is ashen and his eyes are wide open.

ERICA

Brad? What is it?

Brad barely manages to twitch as he stares at Erica standing, holding her coat and gear, in her living room amidst Ravi, the Ethiopian Woman, Narendra, the dead Campesino and the Little Girl.

They all stare back at him.

EXT. TURNPIKE - NIGHT

Brad is driving through pounding rain. The windshield wipers struggle to push the water away.

Brad has a desperate, stricken look on his face. It's unclear if he's afraid of what's behind him, or what lies ahead.

EXT. WILMINGTON - MORNING

Very few people are moving about as the rain lashes at this small community in upstate New York.

Police cars patrol humbly through the drenched streets. The sun comes up but only makes a difference in the shade of grey for the day.

INT. MOTEL DINER

Erica is eating breakfast. Zeke arrives and sits opposite her.

ZEKE

You look like shit.

ERICA

What a gentleman. That's what I get for looking out for Brad.

The waitress comes by with coffee and a menu for Zeke.

WAITRESS

Coffee?

ZEKE

Yes, please.

WAITRESS

What brings you here?

ZEKE

News. I'm a reporter. She's a photographer.

Zeke points out Erica, who smiles at her.

WAITRESS

Yeah? I wanted to do that once.

ERICA

I'll trade ya'.

The waitress smiles and rolls her eyes.

WAITRESS

Ten years ago this was one of the last places to evacuate.

ZEKE

That so? Have you been flooded yet?

(CONTINUED)

WAITRESS

No, not yet.

She excuses herself silently. Zeke nods at her.

ERICA

Any updates?

ZEKE

They're warning about flash flood alerts.

ERICA

Great.

Erica looks out the large plate glass windows streaking with sheets of water.

Zeke considers how Erica looks.

ZEKE

What's going on with Brad?

ERICA

I wish I knew. I've never seen him like this.

ZEKE

What do you see?

ERICA

Well, nothing ever gets to him.

Zeke looks at her for elaboration.

ERICA (CONT'D)

We've been...messaging around for a while.

Zeke nods.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Usually my complaint is that he's not there. I try to have a meaningful conversation with him. You know, something a little deeper than "your place or mine" and nothing.

This is not exactly easy for her, but she knows Zeke.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Anyway, I figured, he's just a cold fish. "Don't expect nothin'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERICA (CONT'D)

Erica. You won't be disappointed."

(pause)

But now, this is the first time I've seen him actually affected...bothered by something.

ZEKE

Do you know what it is?

ERICA

No.

ZEKE

Any guesses?

ERICA

None. You?

Zeke sighs, thinking.

ZEKE

I don't know.

ERICA

The cops caught him incinerating a bag of photographs in a dumpster.

ZEKE

I know.

ERICA

What's so important about a bag of photographs that he has to burn them?

Zeke shrugs.

ZEKE

He's been acting weird for a while.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT

Erica and Zeke run over to a news van with a reporter, camerawoman and some other people gathered about. They're watching a CNN feed, forecasting the weather.

CNN ANCHOR

The National Weather Service has been tracking hurricane Agnes and although it's bypassed the New York Metropolitan area the outlook is not so good for people

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CNN ANCHOR (CONT'D)
upstate. Flash flood warnings
may be posted as early as
tonight.

Zeke turns away from the van and looks at Erica.

ZEKE
More water.

ERICA
Yep'. What do you know so far?

Zeke pulls out a map he has folded to a specific area. He points out items.

ZEKE
This bridge here might go if the
river crests. There are a couple
of other good places around town.

ERICA
Mudslides?

Zeke points up, towards the higher ground.

ZEKE
Up there, maybe. But downhill,
down here is the elementary
school.

ERICA
Is it in session?

ZEKE
We can hope.

She smirks at him even though he doesn't really mean it.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE

Zeke is driving. Erica's checking her equipment bag.

ZEKE
Where to?

Zeke turns on the car radio which is actually a police scanner. Snatches of police conversations come through.

ERICA
I guess, uphill. House races.

ZEKE
Let's see who reaches the finish
line.

EXT. WILMINGTON HILLS

Zeke and Erica are driving around the hilly residential areas. They stop at a dogleg in the road and get out of the Jeep.

Zeke points up the side of a hill at a house teetering on the edge.

ERICA

Bingo.

ZEKE

It's not going, yet.

ERICA

No, but give it a while. If this rain doesn't let up... Look at that run-off.

The rainwater is cutting deep gashes in the mud that surrounds the posts holding the house, and deck, aloft.

ZEKE

Those have to go down pretty deep.

ERICA

Who knows? Who cares?

EXT. STREET

Erica and Zeke have driven up to the front of the endangered house. They get out of their Jeep and knock on the front door.

A harried man opens it.

HOMEOWNER

Yeah!?

ZEKE

Hi, Zeke Souter, reporter. This is Erica Otto, photographer.

Zeke points at the news organization logo on his slicker.

HOMEOWNER

How can I help you?

ZEKE

We were wondering if you feel you're in danger due to these

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZEKE (CONT'D)

rains. I mean your house, the way it's situated.

HOMEOWNER

No shit.

The homeowner indicates his own muddy clothes.

HOMEOWNER (CONT'D)

I was crawling around outside checking the moorings. I don't know how much more of this rain they'll stand.

Zeke takes out his pad and takes notes.

ZEKE

You insured?

HOMEOWNER

Yeah, but...who knows?

ZEKE

Have any authorities come up here?

Erica takes a few shots of the muddied homeowner.

HOMEOWNER

Yeah. They said they might be evacuating people soon. Although they said people are welcome to go to the Red Cross shelter, anytime.

ZEKE

Will you be evacuating soon?

The homeowner nods.

HOMEOWNER

I'm thinking about it.

Zeke and Erica just look at him.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE

Erica and Zeke get back into their Jeep, looking back at the house.

ZEKE

Maybe this won't be a complete waste of time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERICA

Yeah.

She takes a picture through the open car window.

LATER

They drive up into the hills, looking for more news and photo opps.

They come around a bend in the road and find themselves staring at a house that has just slid down a muddy hillside, about two hundred feet.

A group of people is standing around looking at it and looking up at the front of the house hanging onto the hilltop.

They park the Jeep and jump out.

EXT. ROAD

Erica runs up with her camera, taking pictures and sees a particular woman standing in the group. Apparently the homeowner, drenched by the rain, with one tentative hand held up to her face.

The BLACK AND WHITE FREEZE FRAME of the woman with the wreckage of her house behind her is a very poignant image, award-winning even.

Erica takes more shots as the woman shifts from one foot to the other, anxiously watching the demise. Groaning sounds come from the house as the mud and the wreckage collude in sliding the whole thing further down the hill.

The woman turns away suddenly, looking over Erica's right shoulder with a bleak and desperate look on her face. Erica FREEZES THE WOMAN IN BLACK & WHITE.

Erica's camera-holding hand drops to her side.

ERICA

Great...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Brad opens the door and walks in, exhausted. He peels off his wet slicker and unloads his gear. He sits on the edge of the bed staring off into space.

LATER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad is sleeping. The streetlights illuminate half of the room in a gold light. He's sleeping fitfully.

The rain is still coming down, battering the windows and roof.

FLASHBACK

Brad as an eight year-old thrashing desperately in water. He's clutching for the bank of the river, tree roots, sand, anything.

THEN

Brad in the motel bed WAKES UP with a START.

He's drenched in sweat and breathing rapidly. His eyes are wide open and he's frightened.

He runs a hand over his forehead and through his hair. He jumps suddenly because his hand is WETTER THAN EXPECTED.

He glances at it in the half light and then wipes it on his T-shirt.

He's drenched, it's DRENCHED.

He looks at the bed. It's drenched too.

He jumps out of the bed and crouches besides it in his dripping T-shirt and boxers. He turns on the lamp, on the nightstand.

As he pats the bed, water splashes, it's so wet. In horror, he checks the whole bed, running his hands over it.

He looks around desperately, for a leak or a gaping, raining hole in the ceiling, but finds nothing. The door to his room is closed as is the window.

The bed is drenched as if someone had hosed it down.

Brad stares at it, frozen by fear. There are puddles of water collecting on the sheets.

Brad suddenly turns and grabs his clothes, pulling them on. He's getting out of there. He sits down on a chair and quickly tries to put on his boots.

He gets one on and starts on the other, whimpering. He glances at the bed.

The bed is PERFECTLY DRY. He stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gets up and slowly approaches the bed. He touches the bed tentatively. It's definitely dry.

He steps back staring at the bed. He stumbles backwards into the wall. He feels his T-shirt. It's completely dry.

He stands there staring at the bed, clutching his shirt.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY - FLASHBACK

Brad is eight years old and he's thrashing, frantically in a river, trying to get out and save himself.

A little girl is on the bank, screaming at him.

GIRL

Brad! Brad!

Brad can see her through the water in his eyes.

She's frantic, not knowing what to do. She runs forward screaming.

GIRL (CONT'D)

Brad! Brad!

BRAD

(as a child, garbled)

Janey!.....

I/E. JEEP CHEROKEE - DAY

Brad wakes up abruptly.

ERICA

Brad? Brad?

Erica is outside, staring at him, knocking on the window to wake him.

He looks around. He's slept the night in the Jeep. He's achy and full of kinks.

ERICA (CONT'D)

What are you doing in there?

He grabs his slicker and opens the door and gets out.

BRAD

I couldn't sleep in my room.

ERICA

What? Are you nuts? You slept out here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zeke waddles up to Erica carrying his gear. He notices Brad and stops and joins them.

ZEKE

What are you doing here?

BRAD

I came to shoot.

Erica shakes her head.

ERICA

You're suspended, Brad.

BRAD

I don't care.

ZEKE

You won't get paid.

BRAD

I don't care.

Zeke shakes his head too. He tugs on Erica and starts walking to their Jeep.

ZEKE

We're on. A school bus is stuck
in the river.

Brad focuses on Zeke's words and forces himself to wake up.

ERICA

Hold on.

She looks into Brad's eyes. She takes out her motel room key and hands it to him.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Go in there and sleep like a
normal person.

BRAD

I have a room.

ERICA

Then use it!

She starts to walk away.

BRAD

Wait. Where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERICA

Go home, Brad!

She jumps into the Jeep with Zeke as he starts it and they drive off. She waves half-heartedly at Brad.

Brad scrambles to get behind the wheel of his Jeep and starts it.

He floors it and fishtails it into pursuit.

EXT. RIVER

A school bus is indeed stuck in the river. It slipped off the road and into the water, when the waterlogged bank gave way and the roadway collapsed.

The bus is now on its side, teetering on some underwater fulcrum, buffeted by the current.

School kids are trapped on the bus. Having crawled out the windows, they now sit, or stand, watching rescue efforts around them.

Police and fire vehicles are nearby, along with citizens and rescue personnel, all of whom are trying to figure out a way to get to the kids.

Zeke and Erica arrive and jump out of the Jeep.

Zeke immediately starts taking notes, trying to keep his steno pad dry by tenting his slicker over it.

He moves over to a bystander.

ZEKE

Did you see the bus go in?

Erica runs to a vantage point and immediately starts taking pictures.

Brad drives up and screeches to a halt in his Jeep. He jumps out with his camera and runs to the river's edge.

Through his zoom lens he can see the terrified kids and the school bus driver. He snaps away as he frames different aspects of the scene. He runs to an adjacent bridge takes a position there.

He turns to look at the riverbank and the spectators. He photographs them standing, soaking wet, watching.

He takes another picture and stops, noticing Erica looking at him not at the bus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pauses but then continues photographing the scene. She goes about her business as well.

Firemen are trying to string a Tyrolean Traverse across the river, from which to hang down over the bus.

Brad seems completely focused.

The firemen manage to set up the traverse and one of them starts to make his way across, hanging from a harness and carabiners.

The kids on the bus see this and anticipate their rescue.

The fireman makes his way across and hands down three harnesses to the kids on the bus, one by one.

FIREMAN

We're going to take you off, one at a time. Three of you put on these harnesses and we'll get going.

The kids hesitate for a moment but then get in gear.

The fireman hooks up one kid to the traverse and attaches a pull rope to their harness. The rescuers on the other bank immediately start to pull him across.

As soon as the first kid is released the harness comes back and the second kid starts across while the fireman hands the harness to another kid.

Other rescue personnel start setting up a second traverse.

A police officer on the bank picks up his walkie-talkie and listens closely to it. He curses and then announces to the personnel around him.

POLICE OFFICER

We got a flash flood reported upriver.

The rescuers, manning the rope holding the fireman, look back at the police officer, anxiously.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

We better get this moving!

Erica moves closer to see if she can help out. She sees an opportunity across the river. She runs to the bridge, crosses it, passing Brad who is still taking pictures.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She hesitates. He doesn't look up. She continues to the other side where she helps the rescuers by relieving them of the kids that are being rescued.

The fireman, hanging over the bus, gets another harness and sends another kid across. Three more kids move closer to the launch point.

A news truck arrives along with other photographers and print journalists. Still cameras and video cameras appear suddenly, clicking and whirring away, recording the event.

The rain makes everything much harder to deal with. The fireman keeps wiping at his eyes to see.

FIREMAN

Hurry up with that second
Traverse.

The second traverse is proving more difficult to set up than the first one.

Brad zooms in on the fireman as he harnesses another kid. By now, the bus driver, a fortyish man, is helping harness the kids.

The second traverse is up and ready.

Brad sees the fireman hesitate and point up river.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)

Everybody, hang on!

Brad tilts up and sees the river swell.

A flash flood is surging more thousands of gallons of water down river. The fireman sends another kid off as the swell of water lifts the bus off its fulcrum and carries it further down river.

The bus tacks one way then the other as the kids riding it struggle to hang on.

The fireman hanging from the traverse is no longer over the bus. The bus is getting further and further away from him.

The bus driver who was trying to help with the second traverse is now hanging from it over the raging river, without benefit of a harness.

The bus hits a snag and two kids fall in.

On the riverbank, police and other rescuers race down river to help those kids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIREMAN (CONT'D)

Pull me back! Pull me back!

The fireman gets pulled back to the bank.

The bus driver sees him pulled back.

BUS DRIVER

Hey! Come back.

He's losing his grip on the wet traverse. He slips and falls into the raging river.

Brad snaps shots of him being swept away. One of them as the BUS DRIVER, thrashing about, LOOKS RIGHT AT HIM.

The kids remaining on the bus hold on precariously as the raging flood water tilts the bus. As the bus momentarily settles the flat rear creates a geyser of water pushing up and over it.

This makes it harder for them to hold on.

Brad is watching and photographing all of this as the flood waters come higher and closer to the bridge he's standing on.

Brad focuses on the image of the kids remaining on the bus who turn and look down river as it loosens and starts to move again.

The bus is coming right at Brad.

A kid looks up at Brad's lens. He raises his arms in supplication. This would make a PERFECT PICTURE.

The boy looks uncertain at first.

There's two other kids flanking him; an Indian kid and a little girl, soaking wet.

As Brad looks at them through the camera....

KID

Help, me!

The voice becomes a chorus.

KID, RAVI, JANEY

Help, me!

THIS WOULD MAKE AN INCREDIBLE, AWARD-WINNING PHOTOGRAPH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANEY

Brad, help me!

EXT. RIVERBANK - FLASHBACK

Brad, as an eight year-old, is horsing around, running on the bank of the river with JANEY, his seven year-old playmate, beside him.

There's an eddy that forms there, where the kids are playing. The water is slightly deeper than the rest of the river edge.

Brad slips and falls into the water. Janey is playing and giggling.

Brad starts thrashing in the water.

Janey stops giggling and immediately becomes scared.

She watches in terror as Brad thrashes in the water.

JANEY

Brad? Get out of the water.

Brad! Get out!

As her terror increases she starts to panic and SUDDENLY JUMPS IN to HELP HIM.

She manages to dog-paddle to him, a short distance.

JANEY (CONT'D)

I'll help you—

But his thrashing has got him close enough to the edge, to pull himself out, gasping and frightened.

As he coughs up water and tries to catch his breath he looks back at Janey who is now in trouble.

JANEY (CONT'D)

Brad.... Brad?

Brad stares at Janey, thrashing out there alone.

He watches her as she fights to get a hold of something and instead gulps water. She tries to call his name again but can't because she's choking.

Brad has caught his breath but now just stares at her, mesmerized.

He reaches out for her with one hand, then cringes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Janey gulps more water and finally sinks below the disturbed surface.

Brad watches her sink into the river water. Drops of water cling to his eyelashes as he stares at her. He's still breathing rapidly.

BRAD
(whispered)
Mom, Dad?

Now he turns around and runs for help.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Mom! DAD!

EXT. RIVER

Brad hesitates, drops the camera from his eye. He might be able to GRAB THEM and pull them to safety.

The BUS COMES CLOSER.

Brad thrusts his arm down, reaching for Janey.

She grabs a hold of his hand. He looks in her face, a strange combination of life and death.

BRAD
(whispered)
Help me.

The bus CRASHES into the bridge support, wiping it out. The kids on the bus fall off.

Brad snaps out of it and stares at Janey. But he's not holding Janey.

He's got a hold of the boy who was in between Janey and Ravi.

BOY
Help me!

BRAD
Hang on!

The road buckles and Brad falls to one side, clutching onto the road way.

Brad drags the boy to safety. With better leverage, Brad lifts the boy and pushes him towards the bridge anchorage where rescuers come running to help him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The mass of water rushing into the bridge sweeps the support away and the roadway collapses throwing Brad into the mess.

Erica screams when she sees this. She runs up the bank and after Brad.

Brad is swept under by the muddy water. He's scrambling trying to get a hold of something, anything.

Debris of all kinds fills the water; timbers, books, clothes, branches.

The swell takes everything down river to the next constriction, another bridge.

Rescue crews are rushing over there, some climb into their vehicles and hurry down river. The news crews and reporters and photographers pick up and run down river.

Erica runs on the wet frontage road, desperately looking for any sign of Brad.

Brad gulps a mouthful of mud as he goes under. He's swiftly being carried to the next bridge, about to go under it.

The water is now touching the bottom of the next bridge.

As Brad is carried by the current he desperately grabs for something to hold onto.

The water takes him under the bridge. He brushes against the concrete underside.

Some rescue people stop to see if they can reach anybody from that bridge.

Photographers click away, taking pictures of everybody running around, trying to get the kids and bus driver who fell in the water.

Brad comes out the other side and is carried further down river.

Erica runs, looking for any sign of Brad. She spots his hand, outstretched from the water.

There's a third bridge down river. Some people have run down there. Others have gone past hoping to find a spot to catch everyone.

Some firemen are trying to run another traverse across but they're unsure of where the kids are in the current.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brad is being rushed along towards the bridge. The swell hits the bridge and obscures things for the rescuers.

Brad shoots under the bridge, struggling to get air, and he smacks into a wall.

THE BUS.

The underside of the bus, the drive shaft, the chassis, oil tank, etc., provides lots of handholds.

Brad pulls himself to the raging surface and breathes in clear air.

He climbs onto the side of the bus and looks into one of the open windows.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Janey!? Janey!

Miraculously, there are three kids still inside, fighting the water, panicked and in need.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Janey?

Brad grabs one of the kids and yanks him out.

The bus has stopped, momentarily stuck against the bridge. Rescuers run onto this bridge and throw rescue lines overboard to help Brad.

With reckless disregard for his own safety, Brad hoists the kid up and hands him to anonymous hands that take him away.

He practically dives back into the bus window and grabs the other two kids, tugging them up by a hand.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Janey!

He looks around desperately. He spots an arm thrashing nearby in the water.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Janey?

Brad lunges to reach the arm.

FIREMAN

Hold on. Grab a line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The fireman comes over the side of the bridge, landing on the bus, tied to a rappelling line. He ties a rescue line quickly to Brad.

Erica runs onto the bridge.

ERICA

Brad!

Brad barges forward, and with great difficulty, as the water rages around them, debris assaults them and the bus teeters in its place.

Brad reaches out with a free hand, trying to grab the arm. He reaches it and pulls.

The bus driver emerges from the swirl, unconscious. More people either climb over or reach down to help hoist this big, grown man, out of the river. The blockage diverts water, shooting it into the air and over the obstacle.

Brad's spluttering and gasping, trying to breath as muddy flood water races past them.

BRAD

Janey?! Janey!? Where are
you!!??

Brad turns and climbs onto the bridge. He disengages from the rescue line and runs across the roadway to look down the other side.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Janey! Janey!

The look on his face is pure desperation. The raging muddy water continues to rush past. The cold rain continues to fall.

Erica approaches him tentatively.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT

Rescue crews have set up a triage area for the wounded and injured and the dead.

Erica is wandering about, desultorily taking shots of what she sees.

She spots a man covered in mud, slumped on the ground, leaning against Red Cross equipment boxes, a rescue worker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks dead. Collapsed on the spot.

Erica lifts her camera and frames the image. It's impressively poignant and heart-breaking. She fires off a few exposures.

As she shifts her vantage point it becomes clear that it's Brad. She drops the camera.

ERICA

Brad?!

She runs over to him. She wakes him. He awakes with a start.

BRAD

Janey? Where are you? Janey?

He sees Erica kneeling beside him.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Where's Janey?

ERICA

Who?

BRAD

Janey? Where is she?

He desperately tries to stand but falls back. His body is exhausted and strained.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I've got to find her.

He gasps and sobs suddenly. Erica places a hand on his shoulder.

He stops moving and then starts crying in earnest.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I've got to help her. I've got to help....

Racking sobs hit him as he weeps openly. Erica is moved by his abject misery.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I've got to...

She puts her arm around his shoulders, comforting him.

ERICA

It's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAD

I've got to...

A child's hand reaches in and touches Brad's shoulder. It taps him insistently.

Brad looks up.

A rescue worker has helped the first BOY, Brad rescued from the bus, over to him.

Brad catches his breath momentarily as his sobs subside. He looks at the boy. The boy's swaddled in a blanket that the rescue worker helps to keep wrapped around him.

The boy smiles at Brad.

BOY

Thank you, Mister.

Brad blinks at him.

BOY (CONT'D)

Thanks for saving my life.

A last gush of grief comes out of Brad as he grasps the boy's hand, on his shoulder, in acknowledgement.

Slowly, Brad stops crying.

Zeke quietly watches them, standing a few feet away. Erica notices him and nods at him.

Zeke steps up and puts a hand on Brad.

The rescue worker takes the boy away.

Erica and Zeke help Brad to his feet.

ERICA

Come on, Brad. Let's take you home.

And it continues to rain.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEW YORK METROPOLITAN SUBWAY CAR - DAY - FUTURE

The people on the crowded train look even more radically diverse than they do today. A MUCH OLDER BRAD KIVEAT, nicely dressed, perhaps in his SIXTIES, is seated holding a very academic looking, bulging valise on his lap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It looks like a wedding band is on his left hand.

The bored commuters are engaged in their exotic communications technologies. The train stops at a station.

People get on and off. Chimes warn riders the doors will be closing.

A slight commotion outside. The doors start to close.

Just as the doors close a young man jumps on, exhausted from his sprint to the train.

A futuristic camera hangs from the man's neck on a strap. Apparently he's a PHOTOGRAPHER.

A smile flickers across Brad's face, a smile of recognition. The man doubles over with a side-ache, huffing and puffing, trying to catch his breath.

Brad gets up and offers the young man his seat. Surprised, the young man at first declines, waving him off.

BRAD

No, really. Take it.

Brad is determined. Still huffing and puffing, the young man sits down. He looks up at Brad.

YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHER

Thanks, old man.

He smiles at him and nods. Brad smiles back and stands holding onto an overhead strap.

He glances around at the bored commuters. No one cares about what just happened. All of them are in their own worlds. Everyone is focused on a space one inch from the end of their nose.

Actually there are some riders who are not lost in thought.

There are some who are looking at Brad. With a blank expression on his face, Brad looks back at them.

A young Indian man is sitting amongst the riders, staring at Brad. He has a fresh rifle shot exit wound in his chest.

Brad glances at another one, a famished, skeletal Ethiopian woman.

An obviously dead campesino stares back at Brad too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Several people stare back at him, including a little girl in a water drenched summer dress. JANEY.

Brad isn't scared of them. Instead he seems very matter-of-fact about them being there, with him.

They too don't seem intent on doing anything to Brad. They're just there with him.

Brad returns his head to looking forward, like the rest of the riders. He lets out a small sigh as the subway train continues towards its destination.

FADE OUT:

THE END.