

NIGHTFALL

Episode #101

"The High Cost Of Living"

written by

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FADE IN:

TEASER

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE YEAR FROM ZERO HOUR ...

INT. DISCO - DAY

1

SMASH to a ROLLER DISCO, a spinning mirror ball, motes of azure light. Love Unlimited's *Love's Theme* plays in eerie, ironic counterpoint.

Our POV then descends to the dance floor, where a congregation of male/female reanimated CORPSES circles in an undead chain dance.

JESSE (VO)

So here it is. Ten thousand years of human civilization. Gone overnight. All of it, reduced to a parody of it self, or the punch line to some kind of cosmic dirty joke. In less than twenty-four hours, the parasepsis pathogen had made the dead public enemy number one.

DISSOLVE TO

2

A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE THAT READS 'THE DEAD WALK!' WHICH ZOOMS INTO CLOSEUP FOCUS, AND IS THEN IMMOLATED IN AN A-BOMB'S MUSHROOM CLOUD.

JESSE (VO)

Where are the conspiracy nuts now? Or the denialists, the politicians who looked the other way while the planet died? They're one of *these* guys now probably. Can't say they didn't deserve it. We all had it coming.

Then, in rapid montage, we see legions of vivified corpses in malls, hospitals, grocery stores, upscale homes, apartments, everywhere;

mindless, numberless, undead cannibals on the hunt for living flesh, always moving, always hungry. THEY ARE 'CREEPS'. THIS IS THEIR WORLD.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLES:

NIGHTFALL

"THE HIGH COST OF LIVING"

ACT ONE

INT. GARAGE - DAY

3

The song fades into silence. Now we're close on JESSE BLAKE (16); asleep, propped against a pickup truck. Jesse wakes with a start and

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

calls to the man asleep opposite her, her father, ABEL BLAKE (48).

JESSE

Dad. Dad. Wake up.

Jesse grabs an errant pebble from the floor, throws it at Abel. The pebble strikes Abel's shoulder and he awakens with a startled grunt.

ABEL

*Jesse, God damn it --*

JESSE

Dad. I said wake up.

PULL BACK

4

and we're inside a warehouse GARAGE. Is it day or night? We can't tell, although from the sickly greenish light seeping through the garage's windows we might guess that it's day. RAIN PATTERS STEADILY OUTSIDE.

CUT TO:

**INT. GARAGE - DAY**

5

ABEL'S POV

as he jams clothing, a compass, notebooks, a canteen, a flare gun, a matchbook, binoculars, and a roadmap into a Jansport BACKPACK.

BACK TO SCENE

6

where Abel, Jesse strap Kevlar body armor over their street clothes. Jesse finally throws a waterproof, hooded poncho over her 5'6" frame, and cinches her flyaway auburn hair into a looped ponytail.

Despite this, both are very dirty, almost in a state of nature. At last they take up their respective weapons; Abel a deadly 7' boar spear, Jesse a 24" steel machete, worn sheathed at her waist.

JESSE (VO)

We were headed for the border, my father and I. Making for the free territories north the quarantine zone when our ride gave out. My dad thought that he would find my mother there, waiting for us. *Me?* I wasn't so sure.

AND NOW WE CUT TO JESSE, who stands just a few paces behind Abel, as

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

she tenses her stance, draws her machete and holds it at the ready. Abel hefts the backpack, kneels by the garage door, grips its handle,

ABEL

You stay with me. We find another truck or van and we move on. If a creep so much as moves, you put it down. And if you see anyone out there who looks hinky you hide, anywhere -- and we'll meet up back here later. Ready?

JESSE

Ready.

and raises the door. It opens with an ear-popping screech, REVEALS:

CUT TO:

**EXT. GARAGE - DAY**

7

A NORTHERN RUSTBELT CITY IN RUIN. IN THE CORPSE-STREWN MIDDLE DISTANCE, A GATEWAY SIGN, MARRED BY CORROSION AND FREAKISH RED VINES, READS:

WELCOME TO RAVENSBACK POP. 804, 220 ENJOY YOUR STAY

BACK TO SCENE

8

as Abel closes, chains the garage door, takes his place beside Jesse.

JESSE (VO)

If my mother had survived zero hour somehow it would take us a hundred years to find her. A hundred years and a miracle. How could I tell dad that? That miracle was all he had to live for. It was all I had to live for too.

ABEL

Let's go.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

9

TIME JUMP

to a four-way INTERSECTION, a logjam of junked cars, trucks, downed electrical lines, garbage. The rain slashes down even harder now.

JUMP AGAIN

10

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

to Abel, stretched lengthwise below an abandoned SUV's dismantled steering column, as he attempts to hotwire the vehicle's ignition.

Nearby, Jesse, wielding her machete with an ease born of practice, circles the SUV, decapitates one dormant corpse after another.

ABEL

You don't have to do that you know. Get out of the rain.

JESSE

Prior planning prevents poor performance, I always say.  
The more I waste now the fewer we'll have to fight later.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

11

A TENEMENT'S ROOFTOP, 50 YDS AWAY FROM THE INTERSECTION. HERE WE FIND A DIMINUTIVE GIRL SEATED CROSS-LEGGED BELOW A HUNTER'S TARPAULIN.

SHELBY KINCH (14), who is also attired in an outsized hooded poncho, alerts, and, after setting the deadly compound bow that she holds aside, pulls a military grade walkie-talkie from her poncho, speaks:

SHELBY

Yates. Yo, quit screwing around. This is Shelby. Over.

(for a few beats) we hear nothing save the steady drumming of rain, crackling static, followed by a blast of feedback and a male voice.

YATES (OS)

*Yates, here. What's the situation topside, shrimp?*

SHELBY

All right, can the small talk, Yates. I'm about two miles out at the intersection of Benefit and Cimarron and I just spotted two civvies down on the street.

YATES (OS)

*-- civvies?*

Shelby raises binoculars from her lap to her eyes, AND WE CUT TO:

SHELBY'S POV

12

a HANDHELD CLOSE-UP of Abel and Jesse, bustling about the SUV.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SHELBY

A man and a girl. They're definitely tourists, not local. They're too well dressed, and they're armed.

BACK TO SCENE

where Shelby lowers the binoculars, raises her bow, continues:

SHELBY

Looks like they're trying to boost themselves a ride. God damn it. They're going to get themselves killed.

YATES (OS)

*Forget it, Shelby. You know the house rules. No strays. And no means no. I don't care how desperate they look.*

(BEAT)

*You salvage shit for the boss and that's all. Got it? Now bounce the hell out of there and get back to base.*

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

13

THE INTERSECTION

Rain becomes drizzle. Jesse pauses her grizzly work, gazes upward.

ABEL

I think that the rain is letting up. If I can hotwire this wreck and the weather holds out we can get on the main highway and cross the state line by sunset.

(BEAT)

We'll stick with the map and follow the old interstate, and it should only be a matter of days until we're out of the quarantine zone and in the free territories.

JESSE

*If the weather holds out. We can siphon gas along the way, if we can find it. We need food too. I saw some deer by the road, we could take them if we had to.*

(BEAT)

Maybe you should give up on this one and pronounce it, dad. There are lots of other viable rides around here. Let's move on, before the day gets away from us.

SUDDENLY, THE SUV COUGHS TO LIFE WITH A THUNDEROUS, STUTTERING ROAR.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

ABEL

A MIRACLE! QUICK, JESSE, TAKE THE WHEEL! WHEN I SAY GO  
HIT THE ACCELERATOR, I'M GOING TO GET BEHIND AND PUSH!

Jesse continues to stare upward at the sun, motionless, AS WE CUT TO:

JESSE'S POV

14

where the moon's umbral shadow veils the sun's already fragile glow.  
The sky, cloaked in a thick canopy of radioactive ash, darkens, fast.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

15

A SOLAR ECLIPSE

A SHRIEK RIPS THROUGH THE CITY WITH A BLOOD-CURDLING ECHO. ONE BY ONE,  
AS IF OF A SINGLE MIND, CREEPS VIVIFY, AWAKEN, AND RISE TO THEIR FEET.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

16

THE INTERSECTION

CREEPS RISE MOANING, WAILING, HOWLING FROM THEIR RESTING PLACES IN THE  
WRECKAGE, IMMEDIATELY SHAMBLE TOWARD THE INTERSECTION, JESSE, ABEL.

ABEL

IT'S AN ECLIPSE! THE CREEPS ARE REVIVING FAST! STAY CALM!  
REMEMBER, JUST ONE BITE FROM THEM AND YOU'RE INFECTED!

JESSE BEHEADS TWO CREEPS WITH SAVAGE EFFICIENCY. SPEAR IN HAND, ABEL  
LEAPS FROM THE SUV, RUNS A CREEP THROUGH, PINS ANOTHER TO THE BLACKTOP.

THEN

AN ARROW ZINGS OUT OF NOWHERE, STRIKES A CREEPS' HEAD! A SECOND ARROW  
FOLLOWS AND ANOTHER CREEP CRUMPLES. JESSE FREEZES, WIDE-EYED, PANICKED.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

17

THE ROOFTOP

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Shelby looses three arrows at the horde, pivots, looses three more.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

18

THE INTERSECTION

Creeps fall before they reach Abel, Jesse, but some arrows miss their mark. Jesse beheads one creep, another as Abel tears his spear free.

ABEL

JESSE! FORGET THE CAR! FORGET THE CAR! - THERE ARE TOO  
MANY OF THEM, WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT! WE NEED TO RUN! GO!

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

19

THE ROOFTOP

Shelby watches the human/creep duel from above, tries to hone in on a target and can't, lowers her bow, raises the walkie-talkie, shouts:

SHELBY

YATES! YATES! COME IN, YATES! WHERE ARE YOU? EVERYTHING  
IS GOING TO HELL OUT HERE! ANSWER ME, GOD DAMN IT! SHIT!

The response is a series of rapid Morse code beeps, garbled inhuman speech, static, and a ghostly, quavering howl, followed by -- silence.

Shelby collects her gear, arrows, bow as Jesse, Abel take off below.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

20

THE INTERSECTION

Jesse, Abel run toward some path of egress. Creeps pour into the street ahead, crash into, stumble over each other, jam the way out.

JESSE

No good!

THEY DOGLEG INTO AN ALLEY. Creeps block the exit. Jesse hacks at the

CONTINUED:



CONTINUED:

creeps as they advance, cutting three down, then they are too close.

A creep bites Jesse's forearm, locks its jaws on her bracer instead. Jesse screams in pain, terror as the creep wrenches, twists her arm, until a blow from Abel splits the creep's skull, sends it sprawling.

JESSE

Thanks --

ABEL

No time for that now. This way, I found a way out.

Abel zags left, kicks a door open, grabs Jesse's arm, tows her into:

CUT TO:

INT. TENEMENT - DAY

21

A TENEMENT HOUSE

where Abel quickly closes the door behind him, slams the bolt lock.

ABEL

*Whew. Are you all right? We're good for now, it's just, come on, Abel, think. Think, damn it, think!*

THEN, A CREEP SPRINGS FROM THE DARKNESS, CLAMPS ONTO ABEL'S BACK! THE PAIR BECOMES A SNARLING, SNAPPING TORNADO WHIRLING ABOUT THE ROOM.

ABEL THROWS THE CREEP ASIDE, CLEAVES IT FROM HEAD TO CHEST, LOOSES A TORRENT OF RATS THAT SCUTTLE UP HIS SPEAR AND ONTO HIS ARMS, BODY.

ABEL SCREAMS, STUMBLES CRAZILY ABOUT THE ROOM, CRASHES INTO WALLS, FURNITURE, SWEEPS RATS FROM HIS ARMS AND FLINGS TO THE FLOOR. THEN:

JESSE

Dad! Dad! Oh my God, I didn't even see him! Now what?

WE'RE CLOSE ON THE ROOM'S DOORKNOB AS IT TURNS, ONE WAY, ANOTHER. THE DOOR FINALLY GIVES WAY, CAVES INWARD AND CREEPS FLOOD THE ROOM.

ABEL LEVELS HIS SPEAR AND CUTS DOWN ONE CREEP AFTER ANOTHER WITH TERRIFYING, LIGHTNING SPEED. HE SEARCHES THE ROOM. WHERE IS JESSE?

THERE! YELLING AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS, JESSE SHOVES A REFRIGERATOR STRAIGHT THROUGH THE SWARM, DIRECTLY TOWARD A FAR WALL AND A WINDOW.

9.

CUT TO:

**EXT. TENEMENT - DAY**

22

The refrigerator bursts through the tenement's wall, tips over and comes to rest in yet another alleyway. Jesse, Abel follow after it.

ABEL

Come on! Help me move this thing! Come on, help me!

Jesse, Abel line up behind a massive metal dumpster, jam it into the wall's breach, trap the pursuing creeps inside the tenement.

JESSE

That won't last long. We need to find a place to hide.

Abel pauses, cocks his head. He hears a rifle's distinct, barking *ka-plow!*, just above the susurrus of the creep's ceaseless groaning.

ABEL

Jesse. *Listen.* That sounds like a long gun. A *rifle.*

JESSE

There!

CUT TO:

**EXT. STORE - DAY**

23

JUMP

TO A MAN WHO WE WILL COME TO KNOW AS GRAHAM STANDING OUTSIDE A 7-11, FIRING AN AR-15 RIFLE AT THE CREEPS WHO SURROUND THE LITTLE GAS AND GO.

He mouths *come on!* as he espies Jesse, Abel, sprinting toward him. Jesse, Abel cross a street, reach the store. All three backtrack into:

CUT TO:

**INT. STORE - DAY**

24

THE 7-11

and it's here that we confront Graham's posse; WELLS, ROSS, AND EDDY, all grim survivalist types, armed to the teeth and ready for action.

They take up positions around the door, automatic rifles raised, as Graham locks the store's twin doors, lowers, chains a security gate.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

WELLS

LOCK IT! LOCK IT! LOCK IT UP AND STAND BACK! STAND BACK!  
-- JESUS, GRAHAM! WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING OUT THERE?

GRAHAM

I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW, MAN! I DON'T KNOW! IT WAS  
RAINING AND EVERYTHING WENT DARK AND THE REEKERS WOKE UP!

ABEL

Er, ah. May I interrupt? This is an eclipse, a solar  
eclipse. The creeps should go dormant when it's over.

The four men turn as one and glare at Abel, Jesse with ragged, wiry  
1,000-yard stares. Jesse grips her machete just a little bit tighter.

WELLS

Yeah? And what are you anyway? Some kind of expert?  
Those things are going to revive again. *Tonight*. And  
again and again and again. It God damned never ends.

ABEL

Yes. And these walls won't withstand this horde for  
very much longer. We need to find a way out of here.

JUMP TO

25

A STOREROOM, WHERE EDDY CANTS A FLASHLIGHT BEAM INTO AN OPEN 4 X 4  
TRAPDOOR IN THE FLOOR AND A LADDER THAT DESCENDS INTO DARKNESS.

EDDY

See? Here. It could lead to a maintenance tunnel or  
a sewer. There's no way to be certain without a map.

WELLS

Solar eclipse my ass. It could be anything. A dust  
storm. *I say we make our stand right here, right now.*

It's a Hobson's choice for Graham. He studies the trapdoor, Abel,  
Jesse, his men one by one; Ross shrugs, nods, readies his rifle.

GRAHAM

We explore and see how it plays out. If it's a dead  
end we sit tight and wait for this thing to blow  
over. Eddy, Ross, take point. Wells? You're with me.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

TIME JUMP

TO A BRICK-AND-MORTAR TUNNEL, WHERE OUR COMPANY SLOWLY PROGRESSES TWO-BY-TWO THROUGH SUFFOCATING DARKNESS AND MURKY CALF-DEEP WATER.

Ross and Eddy are in the lead with Eddy still holding the flashlight. Wells, Graham march behind, rifles at the ready. Abel, Jesse follow.

A BEAT LATER, Graham coolly hangs back several paces from his men, then sidles up alongside Abel, Jesse, and speaks to Abel *sotto voce*,

GRAHAM

I'm Graham. That's Wells, that's Ross, and the guy in the lead is Eddy. We were on our way west when this particular cluster hump separated us from our ride.

ABEL

I'm Abel. This is my daughter Jesse. It's just been us on the road north for quite a while. You four are the first living people that we've seen in months.

The company continues onward. Then Ross turns toward Abel, curious.

ROSS

There's a rumor out there? about a vaccine? And The Man In The Spire. *Monster zero*. Some people say that if you found him and put a stake in his heart all of the reekers would die. Is that true?

JESSE

Dad. Look.

They pause. 30 yds ahead, we see a shaft of diffuse fluttering light that descends from above and falls in a circle to the water below.

GRAHAM

*Light*. It must be coming through some kind of grate in the sidewalk or the street. So how far have we been walking now, five or six blocks, further maybe? All right people, let's stick together and check it out.

THE GROUP TURNS, WEAPONS AT THE READY, AS THE WALLS GROAN BEHIND THEM; THE MEN EDGE TOWARD THE SOUND, ABEL, JESSE BACK AWAY, TOWARD THE LIGHT.

EDDY

The *hell*?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

ABEL

We need to move, Graham. Do you hear me? *We need to move.*

JESSE

Dad -- ?

GRAHAM

Hold up.

SECONDS PASS. THEN A SECTION OF TUNNEL CEILING COLLAPSES, 20 YDS AWAY, AND DOZENS OF CREEPS DROP FROM THE SURFACE AND PLUMMET INTO THE WATER!

Graham, Wells, Ross, Eddy unleash a barrage of gunfire on the creeps. Bullets fly, ricochet, and rip through the creeps as they advance.

WELLS

SHIT! -- NO, NO, NO! OH, GOD! OH, GOD! OH, JESUS CHRIST!

GRAHAM

WATCH YOUR CROSSFIRE! WATCH YOUR CROSSFIRE, GOD DAMN IT!

SUDDENLY

a tunnel wall explodes outward and gives way beside the group. More creeps flood into the tunnel, set upon the men and tear them to pieces.

Graham, Wells, Ross, Eddy go down screaming in a fountain of blood and churning water. Abel, Jesse hack, slash at the creeps. JESSE SHOUTS:

JESSE

COME ON! YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME, DIRTBAGS? LET'S DANCE!

ABEL

JESSE! JESSE, RUN! GO! GO! GET TO THE END OF THE TUNNEL!

SMASH CUT TO

27

the tunnel's hexagonal TERMINUS, and another ladder that dizzily rises 20' to a 4' X 4' steel grate, and a glimpse of hazy sunlight above.

Jesse reaches the ladder, slams her machete into its sheath, climbs, followed by Abel, just as a horde of creeps swarms into the chamber.

Creeps claw at Abel's ankles, feet as he climbs; he swipes them away with his spear. At the same time, Jesse finally gets to the grate.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

It's a storm drain, a monstrosity that weighs twice as much as Jesse; with all of her strength, Jesse shoves upward with her arm, shoulder.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE CITY - DAY**

28

The grate rises and clangs aside. Jesse, Abel emerge from the drain, and we pull back to see that we're in a parking lot behind a WAREHOUSE, a wallow of freight trucks, rusting machinery; crawling with creeps who turn toward, then move in on Jesse, Abel as they stand upright.

The creeps lurch closer. Jesse, Abel are hopelessly outnumbered and surrounded, they raise their weapons and prepare for the inevitable.

JESSE

Dad! What do we do now! There's just too many of them!  
Oh, God, this is it! This is it! We're going to die here!

Abel embraces Jesse, perhaps for the last time, raises her chin.

ABEL

Jesse. I want you to hide somewhere until this is over.  
No, no, listen! Whatever happens to me, no matter what,  
keep going north and find your mother. Do you hear me?

JESSE

Yes! - Yes!

The swarm attacks. Jesse swings at a creep; she's drained, her arm is heavy, the blade doesn't make good contact, it glances off.

Abel spears a creep as yet another springs at Jesse. She strikes it, *crack!* and it goes down, its skull split. Another. Another.

THEN, A CAR HORN BLARES! JESSE, ABEL TURN, SEE A 1965 VW VAN BARREL TOWARD THEM, SQUEAL TO A STOP. ITS SIDE HATCH SLIDES OPEN, REVEALS,

SHELBY!

Now free of her cloak-like hood and poncho, standing no more than 4'11" tall in her Mohican haircut and patchwork tactical body armor.

JESSE

Holy. Shit.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SHELBY

GET IN! LOOK, STAND THERE GAWPING AT ME FOR MUCH LONGER  
AN' YOU'RE GONNA WIND UP BEIN' A SKEEVIE-SNACK! COME ON!

ACT TWO

INT. VW VAN - DAY

29

Jesse, Abel shove tools, assorted gewgaws, copper wire, radio/stereo, computer parts aside, and throw themselves onto the van's back seat.

SHELBY SLAMS, LOCKS THE VAN'S HATCH, STRAPS HER TINY FRAME INTO THE DRIVER'S CUSTOM-MADE JUMPSEAT, CLAPS ON AN ARMY MEDIC'S M1 HELMET,

SHELBY

Howdy folks. Hell of a pickle we're in ain't it. Make yourselves comfy all right? Sorry it's such a mess.

THEN SLAPS A CASSETTE TAPE INTO A DASHBOARD DECK, BLASTS THE TRASH MEN'S *SURFIN' BIRD* AT FULL VOLUME, STOMPS THE ACCELERATOR, PEELS OUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

30

JUMP

and we're elsewhere in the city, as the van speeds its way through labyrinthine streets, plows through creeps as it careens forward.

CUT TO:

INT. VW VAN - DAY

31

Inside, it's *Mister Toad's Wild Ride* for Jesse, Abel. Outside, creeps loom left, right, lurch at the van, bounce off it with soggy thuds.

SHELBY

Who-ee! Man, that was a close one, huh? I reckoned you two were dead meat for sure, back at that stop light.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

32

THE STREET

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

THE VAN HEADS DOWNTOWN, ZIGZAGS UP ONE STREET, DOWN ANOTHER, EXECUTES CRAZY HAIRPIN TURNS. AHEAD, HIGH RISE TOWERS LOOM DEAD ON THE HORIZON.

CUT TO:

INT. VW VAN - DAY

33

JUMP. Jesse scoots forward, peers over Shelby's shoulder, speaks.

JESSE

Stop light? Wait a minute. That was you up on that tenement roof with the arrows? That was forty-five yards away at least. Wow, you're a damned good shot.

SHELBY NODS, CASUALLY LOWERS THE STEREO'S EAR-SPLITTING VOLUME, THEN,

SHELBY

Thanks. I do what I can for the cause. And you guys aren't a pair of half-bad street fighters yourselves either, the way you took all of those skeevies down.

(BEAT)

You gotta stake 'em right through the ol' brain pan, that's what I always do. Well, not just *me*, my friends too, of course. You'll meet them in a few minutes.

JESSE

*Friends -- ? Well, I, uh --*

ABEL

Look, we appreciate your offer, but if we could just hunker down someplace safe for a while? my daughter and I would be more than happy to be on our way.

FISHES BUNDLED DYNAMITE STICKS FROM THE DRIVER'S FOOTWELL, A ZIPPO LIGHTER FROM HER FLAK JACKET'S POCKET, LIGHTS THE BUNDLE'S FUSE,

SHELBY

No way. Wouldn't hear of it. *Mi casa es su casa* and all that. Now, do me a solid, hon, and toss this out your window before we get blown to hell, will you please?

SHE THEN PASSES THE BUNDLE TO JESSE, WHO JUGGLES THE DYNAMITE (HOT POTATO FASHION) BEFORE THROWING IT OUT OF THE PASSENGER SIDE WINDOW.

JESSE

*Cripes!*



16.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

34

THE STREET

Creeps plod dully toward the dynamite as it hits the sidewalk, rolls to a stop. IT SIZZLES AND FINALLY EXPLODES WITH KILOTON FORCE.

BRICK, VISCERA FLIES 100 YDS IN EVERY DIRECTION. A BROWNSTONE THEN PANCAKES, LANDSLIDES ACROSS THE STREET IN A CLOUD OF ASBESTOS DUST.

CUT TO:

INT. VW VAN - DAY

35

THE VAN

Carnage recedes into the distance. As Jesse looks on, astonished, Shelby *whoo-hoos* with glee, then turns and offers Jesse her hand.

SHELBY

Holy smokes! Did you see that? *Damm!* That ought to hold 'em for a while. My name is Shelby by the way. Shelby Kinch. But you guys can just call me Shel.

JESSE

Jesse.

SHELBY

Jesse? *Jesse.* Nice moniker. It has a certain *je ne sais quoi*. And how 'bout you, dad? You got a name too?

ABEL

Abel Blake.

SHELBY

Ah. Oh. This one is all business. So *serious*. Well, put your socks n' shoes on kids, 'cause we're home.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

36

THE VAN ZOOMS TOWARD A KLIEG LIGHT-BEDECKED FORTRESS, A STRONGHOLD MADE OF FOUR STEEL PANEL WALLS, TRUCK TIRES, TRASHED CARS, RAZOR WIRE.

A FIREHOUSE SQUATS BEHIND THESE SCRAPHEAP WALLS AND THEIR GATE, A

CONTINUED:

17.

CONTINUED:

DIESEL RV PUSHER. CREEPS SURROUND THE WALLS IN AN UNDEAD MOSH PIT.

CUT TO:

INT. VW VAN - DAY

37

THE VAN

Shelby honks the van's horn as the RV looms up in its headlights.

SHELBY

COME ON, - OPEN THE GATE, OPEN THE GATE, OPEN THE GATE!

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

38

THE RV'S ENGINE THUNDERS TO LIFE, THE VEHICLE SLOWLY TACKS IN REVERSE,

CUT TO:

EXT. VW VAN - DAY

39

THE STREET

and the van zooms through the breach without slowing down, into,

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

40

A COMPOUND

WHERE THE VAN SPINS OUT IN A BRAKE-SQUEALING, DIRT-SPITTING 180° SKID, STOPS. THE RV REVS UP AGAIN, CHUGS FORWARD, CLOSES THE BARRICADE.

AS JESSE, ABEL, AND SHELBY SPILL FROM THE VAN, DILLON YATES (38), SCRAMBLES OUT OF THE RV AND MAKES A BEE-LINE STRAIGHT FOR SHELBY.

YATES

What the *hell* Shelby? Didn't you hear what I said before?  
This was supposed to be a smash and grab, not a rescue mission! Man, the boss is going to be pissed about this!

Before he can take another step, Shelby socks Yates in the face, hard enough to send his RPK-74 rifle flying, grabs his jacket collar.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SHELBY

WHERE WERE YOU, YATES! HUH? ANSWER ME! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE WALKIE, NOT OFF SOMEWHERE PICKING YOUR NOSE! I COULD HAVE FREAKIN' DIED OUT THERE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

YATES

AH, WHY, YOU - ! COME HERE, YOU LITTLE SHIT! COME HERE!

Yates, Shelby are then in a full-on wrestling match, rolling on the ground, kicking, punching, and trying to strangle each other.

SHELBY

LET ME GO, YOU BIG APE! LET ME GO! I'M GOING TO MURDER YOU! I'M GOING TO RIP YOUR LUNGS OUT AND FEED 'EM TO YOU!

SUDDENLY

KÖNIG (OS)

ENOUGH!

A 6'6" GIANT EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS. THE GIANT, CLAD IN BANDOLIERS, KEVLAR BODY ARMOR, AND A 'MICKEY MOUSE' GAS MASK, PEELS HIS MASK OFF, REVEALS A MAN WITH A SHAVED HEAD AND A FIRE-RED LUMBERJACK'S BEARD.

HOYT KÖNIG (50), hefts a blood-caked fireman's ax to his shoulder, draws a Taurus pistol, aims it at Jesse, Abel. At the same time, Yates lets Shelby go, picks up his rifle, limps to König's side.

KÖNIG

Shelby? Over here. Yates, you're up. If these two so much as look at you sideways, ventilate 'em.

(BEAT)

And you? Drop the pig sticker. Yeah, that's right, slim. Easy. Easy. And the machete too, pet. On the ground, kick 'em to me and step away. Do it, now.

Jesse, Abel, grudgingly drop their weapons, raise their hands.

KÖNIG

Yates, lock 'em in the brig, grab the flame thrower and meet me up on the wall. Shelby, you're with me.

SHELBY

Aw, boss --

Yates sticks his tongue out at Shelby, *nyah!* levels his rifle.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

YATES

Aye-aye, Cap'n. All right, you mopes. You heard the boss. Keep those mitts where I can see 'em and move.

CUT TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

41

Yates quickly ushers Abel, Jesse, who march single-file with their hands raised in surrender, down a narrow stairwell at rifle-point,

YATES

WALK.

INTO THE FIREHOUSE'S BASEMENT JAIL, WHICH SPORTS A SINGLE CAGE CELL.

YATES

Over there. Try anything stupid and you're dead meat.

YATES GRABS KEYS FROM A HOOK BY THE ENTRANCE, OPENS THE CELL DOOR.

YATES

Go.

JESSE, ABEL ENTER THE CELL. YATES SLAMS, LOCKS THE DOOR WITH A CLANG.

JESSE

So that's it? You're just going to leave us? You need all the help you can get! Let us go, we can fight!

ABEL

Jesse, stop. Take a look around. This place has been repurposed to be like some kind of a medieval keep. See? Like that reinforced door and the cold-rolled steel bars on this cell. When these three finally get overrun, you and I will be safe and sound, in here.

Yates' expression drops, he raises his rifle, steps close to the cell, almost presses his face against the bars. Abel, Yates lock eyes.

YATES

If you two dipshits don't starve to death trying to dig your way through twenty feet of solid concrete floor with your bare hands, that is. So, I wonder which one of you will resurrect and eat the other first. Uh-huh, yeah. That's exactly what I thought.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Yates steps back from the cell, pulls the rifle's bolt, takes aim.

YATES

You didn't think that my crew and I could have made it this far without spilling a whole lot of blood along the way, did you? Now shut up and grab some floor, or I'll shoot you both dead where you stand.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

42

JUMP

Shelby ascends a ladder to the wall's CATWALK, stands beside Yates, König. Outside the wall before her, bathed in a klieg light's glare, we see legions of creeps, moaning, howling, screaming, weeping.

König wields his axe, cleaves the skulls of those who scale the wall. Meanwhile, Yates finally gets an M1A flamethrower's nozzle blazing.

KÖNIG

OKAY! THAT'S IT! BLAST 'EM! GO! LIGHT THESE MOTHERS UP!

YATES LOOSES A 100'-LONG GOUT OF FIRE ON THE CREEPS MASSED DIRECTLY BELOW AND BEYOND THE WALL. THE HORDE GOES UP LIKE SO MUCH DRY GRASS.

KÖNIG

TURN 'EM INTO HAMBURGER! MAKE SURE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT!

SHELBY SHIFTS HER GAZE FROM THE HORDE TO THE SKY, GESTURES, AND WE,

SHELBY

KÖNIG! LOOK! -- YEAH! YEAH! UP YOURS, 'YA BRAINLESS BUMS!

JUMP

43

TO SHELBY'S, YATES', KÖNIG'S LOW ANGLE POV, WHERE WE SEE THE SUN SLOWLY EMERGE FROM ITS LUNAR SHADOW, AND THE ECLIPSE FINALLY ENDS.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

44

Creeps pile atop each other in their attempt to climb over the wall, wave after wave, dropping in place as sunlight washes over them,

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

AND THEN, AS IF RECEIVING, OBEYING A TELEPATHIC COMMAND, THE UNDEAD COLLAPSE EVERYWHERE IN THE CITY, LIKE PUPPETS WITH THEIR STRINGS CUT.

CUT TO:

**EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

45

Clouds part. Shelby, Yates high-five each other, *whoop* as König wedges his fingers into his mouth, lets out a piercing whistle.

KÖNIG

Okay, people. Okay. That's enough. That's enough. We made it through another one. Sweep and clear. Tag 'em and bag 'em. Look for any holes in the wall. And then we'll have a parlay with Shelby's guests.

CUT TO:

**INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

46

JUMP

to the basement. After a rattle of keys in a lock and a squeal of rusty hinges, Shelby enters the jail, opens Jesse, Abel's cell, then draws a 9MM pistol, motions toward the exit with a terse nod,

SHELBY

The sun's out. It's all over. Follow me, princess.

CUT TO:

**INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

47

AND GUIDES JESSE, ABEL TOWARD A FILM NOIR-STYLE, FROSTED GLASS OFFICE DOOR, INSCRIBED WITH A LOGO THAT READS, THE BIG BOILER.

SHELBY

König usually beats strays to a pulp or kills them on sight but he granted you a personal audience today because *I* vouched for you, okay? So be very careful about what you say and what you ask for.

JESSE

Let me guess. You scavenge fuel and food for your boss and Yates and they reap all of the benefits.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Shelby turns, regards Jesse, as if asking *how do you know that?*

JESSE

I'm right aren't I. Doesn't that piss you off, the way those two use you to do all of the heavy lifting?

SHELBY

Oh, *please* girlfriend. The boys might think that they're the shit but they can't lay a glove on me.

(BEAT)

And that's because I'm the best at what I do, and what I do is secure beans and bullets and waste the undead. Now if you'd be so kind as to step aside?

and walks to the door, raps *shave and a haircut* on the glass.

KÖNIG (OS)

ENTER!

CUT TO:

**INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

48

SHELBY USHERS JESSE, ABEL INTO KÖNIG'S 11' X 19' WAR ROOM, WHERE AN OAKEN DESK SITS BESIDE A BUST OF JULIUS CAESAR AND AMONGST A SEA OF AV/PC PARTS, BOOKS, ENCYCLOPEDIAS, MAPS, AMERICAN FLAG BUNTING.

A FRAMED POSTER OF A MUSHROOM CLOUD ON THE WALL BEHIND YATES FRAMES HIS HEAD LIKE A HALO AS HE SITS, FEET UP, AT THE DESK. YATES STANDS BESIDE KÖNIG, THE RPK LOCKED AND LOADED. SHELBY BOWS WITH FLOURISH.

SHELBY

König, Abel Blake. Abel Blake, Jesse Blake, *Hoyt König*.

König takes a cigar from a cedar humidor, strikes a match on a perforated human skull, lights the cigar, puffs it contentedly.

KÖNIG

Abel. Jesse. This is my second-in-command, Dillon Yates. And I take it you already know Shelby Kinch. You can thank her for saving your skins out there. She was on a salvage run when she found you and from what I understand it was one hell of a scrap.

(BEAT)

Yes. Well? Don't just stand there. Out with it, man. Come on. Make it snappy. What can we do for you?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

ABEL

We need a working vehicle and some provisions, too. My daughter and I are on our way north out of the quarantine zone, looking for my wife. Jesse's mother.

KÖNIG

I see. If there's one thing that I am, it's amenable. Walk with me, Mister Blake. Yates, Shelby? You too.

JUMP

49

TO A 30' X 50' STOREROOM. KÖNIG FLIPS ON FLUORESCENT LIGHTS, REVEALS STOCKPILED HARDWARE, TOOLS, WEAPONS, MACHINE PARTS OF EVERY KIND.

KÖNIG

Take a look around. Everything that you see here is the last of its kind and it all belongs to me. Hence my strict no barter rule. I mean if I were to feed and clothe every poor pilgrim who wandered through my gates where would I be then? *Shelby?*

SHELBY

*M'Lord?*

KÖNIG

Give these people their gear and weapons and billet them somewhere for the night. And supply them with some chow before they keel over and die right here in front of me? I mean we aren't complete savages here.

SHELBY

*Yes, M'Lord.*

König lets out a sigh, lowers his axe from his shoulder, feigns two broad, menacing practice chops, claps Abel on the back.

KÖNIG

Sorry, but the answer to your request is absolutely not, Mister Blake. My heart bleeds for you and your girl, but a *working vehicle* as you said, is far too precious a commodity to just give away like candy.

(BEAT)

Of course you can stay and help us behead skeevies until tomorrow morning and then you can be on your way north, was it? But we can't take in any more people, so it's twenty-four hours, and out you go.



24.

CUT TO:

**INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

50

JUMP TO ANOTHER CORRIDOR, where Jesse, Abel are marched several paces ahead of Shelby. Jesse finally turns to Abel, whispers:

JESSE

*Did you see that? That skull had a freaking bullet hole in it, right between the eyes. I don't care if or why Shelby saved us, I'm not going to just sit around this dump and wait for those three to finally execute us.*

CUT TO:

**INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

51

TIME JUMP

and we see König walking backward, guiding Yates, who is at the moment pushing the van into the firehouse's cavernous GARAGE.

KÖNIG

Okay. Keep goin'. Keep goin'. All right. Stop. Stop!

Yates relents, steps away, wipes his hands on his boiler suit.

YATES

Gee, boss. How come I always gotta be the one who pushes this thing around when it gets wrecked? Why not Shelby? She's the one who trashed it, not me.

KÖNIG

Will you put a sock in it? Look at this mess. You know, I said that the van was not to be used for salvage runs. But do you two ever listen to me? No.

(BEAT)

She'll pull through but not without a lot of work. Where the hell is that brat now, anyway? *SHELBY!*

CUT TO:

**EX. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

52

now we're above the firehouse, observing it from a great height,

KÖNIG (OS)

*SHELBY!*

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

JUMP

53

to the no-man's-land outside the firehouse's walls, where we see a mangled creep, mired in mud, corpses, raise its head, work its jaws.

KÖNIG (OS)

*SHELBY!*

CUT TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

54

JUMP

and we're back in the compound with Shelby as she hauls scrap,

SHELBY

*So, you think you're the boss of me? I'll show you who's the boss. That's right. Ain't nobody's the boss of me --*

CUT TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

55

into a RADIO ROOM, this one heaped with AV equipment, a CB radio, more boxed computer and radio parts, where she drops her burden.

SHELBY

*Oh yeah, that's right, that's right, you heard me. Treat me like I'm some kind of pack horse? You sons of bitches couldn't find your dicks with both hands and you know it.*

Shelby proceeds to arrange coaxial cables, trashed hard drives on a middle shelf, then pauses to focus her (AND OUR) attention on one open cardboard box in particular, and the cache of walkie-talkies within.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DUSK

56

JUMP

to a crimson sunset and a basketball court somewhere beyond the firehouse, where Yates, König, gather corpses for final disposal.

The pair heave the last creep onto a grotesque MIDDEN, stand back,

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

and then, after fastening their shemagh scarves, aviator's goggles,

KÖNIG

Burn 'em.

Yates salutes König, approaches the midden, levels the flamethrower,

douses the heaped corpses with a sweeping blast of fire, fire that coils, gyres, spirals upward, upward and finally dissolves into:

CUT TO:

**EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT**

57

NIGHT

and we're atop the firehouse's ROOFTOP with Abel, Jesse, who watch as Yates, Shelby busily spot-repair the van in the compound below,

meanwhile, creeps groan, shriek, howl ceaselessly, stagger through the abyssal darkness outside the fortress, claw futilely at its walls,

WHILE ABOVE AND BEYOND, COUNTLESS MOTES OF SPHERICAL, BLUE-GREEN LIGHT (OR ARE THEY SATELLITES? METEORITES? ORBS?) FALL SLOWLY, GRACEFULLY FROM THE BLUE-BLACK SKY TO THE HORIZON, WHERE THEY DIM, FLICKER OUT.

ABEL

Jesse, look. There's another one. And another and another. I've never seen so many of them at one time. Wow. They're so bright here this close to the border.

SUDDENLY

KÖNIG (OS)

So. You've seen the lights. Quite a show, isn't it?

König, axe slung over one shoulder, emerges from a roof stairwell. He waits there for a moment, whistles *whooo*, lowers the axe, then leisurely approaches Abel, Jesse, gestures toward the sky.

KÖNIG

*Yes, mysterious, mysterious.* They first appeared just before zero hour, but no one knows *what* they are.

ABEL (TO JESSE)

*If you value your life, be quiet and follow my lead.*

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KÖNIG

Sort of like that eclipse that we had this morning. There are more and more of them now, always closer and closer together. *Signs and wonders, indeed.*

(BEAT)

Look. See? They don't fall at terminal velocity. Their rate of descent is constant. That means that they're being controlled, but by who? I can't say.

Abel, Jesse gawk at König. König chuckles at his little joke,

KÖNIG

I was an aerospace engineer back in the day. Yes, indeed, that was me; wife, kids, McMansion in the suburbs and a two hundred grand a year paycheck. Everything that makes for a perfect life. All gone.

then gestures downward, points to the compound, Yates, Shelby.

JUMP

58

TO THE COMPOUND, WHERE SHELBY STOPS HER WORK, LIGHTS A CIGARILLO, ADJUSTS HER HEADPHONES, SCROLLS THROUGH HER IPOD, WAVES AT KÖNIG.

Yates looks up, switches off his acetylene torch, sets it aside, removes his gloves, raises his goggles, and glares at Shelby.

YATES

And what the hell do you think you're doing over there, runt? You're getting paid to fix this shit, same as me, not to stand around wasting time. Now get back to work before the boss gets after you.

SHELBY

*Dillon Yates, so help me, I'm gonna kick your ass.*

JUMP

59

BACK TO THE ROOFTOP. KÖNIG REPLIES WITH A COMMANDING ROYAL WAVE, THEN MAKES A SIGN OF MOCK BENEDICTION OVER THE COMPOUND, ADDS:

KÖNIG

Yates there worked in construction. Roads, houses, you name it. He's a royal pain in the ass but he helped me raise these walls with his bare hands. I wouldn't trade him for anyone else in the world.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

AND WE FOCUS ON SHELBY AS SHE WORKS ON THE VAN, ARGUES WITH YATES.

KÖNIG

As for Shelby, I don't know who or what she used to be, but she's an artist with explosives and has a natural talent for larceny, so now she's our scout.

(BEAT)

So what's your tale of woe, Abel Blake? And before you speak, a courteous word of warning. No shaggy dog stories, please. I know a lie when I hear one.

ABEL

I owned a ranch, a working ranch. I farmed a bit. Back when there was soil to till and crops to grow. And we raised horses. I read the Odyssey in the stables and tried to be a good husband and father.

KÖNIG

A farmer? Really. I would have bet that you were either a cop or a Holy Joe with your attitude. *Hm.* Then you would know about planting and irrigation, what it takes to cultivate grain and seeds and such. That skill makes you a very useful man my friend.

(BEAT)

I reckon that finally brings me around to you, pet. Who and what all were you once upon a time?

JESSE

I was a normal high school student. Senior year. My mother wanted me to go to medical school after I graduated, but I always had my heart set on our ranch, on our land, instead. Like my father.

König fishes what's left of his cigar from his vest's pocket, chomps the stub between his teeth and grins a shit-eating grin,

KÖNIG

And so where is dear old mom these days, anyway? Did she leg it after Uncle Sam dropped the bomb or did she, as they say, get lost in the shuffle?

JESSE

We were split up a few months after zero hour. When the president turned the states over to the militias and the relocation camps were liquidated. But that's really none of your business, is it?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

NOW HIS EYES NARROW, HIS JAWS WORK AS IF HE MIGHT GO BALLISTIC, KÖNIG REGARDS JESSE COLDLY, THE NICE-GUY FAÇADE GONE IN A FLASH,

KÖNIG

You're braver souls than I. Brave or just plain stupid, and I chose to believe the latter. Well I hate to break it to you but we've been listening and there is absolutely no one out there. Radio see-lence-io. And we've listened, believe me.

AND THEN HE'S ALL BUSINESS AGAIN, AND GLANCES AT HIS WRISTWATCH.

KÖNIG

Well, my my. Would you look at that? *Tis now the very witching time of night when churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out*, and yet here we are.

(BEAT)

Just one more thing before we go our separate ways. My previous order from this morning still stands. I expect to see you both packed up and ready to roll at daybreak. Sleep well. Jesse. *Mister Blake*.

CUT TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

60

THE GARAGE

WHERE SHELBY SITS ATOP A BUNK BED. A PORTABLE RECORD PLAYER BESIDE HER SPINS AN LP OF MAURICE RAVEL'S *PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DÉFUNTE*.

Shelby hears the creep's groaning outside, her expression sours; she raises the record player's volume and pounds on a nearby wall.

SHELBY

ASSHOLES!

JUMP

61

TO A WINDOWLESS STOREROOM, LIT BY A SINGLE TALLOW CANDLE. HERE JESSE, ABEL, ARE FINALLY QUIET AND AT REST ON SEPERATE CANVAS ARMY COTS.

ABEL SLEEPS, HIS BACK TURNED TOWARD JESSE. JESSE, SUPINE, AWAKE, GAZES AT A 5" X 7" PHOTOGRAPH IN THE CANDLE'S GLOW, AS WE CUT TO:

HER POV

62

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

A GHOSTLY POLAROID OF A 40-ISH WOMAN WITH SAD, DARK EYES: JESSE'S MOTHER, PENNY BLAKE, SEATED BESIDE A GOLDEN RETRIEVER PUPPY, ARGOS.

AND THEN

63

THE PHOTOGRAPH SEEMS TO MOVE EVER SO SLIGHTLY, AS IF IMBUED WITH LIFE. WE HEAR A SOFT SUMMER BREEZE, WIND CHIMES, AND A VOICE FROM THE PAST:

PENNY (VO)

*Jesse! Jesse! Come inside, now! It's time for dinner!*

WE THEN HEAR FEET JOGGING ON A WOODEN PORCH, A SCREEN DOOR'S SLAM, ARGOS' JOVIAL BARKING. *THIS IS CLEARLY A MEMORY OF A HAPPIER TIME.*

BACK TO SCENE

64

where Jesse sits up, douses the candle with a single breath, lays back, clamps her hands over her ears to silence the creeps' wailing, moaning.

JESSE

*Shut up, God damn you. Shut up shut up shut up shut up.*

Now the howling grows inexorably louder, louder, louder as we zoom in on Jesse's anguished face. Jesse wearily, painfully rolls onto her side, curls into a tight fetal position, then closes her eyes and we:

SMASH TO

### ACT THREE

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

65

AND THE COMPOUND, BATHED IN THE BLISTERING, WHITE-HOT LIGHT OF DAWN. Here Yates sleeps soundly on a webbed folding lawn chair, his head back and mouth agape, the RPK balanced loosely athwart his lap.

CUT TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

66

JUMP

TO KÖNIG'S ROOM, where König sleeps on a double bed, surrounded by heaped books, magazines, bric-a-brac, various guns, knives, swords.

JUMP

67

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

to Jesse, Abel's room. Jesse awakes with a start; there, beside the cot, stands Shelby, an index finger raised cautiously to her lips.

Shelby directs a wary glance toward the door, shakes her head: NO.

CUT TO:

**EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY**

68

A STREET OUTSIDE THE FORTRESS' GATE. ABEL STOWS HIS BACKPACK AND SPEAR INSIDE AN ARMOR-PLATED SUV WHILE SHELBY, JESSE WAIT NEARBY.

SHELBY

There's a few days' water and some food in the back, enough to get you where you need to go, at least. And a walkie-talkie too, tuned to my channel, so you and I can keep in contact for fifty miles or so.

(BEAT)

I couldn't get you a gun, though. I could always say that you two overpowered me and stole the ride, but a misplaced gun is a whole other story. And I'm going to be in enough trouble for this, as it is.

JESSE

Thank you. My dad and I owe you our lives. *Twice* now.

Jesse offers her hand. Shelby hugs Jesse instead, then Abel hands Jesse her machete as she clambers into the SUV's passenger seat.

Shelby fishes a pack of cigarillos from her flak-jacket's pocket, pulls one from the box with her teeth, searches for her lighter.

SHELBY

*Shit*. Hang on a second. Either of you got a light?

ABEL PASSES A MATCHBOOK TO SHELBY, WHO THEN LIGHTS UP A CIGARILLO AS ABEL CLOSES THE SUV'S REAR HATCH AND CLIMBS INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT.

SHELBY

Thanks, dad.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

69

ABEL REVS THE SUV'S ENGINE. SHELBY, WHO STANDS JUST OUTSIDE THE OPEN

CONTINUED:



CONTINUED:

PASSENGER WINDOW, RETURNS THE MATCHBOOK, NOT TO ABEL, BUT TO JESSE.

JESSE STOWS HER MACHETE AT HER FEET, POCKETS THE MATCHBOOK. SHELBY FINALLY HANDS JESSE HER IPOD, HEADPHONES, AND A USB CHARGING CABLE.

SHELBY

*For the dead travel fast.*

JESSE

Oh, no, no. I couldn't --

SHELBY

Hey look, its okay. Take it. There are zillions of these things just lying around for the taking now. You only have to find the one with the right music.

JESSE

Why are you doing all of this? Why risk your life for two people that you barely even know? I mean, why don't you leave? You should come with us.

SHELBY

I can't. König and Yates? - they *saved me*. They found me and cared for me when no one else would. So I sort of owe them is how I see it. And sometimes I think that they'd be lost without me.

(BEAT)

Catch you on the flipside Jesse Blake. If you ever get to where you're going you tell mom I said hey.

Jesse clasps Shelby's hand again. Shelby steps back, salutes Abel,

SHELBY

I'll see you around too, dad. It was nice meetin' you. You take good care of our little girl now, *okay?*

before Abel drives away, slowly at first, then faster, faster.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

70

Jesse glances backward at Shelby, who recedes in the distance, then waves again before finally ducking back into the fortress.

CUT TO:

33.

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

71

TIME JUMP

AS THE SUV ZOOMS ALONG A BOMBED-OUT TWO-LANE HIGHWAY, TOWARD GRIM, DESOLATE RUSTBELT TERRAIN, FARTHER AND FARTHER AWAY FROM THE CITY.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

72

Abel drives onward; meanwhile, Jesse broods, then turns, asks:

JESSE

What becomes of them? König and Yates? And Shelby?

ABEL

Can't say. You need to put this behind you, Jesse. We can't save everyone. Shelby would only slow us down, and we have to focus on our mission now.

JESSE

We have to focus on our *what*? Our *mission*? Is that what we're calling what we're doing now?

(BEAT)

Forget it, okay? Forget it. I'm cold and tired and I haven't slept in days. Let me rest my eyes and then I can take over with the driving for a while.

Jesse gets comfortable, folds her arms, closes her eyes, as we:

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

73

The SUV rambles through an ever more desolate, blasted landscape, closer and closer to the storm clouds that loom on the horizon.

PULL BACK

74

TO THE ROADSIDE, WHERE WE SEE A DECAYED HUMAN CORPSE, SEVERED BELOW THE WAIST, CRUCIFIED SCARECROW-FASHION ON TWO LENGTHS OF IRON REBAR.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

75

SMASH

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

AND JESSE AWAKENS TO A THUNDERCLAP, A CLOUD-DARK SKY, AND A BLEAK STRETCH OF BLACKTOP, JAMMED WITH ABANDONED CARS, SUV'S, TRUCKS.

JESSE

*Ugh.* I must have fallen asleep. How long was I out?

ABEL

I don't know. Forty-five minutes, an hour, maybe.

(BEAT)

There are more and more wrecks as we go north. I should have expected this. We'll have to keep our speed up to get clear of this of place by sundown.

Jesse peers through the passenger window at the highway outside, which, apart from countless junked vehicles, is ominously still.

JESSE

That's odd. I don't see any creeps out there, dead or dormant. In fact, I don't see any bodies at all.

ABEL

Yes, but you know how wily the infected can be. We still need to stay frosty until we're safe on the open road, even with a few hours of daylight left.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

76

The SUV weaves around trucks, cars, continues its journey onward.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

77

JESSE PULLS THE MATCHBOOK FROM A PANTS POCKET, OPENS IT AND WE SEE:

HER POV

78

which, in EXTREME CLOSE UP, is focused on a MESSAGE from Shelby, scribbled in pencil on the inside of the matchbook's upper flap:

**THE CITY IS DOOMED  
DON'T COME BACK**

BACK TO SCENE

79

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

where Jesse goes pale. Gaze fixed on the matchbook, she asks:

JESSE

Dad, have you ever thought that maybe what we're doing right now is, I don't know, like a mistake? That you and I shouldn't have left the ranch?

ABEL

A mistake? Is this because of what that lunatic König said, that the free territories don't exist?

(BEAT)

No. It's duty, my *sacred* duty to keep searching until I find your mother, until I can make a life, a real life, for her and for you and for all of us. I could no more abandon her than I could you.

JESSE

Right. But I wonder what you expect to find when we get there. White pines maybe? A cabin on the lake with a little peapod rowboat to match? Or more of that *shit* that we see out there every day?

ABEL

Don't ever talk like that again, Jesse. Ever. *Ever*. Do you hear me? You can't give up hope, not now. Not after all that we've been through, not when we're finally, finally so close to our objective.

(BEAT)

Now we keep it together and we stay on our course as planned, *three-three-zero, north-northwest*.

Jesse's eyes snap back to Abel. BLOOD TRICKLES FROM HIS RIGHT NOSTRIL.

JESSE

Dad -- ?

Abel wipes blood from his nose, regards the smear on the back of his hand, looks up at Jesse, whose eyes are wide with dread and terror.

ABEL

I'm okay, kiddo. Maybe I got tackled harder than I thought yesterday. It's nothing. I'll be all right.

SUDDENLY

A ROCKET FLARE SHOOTS FROM THE SHADOWS BELOW A NEARBY OVERPASS WITH A

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

YOWLING WOOSH, STRIKES THE SUV'S DRIVER'S SIDE WITH CANNONBALL FORCE!

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

80

FLARES ZOOM IN FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. THEN A DOZEN NOMADS, THEIR FACES AND FORMS OBSCURED BY RAGGED, HOODED CLOAKS, GAS MASKS, SCARVES, BANDOLIERS AND GOGGLES, POUR OUT OF THE SAME OVERPASS, PELT THE SUV WITH ROCKS, BRICKS, ARROWS, STAVES AND SPEARS AS IT HURTLES BY.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

81

Primitive weapons rain down on the SUV. Abel floors the accelerator,

JESSE

GO! DON'T STOP! GET US OUT OF HERE! GET US OUT OF HERE!

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

82

and races toward another overpass. Two dozen more nomads gathered on the road above lob rocks, spears at the SUV as it passes below.

The SUV bursts from the overpass' opposite side, where a lone nomad leaps from a ditch, hurls a magnum spike strip across the highway.

Abel drives over the spike strip at 100 MPH. The SUV's tires puncture, explode like bombs and the vehicle goes into a crazy fishtail slide.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

83

ABEL FRANTICALLY PUMPS THE BRAKES AND SWERVES AROUND A KNOT OF CARS, STRAIGHT AT A SWARM OF VIVIFIED CREEPS WHO STRAGGLE ACROSS THE HIGHWAY.

JESSE

DAD!

ABEL

HOLD ON!

37.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY**

84

THE SUV PLOWS DIRECTLY INTO, THROUGH THE HORDE AT FULL SPEED, SKIDS ON VISCERA, CAREENS HEADLONG INTO AN OVERTURNED SEMI-TRUCK TRAILER.

THE IMPACT SHATTERS THE SUV'S WINDSHIELD, POPS ITS AIRBAGS; THE SUV COMES TO REST, STEAM AND FLUID POURING FROM ITS CAVED-IN ENGINE BLOCK.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

85

Inside, Abel slumps against the steering wheel, Jesse the dashboard. Jesse rocks back in her seat, reveals a deep gash above her right eye.

JESSE

DAD! DAD! WAKE UP! WAKE UP! PLEASE! PLEASE, WAKE UP!

THEN

a creep reaches through the passenger window, grabs Jesse's hair, pulls. Jesse resists, screams as she is dragged toward broken glass,

twisting, thrashing, Jesse accidentally kicks the glove box door. The door drops open, revealing a colt python revolver. Jesse spies the gun,

reaches for, finally grabs it with her left hand, aims to her left, puts the pistol's muzzle to the creep's brow, pulls the trigger and

*BLAM!*

a single bullet vaporizes the creep's skull; it releases its grip, drops to the blacktop. At the same time, the gunshot rouses Abel,

ABEL

*Jesse -- ?*

JESSE

COME ON, GOD DAMN IT! DON'T YOU DIE ON ME, NOT NOW! DO YOU HEAR ME? WE HAVE TO GET OUT, GET UP ON THE ROOF!

Abel comes to at last. As he does Jesse punches upward, pops the SUV's sunroof. Abel gathers his spear and climbs through first.

JESSE

GO, DAD! GO! GO! DON'T STOP! GO ON! I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Jesse hands Abel her machete, jams the pistol in one jacket pocket, the walkie-talkie in another, hoists herself up through the sunroof,

CUT TO:

**EXT. ABEL'S SUV - DAY**

86

onto the SUV's roof, where creeps surround them, threescore deep, Abel lays crumpled in a heap at Jesse's feet as Jesse stands over him. Jesse draws the revolver, aims at the horde, pulls the trigger and;

CLICK

JESSE

OH, COME ON! YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! GOD DAMN IT!

Jesse stuffs the pistol into her waistband, raises her machete, ready for battle, pulls the walkie-talkie from her pocket, shouts:

JESSE

SHELBY! SHELBY! COME IN! COME IN! WE'RE IN TROUBLE HERE!

(BEAT)

MY DAD AND I HAVE WRECKED AND WE'RE PINNED DOWN ON HIGHWAY ONE, ABOUT FIFTY, SIXTY MILES NORTHWEST OF THE CITY! THERE ARE CREEPS EVERYWHERE! SHELBY, DO YOU READ ME!

There is no reply. Jesse pockets the walkie-talkie and starts hacking, slashing away at the horde below her as if she were scything wheat.

NOW WE HEAR AN EARTH-SHAKING BASS RUMBLE. SLOWLY, LOUDER, LOUDER.

AND THEN

A 1966 BELL UH-1D HUEY HELICOPTER AND A 4X4 PICKUP TRUCK WITH A .50 CAL M2 MACHINE GUN MOUNTED IN ITS BAY, DESCENDS ON THE HIGHWAY.

BUZZ JASPER, the Huey's door gunner, peppers the horde with M134 minigun fire as the chopper lands about 35 yds away from the SUV.

The truck, meanwhile, skids, stops about 25 yds away from the wreck. GARRICK RIGGS, the truck's driver, then steps out of the 4x4's cab, drops to one knee, sweeps the horde with a blast from an AK-47,

as TORA BASSETT, a warrior woman in tiger-stripe camouflage fatigues and an eye-patch, unloads the truck's M2 on the remaining creeps.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

RIGGS

WHOA, TORA! STOP! STOP! DON'T HIT THE MAN AND THE GIRL!

THE GUNFIRE CONTINUES WITH LETHAL PRECISION AND MOWS DOWN THE SWARM.

TORA FINALLY CEASES FIRE AND A BESPECTACLED, BANTAM-WEIGHT MAN, HIRAM PARSONS, HOPS FROM THE HUEY'S BAY AND SPRINTS TOWARD THE SUV, WHERE WE FIND JESSE JUMPING FROM THE SUV'S ROOF TO THE BLACKTOP.

PARSONS

You're okay. You're okay. I've got you. I'm doctor Hiram Parsons. These are my friends, Buzz Jasper, Tora Basset and that's Garrick Riggs. What's your name?

JESSE

Jesse --

PARSONS

Jesse. Who is he? Your brother? Your father? Your *father*. Okay, Jesse. Don't worry. You're safe now.

TIME JUMP

87

to Abel supine on a canvas stretcher. Riggs grips one end, Tora the other, and together they carry the stretcher to the chopper.

PARSONS

READY? ON THREE. ONE, TWO, THREE, AND - *LIFT*. EASY. EASY. NICE AND SLOW. THAT'S IT. WATCH YOUR FOOTING, PEOPLE. HE PROBABLY HAS INTERNAL INJURIES, SO DON'T ROCK HIM.

TIME JUMP

88

Jesse looks on as Abel is secured in the Huey's bay. Parsons then gives the chopper's pilot, co-pilot a thumbs-up, addresses Riggs:

PARSONS

GO! GO! IF HE VIVIFIES I'LL PUT HIM DOWN, ALL RIGHT? TAKE THE GIRL BACK TO THE HOUSE! WE'LL MEET YOU THERE!

Jesse attempts to board the helicopter, Parsons shoves her away, and then everyone shouts to be heard above the chopper's rotors.

JESSE

WHOA! WAIT A MINUTE! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THE HELL YOU PEOPLE ARE, OKAY? I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITHOUT HIM!

CONTINUED:



CONTINUED:

PARSONS

NO, NO! LISTEN, YOUR FATHER IS GOING TO BE FINE BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE NEAR HIM IF HE PASSES, UNDERSTAND? YOU STAY WITH GARRICK AND TORA AND THEY'LL FOLLOW US!

(BEAT)

LOOK, MY FRIENDS AND I LIVE IN A PLACE, A SPECIAL PLACE, WITH ELECTRICITY, FOOD, WATER, MEDICINE, ENOUGH TO LAST FOR MONTHS, MAYBE EVEN YEARS! AND CLEAN CLOTHES, TOO!

(BEAT)

-- YES, THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE BEFORE MUST HAVE HAD A DAUGHTER ABOUT YOUR AGE! AND YOU CAN SHARE ALL OF IT WITH US, BUT YOU HAVE TO GET IN THAT TRUCK, RIGHT NOW!

Jesse's gaze darts from Abel to Parsons to the truck, back to Abel,

TORA

SHAKE YOUR TAIL FEATHERS, DOC! THERE ARE MORE GHOSTIES ON THE WAY! THEY MUST HAVE HEARD THE GUNFIRE BECAUSE THEY'RE MOVING FAST! COME ON, COME ON! TIME'S A-WASTIN'!

SHE STEPS AWAY, UNSTEADY, HER EXPRESSION GOES VISIBLY BLANK, SLACK, JESSE GROWS PALE, HER EYES ROLL UP AND SHE SWOONS INTO A DEAD FAINT.

RIGGS

HOLY SHIT!

PARSONS

JESUS! PICK HER UP! PICK HER UP! SHE'S HAVING A GRAND MAL SIEZURE FROM A CONCUSSION! GARRICK, TORA, HELP ME!

SMASH TO BLACK

89

AND WITHIN THAT INFINITE OBLIVION WE HEAR THE CHOPPER'S FADING *WHUP WHUP* AS IT LIFTS OFF, FOLLOWED BY RIGGS AND ROSS SPEAKING, AGAIN.

RIGGS (VO)

*You hear that, baby? God damn! Listen to that beautiful bird sing! There ain't no sweeter sound in the world!*

ROSS (VO)

*There's a rumor out there? about a vaccine? And The Man In The Spire. Monster zero. Some people say that if you found him and put a stake in his heart all of the reekers would die. Is that true?*

CUT TO:

41.

INT. A TENT - NIGHT

90

SMASH

TO FULSOME DARK, ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, AND JESSE, PRONE ON A CANVAS ARMY COT, WITHIN A SMALL, CLUTTERED, MILITARY-ISSUE TENT.

JESSE OPENS HER EYES, SITS UP, PERCHES FOR A MOMENT ON THE COT'S EDGE, LISTENS TO THE SOUND OF HUMAN ACTIVITY, THE HUM OF MANY VOICES OUTSIDE,

CUT TO:

EXT. A CAMP - NIGHT

91

THEN STEPS FROM HER TENT INTO A GOVERNMENT RELOCATION CAMP, WHERE WE SEE COUNTLESS TENTS OF THE SAME DESIGN, TRAILERS, GUARD TOWERS, WALLS.

JESSE REGARDS THE THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES WHO SQUAT IN THE DIRT AROUND HER, THE SOLDIERS, THEIR DOGS WHO PATROL THE CAMP, THE WALLS BEYOND.

SUDDENLY

A DEAFENING, TERRIFYING AIR RAID SIREN'S WAIL CUTS THE AIR, FOLLOWED BY DISTANT SHOUTS, SCREAMS, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE, EXPLOSIONS.

REFUGEES IN GREATER AND GREATER NUMBERS FLEE FROM AN AS YET UNSEEN THREAT, SWARM THROUGH THE CAMP'S MUDDY ALLEYS, DIRECTLY TOWARD JESSE.

REFUGEE 1

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, KID? THEY'VE BROKEN THROUGH THE GATE! RUN! RUN! GET OUTTA HERE, WHILE YOU STILL CAN!

JESSE

HEY, WAIT! STOP! STOP! WAIT A SECOND! WHAT'S GOING ON?

THEN JESSE SEES THEM: CREEPS, HUNDREDS, MAYBE THOUSANDS, TAKING DOWN REFUGEES AS THEY FLOW THROUGH THE CAMP AND TOWARD HER LIKE A FLOOD.

JESSE

MOM! DAD! -- MOM! DAD! WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU?

JUMP

A CH-47 CHINOOK EVACUATION HELICOPTER LIFTS OFF, LOADED FOR BEAR AND SWAMPED WITH CREEPS. THE CHOPPER SLOWLY RISES, RISES, SHEDDING BODIES AS IT ASCENDS. IT THEN LOSES ALTITUDE, KEELS OVER, SPIRALS DOWNWARD,

FASTER, FASTER, WHERE IT CRASHES TO THE GROUND NOSE-FIRST AND EXPLODES

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

IN A FIREBALL THAT WHIPS SHRAPNEL, ROTOR BLADES THROUGH THE CAMP.

JUMP

NOW THE PANICKED REFUGEES STAMPEDE FULL FORCE INTO JESSE WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, BODY SLAM HER TO THE GROUND, TRAMPLE HER, KEEP MOVING,

AND FROM THAT VANTAGE JESSE SEES A CREEP STRADDLE A PRONE MALE REFUGEE. THE CREEP FORCES ITS VICTIM'S JAWS OPEN, THEN VOMITS BLOOD AND A LARVA THAT WRIGGLES INTO THE MAN'S MOUTH AND SLITHERS DOWN HIS THROAT.

CUT TO:

EXT. A HIVE - DAY

92

SMASH

TO A WINDSWEPT, MOUNTAINOUS, UTTERLY ALIEN DESERT LANDSCAPE, WHERE COUNTLESS LUMINOUS, GLITTERING ORBS AND A RINGED, CYCLOPEAN PLANET, ORBITED BY MYRIAD MOONS AND PLANETOIDS, FILLS THE HORIZON BEYOND.

JESSE STANDS ATOP A RISE, REGARDS THE MESA, OBSERVES THOUSANDS OF CREEPS SHUFFLING IN A MILES-WIDE CIRCLE BELOW A MASSIVE, FACETED HIVE,

JUMP

A SPORE-STRUCTURE, PULSING WITH CRIMSON AND AMBER LIGHT, THAT FLOATS HUNDREDS OF YARDS ABOVE, AND THE SOUND OF A SLOW, THUDDING HEARTBEAT.

SILHOUETTED WITHIN THOSE GLOWING PULSES ARE NUMBERLESS SQUIRMING, WRIGGLING LARVAE AND QUASI-FORMED HUMAN FETUSES, AND, AT THE HIVE'S CORE, SUSPENDED IN A STANDING POSE, WE SEE A MAN, THE MAN IN THE SPIRE.

JUMP

THEN THE MAN SPEAKS IN A THUNDEROUS, MALEVOLENT VOICE, A VOICE SO LOUD THAT IT MAKES THE MESA SHAKE, AND JESSE CLAP HER HANDS OVER HER EARS:

THE MAN

I AM THE ONE WHO YOU SEEK. AND YOU WILL NEVER FIND ME.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CAMP - NIGHT

93

AND WE'RE BACK IN THE REFUGEE CAMP, AND JESSE ON THE GROUND, MOBBED BY

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

**CREEPS, AS SHE IS RIPPED APART. JESSE SCREAMS, SCREAMS, SCREAMS, AND:**

**ACT FOUR**

**INT. THE TRUCK - DAY**

94

WE SMASH

TO THE TRUCK. RIGGS SITS AT THE WHEEL, TORA ON THE BAY'S M2. JESSE, UNCONSCIOUS, RECLINES PASSENGER SIDE, HER EYE ROUGHLY BANDAGED.

JESSE AWAKENS, STUDIES GARRICK, SAGA, WITH A WORLD-WEARY EXPRESSION THAT READS, *I'M NOT THE PERSON THAT I WAS BEFORE. I'VE CHANGED.*

RIGGS

Welcome back to the land of the living, kid. Man, you really had us scared there for a while. The doc says that you had some kind of a seizure when you fell and hit your head. Are you feeling better now?

JESSE

Yeah. You're name is Riggs, right? Where's my dad?

Riggs raises a CB radio's mic, presses its talk bar, inquires:

RIGGS

Nate? Riggs. Tell Parsons that the girl is awake. What's shaking up there? How's our other patient?

CUT TO:

**INT. THE HUEY - DAY**

95

NATHAN CALDER (30), the Huey's pilot, studies the chopper's bay, Buzz, Abel on his stretcher, and Parsons, who adjusts Abel's IV. Parsons then takes Abel's pulse, gives Calder an A-OK signal.

Nate nods, fixes his attention on the horizon as his co-pilot, ARDEN DEWITT (29) makes a circular gesture, stabs to Nathan's left.

CALDER

Looks like he's still with us, no surprises here. And tell Tora to get on her fifty. You have a swarm of day timers coming up just off your port quarter.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TRUCK - DAY

THE TRUCK

Riggs nods in agreement, surveys the open road ahead, replies:

RIGGS

That's a ten-four good buddy. I read you loud and clear. I'll see you and Arden back at the *hacienda* shortly. Ya'll save a cold beer for me all right?

RIGGS SIGNS OFF, RAPS TWICE ON THE CAB'S REAR WINDOW, ALERTS TORA, MAKES A BANG-BANG GESTURE, ALSO MOTIONS TO HIS LEFT. TORA NODS.

RIGGS

Hear that, kid? You're dad will be as good as new in no time. It was our eye in the sky that saw you headed straight for that swarm of day timers. They're nasty, fearless creatures. Fearless, but stupid. We've even seen them attack each other.

JESSE

*Day timers -- ?*

RIGGS

On account of these ones aren't allergic to light like the others. Parsons says that the pathogen has mutated and that the dead have evolved, *antigenic shift*, he called it. You're both lucky to be alive.

(BEAT)

The doc isn't just a normal sawbones to us you see. He's been studying the reekers and the day timers from the beginning and knows everything about them and about how we can take the fight to *them* on our terms. Parsons is a great leader and a true genius.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HUEY - DAY

The chopper swoops in low, about 100 yds behind Riggs' truck,

JUMP

as Parsons flips on an open reel tape deck, BLASTS SAM THE SHAM & THE PHARAOHS' WOOLY BULLY THROUGH THE HUEY'S SIDE-MOUNTED SPEAKERS.

CUT TO:

45.

**EXT. THE TRUCK - DAY**

99

Three dozen or so creeps who shamble across the road now gaze upward toward the oncoming sound, just as Riggs' truck races by.

As it does, Tora unleashes a salvo of continuous horizontal fire with the truck's machine gun, rips a passage through the swarm.

CUT TO:

**INT. THE TRUCK - DAY**

100

Jesse looks on as gore, viscera spatters the 4x4's windshield.

RIGGS

Hey I know it's a lot to take in, but it's all good. Nate and Anders always crank their tunes like that when they're comin' in hot. We get a kick out of it, and it confuses the bejeezus out of the ghosties.

JESSE

Your friend, the doctor, said that you people had a place, a special place. Is that where we're going?

THEN, AS IF IN RESPONSE, A 30' HIGH, ACRES-LONG CONCRETE AND STEEL PANEL WALL SLOWLY HOVES INTO VIEW, THROWS A SHADOW OVER THE TRUCK.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE TRUCK - DAY**

101

GEARS RUMBLE, TURN. A MASSIVE, RAZOR WIRE-TOPPED GATE OPENS INWARD.

AND IT IS THERE, BEYOND THE GATE, AMIDST THE RUGGED, UPLIFTED PLATEAU LANDSCAPE, THAT WE SEE A MASSIVE, MOUNTAIN LODGE-STYLE CHÂTEAU.

CUT TO:

**INT. THE TRUCK - DAY**

102

Riggs honks the truck's horn, fans the air with his netback cap, then turns, gives Jesse a direct, sustained, sympathetic look.

RIGGS

You saw him, didn't you. *The Man In The Spire*. In your mind, when you passed out. Don't worry, we all have. You'll find that it happens around here, when you're near the day timers in great numbers.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Jesse nods, returns an ice-cold stare that makes Riggs wince.

JESSE

I saw him. And I know the secret of the plague too. Since zero hour we thought that it was a pathogen, a contagion that had created it. But we were wrong.

(BEAT)

The dead are merely hosts, vessels for vermiform organisms that have been carried here on those orbs, those meteors that fall out of the sky every night. Don't ask me how I know it, I just do. This isn't about survival of the fittest anymore. No, these things want to terraform us. It's about conquest.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TRUCK - DAY

103

above, the Huey circles the villa, augers in, lands beside it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASA ROSA - DAY

104

PULL BACK

and we see Riggs' truck, the villa, from a lofty, 3/4-mile height.

BACK TO SCENE

105

ATOP A CRAGGY PEAK, WHERE A CLOAKED, FEMALE HIGHWAY NOMAD LOWERS A SPYGLASS, RISES FROM A CROUCH AND SECURES AN M1 GARAND RIFLE. SHE THEN TAKES UP A 6'-LONG WOODEN BO STAFF, WHISTLES, GESTURES.

WOMAN

*Ninus. Ninus, come.*

A WOLF RISES FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AMONGST THE ROCKS, SCRUB, LOPES OBEDIENTLY TO THE WOMAN'S SIDE, NUZZLES HER HAND, AND WE FINALLY:

CUT TO BLACK.

END CREDITS, SET TO 'IT'S GOOD NEWS WEEK' BY HEDGEHOPPERS ANONYMOUS.

END EPISODE