

JACOB'S LADDER

An Original Screenplay
by
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It is dusk. A swarm of helicopters swoops out of a yellow sky and deposits an army of men over a Vietnamese hillside.

The soldiers scramble over the terraced rice paddies for the protection of the jungle. Falling into columns, like strands of soldier ants, a full battalion, at combat readiness, assembles on the edge of a darkening wilderness.

Night falls. The members of one platoon huddle close to the ground smoking a joint.

JERRY

Strong stuff.

ROD

(To JACOB, a soldier squatting several yards away)
Hey, Professor, how many times can you shit in an hour?

GEORGE

Don't bug 'im.

DOUG

Where are those gooks already? My finger's twitching.

FRANK

Some offensive. I don't even think they're out there.

PAUL

Jesus, this grass is something else.

JACOB SINGER returns to the group, pulling up his pants.

ROD

Why even bother to pull 'em up?

FRANK

You jackin' off out there again, huh Jake?

PAUL

Hey, get off his back.

ROD

It's called philosophizing, right Professor?

FRANK

Yeah, but who's he philosophizing about, his wife or his girlfriend? (Someone laughs)

PAUL

Don't laugh. That girlfriend sounds like a real dream.

ROD
If you ask me, that's all she is.

FRANK
Yeah, a wet one. (Laughter)

JACOB
Up yours, you adolescent scum.

SERGEANT (V.O.)
Mount your bayonets!

FRANK
(Frightened) Oh shit!

PAUL
Goddamn!

ROD
Gimme that joint!

JERRY
Hey, something's wrong.

GEORGE
What is it?

JERRY
My head.

GEORGE
It's nerves. Take another toke.

GEORGE reaches out, extending a joint. Suddenly he gasps and falls to the ground, his body convulsing uncontrollably. The others stand back, startled. JACOB grabs him and shoves a rifle barrel between his chattering teeth.

ROD
What's going on?

Before anyone can answer JERRY grabs his head, screaming. He turns frantically in all directions.

JERRY
Help me! Help me!

PAUL
What the hell . . . ?

In seconds JERRY is spinning wildly; out of control. He crashes into FRANK with the force of a truck. FRANK slams into the ground as all the air rushes from his lungs. He begins gasping and hyperventilating. His eyes grow wide and frenzied as he gulps for air. Fear and confusion sweep across his face. The MEN watch, horrified, as FRANK's terror escalates beyond reason into all-out panic.

Suddenly FRANK begins howling. He lunges for his bayonet and, without warning, attacks the MEN around him.

PAUL

God Almighty!

PAUL spins out of the way as FRANK'S bayonet impales the ground. JACOB jumps on top of FRANK and wrestles him into the tall grass. PAUL rushes to his assistance.

JACOB stares at FRANK'S face as FRANK struggles beneath him. It is the face of a madman.

PAUL

Good God! What's happening?

The sudden chaos is intensified by the sound of fighting erupting in the distance. Guns crackle and bursts of light penetrate the air.

ROD

This is it!

PAUL panics and jumps to his feet, leaving JACOB alone with FRANK. FRANK'S eyes burn with demonic force as he gathers his strength.

JACOB

Don't leave me.

Dark figures are storming at them over the rice paddies. It is a horrifying vision.

PAUL

They're coming!

SERGEANT (V.O.)

Fire!

Gunfire explodes in the darkness. Suddenly PAUL flips out. He begins screaming uncontrollably, ripping at his clothes and skin. FRANK is struggling like four men and JACOB is weakening in his effort to restrain him.

Bayonets glimmer in the exchange of fire. Bodies fall. More bodies keep coming. The first wave is upon them.

ROD shoots into the night. The dark images hurl forward screaming like banshees. They cannot be stopped. ROD jabs with his bayonet, piercing the belly of his attacker. Agonizing cries accompany his fall. ROD yanks the bayonet out and stabs again. Only after a series of jabs does he realize that it is another American he's killed.

ROD

Oh my God! WHAT'S HAPPENING?

He does not have time to find an answer. He turns to see a continuing wave of AMERICAN SOLDIERS bearing down on him. Their eyes are blinded by a common fury. They fight like animals.

FRANK shoots to his feet, knocking JACOB to the ground, and stomping on him with the heel of his boot. JACOB pulls away and gets up. FRANK grabs hold of his rifle and slams the butt of the gun into JACOB'S back. There is a cracking sound as JACOB'S eyes freeze with pain. His hands rush for his spine as FRANK spins around and jams all eight inches of bayonet blade into JACOB'S stomach. JACOB screams. It is a loud and piercing wail.

CUT ON THE SOUND OF THE SCREAM to a sudden rush through a long dark tunnel. There is a sense of enormous speed accelerating toward a brilliant light. The rush suggests a passage between life and death, but as the light bursts upon us we realize that we are passing through a SUBWAY STATION far below the city of NEW YORK.

CUT TO THE INTERIOR OF AN EXPRESS TRAIN as its wheels screech through the station. JACOB SINGER, sitting alone in the last car, wakes up. The sounds of the scream and the grating wheels merge. He is dazed and confused, not certain where he is.

JACOB glances around the empty car. His eyes gravitate to overhead advertisements for hemorrhoid preparations and savings banks. Gradually his confusion subsides. Shifting uncomfortably he pulls a thick book out of his back pocket, "Being and Nothingness" by Jean Paul Sartre. He begins reading. Another station blurs by.

JACOB is a good looking man, of obvious intelligence. He is in his mid-thirties. It is surprising that he is wearing a mailman's uniform. He doesn't look like one.

The subway ride seems to go on interminably. JACOB is restless and concerned. He glances at his watch. It is 3:30 a.m.. Putting his book back in his pocket, JACOB stands up, and makes his way through the deserted car.

JACOB enters the rumbling passageway between the cars. The wheels spark against the rails. The dark tunnel walls flash by. He pulls the handle on the door to the next car. It is stuck. He struggles with it. A LADY sitting alone inside turns to look at him. She seems threatened by his effort. He motions for her to help. She turns away.

A look of disgust crosses JACOB'S face. He kicks the door. It slides open. The WOMAN seems frightened as he approaches her.

JACOB

Excuse me, do you know if we've passed Nostrand Avenue yet? (She doesn't answer) Excuse me. (She does not acknowledge his existence) Look, I'm just asking a simple question. Have we hit Nostrand Avenue? I fell asleep.

WOMAN

(Speaking with a Puerto Rican accent)
I no from around here.

JACOB

(Glad for a response) Yeah, you and everyone else.

WOMAN

(Sliding closer to the arm rail for protection)
I no from around here.

JACOB

(Backing away) Right, I heard you the first time.

JACOB walks to the other end of the car and sits down. The only other passenger is an OLD MAN lying asleep on the fiberglass bench. Occasionally his body shudders. It is the only sign of life in him.

The train begins to slow down. JACOB peers out of the window. Nostrand Avenue signs appear. He is relieved. He gets up and grabs hold of the overhead bar.

The OLD MAN shudders and stretches out on the seat. As he adjusts his position, tugging at his coat, JACOB catches a brief glimpse of something protruding from beneath the coat's hem. His eyes fixate on the spot waiting for another look. There is a slight movement and it appears, a long, red, fleshy protuberance. The sight of it sends shivers up JACOB'S spine. It looks strangely like a tail. Only the stopping of the train breaks JACOB'S stare.

JACOB is the only passenger getting off. The doors close quickly behind him. He glances at the LADY sitting by the window. There is a fearful expression on her face as the train carries her back into the dark tunnel, out of his sight.

JACOB reaches the exit, a huge metal revolving door surrounded by floor to ceiling gates. He is about to push when he notices a chain locking it shut. He stares at it in disbelief.

JACOB

Goddamn it.

He turns in a huff and hikes to the other end of the platform. He passes a BAG LADY huddled with all her possessions on a contoured plastic seat. She is sleeping. As he approaches the far exit his eyes widen. The gate there is also locked. His hands reach for his hips as he studies an impossible situation.

JACOB turns and approaches the BAG LADY. His nose wrinkles as her odor closes in on him. He taps her lightly on the shoulder. She does not respond. He taps her again. Suddenly she spins around, scaring him with an unexpected ferociousness. She hisses at JACOB like a snake and coils up as though ready to strike. JACOB backs away. She gives him an evil look and then curls back into her sleep.

JACOB

Well, excuse me!

JACOB'S eyes search for an exit. He walks to the edge of the station and peers into the tunnel. It is pitch black. A ladder leads onto the tracks but he expresses no intention of using it. A rodent scrambles along the rails and confirms his hesitation. He turns back and scans the platform once again. Suddenly he realizes that he has found something interesting. The BAG LADY is gone. The platform is deserted. He quickly scans the entire station. His eyes look across the tracks and study the uptown side. He glances just in time to catch a figure darting into the shadows.

CUT TO JACOB stepping cautiously onto the ladder going down to the tracks. He moves like a man unaccustomed to physical derring-do. Another rat scampers by and he gasps.

JACOB

No way!

He starts to climb back up the ladder but sees that there is nowhere else to go. He juts out his jaw and steps back down.

JACOB is not comfortable on the tracks. He cannot see where he is stepping. His shoes splash in unseen liquid which makes him grimace. The steel girders are coated in subway grime. The oily substance coats his hands as he reaches for support.

JACOB

(Talking to himself) Goddamn fucking city!

He wipes the grime on his postal uniform as he steps toward the center track. He reaches for another girder when it starts to vibrate. A pinpoint of light hurls toward him. Then the noise arrives confirming his fear. A train is bearing down on him. JACOB looks frightened, not sure which way to go. He cannot tell which track the train is on. He steps forward, up to his ankle in slime.

He lifts his wet foot and stares around in sudden confusion. He is about to panic. The train is moving at phenomenal speed; an express that will not slow down. He cannot tell uptown from downtown. He is not sure if he is on the center track or the local. The station is spinning.

The lights on the front of the train are merging into one brilliant intensity.

JACOB jumps across the tracks as the subway train spins by. The train's velocity blows JACOB'S hair straight up as though it is standing on end. He clings to a pillar for support, gasping in short breaths.

A few PEOPLE are staring at JACOB from the train. Their faces, pressed up against the glass, seem deformed. A lone figure waves at him from the rear window. The train bears them all away.

Suddenly it is quiet again. For a moment JACOB is afraid to move but then regains his composure. He continues to the other side of the tracks and stumbles up the ladder to the UPTOWN PLATFORM

CUT TO JACOB smiling. The smile, however, is one of irony, not amusement. This exit too is locked. A heavy chain is wrapped through the bars. JACOB stares at it with an expression of total bewilderment.

A sudden muffled scream alerts JACOB that he is not alone. His head turns but sees no one. He hears the scream again. He senses its direction and walks toward the MEN'S ROOM. A crack of light appears under the door. He can hear someone moaning inside. JACOB knocks softly and the moaning stops. The lights click off.

JACOB

Hey, is someone in there?

There is no answer. JACOB stands silently for a moment, not sure what to do. He can hear whispering. He chews his lower lip nervously and then reaches for the door. It pushes open.

The light from the station penetrates the darkness. He gasps. He sees a MAN tied naked to the stall with two other naked MEN grabbing quickly for their clothes. The bound MAN looks ferociously at JACOB and begins yelling.

MAN

You cock sucker! You get outta here.
Mind your own business.

One of the MEN spins out of the shadows bearing a knife and points it at JACOB'S throat. The MAN'S face is barely human. Before JACOB can even react the door slams shut. The lock engages. The crack of light reappears. JACOB can hear laughter coming from inside, followed by a scream. He backs away from the door. His face is white.

JACOB turns with full fury and storms the gate. The chain gives way to his anger. It flies apart and the gate flings open. He stands in amazement, observing the chain as it slides from between the bars and drops to the concrete below. The gate squeaks loudly as JACOB pushes it aside and clangs with an almost painful burst as he slams it shut.

CUT TO JACOB walking toward the towering shadows of a massive PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT. It is dark and the moonlight silhouettes the huge monolithic structures. JACOB walks through a vast COURTYARD dominated by the imposing shapes. Aside from his moving body everything is still.

JACOB steps off a graffiti festooned ELEVATOR into a long impersonal HALLWAY. He uses three keys to unlock the door to his APARTMENT.

JACOB enters the darkness without turning on the light. He tries to navigate his way to the BATHROOM, illuminated by a tiny nightlight in the distance. His effort is unsuccessful. He bangs loudly into a table. A WOMAN'S voice calls out.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Jake, is that you?

JACOB

What the hell did you do, move all the furniture?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Why didn't you turn on the light?

JACOB

I didn't want to wake you.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

(Sleepy but pleasant) Gee, thanks a lot.

JACOB

Where is the lamp?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Where are you?

JACOB

If I knew I wouldn't have to ask. What did you do? I was happy the way it was.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

I moved the couch. That's all.

JACOB

Where to?

JACOB crashes into a chair. A light suddenly goes on. JEZEBEL "JEZZIE" PIPKIN, 33, is standing in the BEDROOM door tying a man's terrycloth bathrobe around her waist. Although sleepy, disheveled, and not looking her best it is obvious that JEZZIE is a beefy woman, juicy and sensual.

JEZZIE

That help?

JACOB

(Nearly sprawled over the chair)
Thanks. (He pushes himself up)

JEZZIE

What do you think?

JACOB

What do you mean?

JEZZIE

The room!

JACOB

Oh God, Jezzie, ask me tomorrow.

JEZZIE

It is tomorrow. Four A.M. How come they kept you so late?

JACOB

Roberts didn't show up. They were short three men. What could I say? Besides, it's double time.

JEZZIE

(Looking at the grease on his uniform)
What happened to you?

JACOB

(Unbuttoning his shirt as he walks to the BATHROOM) Do me a favor, will ya? (She looks at him) Don't ask.

JACOB steps into the BATHROOM and pulls at his clothes, leaving them in a pile on the floor. He reaches for the faucet and sends a stream of water pounding against the porcelain tub. JEZZIE enjoys JACOB'S nakedness. She reaches out to his chest and squeezes one of his nipples. His body tenses slightly. JEZZIE drops her robe. They enter the shower together.

CUT TO A DENSE RAIN on a dark night filling puddles of water. JACOB is crawling through the underbrush in the Vietnamese JUNGLE. His shirt is bloodsoaked. He moves slowly, creeping on his right forearm. His left hand is holding his intestines from spilling onto the grass.

JACOB

Help me. Someone.

Suddenly a flashlight beam can be seen in the distance. It dances around the bamboo trees and draws closer to JACOB. It is impossible to see who is carrying it. The light darts near the ground where JACOB is lying and then bursts directly into his eyes.

CUT TO SUNLIGHT pouring through the BEDROOM window. JACOB is sleeping fitfully as a bar of light saturates his face. His hand rushes up to cover and protect his eyes but the damage is done. He is awake.

JACOB lies in bed for a few moments, dazed. Slowly his hand gropes along the shelf at the head of the bed, searching for his glasses. He has trouble finding them. As his hand sweeps blindly across the headboard it hits the telephone and sends it crashing to the floor. He sits up with a disgusted look on his face and searches the out of focus shelf behind him. Suddenly JEZZIE enters.

JEZZIE

You up?

JACOB

No! Have you seen my glasses?

JEZZIE

(Shaking her head) Where'd you leave 'em?

JACOB

I don't know.

JEZZIE

Did you look around the headboard?

JACOB

Whata ya mean look? I can't see.

JEZZIE

(Smiling as she scans the shelf)
Maybe you left 'em in the bathroom.

She leaves and returns moments later with his glasses
and a large paper bag. She tosses them both onto the bed.

JACOB

Thanks (He puts on his glasses and notices
the bag) What's that?

JEZZIE

Your kid dropped it off.

JACOB

Who? Jed?

JEZZIE

(Stooping to pick up the phone)
No. The little one.

JACOB

Eli. Why can't you remember their names?

JEZZIE

Remember 'em? I can't even pronounce 'em.

JACOB

Jedediah is Jed. Elijah is Eli. It's easy.
Give it a chance.

JEZZIE

They're weird names.

JACOB

They're biblical. They were prophets.

JEZZIE

Well, personally, I never went for church names.

JACOB

And where do you think "Jezebel" comes from?

JEZZIE

I don't let anybody call me that.

JACOB

(Shaking his head) You're a real heathen,
you know that Jezzie? A resurrected Visigoth.

JEZZIE

Sticks and stones may break my bones . . .

JACOB

Jesus, how did I ever get involved with such
a ninny?

JEZZIE
You sold your soul, remember? That's
what you told me.

JACOB
Yeah, but for what?

JEZZIE
A good lay.

JACOB
And look what I got.

JEZZIE
The best.

JACOB
Says who?

JEZZIE
You. Your very words.

JACOB
I must have been out of my head.

JEZZIE
Jake, you are never out of your head!

JACOB
(Ignoring the criticism and reaching for
the paper bag) What's in here?

JEZZIE
Pictures. Your wife was gonna toss 'em so
"what's his name" brought 'em over on his
way to school.

JACOB lifts the bag and pours the photographs onto the
bed. There are hundreds of them.

JACOB
(With growing delight) Look at these, will ya?
God almighty. My Bar Mitzvah. I don't believe
it. Jesus, these are fantastic. Look, here's my
Dad, God rest his soul. And my brother, when we
were still talking.

JEZZIE
Lemme see.

JACOB
(Rummaging excitedly through the pile)
Here. Look. This is me and Esther when I
was still at City College.

JEZZIE
(Looking closely) That's Esther? (She studies
the photo) I can see what you mean.

JACOB
What?

JEZZIE
Why you left her.

JACOB
What do you mean you can see?

JEZZIE
Look at her face. A real bitch.

JACOB
She looked good then.

JEZZIE
Not to me.

JACOB
Well, you didn't marry her. (Sitting up
suddenly) Hey, what time is it?

JEZZIE
Relax. I called in. I told 'em you'd
be late.

JACOB
What did they say?

JEZZIE
What can they say? You were there til
after three, right?

JACOB
What about you? When are you going in?

JEZZIE
After my cramps let up.

JACOB
Cramps? When did that start?

JEZZIE
(Smiling) Come on. You men are so gullible.
You fall for anything.

JACOB
(Rolling his eyes) Ah yes, cramps and apples.

JEZZIE
Apples? Whata ya mean, apples?

JACOB
Just an esoteric remark.

JEZZIE
I don't get it.

JACOB
Adam and Eve, ever hear of them? (She wrinkles her nose) We men have a history of seduction. We've been falling for a long time.

JEZZIE
Oh, apples.

JACOB
(Digging into the pile for another snapshot) God, this is me! (He holds up a baby photo) Look. It's dated right after I was born. (He stares at it intently) What a baby! Cute, huh? So much promise. (He shakes his head and tosses the picture back into the pile)

JEZZIE
(Standing up and surveying the scene) It's amazing, huh Jake? Your whole life . . . right in front of you. (She pauses before making her final pronouncement) What a mess!

CUT TO JEZZIE carrying the garbage to the INCINERATOR ROOM down the hall. She is carrying several bags. Two of them are tossed instantly down the chute. She hesitates with the third. After a moment she reaches into it and pulls out a handful of photos. They are happy pictures of JACOB'S youth. With cool deliberation she drops them, one at a time, down the chute. An apartment door slams shut. Quickly she disposes of the pictures remaining in her hand. JACOB opens the door to the tiny room as the bag filled with the memories of his life falls to the fire below.

JACOB
Ready?

JEZZIE
Just gettin' rid of the garbage.

JACOB AND JEZZIE, both wearing postal uniforms, head for the ELEVATOR. They are surprised that it has arrived promptly and disappear behind its closing doors.

CUT TO SCENES OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. JACOB is driving a mail truck through crowded streets. As he drives he is humming to himself a rendition of Al Jolsen's "Mammy".

JACOB stops his truck in front of an APPLIANCE STORE on West 46th Street. He opens the back door and pulls a stack of boxes toward him. He lifts them with effort and slams the door with his foot. It doesn't close.

JACOB

Shit!

He considers giving it another whack but the boxes are heavy. He turns instead and waddles toward the store.

A heavyset WOMAN with a dark tan is standing behind a cluttered counter. A picture of Richard Nixon is still stapled to the wall. She looks at JACOB.

WOMAN

Where do you expect me to put those? (JACOB shrugs) I don't have any room. (She tries clearing the counter but has nowhere to put anything) How 'bout over there? (She points to a table and JACOB hurries toward it) No wait. You'll squash the envelopes. Do me a favor, will you? Bring 'em to the stock room.

JACOB

They're awfully heavy.

WOMAN

I know. That's why I'm asking. (She opens the stock room door and points to an empty shelf)

JACOB

(Huffing and puffing) What happened to your stock boy?

WOMAN

That's what I'd like to know. If you happen to see him on the street somewhere tell him he's fired. For two days he hasn't even called. That good for nothing.

JACOB stoops to set the boxes on the shelf. There is a snapping sound and he winces in pain. Massaging his lower back JACOB returns to the front desk and unfolds some papers for the WOMAN'S signature.

JACOB

How was Palm Springs?

WOMAN

Hot. Where do I sign?

JACOB

(Pointing to the line) You got a nice tan, though.

WOMAN

Tan? What tan? It faded on the airplane. I'd try to get my money back but who do you ask? (She looks heavenward) Two hundred dollars a night, for what? (She hands JACOB the wrong sheet)

JACOB

No. I'll take the other one. (He takes it) Right. Well it's good to have you back. See you tomorrow, probably.

WOMAN

If you're lucky.

JACOB smiles to himself as he leaves the store. He walks carefully. His back is out.

CUT TO THE MAIL TRUCK stuck in traffic. There is a claustrophobic quality to the scene. Nothing is moving. Horns are blaring and drivers are agitated. Suddenly JACOB hears a cough. It surprises him. He looks back at the pile of mail bags and shrugs his shoulders. Then he hears it again, a long, guttural cough coming from close by.

JACOB gets up and stares into the back of the truck. His eye falls on a pile of empty mail bags just as one moves. It astonishes him. Slowly he makes his way over a stack of boxes and approaches the site of the strange phenomenon. Again the bags move.

JACOB reaches down and fingers one of them. At the instant he lifts it a terrifying figure pops out staring at him with a frightening glare. JACOB jumps back, nearly falling. It is a moment before he realizes that he is looking at an old WINO who has been sleeping in the truck.

JACOB

Goddamn it! What the hell . . . ?

WINO

(Pleading) I didn't take nothin'. Don't hit me. I was just napping. Don't hit me. I was cold.

JACOB

(Lifting the man up) What the hell do you think you're doing? You can't do this. This is government property. (He begins opening the door)

WINO

(Begging) Don't throw me out. They're gonna get me. They'll tear me to pieces. Let me stay. (He holds onto JACOB'S leg)

JACOB

(Trying to pull away) Come on. You can't stay here.

WINO

They'll eat me alive. Please! I never hurt anybody when I was alive. Nobody. Believe me. I led a good life. I don't belong here.

JACOB gives the WINO a strange look and then escorts him from the truck. A hundred eyes peer out of motionless cars and follow him as he leads the WINO to the sidewalk. JACOB pulls a dollar bill from his pocket and places it in the WINO'S hand. The OLD MAN crumples it into a ball and turns away. He has a frightened look on his face. JACOB returns to his truck shaking his head.

JACOB

New York!

He climbs into his seat and glances into his rear view mirror. He notices the WINO edging fearfully along the side of a building. A horn honks and traffic begins moving. When JACOB looks back the WINO is no longer there.

CUT TO THE TRUCK pulling over to a corner NEWSSTAND. JACOB jumps out and hurries toward it with coins ready in his fist. The NEWSSELLER is facing away from him.

JACOB

You got a News left?

SELLER

You got eyes?

JACOB

I don't see any.

SELLER

What can I tell ya?

Suddenly the SELLER turns around. JACOB jumps. His face is horrible, hardly human. It is covered with strange bumps. JACOB backs away.

SELLER

Well do you want a paper or don't ya?

JACOB

(Almost stuttering - trying to be polite)
No. Thank you. Never mind. (He turns and actually runs back to his truck)

SELLER

Where you runnin' to my friend? What's the rush?

JACOB looks back at the stand as he drives off. The SELLER and a CRONY are pointing in his direction and laughing.

CUT TO JACOB driving his mail truck into the huge POST OFFICE PARKING GARAGE on 34th Street. His mind seems distracted. He has difficulty parking.

CUT TO THE INTERIOR OF THE POST OFFICE, a vast room filled with hundreds of PEOPLE sorting and moving mail. JACOB walks stiffly through the aisles, his left hand rubbing his back. Several workers greet him. He comes up to a WOMAN from behind and grabs her by the hips. She shrieks. Heads turn. It is JEZZIE.

JEZZIE

Jake! Don't do that.

JACOB

How's it going? (She shrugs) I'm going home.

JEZZIE

What's wrong?

JACOB

I'm out of it. Not enough sleep, I think. Besides, I gotta see Louis. My back.

JEZZIE

You talk to the boss? He's not gonna like it.

JACOB

I'm going to see him now.

JEZZIE

I'll miss you. I was looking forward to the ride home.

JACOB

I'll be glad to avoid the crush.

JEZZIE

(Seductively) I enjoy crushing into you any chance I get. (She grabs him and hugs him tightly)

JACOB

Gently. My back. (JEZZIE ignores him and squeezes again)

CUT ON A SCREAM to JACOB in a CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE. He is lying on a long leather padded device that looks like an instrument of torture. LOUIS, the Chiropractor, is a giant of a man, 280 pounds. He is adjusting JACOB'S spine.

LOUIS

Come on Jake. That didn't hurt.

JACOB

How do you know?

LOUIS

You're overreacting. I know you.
How come you're so tense today?

JACOB

What can I tell you?

LOUIS

I saw Esther the other day.

JACOB

Her knee acting up?

LOUIS

A bit.

JACOB

What did she have to say?

LOUIS

Turn on your right side. (JACOB starts to
turn on his left) How about the other way?
(JACOB turns back) I don't understand you
philosophers. You've got the whole world
figured out but you can't remember the
difference between right and left.

JACOB

I was absent the day they taught that in
school. What did she say?

LOUIS

Who?

JACOB

Esther.

LOUIS

Not much. She's like you that way. Two clams.
No wonder your marriage didn't last. Put your
hand under your head. Take a breath and then
let it out. (He makes a rapid adjustment
pushing down on JACOB'S thigh. JACOB groans)
Ah, good. Now turn to your left.

JACOB

She talk about the boys?

LOUIS

She says she can't get them new coats because
you haven't sent the alimony for three months.

JACOB

She told you that? (He shakes his head) Did she tell you about the \$2,000 I'm still paying for the orthodontist? I'll bet she didn't mention that.

LOUIS

She said you were a son of a bitch and she regrets the day she set eyes on you.

JACOB

I thought you said she didn't say much.

LOUIS

She didn't. That's about all she said. Put your hand up. Good. I think she still loves you. Take a breath and let it out. (He makes an adjustment. JACOB screams)

JACOB

Loves me!? She hasn't said a kind word about me in years.

LOUIS

Right. She doesn't stop talking about you. You're always on her mind. That's love, Jake.

JACOB

She hates me, Louis.

LOUIS

You should go back to her.

JACOB

What? She threw me out, remember. She doesn't love me. She married some philosopher king who was going to carry her far away from Brooklyn into the gilded halls of academia. I was her escape. Only we didn't make it. She can't forgive me that she only lives four blocks from the house she grew up in. She didn't marry me for that.

LOUIS

I tell you, she's waiting for you Jake.

JACOB

You're out of your mind Louis. You may know bodies but you don't know hearts.

LOUIS

They are intimately connected. Relax, this is going to be strong.

JACOB

You know what Esther's problem was? She had all the ambition in the family. She wanted more out of my life than me. She was more willing to fight for my career than I was. She should have been a boxer.

LOUIS stands in back of JACOB'S head and holds it from the base of the neck. He moves the head gently from side to side and then twists it rapidly. There is a loud cracking sound.

CUT TO A FLASH OF LIGHT. A MAN rushes at the camera yelling.

MAN

I found one. He's alive.

He shines a flashlight into the lens creating rings and halos. Suddenly LOUIS reappears, a halo effect still visible behind his head.

JACOB

God almighty. What did you do to me?

LOUIS

I had to get in there. A deep adjustment. Relax a moment and let it set a bit.

JACOB

I had this weird flash just then.

LOUIS

What?

JACOB

I don't know. I've been having them recently. Like one second dreams. (He thinks for a moment as though trying to recapture it and then changes the subject) You look like an angel, Louis, an overgrown cherub. Anyone ever tell you that?

LOUIS

Yeah. You. Everytime I see you. Now listen to me. No more Douglas Fairbanks, okay? Your back won't take it. You tell your girlfriend to calm down if she knows what's good for you.

JACOB

Louis, you're a life saver.

LOUIS

I know.

JACOB

Not many around these days, I'm telling you.

CUT TO JACOB walking down Nostrand Avenue. He is singing to himself.

JACOB

Mammy! Mammy!
The sun shines East. The sun shines West.
I know where the sun shines best.
Mammy! My little Mammy!

He sings with a perfect Al Jolsen imitation but modifies the gestures so as not to be too noticeable to people on the street.

It is near dusk and lights are just coming on. The shop windows have a particularly garish look about them. The mannequins are dressed in inexpensive, almost tawdry, clothes and have a pathetic appearance. A few shops have set up their Christmas decorations. The ornamentaion seems strangely out of place; almost blasphemous.

JACOB passes a street gang standing in the doorway of a local drug store. They chortle and make taunting sounds.

GIRL

Hey, wanna play post office, mailman?

JACOB ignores them and keeps walking. He comes to a cross street. The light is green. He is still singing to himself and does not notice a bright red car charging around the corner. The car is moving full speed, heading straight toward him. A YOUNG MAN walking a few steps behind yells out.

YOUNG MAN

Look out!

JACOB turns and sees the car. He dashes to get out of the way but the car swerves in his direction. The YOUNG MAN calls out again.

YOUNG MAN

Jump!

With an almost superhuman thrust JACOB hurls himself onto the curb as the car shoots by. JACOB looks up to see the car speeding away. Two MEN peer out at JACOB from the back seat. They are laughing like madmen and shaking their heads. JACOB yells and waves his fist to no effect. After a moment he turns to thank the YOUNG MAN whose scream had saved him, but he is gone.

CUT TO JACOB and JEZZIE lying in bed. They are a sensual couple and even in quiet, reflective moments such as this, their positioning is erotic and stimulating. Both of them are nude. JACOB'S hands are clasped behind his neck and he is staring mournfully at the ceiling. JEZZIE is lying on her side, her left leg draped across JACOB'S pelvis. Her head is propped up on her right arm while her left hand gently strokes JACOB'S navel. Neither are talking. Suddenly, out of the blue, JEZZIE speaks.

JEZZIE

Maybe it's all the pressure, Jake. The money. Things like that. Or your wife.

JACOB

Why do you bring her up?

JEZZIE

Cause she's always on your mind.

JACOB

When was the last time I said a word . . .

JEZZIE

It has nothin' to do with talkin' (She pauses for a while, long enough to suppose that the conversation is over. Then she continues) Or maybe it's the war. (JACOB closes his eyes) It's still there, Jake. (She points to his brain) Even if you never say a word about it. You can't spend two years in Viet Nam . . .

JACOB

(Annoyed) What does that have to do with anything? Does it explain barricaded subway stations? Does it explain those godforsaken creatures?

JEZZIE

New York is filled with creatures. Everywhere. And lots of stations are closed.

JACOB

They're demons, Jez.

JEZZIE

They're winos and bag ladies. Low life. That's all they are. The streets are crawling with 'em. Don't make 'em into somethin' they're not. (She pauses and rubs his forehead) It's the pressure honey. That's what it is.

JACOB

Those guys tried to kill me tonight. They were aiming right at me.

JEZZIE

Kids on a joy ride. It happens all the time.

JACOB

They were not human!

JEZZIE

Come on. What were they Jake?

JACOB doesn't answer. He turns over onto his stomach. JEZZIE stares at his naked back and drags her fingernails roughly down to his buttocks. Deep scratch marks follow in their wake.

JEZZIE

You still love me?

He does not respond.

CUT TO JACOB and JEZZIE sitting at the breakfast table. JEZZIE is reading the National Enquirer and chewing at her lip. Suddenly a drop of blood rises between her teeth and falls onto the formica table top. She stares at it for a moment and then wipes it with her finger. Unconsciously she brings the finger to her mouth and licks it with her tongue.

JACOB is nursing a cup of coffee and staring out the window at the housing project directly across the way. The toaster pops. JEZZIE jumps. She gets up, butters her toast, and returns to her paper.

JEZZIE

Says here the world's comin' to an end. The battle of heaven and hell they call it. Should be quite a show; fireworks, H bombs, and everything. You believe them, Jake? (He doesn't answer) Me neither. (She turns the page) God, look at this. Two heads. Only lived two days. A day for each head. Could you imagine me with two heads? We'd probably keep each other up all night - arguing and whatnot. You wanna see the picture? (JACOB remains silent. Suddenly JEZZIE explodes) Goddamn you son-of-a-bitch! Uncle Joe's hogs used to treat me better than you do. At least they'd lick my toes once in a while. At least they showed some fucking interest.

JACOB gets up and goes over to the window. He peers at the courtyard eighteen stories below and watches the patterns of early morning movement. Tiny figures drift purposefully over the concrete. Suddenly JACOB realizes that JEZZIE is crying and turns to see her curled over the kitchen table. He walks to her side and strokes her hair.

JACOB

I'm sorry, honey.

JEZZIE begins to sob. After a moment she looks at him with puffy eyes.

JEZZIE

You love me? (He nods his head "yes". She smiles coyly and rubs her hair like a kitten against his crotch. After a few moments she speaks) Della's party's tonight. Why don't we go? It'll take your mind offa things. And I won't make you dance. I promise. Huh? (He nods his head in consent. JEZZIE hugs him) You still love me, Jake? (He nods his head again, only heavily, as though the question exhausts him)

CUT TO JACOB'S mail truck as it pulls up to the same NEWSSTAND he stopped at the day before. JACOB hesitates before getting out of the truck and then approaches the stand timidly. Again the NEWSSELLER is facing away from him. JACOB taps his coins on the counter and waits for him to turn around. He does. It is a different MAN. JACOB is surprised.

JACOB

What happened to your partner?

SELLER

Who?

JACOB

The old man with the . . . strange face.

SELLER

(Laughing) You mean Shorty ? With the bumps?
(JACOB nods) Oh, he's been gone a long time.
(JACOB stares) Died in May, I think it was.

JACOB

(Stunned) Died? He was here yesterday.

SELLER

Yesterday? What are you talking about?

JACOB

I saw him.

SELLER

You must be mistaken, Mister. Not here you didn't. Shorty's dead and gone. (He smiles at JACOB. The smile seems out of place and makes JACOB uncomfortable. He turns away, confused and disturbed. The SELLER calls after him) Hey, you wanna paper?

JACOB doesn't answer. He walks back to his truck and sits quietly, just staring out the window. After a short while he turns the key in the ignition and drives off.

JACOB parks his truck next to a mailbox near BELVUE HOSPITAL. He walks toward a building marked, "Mental Health Clinic." He enters the building hesitantly and walks the corridor at a snail's pace. He passes through the EMERGENCY ROOM. It is filled, nearly overflowing, with people suffering and waiting for attention. JACOB continues walking to the main RECEPTION DESK. He speaks nervously.

JACOB

I'd like to speak to Dr. Carlson, please.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

JACOB

No. But I need to see him. Not for long, ten minutes.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, I'm afraid our doctors are seen by appointment only.

JACOB

Look. I was in the veterans' outpatient program. Call him. He knows me.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry but our policy . . .

JACOB

This is important!

RECEPTIONIST

If it's an emergency we have a staff of psychiatric social workers. There's about an hour's wait. I'll be glad to take your name. Why don't you just fill out this form?

JACOB

Goddamn it! I don't want a social worker. Carlson knows me.

JACOB pounds the desk, rattling a tiny African Violet and knocking the RECEPTIONIST'S forms onto the floor. She grunts angrily and stoops to pick them up. As she returns to a standing position her cap hits a drawer handle and slips off. TWO POINTED HORNS protrude from her skull where the cap had been. JACOB'S eyes lock on them like radar. He backs away. She quickly replaces her cap and breaks the spell, but her eyes glare at him with demonic intensity. JACOB turns and begins walking and then running to the door. A POLICEMAN jumps in front of him, his gun drawn.

POLICEMAN

Hold it right there. Where the hell do you think you are? This is Belvue. People running around here get shot. You wouldn't be the first. I've caught a few escapees in my time. (JACOB is frightened) Not that it matters. Where would you go? You think the streets are any different? (He laughs to himself and puts his gun away) Come on, get out of here. I wouldn't want to interfere with the U.S. mail.

JACOB walks to the door. He does not look back.

CUT TO a huge amphitheatre of a LECTURE HALL at CITY COLLEGE. It is almost empty. No more than forty STUDENTS are scattered near the front of nearly three hundred seats. All are listening to PROFESSOR EMANUEL STERN who is nearing the end of his lecture.

STERN

Thus at the core of today's discussion we find four fundamental doctrines. First, that the world of matter and individual consciousness are both manifestations of one Divine Reality.

One of the STUDENTS seems about to fall asleep and keeps nodding his head.

STERN

Even you, Mr. Palmer, are part of it, as amazing as that may seem.

MR. PALMER sits up quickly in his seat as other STUDENTS smile.

STERN

Second, human beings are capable not only of knowing about this Divine Reality by inference but can realize its existence by direct intuition, superior even to reason.

A door opens in the upper reaches of the lecture hall. JACOB enters and walks quietly down the stairs to within hearing range of the PROFESSOR.

STERN

Third, Man possesses a double nature, an ego and an Eternal Self, what we call spirit or soul.

JACOB takes a seat at one of the desks. There is a pencil lying on it which he fingers distractedly.

STERN

Fourth, and most important, man's life on earth has only one end and purpose, to learn to let go of the separate ego and to identify with the Divine spark within.

MR. PALMER is nodding off again.

STERN

Almost impossible to believe, isn't it Mr. Palmer, that somewhere in that unconscious head of yours lies the source of all consciousness?

PLAMER

Yes, Sir. Very hard.

STERN

(Nodding his head) Well now, having reached this apotheosis there seems little, if anything, left to say. So rather than try, you are dismissed.

The STUDENTS seem surprised but not unhappy with the sudden dismissal. They quickly gather their books and begin the long climb to the exits. Only JACOB remains seated.

JACOB

Hello Prof.

STERN

(Looking up and staring at JACOB for several seconds before recognizing him) My oh my. Doctor Singer. Isn't this a happy surprise?

JACOB comes down the aisle and clasps hands with his old PROFESSOR.

STERN

(Looking at JACOB'S uniform) Are you in the service?

JACOB

The postal service. I'm a mailman.

STERN

(Surprised but non-judgmental) Ah! Neither snow nor sleet, nor dark of night . . . I always admired that.

JACOB

(Smiling) It's good to see you.

STERN

Likewise.

CUT TO THE TWO MEN walking down the city streets that constitute the CAMPUS of CITY COLLEGE.

STERN

And how is your wife? Esther, no?

JACOB

(Shrugging his shoulders) I haven't seen her in months.

STERN

(Understanding) Ah!

JACOB

I'm with another woman now. We're both with the post office, Midtown, 34th Street branch.

STERN

Hmm. I don't suppose there are too many philosophers in the post office?

JACOB

Oh, you'd be surprised. They just don't all have their doctorates, that's all.

STERN

(He smiles) Last I heard you were offered a position in the West somewhere. Tucson was it?

JACOB

Oh, that goes way back. They had a hiring freeze, one of those last minute things. Bad timing for me though. Middle of the war. The draft. (STERN nods his head. They walk a moment in silence) I'll tell you Prof, after Viet Nam . . . I didn't want to think anymore. I decided my brain was just too small an organ to comprehend this chaos.

STERN

(Looking at JACOB with affection) Jacob, if it was any other brain but yours, I might agree. (He pauses) Tell me, does your friend know what a brilliant thinker, what a sublime intellect she's living with?

JACOB

(Smiling coyly) I doubt it's my mind that interests her. I tell you Prof, she's a fiery lady.

STERN

(With a fatherly demeanor) Well try not to get burned. You have a great mind, Jacob. Don't let anyone tempt you away from it.

CUT TO THE TWO MEN sitting quietly in an off campus COFFEE SHOP. They are fixing their tea, not speaking. Suddenly JACOB looks at STERN.

JACOB

I've got a problem, Prof. More Augustine than Kierkegard, if you know what I mean. (STERN looks at him questioningly) I need to know about . . . demons.

STERN

(Surprised) Demons, Jacob? Why demons? Are you writing . . . ?

JACOB

No. (He pauses a moment) I see them.

STERN

See them? (He smiles uncomfortably) What do you mean? Physically?

JACOB

(Hesitating) Yes.

STERN pauses. He looks at JACOB. The intensity of his gaze is unsettling and JACOB reaches for his tea. The cup rattles.

STERN

I know very little about demons, Jacob, fleshy ones anyway. I know them as literary figures, biblical ones . . . Dante, Milton . . . but Jacob, (He pauses) this is the 20th Century. We don't see demons now.

JACOB

I see them, Prof. Everywhere. They're invading my life. (A look of concern fills STERN'S eyes) Christ, I know how it sounds.

STERN

Have you considered a doctor? A psychiatrist?

JACOB

Yes. (Suddenly uneasy) I don't want them. I'm not looking for analysis or drugs. It's too easy to dismiss as some kind of psychosis. (He pauses uncomfortably) It's more than that. I can feel it. I need you Prof. You're the only one I can talk to.

STERN

I don't know what to say.

JACOB

I need your insight, your intuition.

STERN sips his tea slowly. He is thinking.

STERN

Demons? I don't know what to tell you. It sounds like a spiritual matter to me. The problem, Jacob, is that you have no context for it. You're a lapsed Jew, a renegade Existentialist, and here you are suffering demons a hundred years after Freud. How the hell am I supposed to make it fit?

JACOB

I'm afraid, Prof. Nothing makes sense. (He pauses) Please help me.

STERN

(Trying to be delicate) Jacob, I don't believe in demons, not in the empirical sense. I don't believe in devils fighting for our souls. I don't believe in eternal damnation. I don't believe in otherworldly creatures tormenting us. We don't need them. We do a good enough job on ourselves.

JACOB

(Disturbed) But I see them.

STERN

Look. I don't pretend to know what's going on inside your head. For all I know it's pathological and they should be pumping valium into your veins by the quart. But if you're not willing to accept the help of science; and believe me, I admire you for that; then you'll have to do battle on your own. What can I say? It's a lonely pilgrimage through our times even for the strongest souls. But to be pursued by . . . demons no less . . . There are no guides, Jacob. (He pauses) You wanna know what I'd do if I suddenly started seeing demons? I'd hail the first taxi that came along, shoot over to Belvue and beg them for shock treatment. I'm no saint.

JACOB

Hell, you think I am?

STERN

I've never understood you, you know that? You were by far the best pupil I've ever had, bar none. Intellectually, you were the most original, the most imaginative. Who knows, maybe you've been "elected" to see demons. Maybe you're in touch with . . . something. Nothing would surprise me about you Jacob. Nothing.

JACOB gazes at his old friend and mentor, frustration blazing in his eyes. They are both surprised to see tears form and run down his cheek. JACOB reaches for a napkin and dries them quickly. STERN, uncomfortable in the face of emotion, turns away.

CUT TO LOUD DANCE MUSIC. JACOB is sitting in a stuffed chair against the wall of a crowded APARTMENT. JEZZIE is dancing with other post office employees in the center of a small LIVINGROOM. The dancing is steamy. The lights are dim and the room is filled with smoke. The hazy atmosphere is colored by a flashing neon sign outside the window. It is alternating red and blue. The flashing disfigures the dancers and gives them a strange, distorted appearance.

A group of PEOPLE are sitting on a sofa that's been pushed into the HALLWAY. They are smoking dope. Late arrivals must climb over them to get to the dance floor. Another group is crammed into the BATHROOM, snorting coke.

In the DINING ROOM several people are gathered around ELSA, an attractive black woman who is reading plams. She notices JACOB sitting on the chair and waves for him to join her. He shakes his head "no". She calls over the music.

ELSA

Hey, you! Let me look at your hand.

JACOB shrugs his shoulders. DELLA, dancing near by, calls out.

DELLA

Go on Jake. She's good. She reads 'em like a book.

JACOB

I'm not interested.

DELLA

Go on. It's fun.

CUT TO A CLOSE UP OF JACOB'S HAND. ELSA is squeezing the mounds and examining the lines. What begins as a playful expression on her face turns suddenly serious.

JACOB

Depressing, isn't it?

ELSA doesn't answer. She reaches for his other hand and compares the two of them. JEZZIE looks over from her dancing and eyes the scene jealously.

ELSA

You have an unusual hand.

JACOB

I could have told you that.

ELSA

You see this here? It's your life line. Here's where you were born. This split's probably a divorce. You know, you got a strange line here. (She studies it with concern) Never seen anything like it.

JACOB

It's short, huh?

ELSA

Short? (She looks at him seriously) It's ended.

JACOB

(Laughing) Oh, terrific. Just my luck.

ELSA

It's not funny. According to your hand . . . you're already dead.

JACOB

(Smiling nervously) I don't look dead, do I?

CUT TO THE DANCERS. Their movements are loose and getting looser. The music is strong and insistent. Suddenly JEZZIE breaks from the crowd and reaches for JACOB. He pulls away. Some of the MALE DANCERS call out to him.

DANCERS

Come on man, show your stuff. Don't be a pussy.

JACOB is easily intimidated. He relents, but not happily. He glares at JEZZIE and nods apologetically to ELSA. It is obvious that he is embarrassed at his inadequacy on the dance floor.

MAN

Come on professor. You got feet too.

JACOB tries to smile but it is pained and unconvincing. JEZZIE is playing with him, sometimes mimicking his movement. A number of DANCERS notice and laugh which only increases JACOB'S discomfort. JEZZIE'S taunting has a strange effect on JACOB. He grows distant and withdrawn, even though his body is still going through the motions of the dance.

Suddenly a strange and terrifying spectacle unfolds before him. The DANCERS undergo a shocking transformation, a full three-dimensional alteration of their physical forms. Clothes fuse to their bodies like new skin. Horns and tails emerge and grow like exotic genitalia, exciting a frenzy among the DANCERS. New appendages appear unfolding from their flesh. Dorsal fins protrude from their backs. Armoured scales run in scallops down their legs. Tails entwine sensuously. Long tongues lick at the undersides of reptilian bellies. The metamorphosis holds a biological fascination. Bones and flesh mold into new forms of life, creatures of another world.

CUT TO JACOB'S face as it registers terror and disbelief. He stares at the DANCERS. They are perverse, corrupt aspects of their normal selves. He is mesmerized by JEZZIE.

Her flesh has grown hard and wrinkled and has the markings of a snake. Her tongue, long and curled, darts in and out of her mouth repeatedly. Her eyes are thin and domineering. They lock JACOB in their gaze. He wants to stop, to run, but JEZZIE won't release him.

JACOB grabs his eyes as though trying to pull the vision from them but it won't go away. The music throbs. His actions become spastic, almost delirious. His hysteria attracts the attention of the other DANCERS.

A circle forms around JACOB and JEZZIE as their frenzy transcends the boundaries of dance and erupts into an almost orgiastic display. JACOB is out of control. His fury becomes a kind of exorcism, a desperate attempt to free himself from his body and his mind.

CUT TO JACOB as his eyes pass beyond pain. The dark walls of the APARTMENT fade away. Strange faces in infantry helmets appear in the darkness, outlined by a bright moon that is emerging from behind a large cloud. The faces are looking down and voices are speaking.

VOICE

He's burning up.

VOICE

Total delirium.

VOICE

He'll never make it.

VOICE

That's some gash. His guts keep spilling out.

VOICE

Push 'em back.

JACOB (V.O.)

(Crying weakly) Help me!

His eyes focus on the moon. Rings of light emanate from it, filling the sky with their sparkling brilliance. The rings draw us forward with a quickening intensity that grows into exhilarating speed. The rush causes them to flash stroboscopically and produces a dazzling, almost sensual, surge of color. The display is spectacular and compelling. A voice can be heard in the distance.

VOICE

I think we're losing him.

Suddenly the flickering rings begin to define a tangible image, a kind of CELESTIAL STAIRCASE, rising up into infinite dimensions. As we speed toward it, it grows increasingly majestic. The image is so awesome and other-worldly that it is difficult to grasp what is being seen.

Music can be heard in the distance. It too is celestial in its beauty. Then, unexpectedly, it grows hard and insistent, like a heart beat. Heavy breathing accompanies the sound. The image of the STAIRCASE shatters and disappears, replaced by intense flashes of red and blue light. The music grows louder and reaches a thundering crescendo. Then silence.

The APARTMENT reappears in all its normalcy. The neon sign is still flashing outside the window. DANCERS are smiling and sweating. Cheers and applause ring out for JACOB and JEZZIE but JACOB barely hears them. JEZZIE hugs him tightly. PEOPLE smack him on the back.

ADMIRER

You are out of your mind, man. Out of your fuckin' mind.

WOMAN

Jake, you little devil you. You never told me you could dance like that.

MAN

Jezzie, what did you put in that man's drink?

JEZZIE smiles while pulling JACOB to a corner chair. He plops down. His chest is heaving and he is grabbing hold of his stomach. His face is frightened and distorted.

JEZZIE

You okay?

JACOB

I wanna leave. Get me out of here.

JEZZIE

Oh come on. It's early.

JACOB

(Pulling JEZZIE close to him, his voice filled with paranoia) Where are we?

JEZZIE

(Surprised by the question) We're at Della's.

JACOB

Where?

JEZZIE

What do you mean? Where do you think?

JACOB

Where's Della?

JEZZIE

Over there.

JACOB
I want to see her. Show her to me.

JEZZIE
She's behind those people.

JACOB
Bring her here.

JEZZIE
Why? What for?

JACOB
Prove it to me. (Loudly) Show me Della!

JEZZIE
(Confused) Hey, I'm here.

JACOB
(Pleading) Show her to me.

Annoyed, JEZZIE leaves JACOB and crosses the room. He watches her as she goes. JACOB is holding his stomach and rocking painfully. He eyes the room and everyone around him with intense suspicion. Moments later JEZZIE returns with DELLA.

DELLA
Hiya Jake. That was some dance.

JACOB
(Staring at her closely) Della?

DELLA
Jake?

JACOB
(Somewhat relieved) Hi. How you doin'?

DELLA
I'm fine Jake. How are you?

JACOB
I don't know. I'm okay.

DELLA
(Feeling the strangeness) You want to see me?

JACOB
Yeah.

DELLA
Well, here I am.

JACOB
I see.

DELLA

What do you want?

JACOB

I just wanted to see you. That's all.

DELLA

(A bit uncomfortable) Well, how do I look?

JACOB

Like Della.

DELLA

That's good to know.

JACOB

Sure is.

Suddenly JACOB breaks out in a dense sweat and begins shaking. His entire body is convulsive.

JEZZIE

Are you feeling all right? (She puts her hand to his forehead) Shit, you're burning up. Feel his forehead.

DELLA

(Placing her hand on his forehead and then his cheeks) Damn, that's hot. Maybe from dancing.

JEZZIE

I think you should lie down. (JACOB is shaking uncontrollably. People are gathering around) Can't you stop it?

JACOB

No.

WOMAN

Is he sick?

DELLA

He's on fire.

ELSA

Maybe you should take him home.

MAN

I can call a cab.

JEZZIE

Can you stand up?

JACOB nods that he can. He leans forward as JEZZIE and DELLA support him. He takes one step and collapses to the floor in a dead faint. The room dissolves around him.

Blurry images move overhead. Sounds of their voices and laughter overlap.

VOICES

What a dildo! Doesn't get it, does he?
He's hangin' on for dear life. Dear life?
(laughter) Hangin' on by his fingernails.
Then chop off his hands. What? And cut
his life line? (laughter)

Suddenly the image resolves itself. Smiling faces turn serious and concerned as JACOB'S eyes open. His paranoia, however, is fully charged by the sight of them and he begins yelling.

JACOB

Who the hell are you? What are you trying to do? What do you want from me?

The PEOPLE seem surprised by his outburst. JEZZIE and DELLA are particularly disturbed.

JACOB

Go to hell, all of you! Go to hell!

Everyone stares at him silently. A MAN calls out from the HALLWAY.

MAN

I've got a cab.

CUT TO JACOB lying in bed in his own BEDROOM with a thermometer in his mouth. JEZZIE is pacing the floor with great agitation.

JEZZIE

I've never been so mortified in my whole life. Never! Screaming like that. I don't understand what's gotten into you, Jake, make you do a thing like that. You're not acting normal. I've lived with too many crazies in my life. I don't want it anymore. I can't handle it. I'm tired of men flipping out on me. Shit, you'd think it was my fault. Well you picked me, remember that. I don't need this. If you go crazy on me you're goin' crazy by yourself. You understand?

JEZZIE reaches for his mouth and pulls out the thermometer. She looks at it closely and then squints to see it better.

JACOB

What's it say? A hundred and two?

JEZZIE

I don't believe this.

JACOB
A hundred and three?

JEZZIE
I'm calling the doctor

She runs out of the room. JACOB calls after her.

JACOB
What does it say?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
It's gone to the top.

JACOB
The top? How high is that?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
I don't know. The numbers stop at 107°.

JACOB
Shit.

JEZZIE is on the phone to the doctor in the next room. JACOB begins shaking again and reaches for the extra blanket at the foot of the bed. He pulls it up around his shoulders. The whole bed vibrates with his shivering. Suddenly JEZZIE rushes through the BEDROOM and into the BATHROOM. She turns on the bath water.

JACOB
(Calling out) What the hell are you doin'?

JEZZIE
Get your clothes off.

JACOB
What are you talking about? I'm freezing.

JEZZIE
Get your clothes off!

JACOB
Why?

JEZZIE
If you don't get into that tub in the next minute you'll never step out of that bed again, you hear? (JACOB gives her a confused look as she rushes back to the KITCHEN)

JACOB
What'd the doctor say?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
(Calling back) That you'd die on the way to the hospital. Now get into that tub.

JACOB stares at her as she bursts back into the BEDROOM carrying four trays of ice cubes. She hurries into the BATHROOM and dumps them in the tub.

JEZZIE (V.O.)
He's comin' right over.

JACOB
Coming here?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
Goddamn it. Get your body in here. I can't stand around waitin'.

She rushes out of the BATHROOM and pulls JACOB out of bed. He is shaking violently and she has difficulty navigating across the room and undressing him at the same time. She maneuvers him into the BATHROOM and positions him next to the tub. He looks down at the ice cubes floating in the water.

JACOB
You've got to be out of your mind. I'm not getting in there. I'd rather die.

JEZZIE
That's your decision.

JACOB
Look at me. I'm ice cold.

JEZZIE
You're red hot, damn it. Get in there. I've got to get more ice.

She runs out of the room. The door to the apartment slams shut. JACOB sticks his toe into the water and pulls it out again instantly.

JACOB
Oh Jesus!

He sticks his whole foot in and grits his teeth as the ice cold water turns his foot bright red. He keeps it in as long as he can and then yanks it out, quickly wrapping it in a towel. JACOB rubs his foot vigorously to get rid of the sting and stares at the water, afraid of its pain.

JEZZIE is running up and down the CORRIDOR knocking on doors and collecting ice cubes from those who will answer. She hurries back to the BATHROOM with several PEOPLE behind her carrying additional ice trays. One of the MEN is shifting the trays in his hands to avoid the burning cold. As JEZZIE enters the BATHROOM, JACOB is sitting on the rim of the tub with the water up to his calves. He is shivering vigorously.

JACOB

I can't do it.

JEZZIE

What kind of man are you? (She unloads
two trays into the water)

JACOB

Don't gimme that.

JEZZIE

Lie down!

JACOB

(Pleading) Jezzie! My feet are throbbing!

JEZZIE

(Calling out) Sam, Tony, come in here.

JACOB

Hey, I'm not dressed.

SAM

You ain't got nothin' we ain't seen before.

SAM and TONY grab hold of JACOB who wrestles to get
away.

JACOB

Get the hell off of me.

TONY

He's like a hot coal.

SAM

It's for your own good, Jake.

JACOB

Let go of me, you sons of bitches.

The TWO MEN struggle with JACOB and force him into the
water. TONY winces when the water hits his arm. JACOB
nearly flies out of the tub. The TWO MEN fight to hold
him down. JACOB screams and cries for them to let him
go but they keep him flat on his back.

JACOB

I'm freezing! I'm freezing! Goddamn you!

TONY

(His hand turning red) Sam, I can't take it.

SAM

Don't you let go.

TONY

Jez, get help. My hands are killing me.

JACOB
Help me! Help me!

JEZZIE
(To TONY) Here. I'll do it.

TONY
Take his legs.

SAM
Run your hands under hot water.

MRS. CARMICHAEL comes in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
I have some ice from the machine.

JEZZIE
Bring it in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
Is he all right?

JACOB
Help me!

JEZZIE
He doesn't like it.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
I don't blame him. What should I do
with the ice?

JEZZIE
Pour it in.

MRS. CHARMICHAL
On top of him?

JEZZIE
He's melting it as fast as we dump it.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
Okay. My husband's got two more bags. He's
coming. They're heavy.

She rips open the bag with her teeth. TONY helps her
pour it into the water. JACOB yells.

JACOB
Oh God! You're killing me! Stop! Stop!

CUT TO JACOB lying in a BEDROOM we have not seen before. He is tossing and turning in his bed as though struggling to get out. Suddenly he sits up and looks over at the window. It is open and the shade is flapping. Cold air is blowing in and he is shivering.

JACOB

Damn! You and your fresh air.

He jumps out of bed and goes over to the window. He pushes at the frame and it comes flying down with a loud bang. A woman in the bed sits up. It is ESTHER.

ESTHER

What was that?

JACOB

It's freezing.

ESTHER

I'm not cold.

JACOB

Of course not. You have all the blankets. It must be ten degrees in here. I'm telling you Esther, if you want to sleep with fresh air, you sleep on the fire escape. From now on that window is closed.

ESTHER

It's not healthy with it closed.

JACOB

This is healthy? I'll probably die of pneumonia tomorrow and this is healthy. (He settles back into bed and pulls the covers back over to his side. He lies quietly for a moment, thinking) What a dream I was having. I was living with another woman. (He pauses) You know who it was?

ESTHER

I don't want to know.

JACOB

Jezebel, from the post office. You remember, you met her that time at the Christmas party. I was living with her. God, it was a nightmare. A real nightmare. (He pauses again) It was strange. There were all these demons and I was on fire. Only I was burning from ice.

ESTHER

Guilty thoughts. See what happens when you cheat on me, even in your mind?

JACOB
She was good in bed, though.

ESTHER
Go to sleep.

JACOB
She had these real beefy thighs. Dark meat.
Delicious.

ESTHER
I thought you said it was a nightmare?

JACOB
Yeah, it was.

A young BOY comes into the room.

ELI
Daddy, what was that noise?

JACOB
What are you doing up?

ELI
The bang. It woke me.

JACOB
Oh, the window.

ELI
It's cold in here.

JACOB
Tell your mother.

ELI
Mom, it's . . .

ESTHER
I heard you. Go back to sleep. You still
have two hours.

ELI
Will you tuck me in?

ESTHER
(Grimacing) Oh, all right.

She starts to rise. JACOB stops her and gets up instead.
He whisks ELI upside down and carries him into his BEDROOM,
licking his belly and tickling him all the way. ELI
laughs and snuggles into his pillow as soon as he hits
the bed. JED stirs nearby.

JED
Dad?

JACOB

What are you doing up? (He kisses ELI and sits down on the foot of JED'S bed) What's up?

JED

I've been thinking about you.

JACOB

Me? What for?

JED

I don't know. I've sort of been wanting to talk to you, but you know . . . what's to say? (JACOB strokes JED'S neck and rubs his hair) I don't know what I'd do without you.

JACOB

Without me? What brings that up? (JED shrugs) I'm not going anywhere. I'm right here, Jed. (He looks at his son tenderly) Come on, go back to sleep. You can still get a couple of hours. (He hugs him warmly and then walks to the door)

JED

(Staring at his father) I love you, Dad.

There is deep emotion and seriousness in JED'S words. JACOB is struck by them. He smiles back lovingly and leaves the room.

JACOB returns to his bed. ESTHER turns over and gets comfortable. JACOB lies on his back facing the ceiling. He pulls the blankets up to neck. His face relaxes and he is overcome with feelings of comfort and security.

JACOB

I love you Esther.

She smiles warmly. His eyes close and in a matter of seconds he is back asleep.

CUT TO SUMMER MORNING SOUNDS, CRICKETS and BIRDS. The image of trees materializes overhead and a beautiful pink sky, just after sunrise, can be seen through the branches. It is an idyllic setting.

Suddenly a strange sound can be heard in the distance, a metallic humming, growing louder. Instantly there is a scramble of feet and a sound of heavy boots moving through tall grass. Voices can be heard. Men's voices.

VOICE

They're here.

VOICE

Thank God. Move 'em out!

VOICES

Bust your balls!

VOICE

He's fading fast! Move it!

There is a sudden swell of activity. The trees and branches overhead begin to blur and speed by. The idyllic image of moments before reveals itself as a P.O.V. SHOT. The CAMERA races out of a JUNGLE covering and into a huge CLEARING. A beautiful cloud studded sky bursts into view. Snatches of helmets, arms, uniforms, appear on the edge of the frame as the rush forward continues.

High overhead an insect appears to be buzzing through the sky. As it swoops down it seems to change and transmute itself into a helicopter. Its blades whirl with a deafening whine. Long lines drop out of its belly and dangle in mid-air. Its body grows and fills the sky with its dark form.

SOLDIERS leap up into the air, reaching for the lines. It is a strange ballet of lurching, lunging, missing, and connecting. The air is filled with turbulence. Voices are yelling but the words are not clear. They are filled with urgency.

Suddenly the CAMERA leaves the ground. The edges of the sky disappear as the helicopter's gray mass overwhelms the frame. It grows larger and darker as the P.O.V. CAMERA approaches. Rivets and insignia dotting the underbelly come into view. Out of the darkness hands emerge, reaching out.

Watery, womb-like sounds rise out of nowhere, the rippling of water, a heart beating. Gradually voices can be heard mumbling; distant sounds, warm and familiar.

THE INTERIOR OF THE HELICOPTER appears. It has a surreal appearance. It looks like a BATHROOM. It is brightly lit and covered with ceramic tiles. A DOCTOR reaches out to help pull JACOB in. Surprisingly JEZZIE is standing beside him.

DOCTOR

You are a lucky man, my friend. A lucky man.
You must have friends in high places, that's
all I can say. You've got angels on your side,
that's for sure.

Suddenly SAM and TONY appear next to the DOCTOR. They are extending their arms to the P.O.V. CAMERA. JACOB'S arms, nearly blue, reach out toward them. Gradually, he rises from the tub as the full BATHROOM comes into view.
CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN gradual sounds of feet shuffling across the floor. A glass rattles on a tray. A television is on low in the background. Slowly the CAMERA LENS opens from JACOB'S P.O.V. and we see JEZZIE puttering around the BEDROOM. Suddenly she is aware that JACOB is watching her. She smiles.

JEZZIE

Jake. (She places her hand on his head and strokes his hair) You're gonna be all right, Jake. You're gonna be fine.

JACOB

Am I home?

JEZZIE

You're here. Home. The doctor said you're lucky your brains didn't boil. (She smiles) What a night, Jake. You were hootin' and screamin' and laughin' and cryin'. I never saw anything like it. You melted two hundred pounds of ice in eight hours.

JACOB

Are we in Brooklyn?

JEZZIE

You're right here, Jake. You just rest. (She puffs up his pillow) The doctor said you had a virus. That's what they always say when they don't know what it is. You can't do anything for a week. He says you gotta recuperate.

JACOB

I'm alive?

JEZZIE

What kind of question is that? (She smiles, strokes his forehead, and gets up) Now you just lie here. Mrs. Sandelman made you some chicken soup. It'll warm you up.

JEZZIE leaves the room. JACOB watches her as she goes. He seems lost and confused. His voice trails after her.

JACOB

(Weakly) Esther?

JACOB, unshaven, wearing his bathrobe, is sitting at the KITCHEN TABLE. JEZZIE is making sandwiches. She wraps them in plastic Baggies and puts one in a lunch box, another in the refrigerator. She is dressed in her postal uniform. JACOB is moving salt grains around the formica table top and staring into space.

JEZZIE

You know, you really ought to get out today. You can't just sit around like this all the time. It's not healthy. It's not good for your mind. Go take a walk, or somethin'. Go to a movie. Christ, who's gonna know? You think I care? I don't give a shit. Go. Enjoy yourself. One of us should be having a good time. (JACOB isn't listening. JEZZIE knocks on his head) Hello! Anybody home? (She looks in his ear) Anybody in there? (There is no response) Goddamn it, Jake, there are two of us in this room. You hear?

CUT TO A CLOSE UP of salt crystals as JACOB'S huge finger moves them across the table. JEZZIE, frustrated, returns angrily to packing her lunch box. Suddenly she spins around.

JEZZIE

Goddamn it! I can't stand it anymore. I've had it up to here. Go ahead and rot if you want. (Pause) You son-of-a-bitch, I'm talking to you.

CUT BACK to the salt crystals. Suddenly a crashing sound catches JACOB'S attention as a kitchen pot flies by his head. He looks up to see JEZZIE knocking pots and pans off the kitchen counter and kicking them wildly across the room. The noise is terrible. The intensity of her rage is shocking. The pots crash into every surface. And then, suddenly, she stops. JEZZIE stoops down to the floor and picks up her sandwich, stuffs it back in its plastic Baggie, and puts it back in her lunch pail. She is about to leave when she stops and looks at JACOB.

JEZZIE

(Her anger in check) I made you a tuna fish sandwich. It's in the fridge. Eat a carrot with it. I left the enema bag hanging on the bathroom door. The aspirin's on the bottom shelf. We're out of soap so if for some reason you decide to wash yourself again, use the dishwashing stuff. (She walks out of the room and returns with her coat) I'm sorry I yelled, but you get on my nerves. (She bends down and makes eye contact with JACOB) Hello. Listen, I gotta go. (She pauses for a second and then, unexpectedly, raises two fingers, like horns, over her head. The gesture catches JACOB'S full attention) I'm horny. Keep it in mind. (She leans over to JACOB and kisses his cheek) Love me a little? (She looks into his eyes. The suggestion of a smile appears on his lips. They seem about to speak, but don't) What?

JACOB

(Pausing) Who are you? What are you doing in my life?

JEZZIE

What?

JACOB

(Speaking with affection) You are the most unbelievable woman I have ever met. One second you're a screaming banshee and the next you're Florence Nightingale. One moment you're saving my life and the next you're trying to knock my head off with everything but the kitchen sink. (She smiles) You know, when I first met you I thought you were an angel. I really did. Then I wondered if you weren't some devil tempting me away from my wife and kids. Now, God knows, it seems you're my savior and that I'd be dead if it weren't for you. Who are you? That's what I want to know. Will the real Jezzie Pipkin please stand up.

JEZZIE smiles coyly. Different shades of personality play on her face. Then, imitating the T.V. game show, the real JEZZIE begins to stand. JACOB smiles and extends his hand to help her. They rise together, laughing, and embrace.

CUT TO APPLAUSE from a real television game show as JACOB switches channels on the LIVINGROOM T.V.. He stops on an interview program, turns up the sound, and runs to the BATHROOM. The CAMERA stays on the television. JACOB can be heard urinating in the distance.

MAC HAYES, a young, virile, and smug REPORTER is speaking.

HAYES

The Reverend Norman Murphy, leader of one of the largest groups supporting the Armageddon Committee, told our cameras that we are no longer dealing in decades but years.

CUT TO THE REVEREND.

MURPHY

The battleground is being readied. Our planet is the battlefield. Our souls are the prize. All the signs point to the inevitable confrontation between the forces of good and evil. People must choose sides. There is no draft evasion in this war. All are called. All must take up weapons. Are you prepared? That's the question we ask.

The toilet flushes and JACOB walks back to the LIVINGROOM and turns down the sound.

HAYES

Do you find people scoffing at you, Reverend? After all there have been doomsayers for thousands of years and we're still here.

MURPHY

People are less apt to laugh these days. The prophesies are too close for comfort. I mean, all you have to do is watch the news.

HAYES

There are some who claim that your pessimism is defeatist and that what the world needs now is hope, a positive thrust.

MURPHY

I think the time for hope has passed. The seeds have been planted. We shall reap what we've sown.
(He pauses) Pessimists, no. I think we are perceived as the only realists around.

HAYES

Other movement leaders agree. In an interview . . .

Suddenly the telephone rings. It startles JACOB. He jumps. It rings again. He reaches down, turns off the T.V., and picks up the phone. His eyes continue to stare at the blank screen as he talks.

JACOB

(Pacing nervously) Hello.

PAUL (V.O.)

Jacob Singer?

JACOB

Speaking.

PAUL (V.O.)

Paul Gruneger!

JACOB

Paul? Paul Gruneger! Well I'll be goddamned.
(JACOB grows more animated. A new, macho streak emerges) Paul! You son-of-a-bitch, how the hell are you? I haven't seen you in what, five, six, years?

PAUL (V.O.)

A long time.

JACOB

Jesus Christ. How've you been? What's happening in your life?

PAUL (V.O.)

Nothin' much.

JACOB

Me neither. Nothing too exciting. So tell me, to what do I owe the honor?

PAUL (V.O.)

I need to see you, Jake.

JACOB

Shit, Paul. I'd love to see you. But I'm kind of laid up here. I've been sick.

PAUL (V.O.)
I need to see you.

JACOB
Well, hell. Sure, it won't hurt to have company.
Why don't you come by?

PAUL (V.O.)
(Nervously) I'd prefer to go out. It's private.

JACOB
I'm home alone.

PAUL (V.O.)
No. I can't talk there. Really. I can't.

JACOB
(A strange expression on his face) Well . . .
look, it'd probably be good for me to get out.
When would you like to come?

PAUL (V.O.)
Now!

JACOB
Now?

PAUL (V.O.)
Yeah, if that's all right?

JACOB
(Concerned) Well, sure. I could be ready.
I just gotta shave. You buzz me and I'll come
down. It'll be great to see you Paul; cheer me
up a bit. Let me give you my address.

CUT TO JACOB and PAUL driving across the VERRAZANO BRIDGE
heading toward STATEN ISLAND. JACOB is patting PAUL on
the back.

JACOB
Jesus, man, you look terrific. You must have
put on twenty pounds.

PAUL
I work in a bakery.

JACOB
You're lucky. How many vets you know are
even employed?

PAUL
Count 'em on one hand.

JACOB
It's almost like a conspiracy, huh?

PAUL
No joke. Fuckin' army! That goddamn war.
I'm still fightin' it.

JACOB
It's not worth it. You'll never win.

PAUL
You tellin' me? I see those gooks chargin' at
me every night. How many times can you die, huh?
(He looks in his rear view mirror before changing
lanes. He sees a bright red car tagging close
behind him. He pulls out. So does the car)
Are you married, Jake?

JACOB
Was.

PAUL
You and everybody else. God I hate this
bridge. Makes me nervous.

JACOB
Why the hell we goin' to Staten Island?
Plenty of great bars . . .

PAUL
I just need to talk.

JACOB
You can't talk in Brooklyn?

PAUL
I'm not sure where I can talk anymore.

JACOB
What's wrong?

PAUL
Let's get a coupla drinks, okay? (He looks
out his rearview mirror) Hey, take a look
behind us. Do you think that car is followin'
us? I mean, do they look suspicious?

JACOB
(Turning to look out the back window) That
red car?

PAUL
Pull the mirror down over the sun visor.
(JACOB does) Just watch 'em.

JACOB
What's goin' on Paul?

PAUL
I don't know. I haven't got the slightest
idea.

JACOB

You in trouble?

PAUL

Yeah.

JACOB notices PAUL'S left arm. It is shaking. The red car passes on the left. Both PAUL and JACOB stare at it as it speeds by.

CUT TO JACOB and PAUL sitting in a dark booth in an obscure STATEN ISLAND BAR. PAUL is leaning across the table in a very intimate fashion.

PAUL

Somethin's wrong, Jake. I don't know what it is but I can't talk to anybody about it. I figured I could with you. You always used to listen, you know? (JACOB nods. PAUL takes a sip of his drink and stares deliberately into JACOB'S eyes) I'm going to Hell! (JACOB'S face grows suddenly tense) That's as straight as I can put it. And don't tell me that I'm crazy cause I know I'm not. I'm goin' to Hell. They're comin' after me.

JACOB

(Frightened but holding back) Who is?

PAUL

They've been followin' me. They're comin' outa the walls. They're tryin' to get me. I can't even sleep anymore. I don't trust anyone. I'm not even sure I trust you. But I gotta talk to someone. I'm gonna fly out of my fuckin' mind.

PAUL cannot contain his fear. He jumps up suddenly and walks away from the booth. JACOB follows him with his eyes but does not go after him. A YOUNG MAN in the next booth observes the scene with interest. He looks vaguely familiar, like we have seen him before.

PAUL stares out the window for a moment and then walks over to the juke box. He pulls a quarter out of his pocket and drops it in the slot. His finger pushes a selection at random. Some 1968 rock hit blares out. JACOB'S mind is reeling by the time PAUL sits back down.

PAUL

Sorry. Sometimes I think I'm just gonna jump outa my skin. They're drivin' me wild.

JACOB

Who, Paul? What exactly . . . ?

PAUL

I don't know who they are, or what they are.
But they're gonna get me and I'm scared Jake.
I'm so scared I can't do anything. I can't go
to my sister's. I can't even go home.

JACOB

Why not?

PAUL

They're waitin' for me, that's why. Even my
sister. You can't trust anyone anymore, Jake.
(His hand starts to shake. The tremor spreads
rapidly to his whole body. The booth begins to
rattle) I can't stop it. I try. Oh, God!
Help me Jake.

JACOB slides quickly out of his side of the booth and moves
in toward PAUL. He puts his arm around him and holds him
tightly, offering comfort as best he can. PAUL is obviously
terrified by what is happening and grateful for JACOB'S
gesture. A few PEOPLE at the bar look over in their
direction with smiles of derision on their lips.

JACOB

It's okay, Paul. It's okay.

PAUL

(Crying) I don't know what to do.

JACOB

Don't do anything. (PAUL begins to relax a
bit and the shaking subsides) Paul, I know
what you're talking about.

PAUL

How? What do you mean?

JACOB

I've seen them too . . . the demons!

PAUL

(Staring at JACOB) You've seen them?

JACOB

Everywhere, like a plague.

PAUL

Then you know? God almighty. I thought
I was the only one.

JACOB

Me too. I had no idea. I thought it was my
mind. I tell you, I feel like I've been coming
apart at the seams; like they've been coming in
the cracks.

PAUL

Oh God. I know. I know.

JACOB

What is it Paul? What's happening to us?

PAUL

They keep telling me that I'm already dead, that they're gonna tear me apart, piece by piece, and throw me into the fire. (He fumbles in his coat pocket and pulls out a small Bible and silver cross) I carry these everywhere but they don't help. Nothing helps. Everyone thinks I'm crazy. My mother-in-law filed a report with the army.

JACOB

(Stunned) The army?

PAUL

She said I haven't been the same since then. Since that night. I've been so fucked up. There's still this big hole in my brain, this big murky pit. It's so dark in there Jake. I can't see. But I feel it. It's filled with monsters and bayonets. It's like they're crawling out of my brain. What happened that night, Jake? Why won't they tell us?

JACOB

Paul, we've done this before. Forget it.

PAUL

But the monsters, Jake. We're both seein' 'em. There's gotta be a connection. Something.

JACOB leans back in the booth, his mind racing. The YOUNG MAN in the next booth is watching them with rapt attention.

CUT TO PAUL and JACOB in the MEN'S ROOM. PAUL flushes the urinal.

PAUL

I'm afraid to go by myself anymore. I keep thinkin' one of 'em's gonna come up behind me. Somethin's wrong when a guy can't even take a leak by himself. (He walks to the sink) I've seen 'em take people right off the street. They tried to grab me once. I used to go home a different way every night. Now I can't even go home.

JACOB

What time have you got, Paul?

PAUL

It's after five. About twenty after.

JACOB

Jezzie'll be home in forty minutes. Look, I insist.

PAUL

You're sure? You don't think she'll mind?

JACOB

Are you kidding? We've put up more of her cousins, nieces, nephews. You wouldn't believe how they breed in Indiana.

PAUL

What do they come to Brooklyn for?

JACOB

Now look, if you lived in Indiana, even Brooklyn would look good.

PAUL

(Smiling) I really appreciate this Jake. I promise I won't stay for long.

JACOB

Hey, Paul, cool it. As far as I'm concerned you're doing me a favor. Come on. Let's go.

The TWO MEN leave the bar on a dingy side street. It is cold outside. Christmas lights seem ludicrous dangling in the bar's front window. PAUL looks at them and smiles.

PAUL

Merry Christmas.

PAUL steps into the street and walks to the driver's side of his car. He pulls out his keys and opens the door. JACOB looks down on the sidewalk and notices a dime in between the cracks.

JACOB

Goddamn, this is my lucky day.

He bends down to pick up the dime. PAUL inserts the key into the ignition and steps on the gas. He turns the key.

THE CAR EXPLODES. Pieces of metal and flesh fly into the air. JACOB sprawls out flat on the ground as the debris hurls above him. He covers his head.

CUT TO A HELICOPTER suffering an air bombardment. Flack is exploding all around it and shock waves are rocking the craft violently. JACOB'S eyes peer to the left. INFANTRY GUNNERS are firing rockets into the JUNGLE below. A pair of MEDICS are standing over him. He is trying to whisper to them and one of the MEDICS leans over, pressing his ear to JACOB'S mouth.

JACOB

Help me!

MEDIC

We're doing the best we can.

JACOB

Get me out of here!

CUT TO THE YOUNG MAN from the bar grabbing JACOB under the arms and dragging him down the sidewalk.

YOUNG MAN

Just hold on.

JACOB

(Looking up at him) Where am I? Who are you?

The YOUNG MAN yanks JACOB around a corner of the bar just as another explosion consumes the car. The air is filled with flames and flying glass. The YOUNG MAN pulls JACOB into the bar and lays him on the floor.

YOUNG MAN

Just lie still. You're okay. You're not hurt.

The CUSTOMERS in the bar are in a state of bedlam. Part of the wall has blown apart and bricks and glass are everywhere. Sirens are heard in the distance. A red car speeds off down the street. JACOB looks for the YOUNG MAN who had helped him. He is gone.

CUT TO A FUNERAL PROCESSION heading down Ocean Parkway. JACOB and JEZZIE are driving in an old Chevy Nova. They are dressed up. JACOB'S face is badly bruised and he has a gauze pad over his ear. They drive in silence. JACOB appears very sad. Slowly his right hand reaches across the seat, seeking JEZZIE'S. Their fingers embrace.

The FUNERAL PROCESSION enters the CEMETERY. Cars park along the length of the narrow road. MEN IN ARMY UNIFORMS emerge from their cars along with WIVES and GIRLFRIENDS. They are the SOLDIERS we have seen at the opening of the film. A small group of FAMILY MEMBERS are helped to the graveside.

JACOB joins the other VETERANS as pall bearers. They carry the casket in semi-military formation to the grave. JACOB looks closely at the distraught family. Under her veil, PAUL'S SISTER is smiling.

CUT TO THE LIVINGROOM OF PAUL'S HOME. The old army BUDDIES are sitting together, talking. PAUL'S WIFE can be seen in the BEDROOM. Several WOMEN are comforting her.

JEZZIE is talking to a small group of LADIES in the DINING ROOM and nibbling off a tray of cold cuts. PAUL'S SISTER is with her and they seem to be having a lively, almost intimate, conversation.

JACOB and his BUDDIES are drinking beer. They all have a tired, defeated look about them.

FRANK

Did anyone see the police report? (No one answers)
It sounds like a detonation job to me.

JERRY

The paper said it was electrical; a freak accident.

ROD

Bullshit. Someone's covering somethin'. That was no accident.

GEORGE

Why do you say that?

ROD

Cars don't explode that way. Any simpleton knows that.

GEORGE

But the paper . . .

ROD

That was set. I'm tellin' you.

DOUG

By who? Why? Paul didn't have an enemy in the world.

JERRY

How do you know?

DOUG

Come on. We all know Paul.

GEORGE

Who knows anybody, really?

DOUG

Hey, you're talkin' about Paul. Who'd want to hurt him?

FRANK

(To JACOB) What did he talk about when you guys went out? Did he say anything?

JACOB

He was upset. He thought people were following him.

JERRY
You're kidding. Who?

JACOB
He didn't know. (He pauses) Demons.

GEORGE
(Obviously struck by the word)
What do you mean, demons?

JACOB
He told me he was going to Hell.

The statement has a surprising impact on the group. There is immediate silence and eyes averted from one another. ROD tries to cover.

ROD
What'd he say that for? What made him say that?
Strange, huh? Strange.

GEORGE
What else did he say, Jake?

JACOB
He was scared. He saw these creatures coming out of the woodwork. They were tryin' to get him, he said.

GEORGE
(His arm shaking) How long had that been going on?

JACOB
A couple of weeks, I think. (He notices GEORGE'S beer can rattling)

GEORGE
He say what they looked like?

JACOB
No. Not really. Just demons.

GEORGE
(Getting up) Excuse me a minute. I'll be right back.

ROD
In one end, out the other, huh George?

GEORGE tries to smile as he hurries to the BATHROOM. His arm is nearly out of control and beer is spilling on the carpet as he walks.

ROD
Still a spastic, huh George? I hope you can hold it in you better than you hold it in the can. (No one laughs. There is an uncomfortable silence)

DOUG

I know what Paul was talking about. I don't know how to say this . . . but in a way it's a relief knowing that someone else saw them too.

ROD

You're seeing . . . demons?

DOUG

They're not human, I'll tell you that. A car tried to run me over the other day. It was aiming straight for me. I saw their faces. They weren't from Brooklyn.

ROD

What are you tellin' me? They're from the Bronx?

DOUG

It was no joke, Rod.

FRANK

Were they laughing? (DOUG looks at FRANK, surprised by the observation. He nods)

JERRY

Something weird is going on here. What is it about us? Even in Nam, it was always weird. Are we all crazy or something?

DOUG

Yeah, ever since that . . . (He hesitates. They all understand)

ROD

What does that have to do with anything?

FRANK

It was bad grass. That's all it was.

JERRY

Grass never did that to me.

DOUG

You know, I've been to three shrinks and a hypnotist. We've tried everything, primal scream, regression therapy. Nothing penetrates that night. Nothing.

ROD

We were stoned. That's all. You should just forget it. It's not worth goin' over again and again. It happened. It's over.

JACOB

I've seen them too.

ROD

Shit!

JERRY

So have I.

JACOB

Well look, this is obviously no coincidence. Something is going on here. I admit it's weird. I don't understand it. But it's happening to all of us.

ROD

Not me buddy.

JACOB

Okay, not you Rod. But the rest of us are flipping out for some goddamn unknown reason. We need to find out what's going on.

DOUG

Do you think it has something to do with . . . the offensive?

JACOB

It's got something to do with something. I think we ought to get a lawyer. If they're hiding something from us we have a right to find out.

ROD

Come on Professor. You'll be buttin' your head against a stone wall.

JACOB

That may be the only way to get through. Besides, six heads'll be better than one.

ROD

Not my head, buddy. Not me. I'm gettin' a headache just listenin' to you.

JACOB

We have an obligation to each other, to ourselves, to get to the bottom of this insanity. I say we should get ourselves a lawyer.

ROD

I say you should get a psychiatrist.

DOUG

Too late. I've tried. It doesn't help. I think you're right, Jake. I'm game.

JERRY

Me too.

ROD

You guys are out of your minds. It was bad grass. There's no such thing as demons.

CUT TO JACOB, FRANK, JERRY, GEORGE, DOUG, and ROD sitting on plush chairs in the LAW OFFICE of DONALD GEARY. GEARY is quietly looking at each of them before he speaks.

GEARY

I'll want depositions from all of you. Sworn depositions. And I want to know who Paul, or his mother-in-law, contacted.

JACOB

Then you'll take the case?

GEARY

I'll look into it.

JACOB

Do you think we have a chance?

GEARY

That's hard to say at this point. I'll need psychiatric examinations, a list of other members of your platoon, or their survivors. I'll need whatever military records you have, honorable or dishonorable.

DOUG

Now this is the kind of action I like.

GEARY

I'll tell you this. If this suit is successful you would all stand to recover quite a lot of money. Not that I can predict anything but suits of this kind have been awarded fairly generous judgments.

JACOB

That's encouraging. Especially with your fees.

GEARY

My fees are not unreasonable for the marketplace, Mr. Singer.

JACOB

Doctor.

GEARY

Doctor?.

JACOB

Ph.D.

GEARY

Ah! I thought you were a mailman.

JACOB

I am.

GEARY

(Confused) Why aren't you teaching? Why aren't you in a univeristy?

JACOB

(Cleverly answering the question from the defense's point of view) I'm too messed up to teach. Whatever they did to us ruined our lives. I should have been a Department Chairman by now. Instead, I'm delivering mail on 42nd Street.

GEARY

(Picking up on his line of thought) Well, they're going to have to pay for that, aren't they?

JACOB

(Smiling) You bet your ass.

CUT TO A DARKENED BEDROOM. JACOB and JEZZIE are making love. A half-smoked joint is smouldering in an ashtray by the bed. JEZZIE is poised on top of JACOB and his eyes are focused on her face.

A hurricane lamp casts a warm glow over their bodies. Its flickering plays games with JACOB'S eyes and for a moment JEZZIE seems to disappear. JACOB reaches out for her breasts and his hands vanish into the shadows dancing across her. With sudden, hallucinogenic impact, JACOB feels himself drawn into a starry universe opening from inside her.

THE CAMERA plunges through her image into a galaxy of stars and rushes toward one that is twinkling brightly. Pulsations of its light whiten the screen. Out of the whiteness appears a momentary flash of the CELESTIAL STAIRCASE, accompanied by sounds of sexual climax.

The STAIRCASE sparkles for an instant and then it's gone. The sparkle becomes a glimmer in JEZZIE'S eye as her face fills the screen. She looks especially lovely and radiant. Her image moves with the lamplight.

JACOB'S face is ecstatic. He can barely talk and simply basks in JEZZIE'S glow. Slowly, she leans forward and whispers in his ear.

JEZZIE

So tell me . . . am I still an angel?

JACOB

(Smiling broadly) With wings. (He strokes her hair) You transport me, you know that? You carry me away.

JEZZIE kisses him softly around his face and gently probes his ear with her pinky. JACOB loves it.

JEZZIE

We're all angels, you know. (She bites his ear lobe. He winces) And devils. It's just what you choose to see.

JACOB

(Feeling deeply inside himself) I love you, Jez.

JEZZIE

I know.

JACOB

Underneath all the bullshit . . . just love.

JEZZIE

Remember that.

JACOB

(Smiling) Remind me. (He gazes out the window) You know what? I feel . . . exorcised . . . like the demons are gone.

JEZZIE

How come? The army?

JACOB

In a way. At least now I have some idea why it was happening. If we can only get them to admit it, to explain why . . . maybe . . . I don't know. Maybe it'd clear things up a bit, (he points to his brain) upstairs. I'll tell you something, Jez, honestly. (He hesitates) I thought they were real.

JEZZIE

(Lying quietly for a minute) Hey, Jake, can I ask you a question?

JACOB

Shoot.

JEZZIE

If they're not real, the demons . . . then who killed Paul?

The question catches JACOB off guard and penetrates his brain with the velocity of a bullet. JEZZIE realizes what she's done. She reaches for his head and gently strokes it as though tending to the wound. JACOB gazes into the shadows. THE SCENE FADES TO BLACK.

CUT TO JACOB coming out of the BATHROOM SHOWER. JEZZIE is moving rapidly around the KITCHEN.

JACOB
(Pulling on his robe) Where did you say
you were going?

JEZZIE
I told you ten times.

JACOB
It hasn't registered.

JEZZIE
I've got that union meeting, women's caucus.

JACOB
Oh yeah. I'd think you'd run out of grievances
by now.

JEZZIE
I put a frozen dinner in the oven, a Manhandler.
It'll be ready at a quarter of. I threw a little
salad together. It's in the fridge. I also
bought some apple juice, Red Cheek. Don't drink
it all. Oh, and your lawyer called.

JACOB
(Interested) Oh yeah? When?

JEZZIE
(Grabbing her coat) While you were in the shower.

JACOB
Why didn't you call me?

JEZZIE
He didn't give me a chance. (She pauses
nervously) He's not taking your case.

JACOB
(Stunned) What? Why?

JEZZIE
He said you didn't have one.

JACOB
What's he talking about?

JEZZIE
I don't know. That's all he said. He wasn't
very friendly. Oh, yeah. He said your buddies
backed down. They chickened out, he said.

JACOB
I don't believe this.

JEZZIE

Baby, I don't have time to go into it. I'm sorry. I've got to run. Don't be upset. We'll talk when I get home. See you around eleven. (She kisses him on the cheek) Bye. And don't brood. Watch T.V. or something.

The door slams securely. The locks set. JACOB is alone. He wanders around the APARTMENT. His whole body seems heavy, as though carrying a new burden. Suddenly a spark of motivation spurs him into action. He begins rifling through a desk drawer. He comes up with a frayed address book and looks up a number. He dials.

FRANK (V.O.)

Hello.

JACOB

Frank. It's Jake. Jacob Singer. (FRANK does not reply) Listen, I just got a strange call from Geary. He said you guys backed down. What's he talking about?

FRANK (V.O.)

That's right. We did.

JACOB

What do you mean, Frank? I don't get it. Why?

FRANK (V.O.)

It's hard to explain.

JACOB

(Angry) Well, try, huh.

FRANK (V.O.)

I don't know if I can. It's just that war is war. Things happen.

JACOB

What are you talking about? We're victims of a conspiracy.

FRANK (V.O.)

We're not victims of anything.

JACOB

Who's been talking to you, Frank? (FRANK doesn't respond) Jesus, what's going on? We've got a great case here. How can you just drop it like that? (FRANK is silent) What about the others?

FRANK (V.O.)

They're not interested, Jake.

JACOB

Shit! You know it's not half the case if I go it alone. The strength is that we're all suffering the same symptoms. The cause is obvious to anybody with half a mind. Frank, the army is culpable. They've done something to us. How can you not want to know? How can you live with this and not want to get to the root of it?

FRANK (V.O.)

(Pausing) Maybe it's not the army, Jake.

JACOB

What do you mean?

FRANK (V.O.)

Maybe there's a larger truth.

JACOB

What are you talking about?

FRANK (V.O.)

Maybe the demons are real.

JACOB

Goddamn it. What kind of bullshit is that?

FRANK (V.O.)

Listen, Jake. I gotta go.

JACOB

What the hell? What kind of mumbo jumbo . . . ?

FRANK (V.O.)

I'm hanging up.

JACOB

Hey, wait!

FRANK (V.O.)

Don't bother to call again, okay? (He hangs up)

JACOB stands holding the phone for a long time, until the high pitched whine from the receiver reminds him it's off the hook. The sound frightens him and he slams the receiver down.

CUT TO JACOB'S TRUCK parked outside the NBC TELEVISION STUDIOS at ROCKEFELLER CENTER.

CUT TO MAC HAYES, the investigative reporter for WNBC. He is sitting in a small STUDIO behind the NEWS DESK reading the news into a live television camera.

HAYES

And finally, a spokesman for the Bureau of Missing Persons says the current problem is reaching near epidemic proportions. The rash of sudden disappearances which began less than a month ago has disturbed authorities who still have no clues to explain what they call, "a mysterious and disturbing phenomenon." And that's our mid-morning news break. I'm Mac Hayes.

The red light on the camera goes off. HAYES takes off his microphone and leaves the STUDIO.

CUT TO HAYES entering a bustling NEWS ROOM. He walks over to his desk. JACOB is sitting in a chair beside it.

HAYES

Sorry about that. Anyway, let me continue. (He sits) What you're telling me Mr. Singer is very interesting, no doubt about it. But do you have any idea how many interesting stories there are out there? Do you have any idea how many people come to me with the injustices of the world? It'd break your heart.

JACOB

What can people do? There's a wall of silence out there. It's hard to penetrate.

HAYES

(A glint of compassion in his eyes) And why haven't you retained legal counsel?

JACOB

Like I said before, I think they've been scared off. It's an explosive story. I'm sure there are people who don't want it told.

HAYES

Look. Let me think about it. I've got all your information. Let me mull it over. Maybe I can make a few calls. Check with me tomorrow.

JACOB

(Smiling broadly) Well, that's wonderful, Mr. Hayes. I couldn't have asked for more.

HAYES

I don't promise a thing.

JACOB

I couldn't ask you to.

The TWO MEN stand up. HAYES extends his hand. JACOB takes it and nods warmly in appreciation.

CUT TO JACOB sitting in a comfortable chair in his LIVINGROOM. He is reading. The room is dark, lit only by a reading light. The walls are mostly in shadow. The light, however, falls on one section of the wall, a portion that has been lined in fake wood paneling.

JACOB'S eyes suddenly lift off the page and roam over the wood grain on the wall. All of a sudden he notices something strange, an image in the grain. He stares at it. The more he stares the more precise its definition. The image of a DEMON appears in the wall.

JACOB sits up quickly and stares at the wall. It is impossible to get the DEMON'S image out of the grain. It seems etched, even imbedded, in the paneling.

JACOB looks away and returns to his book. He is reading about archetypes and the primordial mind. But the book does not hold his attention. He is obsessed with the wall. Its molecules seem suddenly active, the wood grain subtly animate. Layers begin to appear in the surface of the wall as the grain patterns slowly define a rocky, barren landscape.

The DEMON is growing solid. Cries and screams rise up in the distance. Flames and a red glow emanate from the space extending rapidly into the wall. The image of Hell erupts before him.

JACOB stands up. He can see bodies suffering beyond the wall, masses of PEOPLE wailing and enduring the torments of a fiery world. The DEMON'S arm slowly extends from the plane of the wall and reaches into the room. He is huge, covered in flames and skulls, a living horror. He grabs hold of JACOB and pulls him toward the wall. JACOB tries to back away but he cannot. His face is white with fear. The DEMON draws JACOB toward the inferno.

JACOB

(Yelling at the top of his lungs) NO!

Suddenly JEZZIE appears, the light from the BEDROOM flooding the paneled wall. The DEMON vanishes instantly.

JEZZIE

Jake, are you all . . . ? (She stops dead in her tracks)

CUT TO JACOB pressed up against the wall, defying gravity and logic, as though about to merge with the solid surface. His body holds there for a moment and then collapses to the floor. JEZZIE goes to him.

JEZZIE

Jake? Jake?

He doesn't answer. He looks at JEZZIE with a blank stare. His body begins shaking.

CUT TO JACOB in bed, lying in a fetal pose. JEZZIE is stroking his hair and trying to calm him.

JEZZIE

It's going to be all right, Jake. It's going to be all right. Don't be afraid. I'm here. I've got you now.

JACOB

Hold me, Jezzie. Hold me.

JEZZIE wraps herself around his shivering body and warms him with her own. The image seems tender and comforting until we notice JEZZIE'S tongue darting nervously in and out. It looks strangely like a snake's.

CUT TO JACOB sitting opposite MAC HAYES in the WNBC NEWSROOM. He is wide-eyed, almost hysterical.

JACOB

They're trying to get me. I don't know who . . . if they're real or not real . . . but they're after me. They're comin' out of the walls. The army's the only hook I've got. I need you. I need somebody who can move mountains - fast.

HAYES

Maybe you need . . . a doctor.

JACOB

What's he gonna tell me? I'm crazy? There's no such thing as demons? They'll lock me up. They'll put me away. It'll be me and the demons in one big padded cell. Look. I know how this sounds. The only thing I have standing between me and all-out insanity is the fact that I know somebody's fucked with my head. I've got to prove it. You've got to help me.

HAYES

Listen, let me give it to you straight, okay? I don't know you from Adam, right? You come in here yesterday with this bizarre story and demand I look into it. Okay. I bought it. I said I'd check into it and I did. Now I don't know what kind of fool you take me for but I'll tell you this, I think you have used and abused me, and I don't like it.

JACOB

(Shocked) I don't know what you mean.

HAYES

I talked to the Bureau of Records yesterday. They never heard of you. There is no record of your having ever been in the armed forces.

JACOB

What the hell is that supposed to mean?
I spent two years in Viet Nam. I can tell
you every battle. I gave you my buddies'
numbers, addresses. Just call them.

HAYES

What do you think I did?

JACOB

So, you see?

HAYES

Look, is this a joke? If this is a joke,
I don't think it's funny. (JACOB is bewildered)
Look, not one of your buddies lives at the
addresses you gave me, except one, and he said
he never heard of you.

JACOB

Jesus Christ. What do you mean? Who never
heard of me?

HAYES

(Looking at his list) McMullen. Frank McMullen.
Said he never heard your name before and had no
idea who I was talking about.

JACOB

This is crazy.

HAYES

Yeah, I'd say that.

JACOB

(Pulling the list from HAYES' hand) Let me see
that. (He examines it) These are their addresses.
I know they are. I've been to their homes. What's
going on here? I don't understand.

HAYES

That makes two of us.

JACOB

Frank knows me. I just talked to him. Why
would he do that? There's something happening
here.

HAYES

I pulled some strings with some army brass.
I gave them your name and your "buddies'" names.
It turns out they had your files . . .

JACOB

See. I told you.

HAYES

. . . in a special section.

JACOB
Special? What special . . . ?

HAYES
Psychiatric. (JACOB'S eyes pop) I'm just telling you what they told me. I said I'd give it to you straight. According to their files, you and your buddies were all discharged on psychological grounds after some war games in Thailand. You've never even been to Viet Nam.

JACOB
(His mouth wide open) That's a lie!

HAYES
They told me that the only thing you guys had in common was that you were all whacko. They said I was dealing with a group of lunatics and that I shouldn't waste my time.

JACOB
(Nearly speechless) Jesus Christ. What is going on here? It's all a lie. It's all a big lie. I fought in Nam. I know every hill, every tree between Da Nang and Saigon. You've got to believe me.

HAYES
I don't have to do any such thing.

JACOB
But can't you see. It's all camouflage. They're trying to discourage you.

HAYES
And doing an effective job of it.

JACOB
How can you believe them?

HAYES
I have reliable sources. And I'm afraid your arguments are not persuasive.

JACOB
I have no arguments. These are facts. I'm no off-the-street idiot. I know what I'm talking about. The army has set me up. Obviously, I know too much. I know what they did and they're scared. They've messed with our minds. I don't know how they did it or why, but it is an incontrovertible fact that they did. I know I have a case but I can't pursue it by myself. Look how far you got in no time. How could I ever hope to do that?

HAYES

Mr. Singer. This is out of my province but might I suggest that you consider some kind of professional help.

JACOB

(Growing furious) Help? The only help I need is what I'm asking you for.

HAYES

Look, I'm sorry. I'm just not interested in your case. What can I tell you?

JACOB

Jesus, how can you abandon me like this? What am I going to do?

HAYES

There are other reporters. I just can't help you here.

JACOB stands up. He is not sure what to do or say. His hands gesture as though trying to find a last word. But nothing is said. JACOB turns and leaves.

CUT TO JACOB walking down the NBC CORRIDOR to the elevators. He seems disoriented and in a daze.

CUT BACK TO MAC HAYES sitting down at his desk and picking up the telephone. He speaks quietly.

HAYES

He just left.

CUT TO JACOB stepping onto the elevator. Several SOLDIERS also get on. The doors close. The Muzak is playing "Mammy" with Al Jolsen singing. JACOB is surprised to hear it. He presses the button for the main floor.

AL JOLSEN

I'm comin'. I'm comin'.
I hope I didn't make you wait.
I'm comin'. I'm comin'.
Oh lord, I hope I'm not late.

Suddenly the Muzak goes dead. There is a slight static and then a VOICE comes over the elevator speaker.

VOICE

M.A.S.H. emergency unit C please report to section 2 immediately. Dr. Fong Lee, please contact Saigon Operator #4 on the red line.

The static returns and then Al Jolsen. JACOB stares at the speaker, confused by the interruption.

AL JOLSEN

Mammy! Mammy! Look at me!
Don't you know me?
I'm your little baby!
I'd walk a million miles
For one of your smiles
My Mammy!

The elevator stops at the 6TH FLOOR. The doors open swiftly.

SOLDIER

Let's go Singer.

JACOB is shocked to hear his name. He looks at the SOLDIER towering over him and feels a shove toward the open door. He turns toward it and stops in terror. There is no 6th floor.

JACOB is staring into a blue sky and the tops of trees. He turns back to the SOLDIERS. They are lifting him and preparing to hurl him out. He clutches the side of the door with a free hand as they swing him over the side. He screams. Far below he can see bodies moving in strange patterns, looking up at him.

A SOLDIER pries his hand loose and suddenly he is falling. He looks up at the faces of the men who have pushed him. They recede quickly into the belly of a helicopter whose dark form rapidly reveals itself.

Long, umbilical like, cords trail after him. He is falling at great speed. Suddenly his fall breaks without a crash and bodies are swarming over him.

There is a flurry of activity and in seconds JACOB is whisked into a van with bright walls and medical equipment. His hand reaches out for help. It grapples with a dark red button and presses it. A loud siren begins to wail.

CUT TO A ROW OF LIGHTS flashing one at a time toward the left of the screen. When they reach the last panel the elevator door opens. A CROWD OF PEOPLE are waiting to get on. They stare at JACOB who is leaning against the wall pressing the emergency button.

JACOB is stunned. A large hand reaches out from the back of the elevator and pulls his hand off the button. JACOB spins around. It is one of the SOLDIERS.

SOLDIER

Let's go Singer. You're coming with us.

CUT TO JACOB being hustled to a waiting car. He is shoved inside, in between two officious looking MEN. The doors lock from the DRIVER'S command. JACOB is noticeably frightened.

MAN

Mr. Singer. What an appropriate name for a man who can't keep his mouth shut. (The car drives off)

JACOB

Who are you? What do you want?

MAN

We've been watching you for a long time. You and your friends. You've been exhibiting some very odd behavior. Frightening people with foolish talk about demons . . . and experiments. (JACOB tries to speak but the other MAN grabs his mouth) You're in over your head, Mr. Singer. Many men drown that way. The army was part of another life, a past life. Forget it. It is dead and buried. Let it lie. (The other MAN jabs JACOB in the back, hard. JACOB cries out) I hope we have made our point, Mr. Singer.

The other MAN grabs JACOB and forces him onto the floor. The car turns East on 59th Street and stops on the corner of Lexington Avenue. The door flies open. A foot jams full force into the small of JACOB'S back and sends him sprawling onto the pavement in front of Bloomingdales. JACOB grabs his back. He is in excruciating pain. He tries to get up but can't move. He reaches out to people passing by but they ignore him and hurry past.

A SALVATION ARMY SANTA has been watching the entire scene. After a moment's consideration he leaves his post and ambles over to JACOB. He looks down at him and smiles. JACOB gasps. Behind the beard he recognizes SHORTY, the NEWS SELLER, who died.

SANTA

Merry Christmas.

CUT TO THE SOUND OF A SIREN as an AMBULANCE races through the streets.

CUT TO AN EMERGENCY CREW extracting JACOB from the back of the rescue vehicle and rolling him at great speed into the EMERGENCY ROOM.

BEARER

He's been screaming like a mad man.
You better get something in him.

RESIDENT

(Approaching JACOB) Hi. I'm Doctor Stewart.
Can you understand me? (JACOB nods his head "yes") Can you tell me what happened?

JACOB
My back. I can't move. I need my
chiropractor. They took my wallet.

RESIDENT
Your back? Did you fall?

BEARER
They said he slipped on the ice.
May have hit his head.

RESIDENT
We better get an orthopedic man
in here. Is Dr. Davis on call?

NURSE
I'll page him.

JACOB
Call my chiropractor.

BEARER
He keeps sayin' that. Over and over.

JACOB
Help me.

NURSE
We're doing everything we can.

JACOB
Please call him. He can fix it.

NURSE
Don't you worry about a thing.

JACOB
Louis Schwartz. Nostrand Avenue.

RESIDENT
Get me two CC's of valium.

ATTENDANT
Does he have any identification?

BEARER
No wallet. Nothing.

JACOB
They stole it.

RESIDENT
Who did?

JACOB
I don't know. Santa Claus.

RESIDENT

What's your name?

JACOB

Jacob Singer. Can you call my chiropractor?
He can help me.

RESIDENT

I have an orthopedist on the way.

JACOB

No. I don't want anyone else.

RESIDENT

I'm going to have to move you a bit, just to
check for injuries. This may hurt a little.

JACOB

No. Don't move me. (The RESIDENT ignores him.
JACOB screams)

RESIDENT

I don't have to ask if you can feel that. (The
NURSE arrives with the two CC's of valium. The
RESIDENT takes the bottle and prepares the injection)
This'll take the edge off. It may make you a little
drowsy and you probably won't remember much for a
while but your mind will stay alert. You'll still
be able to communicate with the doctor. (He rolls
up JACOB'S shirt sleeve)

JACOB

Goddamn it. I want Louis.

NURSE

Who's Louis?

RESIDENT

He's out of it. This should just take a moment.

The RESIDENT injects the serum into JACOB'S veins while
two ORDERLIES hold him still. JACOB barely struggles.
His eyes fixate on the EMERGENCY ROOM WALL. It is white
and sterile. Within moments it begins to emit a reddish
glow. JACOB watches with astonishment as the wall's two
dimensional surface separates into three dimensional
planes. The solid surface gives way to a DARK CHAMBER that
was not there before.

Out of the transmuted space CREATURES begin to form,
Bosch-like DEMONS with horns and tails, undeniably of
another world. They are horrific forms. Slowly several
of them emerge from the wall and approach JACOB. They
look like parodies of doctors and nurses, wearing
traditional hospital gowns. Without a word they wheel
him through the space where the wall had been. JACOB
tries to scream but no sound comes out.

The DARK CHAMBER is filled with mournful CREATURES being led by DEMONS through a series of CORRIDORS. No one fights or struggles. JACOB'S stretcher is moved through the darkness. He tries to sit up but is forced back down. He is obviously drugged.

JACOB is wheeled into a tiny CHAMBER. A number of DEMONS are waiting for him. Chains and pulleys hang from the ceiling. They are lowered and attached with speed and efficiency to JACOB'S arms and legs. The devices are manipulated smoothly and JACOB is lifted off the stretcher. The chains retract, stretching him spread eagle in the air. He screams loudly.

JACOB

Oh God!

The DEMONS laugh. There is the sound of a huge door closing. JACOB is left in darkness. The darkness is hallucinogenic. Fires appear beyond the boundaries of the wall; images of Dante's Inferno, souls of the dead in endless torment. JACOB is but one of countless beings sharing a vastness of suffering. His own screams for help are lost in the magnitude of voices crying.

Suddenly, out of the menacing shadows, a contingent of DEMONS emerges. They are carrying sharp surgical instruments. They surround JACOB, their eyes glistening as bright as their blades. JACOB is panting and sweating with fear. For an instant one of the DEMONS looks like JEZZIE. JACOB calls out to her.

JACOB

Jezzie! Help me!

The DEMONS laugh as she changes form. They take great pleasure in his suffering. Their voices are strange and not human. Each utterance contains a multitude of contradictory tones, sincere and compassionate, taunting and mocking at the same time. The confusion of meanings is a torment of its own.

JACOB

Get me out of here.

DEMON

Where do you want to go?

JACOB

Take me home.

DEMON

Home? (They all laugh) You are home.
You're dead.

JACOB

No! This is crazy. I just hurt my back.
I'm not dead.

DEMON

(Laughing) What are you then?

JACOB

I'm alive.

DEMON

Then what are you doing here?

JACOB

I don't know. I don't know. (He struggles like a trapped animal) This isn't happening.

DEMON

What is happening?

JACOB

(Crazed) Let me out of here!

DEMON

There is no out of here. You've been killed. Don't you remember?

The DEMON extracts a long needle from his belt and positions it over JACOB' head. Like a divining rod it locates a particular point near the crown of the head. With a powerful thrust the DEMON shoves the needle into JACOB'S skull and pushes it slowly into his brain. JACOB howls.

CUT RAPIDLY TO VIETNAM and a replay of flashes of the opening sequence of the film. SOLDIERS with bayonets are charging over rice paddies in the dark of night. FRANK MCMULLEN, his face twisted and demonic, charges at JACOB with the long bayonet blade and jams it into his intestines. JACOB cries out.

CUT TO THE DEMONS.

DEMON

Remember?

JACOB

(Screaming) No! That was years ago. I've lived years since then.

DEMON

It's all been a dream.

JACOB

No! The army did this to me. It's all drugs. They've done something to my brain. (He begins raving like a madman) Jezzie! I want my boys! Esther! I'm not dead! I want my family!

The DEMONS laugh and then unexpectedly back away, disappearing into the darkness. JACOB'S voice fades into a low but constant moan.

Suddenly a fluorescent light flashes on overhead. HOSPITAL ROOM WALLS materialize instantaneously around him. A NURSE enters the room followed by ESTHER, ELI, and JED. They approach JACOB who is lying in traction, suspended over a hospital bed.

NURSE

He's still pretty doped up. I don't think he'll be able to talk yet and I doubt that he'll recognize you.

ESTHER

I just want to see him.

JED

Dad. Hi. It's us. We just found out.

ELI

You look terrible. Does that hurt?

NURSE

I'll be outside if you need me.

ESTHER

Jake. It's me. We heard what happened.

JACOB

(His voice hoarse, nearly whispering)
I'm not dead. I am not dead.

ESTHER

No. Of course you're not. You've just hurt your back. That's all. You're going to be fine. It'll just take some time.

JED

A month, they said.

ESTHER

I called Louis. He said he'd try and get you out just as fast as he could but that chiropractors don't carry much weight around here. Still, he's going to do everything he can.

ELI

(Trying to joke) You just hang in there, Dad.

ESTHER

(Smacking him) That's not funny. (She reaches over and rubs JACOB'S brow) What a mess, huh? God I wish there was something I could do. I love you, Jacob. For whatever that's worth. I do.

There is a sudden sound of DEMONS laughing. JACOB jerks his head painfully but does not see them.

DEMON

Dream on!

JACOB

(Yelling at the unseen voice) No!
(He whimpers) Oh God, help me.

ESTHER

Jacob, what can I do?

JACOB

Save me!

JACOB'S plea confuses ESTHER. She responds with a kiss.

CUT TO DAYLIGHT streaming though the window in JACOB'S ROOM.
He is still in traction and looks very uncomfortable. A new
NURSE enters holding a plastic container with a straw poking
out.

NURSE

Well, don't we look better this morning?
That was a hard night, wasn't it?

JACOB

Where am I?

NURSE

Lenox Hospital.

JACOB

I'm awake?

NURSE

You look awake to me. Here. (She holds the
straw to his lips) Drink some of this.

JACOB

How long have I been here?

NURSE

Since yesterday.

JACOB

I'm not dead?

NURSE

Not according to your chart.

JACOB

I'm alive.

NURSE

We wouldn't be talking if your weren't.

There is a sudden knock at the door.

JEZZIE

Can I come in?

JACOB

(With mixed reactions) Jezzie?

JEZZIE

It's me. In the flesh.

JACOB

(Staring at her intently) Jezzie.

NURSE

He's just coming off some powerful drugs. He'll be all right.

JACOB

Where's Esther? Where did she go? (The NURSE gives him a strange look) She was here . . . last night.

NURSE

No. No. You haven't had any visitors.

JEZZIE

They only tracked me down this morning. They traced your uniform.

JACOB

That's a lie. My family was here.

NURSE

That's not possible. We weren't even sure who you were until a few hours ago.

JACOB

(Insistent) They were here last night. They were as real as you are.

The NURSE smiles and nods in appeasement. She glances at JEZZIE who smiles back.

JACOB

This is not a dream! This is my life.

JEZZIE

Of course it is, Jake. What else could it be?

She giggles nervously. There is a funny glint in her eye. JACOB looks away. He doesn't want to see it.

CUT TO JEZZIE asleep in a chair. The sun is setting, casting an orange glow over her face and a huge shadow onto the wall. JACOB is moaning.

JACOB

Oh God. It's wearing off. Call the nurse.
I can't stand it. Is anybody here?

JEZZIE

(Awakened by his mumbling) I'm here, Jake.

There is a loud commotion out in the HALL followed by a sudden invasion of JACOB'S ROOM. LOUIS SCHWARTZ, JACOB'S chiropractor, storms through the door followed by several NURSES and ORDERLIES.

NURSE

I'm sorry, you can't go in there. Visiting hours are over.

ORDERLY

Listen, you're going to have to leave.

LOUIS

(Staring at JACOB and the traction equipment)
Good God! And they call this modern medicine.
(Outraged) This is barbaric! What madness.
This is not the middle ages! What are you doing to this poor man? Don't worry, Jake. I'll get you out of here. (LOUIS turns back to the ORDERLY, yelling) What is this, the inquisition? Is he some heretic? Why don't you just burn him at the stake and put him out of his misery?

ORDERLY

Look, I'm sorry. This is the dinner hour. We don't allow visitors. These rules exist for a reason.

JACOB

Louis, save me. They're demons here. Help me.

LOUIS

Don't you worry, Jake. (Angry) This is outrageous!

LOUIS charges over to the traction equipment and begins working the pulleys that suspend JACOB over the bed. The NURSES and ORDERLIES become instantly hysterical and start screaming.

NURSE 1

What are you doing?

ORDERLY

What the hell do you think . . . ?

LOUIS

Don't you come near me.

NURSE 2

You can't do that.

LOUIS

What is this, a prison? Stay back.

JEZZIE

You're going to hurt him.

LOUIS

I'm going to hurt him?

NURSE 1

Call the police. (An ORDERLY runs out of the room)

JACOB

Help me!

LOUIS

(To JEZZIE) Get me a wheelchair. Quick!

JEZZIE looks at the NURSES, at JACOB, and then runs out into the HALL. The ORDERLIES try to encircle LOUIS but his bulk is intimidating. He lowers JACOB to the bed. One of the ORDERLIES lunges at LOUIS who swings back at him with one of the pulley chains. It just misses but scares him off. JEZZIE rushes in with the wheelchair.

LOUIS

(To the ORDERLIES) You take one step and I'll wrap this around your neck. (To JEZZIE) Help me with him.

Together they lift JACOB into the chair. He is in terrible pain. LOUIS positions JEZZIE behind him.

LOUIS

(To the ORDERLIES) Get out of my way. (They don't move. LOUIS pulls the chain out of the wall. The ORDERLIES jump back. He addresses JEZZIE) Stay with me.

NURSE 2

You can't do this. It's against regulations.

LOUIS charges through the open door into the CORRIDOR. A group of NURSES and PATIENTS has gathered but step away as they emerge. JEZZIE follows closely behind him as he wheels JACOB toward the elevator. A collection of new ORDERLIES comes running down the corridor. They all back against the wall when faced with LOUIS' determination. LOUIS pushes the elevator button. The STAFF keeps its distance. Some mumble to themselves. Others glare ferociously. The door slides open. JEZZIE steps into the elevator. LOUIS wheels JACOB behind her. As the doors are closing an unidentified voice calls after them.

VOICE

Pleasant dreams.

JACOB freezes. The elevator descends.

CUT TO JEZZIE and LOUIS helping JACOB into LOUIS' OFFICE. They walk him to an adjusting table. LOUIS pushes a lever and the table rises to a vertical position. JACOB leans against it and rides it down to a horizontal plane. Every movement is agony for him.

LOUIS

Half an hour from now and you'll be walking out of here all by yourself. Mark my words. (JACOB barely hears them. LOUIS turns to JEZZIE) You can stay if you want.

JEZZIE

No. It's okay. I'll just wait out there, unless you need me.

LOUIS

We're fine. (JEZZIE strokes JACOB'S neck and then retires to the WAITING ROOM. LOUIS examines JACOB'S back) Well, you've done it to yourself this time, haven't you?

JACOB

(Nearly whispering) Am I dead, Louis? (LOUIS leans over to hear what he said) Am I dead?

LOUIS

(Smiling) From a slipped disc? That'd be a first.

JACOB

I was in Hell. I've been there. It's horrible. I don't want to die, Louis.

LOUIS

Well, I'll see what I can do about it.

JACOB

I've seen it. It's all pain, Louis.

LOUIS

(Working on JACOB'S spine like a master mechanic) You ever read Meister Eckart? (JACOB shakes his head "no") How did you ever get your Doctorate without reading Eckart? (LOUIS takes hold of JACOB'S legs and yanks them swiftly. JACOB cries out) Good. Okay, let's turn over gently. Right side.

JACOB

(Thinking a moment and then trying) I can't.

LOUIS

(Helping him) You're a regular basket case, you know that? (He moves JACOB'S arm over his head) Eckart saw Hell too. (LOUIS positions JACOB'S other arm, bends his legs, and then pushes down on his thigh. His spine moves with a cracking sound. JACOB groans) You know what he said? The only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go of your life; your memories, your attachments. They burn 'em all away. But they're not punishing you, he said. They're freeing your soul. Okay, other side. (He helps JACOB and repositions him. Again he pushes and the spine cracks) Wonderful. So the way he sees it, if you're frightened of dying and holding on, you'll see devils tearing your life away. But if you've made your peace then the devils are really angels freeing you from the earth. It's just a matter of how you look at it, that's all. So don't worry, okay? Relax. Wiggle your toes. (JACOB'S toes dance as LOUIS gives a quick, unexpected jab to the lower vertebrae in his back. There is a loud scream) Perfect. We got it. (LOUIS pushes a lever and the table rises back up) Okay. Let's just give it a little try. See if you can stand.

JACOB

What? By myself?

LOUIS

You can do it. Come on. Easy. Just give it a try.

JACOB steps cautiously away from the table. He moves hesitantly, with deliberate restraint. LOUIS encourages him like a faith healer coaxing the lame. His first steps have an aura of the miraculous about them. JACOB walks slowly, without help. JEZZIE looks up from the WAITING ROOM and stares in amazement. LOUIS smiles impishly. He looks like a giant cherub.

LOUIS

Hallelujah.

JEZZIE goes to JACOB'S side. She reaches out to take his arm and offer her support. With a firm gesture he pulls away and continues walking on his own.

CUT TO JACOB lying on the floor of his BEDROOM doing exercises for his back. He has several days' growth of beard and does not look well. His mind is drifting and only the occasional pain in his back reminds him of what he is doing. JEZZIE can be heard vacuuming the carpet in the LIVINGROOM. Suddenly the door swings open. The wail of the vacuum cleaner causes JACOB to tense. His eyes drift down from the ceiling. JEZZIE vacuums around him and seems insensitive to his presence.

JEZZIE shoves the vacuum cleaner under the bed and hits something. JACOB tightens. She looks and is shocked to discover a can of gasoline and boxes of kitchen matches. It takes her a second to understand the implications of what she has found. JACOB is ready when she begins yelling.

JEZZIE

You're completely off your rocker, you know that? You'd think you fell on your head instead of your back. What are you planing to do, burn down the apartment along with your demons? (She begins to remove the gasoline can)

JACOB

(Yelling) Don't you touch it. (He glares at her)

JEZZIE lets go of the can and grabs the vacuum. She moves it furiously across the carpet. Suddenly JACOB sees her tongue darting in and out, unconsciously. She looks strange, not human. JACOB freezes. He yells out.

JACOB

Who are you? (The sound of the vacuum cleaner drowns out his voice. He yells again. JEZZIE sees him and turns off the machine. His voice booms out) Who the hell are you?

JEZZIE ignores the question and turns the vacuum cleaner back on. JACOB rolls over and pulls out the plug.

JACOB

Why won't you answer me?

JEZZIE

(Angry) Cause you know goddamn well who I am.

JACOB

I don't know you.

JEZZIE

You've lived with me for two years.

JACOB

That doesn't mean shit. Where do you come from, huh? And I don't mean Indiana.

JEZZIE

What do you want me to say? My mother's tummy?

JACOB

You know goddamn well what I mean.

JEZZIE

You're out of your fucking mind. I'm not gonna stand around here gettin' interrogated by you.

JACOB

Well leave then. Go to Hell.

JEZZIE

(Furious) You son-of-a-bitch. Who do you think you are? I don't deserve this. Who takes care of you day and night? Who cleans the floor and washes you goddamn underwear? Well, I've had it. You flip out on your own, you ungrateful bastard. I'm done holding your hand. I don't want anything to do with you, you hear? Nothing!

She storms out of the room, kicking the vacuum cleaner as she goes. JACOB can see flashes of her through the open crack of the bedroom door. Occasional curses and epithets hurl through the opening along with a flood of tears.

JACOB catches glimpses of her as she grabs her coat from the hall closet and as she pulls her money out of the desk drawer. He can see the lamp as she shoves it to the floor and hears it shatter as she stomps on it with her foot. There is a blur as she heads to the front door and a deafening bang as she leaves.

JACOB'S eyes drift up to the ceiling. They hardly blink. He stares at the plaster, chipping and cracking, above him. Suddenly the cracks begin to move. JACOB jumps up. A DEMON is materializing over his head. JACOB yells and grabs hold of the extension pole for the vacuum cleaner. With a furious cry he begins jamming it at the ceiling. Rather than blot out the evolving image his attack helps to define it. JACOB slams harder. Plaster and wood lathing cover the floor. The DEMON is gone. Panting hard, JACOB reaches for matches and the gasoline can. He stops and stares at them with great intensity.

CUT TO A SIREN blaring and a fire engine racing through the streets of lower MANHATTAN. A CROWD is forming. Banks of lights and television cameras amass in the cold night air. NEWS REPORTERS are gathering. Police cars and mobile units rush to the scene.

CUT TO JACOB. He is sitting on the ground in front of the U.S. ARMY HEADQUARTERS. He is soaking wet and shivering. The container of gasoline sits, half empty, at his side. He is holding a book of matches in his hand, poised and ready to strike. His eyes glare into the lights.

Television cameras and microphones are pointing in JACOB'S direction, but at a safe distance. He is yelling at them, his teeth chattering from the cold.

JACOB

Listen to me.

BYSTANDERS are yelling and taunting.

BYSTANDER

Light the match!

ONLOOKER
Do it already. We don't have all night.

BYSTANDER
I'll do it for you.

A police ambulance arrives at the scene. FIREMEN ready hoses at nearby hydrants.

JACOB
(Shouting) There were four companies in our battalion. Five hundred men. Seven of us were left when it was over. Seven! Four companies engaged in an enemy offensive that not one of us who survived can remember fighting. The army says we smoked bad dope, that it messed up our minds. But you don't forget a battle where five hundred men were killed. They did something to us.

MAC HAYES
(Speaking into a bullhorn) Tell them about the demons, Mr. Singer.

JACOB
Who said that?

HAYES
Mac Hayes, Mr. Singer. Channel 4 Evening News.

JACOB
So, I finally got your attention, huh, Mac? All it took was some gasoline and a match.

HAYES
Tell us about the demons.

JACOB
You're a slimy bastard!

REPORTERS
What demons? What's he mean?

JACOB
I don't know what they are. All I can tell you is that I see them. I don't know where they come from or how they got here, but they're among us.

REPORTER
What do demons have to do with the army?

JACOB
That's what I want to find out.
You guys have to help me.

HAYES

Isn't it true, Mr. Singer, that you and your buddies were mustered out of the service with psychiatric records?

JACOB

No, it's not true and you know it.

HAYES

And that you never spent one day in Viet Nam?

JACOB

We are victims of a conspiracy. Of course they'll deny us. They'll falsify records. They'll kill to protect themselves. But they won't get me.
(He holds up a match)

A loud speaker blares through the crowd.

VOICE

Put your matches away young man. Give yourself up. You're under arrest.

JACOB

For what? For seeking the truth?

VOICE

We have you surrounded. Please come quietly.

JACOB

You come near me and I light the match.

VOICE

We're not going to hurt you.

JACOB

Bullshit! I'm not moving from this spot til the army addresses this matter directly; until they admit their experiments and confess what they've done.

BYSTANDER

You'll be here til hell freezes over.

JACOB

I'll stay as long as it takes.

BYSTANDER

Come on baby, light the match.

VOICE

Okay, let's clear the area. Everyone out.

ONLOOKER

What do they look like, your demons?

VOICE

Clear the area!

BYSTANDER

Do they come from Hell?

REPORTER

Are you one of those doomsayers we keep hearing about? Is this the beginning of Armageddon?

VOICE

This is your last warning. Everyone out!

Suddenly a lighted match flies in JACOB'S direction. He dives to the ground. He can hear people laughing. The match dies in mid-air. PEOPLE on the fringe of the crowd scream and begin to run. Another match soars through the air and goes out.

VOICE

Clear the area immediately. This is an order!

A flaming match falls just short of JACOB.

ONLOOKER

(Panicked) He'll burn us all!

The CROWD scatters instantly. JACOB is lost in the ensuing confusion. Laughter and screams fill the air as bodies scramble to escape the potential conflagration. The television cameras capture it all.

Suddenly a match hits the gasoline can and a huge explosion rocks the street. Flames are flying through the air. Water hoses are trying to douse them as quickly as they spread. Bodies are running in all directions. Viewed through the flames the scene momentarily resembles a vision of Hell.

JACOB runs and crawls past the fleeing crowd. Some of the people recognize him and start to give chase. Seemingly out of nowhere a YOUNG MAN appears beckoning JACOB toward him. We have seen him before. He is the man whose yell saved JACOB from the red car on the Brooklyn street and who pulled JACOB away from PAUL'S exploding car. The YOUNG MAN motions JACOB toward a garbage dumpster parked in an alley. He holds open the large metal flap and directs JACOB to jump in. JACOB sees the people approaching and does not hesitate. He hurries up the alley and scrambles into the dumpster. As the YOUNG MAN lowers the flap JACOB catches his eyes. He realizes that they have met before.

JACOB

Who are you?

YOUNG MAN

Shh! Keep quiet.

The YOUNG MAN begins to run. The crowd sees him and pursues him down the alley. He is fast, however, and disappears quickly, almost as if he'd vanished into the night. The angry crowd stops and searches the alley staring dumbfounded into the darkness.

JACOB huddles in a corner of the dumpster, surrounded by waste and refuse. He listens tensely as the crowd disperses. Finally all is quiet. He is amazed to find that he is still holding the book of matches. He stares at them as though confronting his life and his death. Suddenly he hurls them against the dumpster wall and begins to cry.

JACOB sneaks into the ENTRANCE of his APARTMENT COMPLEX. He is cautious and afraid. He moves quickly to the doorbell listings and slips his name out of its holder.

CUT TO JACOB getting off the elevator one floor above his own and walking down a flight. He peers out the window and sees no one in the halls. He opens the door a crack and confirms that no one is there. Running rapidly down the CORRIDOR he hurries to his apartment door and unlocks it. He rushes inside and locks the door behind him.

JACOB dashes to the BATHROOM, pulling off his gasoline drenched clothes and dropping them on the floor. He turns on the water in the shower and lets it warm up. Grabbing a suitcase from the BEDROOM closet he begins stuffing it with clothes. He hurries back to the shower and reaches in to test it. He jumps in.

Lather covers JACOB'S hair and hangs over his tightly closed eyes. His entire body is covered in suds. He is washing as quickly as he can. Suddenly he hears a noise as someone enters the BATHROOM. He tenses.

JACOB

Who's there? Who is it?

JACOB struggles to rinse the soap from his eyes. They are burning. There is a shadow behind the curtain.

JACOB

Goddamn it! Who's there?

The soap is still running down his forehead and he cannot see. Suddenly the shower curtain is thrown back. JACOB, fighting to see, backs against the wall. A hand reaches in and pulls his nipple, pinching hard.

JEZZIE
(Stepping into the tub) It's just me.

JACOB
Jezzie?

JEZZIE
Who else were you expecting?

JACOB
Goddamn you! Let go!

JEZZIE
Come on Jake. I'm sorry I left like that.
I apologize.

JACOB
What the hell do you think you're doing?

JEZZIE
You know I could never resist you in the shower.
JEZZIE'S charms are powerful and seductive. JACOB is
tempted but he fights his own arousal.

JACOB
Goddamn it! (He charges, dripping wet, out
of the shower)

JEZZIE
(Staring at him) What did you do that for?

JACOB
Stay away from me Jezzie.

JEZZIE
Look Jake. I said I was sorry. (She looks at
him with sudden pity) Hey, come on. I love you.

CUT TO JACOB dressing and piling the last of his clothes
into his suitcase. JEZZIE is standing, watching him.

JEZZIE
What is going on? Why are you doing this to me?
You can't just leave like that. What about your job?

JACOB
I doubt if I still have a job.

JEZZIE
What are you talking about?

JACOB
Watch the News tonight. Channel 4. (She stares at
him with confusion. The phone rings) Don't!

JEZZIE

It might be for me.

JACOB

I'm not here. You haven't seen me.

JEZZIE

(Picking up the receiver) Hello. (She pauses, looking at JACOB) No. He's not here. I haven't seen him all night. (Pause) I don't know when. (Pause) What? Tell him what? (JACOB looks up. She turns to him, covers the phone, and whispers) He says he was in Viet Nam. (JACOB'S eyes widen) He knows about the experiments.

JACOB

(Lunging for the phone) Let me. Hello. This is Jacob Singer. (He listens with growing fascination) God almighty! (Pause) Yes. Yes. Right. Where would you like to meet? (He listens) How will I know you? (JACOB seems momentarily uncomfortable) Okay. I'll be there. (He hangs up the phone and stands silently for a moment)

JEZZIE

Who was that?

JACOB

A chemist. Part of a chemical warfare unit out of Saigon. Top secret. He said he knows me and that I'll know him when I see him.

JEZZIE

How?

JACOB

I have no idea. (He thinks) I was right. There were experiments. I knew it. I knew it. My God.

JEZZIE

How do you know he's telling the truth?

JACOB stares at JEZZIE for a several moments but does not respond. He takes his suitcase and walks to the front door. He opens it a crack and peers into the hallway.

JEZZIE

(Pleading) Don't go Jake.

JACOB gazes at JEZZIE for a moment and then hurries down the HALL. He stops at the stairwell and looks back. JEZZIE is still standing there like a lost child, frightened and vulnerable. He hesitates and then walks back and hugs her gently. She begins to cry.

JACOB

I'll call you, Jez. (He turns and disappears quickly down the stairwell)

CUT TO JACOB standing uncomfortably under the WESTSIDE HIGHWAY. GROUPS OF MEN in black leather jackets are cruising the area and look at JACOB with curiosity. One MAN in particular cruises by several times and then approaches him.

MICHAEL

Jacob? Hi. I'm Michael Newman. Friends call me Mike.

JACOB is startled when he sees him. He is the same YOUNG MAN who has appeared throughout the film, assisting JACOB in moments of crisis.

MICHAEL

Surprised, huh? I told you you'd know me. I've been tracking you for a long time. I just wish I'd spoken to you before tonight.

JACOB

I don't get it. Who are you? Why have you been following me?

MICHAEL

Observation, mainly. Clinical study.

JACOB

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

You were one of the survivors. (He looks coolly at JACOB) I always suspected the longevity of the compounds. I warned them about it. But I never expected such a powerful resurgence, especially after so many years. Still, I felt I had an obligation, personally, scientifically, to keep on top of you guys.

JACOB

You've been watching us?

MICHAEL

On and off. I could never do it full time. I gotta work too, you know. When Paul died I realized the scope of the thing. Scared the hell out of me. I knew they meant business. I just wish I'd talked to you earlier, that's all. Now with this news coverage, God knows what'll happen. Come on, let's get outta here. We need to talk.

CUT TO THE TWO MEN sitting on a deserted WEST SIDE PIER that juts into the Hudson River. JACOB is wide-eyed as he listens to MICHAEL'S story.

MICHAEL

So, first I'm arrested, right? Best LSD I ever made, right down the drain. It's two a.m. and the Director of the whole Lab is standing there with half the cops in the precinct. I figure this is it, twenty years, if I'm lucky. That was '68.

JACOB

Long time ago.

MICHAEL

Next thing I know I'm on Rikers Island. Ever been there? (JACOB shakes his head) Suddenly they take me from my cell to the visitors' room, with those bank teller windows, you know? Four army brass, medals up their asses, are standin' on the other side. They tell me if I'll come to Viet Nam for two years, no action mind you, just work in a lab, they'll drop all the charges and wipe the record clean. Well, I'd only been in jail for thirteen hours and I already knew that Nam couldn't be any worse.

JACOB

Shows how much you knew.

MICHAEL

No shit. It was blackmail. They had me by the balls. Anyway, I ended up in Saigon a week later working in a top secret lab synthesizing mind altering drugs. Not the street stuff. They had us isolating special properties. The dark side, you know? They wanted a drug that increased aggressive tendencies.

JACOB

Yeah, sure. We were losing the war.

MICHAEL

(Nodding "yes") They were worried. They figured you guys were too soft, not fighting up to your potential. They wanted something to stir you up, make you mad, you know? Tap into your anger. And we did it. The most powerful thing I ever saw. Even a bad trip, and I had my share, never compared to the fury the ladder unleashed.

JACOB

The ladder?

MICHAEL

That's what they called it. A fast trip straight down the ladder. (He makes a downward dive with his hand) Right to the primal fear, the base anger. I'm tellin' you it was powerful stuff. But then, I don't need to tell you. You know.

JACOB can barely catch his breath, the information he is receiving is so powerful to his mind.

MICHAEL

You okay?

JACOB

Yeah.

MICHAEL

We did experiments on jungle monkeys. It worked. They bashed each other's heads in, chewed off their tails, gouged out their eyes. The brass loved it. Then they made us try it on Charlie. (He pauses) Poor bastards. They took about twenty of 'em, POW'S, just kids really, and put 'em in a courtyard. We fed 'em huge doses of the stuff. They were worse than the monkeys. I never saw anything like it. I didn't know men could do those things. (He stops for a moment. A tear is rolling down his cheek) The whole thing still blows me away.

MICHAEL stands up and begins walking in circles around the PIER. JACOB gets up and walks beside him.

MICHAEL

Anyway, this big offensive was coming up. Everyone knew it; Time magazine, Huntley-Brinkley. And the brass was scared cause they knew we couldn't win. Morale was down. It was gettin' ugly in the States. Hell, you remember.

JACOB

Like it was yesterday.

MICHAEL

That's when the powers that be decided to use the ladder. Just infinitesimal doses on one test battalion. Yours. They wanted to prove its effectiveness in the field. They were sure your unit would have the highest kill ration in the whole goddamn offensive. And you did too. But not the way they thought.

JACOB is beginning to shake. MICHAEL notices.

MICHAEL

Hey, listen, you want something to calm you down?

JACOB

(Suspiciously) No. Thank you.

MICHAEL

(Reaching into his pocket and pulling out a container of pills) Take one.

JACOB

No thanks. I don't like to take . . .

MICHAEL

(Feeling the lack of trust) I made it myself.
Trust me.

He hands JACOB the pill. JACOB holds it for a moment, nervously. In a sudden act of faith he pops it into his mouth and downs it with a gulp. MICHAEL smiles. They walk quietly for a moment and JACOB opens up.

JACOB

You know, none of us can remember that night. Like it's obliterated from our memories. I get flashes of it all the time but they don't make sense. I can't put it together. They had us seeing shrinks for years. But nothing they did could ever touch it. What happened? Was there ever an offensive?

MICHAEL

Yeah, sure. A couple of days later. It was fierce. You guys never saw it.

JACOB

But there was an attack. I can still see them coming. There was a fight . . . wasn't there?

MICHAEL

Yeah, the worst. But not with the Cong.

JACOB

Who then?

MICHAEL

(He hesitates, obviously uncomfortable. His eyes grow puffy. He looks at the river for a moment and then turns to JACOB) You killed each other. (JACOB'S mouth drops open) It was brother against brother. No discrimination. You tore each other to pieces. I knew it would happen. I warned them. I WARNED THEM. But I was just a hippie chemist, right? Jesus! And I helped 'em make the stuff.

Tears start flowing down MICHAEL'S face. He wipes them with his sleeve. It takes him a moment to regain his composure. JACOB is shivering. MICHAEL leads him to the wooden planks overhanging the water. They sit and gaze at the JERSEY SHORE.

MICHAEL

I talked to the guys who bagged the bodies. They're in worse shape than you, believe me. They saw what was left. It's a blessing you don't remember.

MICHAEL (CONT)

Of course the brass covered the whole thing up right away. Blamed the entire debacle on a surprise attack. Needless to say they kept a pretty tight watch on you guys, put you under observation, buried your records. I had a hell of a time gettin' hold of 'em. But I did it. Took me two years. (He looks at JACOB) I needed to find you. I felt responsible, you know? The ladder was my baby.

JACOB

If you knew, why the hell didn't you say anything?

MICHAEL

(Pausing) The truth can kill, my friend. Five hundred men died out there. This isn't a story they'd ever want out. Not good for appropriations. Besides, I'd seen your records. I knew you didn't remember that night. I figured I was doin' you a favor leavin' it that way.

JACOB

Then why tell me now?

MICHAEL

Because I can still help. I knew if the ladder ever opened up again I could step in right away. But I didn't realize it was happening until it was too late. I suspected something that time you and Paul got together. I followed you to that bar. I sat in the next booth. Paul was smart to put the juke box on. I couldn't hear a thing. Still, I had a feeling it was time to talk to you. I even followed you out to the car. (He pauses)

JACOB

You saved my life.

MICHAEL

(Nodding humbly) In a way. Only it's like something else is operating here, like a sixth sense. I mean, what made me turn on the T.V. tonight just when you pop on the screen? What made me follow you out to that bar? I don't know. You must lead a charmed life. Just the fact that you haven't died from the effects of the ladder. It's amazing. Something about you I don't understand. I can't imagine anyone could tolerate it so long. God knows what it's done to your chemistry, your chromosomes.

JACOB

It's opened the doors to Hell. That's what it's done. All seven of us . . . the same thing. Jerry, George. Doug . . . we're all having the . . .

MICHAEL freezes, a look of horror on his face.

JACOB

What's the matter?

MICHAEL

You don't know?

JACOB

Know what?

MICHAEL

About the others? It was in the papers, just last week. I figured that's why you . . . tonight.

JACOB

I was in the hospital. I haven't heard a thing. Tell me.

MICHAEL

(Finding it hard to speak) They're dead, Jacob. Like Paul. An explosion in Frank's apartment. They were all there. (JACOB starts shaking. MICHAEL pulls another pill from his pocket and forces it into JACOB'S mouth) Come on, swallow it. (JACOB swallows it quickly) That'll help. (JACOB begins to relax) I'm sorry.

JACOB

You shouldn't have come. Don't you see? It's dangerous to be with me.

MICHAEL

I needed to help you.

JACOB

How? Will you come with me to the authorities? Will you tell your story? We could nail them, Mike. With you I have proof.

MICHAEL

(Nervous) No. You have no proof. You've never met me. You never heard a word. Promise. I'll deny it all if it ever gets out. Every word of it. This is a humanitarian gesture. That's all it is.

JACOB

Then how can you help?

MICHAEL

I can get rid of the demons. For whatever it's worth under the circumstances. I can ease your suffering. I can block the ladder. I have an antidote. We can kill them off, chemically speaking.

JACOB

(Staring at MICHAEL) What the hell do you mean? They're not in my head. I see them.

MICHAEL

They'll all disappear. It's chemistry my friend. I know. I created it.

JACOB

No. You're wrong. You've unleashed something bigger than you know. It's beyond chemistry. You've opened a terrible door.

MICHAEL

I can close it. (He reveals a vial in his coat pocket) Come on. Let's go somewhere else.

JACOB

It won't work. (MICHAEL looks at him imploringly) Look, what if I take it and nothing happens? What if they're still there? What are you going to say then?

MICHAEL

Then we have a problem of a whole different magnitude.

JACOB

Well, I'll tell you honestly. I think that's what we have.

CUT TO JACOB and MICHAEL leaving the PIER and walking along the HUDSON RIVER beneath the HIGHWAY. They are not aware of the dark car following from the distance.

The TWO MEN enter a sleazy HOTEL near the docks, obviously frequented by a gay clientele. JACOB is uncomfortable as they check in. MICHAEL, however, seems to know the ropes. They go to a small ROOM with a swayback bed, an old chair held together with orange tape, and one lamp with an old lace shade. Daylight is just breaking and casting a yellow glow on the JERSEY SHORELINE. JACOB pushes aside some old cotton curtains and admires the view.

JACOB

(Turning to MICHAEL) Looks like this place gets a lot of use.

MICHAEL

You can say that again. Even the floor boards squeak.

JACOB

You come here often?

MICHAEL

Sometimes. When it's convenient.

JACOB

How do I know this isn't just some kind of, you know, a seduction or something?

MICHAEL

Hey, I'm not the problem. You've got bigger problems than me. We came here cause it's in the neighborhood and no one's gonna be looking for you here. Don't worry about my motives, okay? I haven't let you down yet.

MICHAEL turns away from JACOB, upset. JACOB comes over to him and puts his hand on his shoulder. MICHAEL turns back to JACOB and pats him on the neck. Then he reaches into his pocket and casually extracts the vial.

MICHAEL

I came up with the formula back in Nam but never got a chance to use it.

JACOB

(Concerned) Never?

MICHAEL

I'd hoped I'd never have to. Believe me, it works. It's got an inhibitor that dampens the downward thrust of the ladder and opens an upper range. It'll turn your whole head around.

JACOB

You take it orally?

MICHAEL

Just open your mouth and stick out your tongue.

JACOB

How long will it take?

MICHAEL

Pretty quick. Couple of minutes to start. Shouldn't last more than an hour or two.

JACOB

What is it? An hallucinogen?

MICHAEL

A mild one. It'll free your head. Come on. Just open your mouth.

JACOB

(Fearful) I don't know.

MICHAEL

"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil," but no one ever said I wouldn't be shittin' in my pants every step of the way, huh? (JACOB smiles, his mouth open) Stick out your tongue. (JACOB obeys as an eyedropper deposits a single drop of liquid. It rolls to the back of his mouth) Thata boy. Now why don't you just lie down on that grungy bed and relax.

JACOB

One drop?

MICHAEL

It's strong stuff.

JACOB stretches out on the bed. He stares up at the ceiling and examines its pock-marked lunar look. Long cracks and shallow craters erode the surface. It is an alien terrain.

JACOB

I think I'm falling asleep.

MICHAEL

(Sounding far away) Pleasant dreams.

The words send a jolt through JACOB'S body. He tries to get up but can't.

JACOB

(Frightened) I can't move. Help me.

MICHAEL

Just relax.

JACOB

What's happening?

The ceiling begins to rumble. Cracks split wide open. Huge crevasses tear through the plaster. JACOB'S world is crumbling. He stares in horror as DEMONIC FORMS attempt to surge through the rupture above him. Piercing eyes and sharp teeth glimmer in the darkness. Hooved feet and pointed claws clamour to break through.

JACOB

HELP ME!

Instantly MICHAEL appears standing over him. He is holding the vial with the antidote. He draws an eyedropper full of the fluid and holds it over JACOB'S mouth.

MICHAEL

Take it!

JACOB fights him but MICHAEL forces the entire contents of the eyedropper down his throat. JACOB gags. He tries to spit it out, but can't.

Suddenly the ceiling erupts in violent clashes as whole chunks break off and collide with one another like continental plates. The collisions wreak havoc on the DEMONS, chopping and dismembering them. Body parts fall from the ceiling like a Devil's rain. Horrible screams echo from the other side.

Flashes of light and dark storm over JACOB'S head, thundering like a war in the heavens. It is a scene of raw power and growing catastrophe. It builds in fury and rage until suddenly the ceiling explodes.

Matter atomizes instantly. Trillions of particles hurl chaotically in all directions. The walls shatter into a dazzling brightness. For a moment there is a sense of intense forward movement, a rush toward oblivion. And then, suddenly, it stops. There is absolute quiet and stillness.

JACOB'S eyes stare into the formlessness sparkling around him. All space has become a shining void. Gradually faint pastel colors appear like colored molecules, dancing and spinning, redirecting space into new formations. They weave patterns of intricate complexity and stunning beauty.

As the colors grow brighter and more vivid their abstraction gives way to solid form. A GARDEN SCENE emerges. It is a GARDEN OF LIGHT, a vast, almost mythic, Rousseau paradise. It radiates an intense shimmering light.

JACOB'S eyes are captivated by the vision before him. A sudden movement catches his attention. He looks up and notices MICHAEL still standing beside him. MICHAEL, however, is rapidly changing form. It is a full, plastic, three-dimensional metamorphosis. His very flesh seems to expand and glow with its own inner light. His face shines and radiates an almost transcendental beauty.

JACOB is nearly blinded by MICHAEL'S presence and must shield his eyes to look at him. MICHAEL smiles an extraordinary and joyous smile that radiates such intense luminosity that JACOB has to squint to see it.

Suddenly MICHAEL steps off the ground. He rises into the air and floats above JACOB. JACOB can barely breathe as he watches him. MICHAEL rises into a sky filled with orbs and blazing lights. The lights shine on JACOB'S head. He effervesces and shimmers in their glow.

One of the orbs sends a burst of light exploding over JACOB. So intense is the light that JACOB grabs his eyes. As he opens them again he sees that the GARDEN is fading back into pure light. MICHAEL, too, is fading.

Another burst of light and the GARDEN is reabsorbed by the void. Only the brightness remains. It is many seconds before we realize that the HOTEL ROOM is coming together, reconstructed by the light. In moments it is fully formed. Sunlight is pouring through the window. MICHAEL is sleeping lightly in the chair. He hears JACOB stir and sits up.

JACOB is sitting on the bed. He does not seem to know where he is. His eyes are filled with awe. They move slowly around the room, taking everything in. He doesn't speak. MICHAEL gets up and sits beside him. He respects his silence.

CUT TO JACOB AND MICHAEL walking through the STREETS OF GREENWICH VILLAGE. It is early MORNING and the sidewalks are bustling with PEOPLE on their way to work. CHILDREN are playing and enjoying their Christmas vacation. JACOB stares into their faces and beams when they smile back at him. MICHAEL enjoys JACOB'S happiness.

CUT TO THE TWO MEN sitting around the FOUNTAIN in WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK. The expansiveness of the setting mirrors JACOB'S openness and sense of joy. He delights in everything around him, CHILDREN on their bikes, a MAN juggling snowballs, and the huge Christmas tree underneath the arch. It is a while before MICHAEL speaks.

MICHAEL

So, how you doin'? (JACOB laughs) It was better than you expected, huh?

JACOB

Are you kidding?

MICHAEL

And no more demons. I told you they'd be gone.

JACOB

It's like a miracle.

MICHAEL

Better living through chemistry, that's my motto.

JACOB

It was paradise, Michael. The Garden of Eden. You showed it to me. You were there, with me.

MICHAEL

Well that's good to know.

JACOB

Mike, it was real. It was glorious.

MICHAEL

Glorious. I'm not surprised. I fed you enough of that stuff to send a horse to heaven. I'm just glad you came back.

JACOB

I would have stayed there if I could.

MICHAEL

I'm sure. You've got nothing but troubles waitin' for you here. (He points to a POLICEMAN standing on the far side of the SQUARE) You gotta make some serious decisions. I'd invite you back to my place but I don't think it's safe. Do you know anybody out of town? Is there anywhere you can go? (JACOB nods his head "no") Well at least go to a hotel for a few days to think things out. But don't use your own name. The New York Police are very effective when they want to be.

JACOB

(Coming down to earth) What should I do? I don't have any money.

MICHAEL

No problem. I've got every credit card ever issued.

He takes JACOB by the arm and begins walking. They pass underneath the arch and head up FIFTH AVENUE. Suddenly MICHAEL pulls JACOB and faces him toward a store window. A police car can be seen passing in the reflection. They wait for it to turn a corner and then continue walking.

The TWO MEN stop in front of the FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL. Reaching into his wallet, MICHAEL pulls out a huge stack of credit cards and hands one to JACOB.

MICHAEL

Here. Take this one. You check in here. It's a nice place. Spend a few days. It's on me.

JACOB

No. I couldn't.

MICHAEL

What? You want the Plaza? Don't be foolish. Here. Take it. And take this too. (He pulls a business card out of his coat) This is my home address down on Prince Street. It's got my phone, everything. Call if you need me . . . but you won't. Everything's gonna work out. You just get outta town as fast as you can. Don't take any chances. They're pretty angry, you know. Listen, I better split. (He smiles)

JACOB

I don't know what to say.

MICHAEL

Save the words. (He smiles) Just send back my credit card.

MICHAEL laughs and hugs JACOB, kisses him on the cheek, and walks away.

CUT TO JACOB in a lovely HOTEL ROOM overlooking WASHINGTON SQUARE. He is sprawled out happily on the bed when there is a knock at the door. He jumps up and opens it. JEZZIE is standing there. She looks at JACOB quizzically. He smiles and takes her in his arms, swinging her into the room.

JEZZIE

Hey, I left the luggage in the hall.

JACOB

I'll get it in a minute.

JEZZIE

What are you doing here? Are you all right? How do you expect to pay for this? (JACOB smiles) Everyone's looking for you, Jake. I dodged people all over the place to get here, reporters, police. I don't know what you're gonna do.

JACOB

I'm gonna make love to you. That's what I'm gonna do.

JEZZIE

Are you out of your mind?

JACOB

Yep. Finally.

JEZZIE

What does that mean?

JACOB

I love you Jez. That's what it means.

JEZZIE

God, I can't keep up with all your changes.

JACOB

Me neither.

JEZZIE

What's gotten into you? (JACOB smiles)

CUT TO JACOB and JEZZIE lying in bed gently caressing one another. For all his ardor JACOB is exhausted from the events of the preceding day. While stroking JEZZIE'S hair he falls asleep. JEZZIE covers him with a sheet.

DISSOLVE TO JACOB and JEZZIE romping in the SHOWER. Their nude bodies are sensual behind the sliding glass doors.

DISSOLVE TO JACOB and JEZZIE in bed making love.

DISSOLVE TO JACOB and JEZZIE lying in front of the T.V. watching a romantic movie. JEZZIE snuggles up to JACOB.

JEZZIE

It's amazing, you know, that a drug could change things like that, destroy a life and then give it back. It's hard to believe that the world could be so hellish one day and like heaven the next.

JACOB

I tell you, it was like Sunday School rushing back at me. I felt like a little boy. Adam and Eve, the Ten Commandments. I saw Paradise, Jezzie.

JEZZIE

It's so hard to believe.

There is a knock at the door. JACOB throws on a bathrobe. JEZZIE jumps under the sheets.

JACOB

Who's there?

BELLBOY (V.O.)

It's your dinner, Sir.

JEZZIE'S eyes brighten. JACOB opens the door. A BELLBOY wheels in a table set for dinner. He sets it in the corner of the room. JACOB tips him and he leaves. JEZZIE jumps out of bed, runs to the table, sniffs at the food, and squeals excitedly.

JEZZIE

This is one of my dreams, Jake. Since I was a little girl. I never thought it would happen.

JACOB

Stick with me kid. (JEZZIE smiles)

DISSOLVE to JACOB and JEZZIE sitting next to a large window overlooking FIFTH AVENUE. They are sipping champagne.

JEZZIE

I want to go with you, Jake. Wherever you go.

JACOB

It's not practical, Jez. It'll be hard enough alone.

JEZZIE
I can waitress. I'm good.

JACOB
No. Things are too hot. Later. I'll send
for you.

JEZZIE
Bullshit!

JACOB
I promise.

JEZZIE
Please.

JACOB
No. I'm a marked man, Jez. I'm the only one
still left. I don't want to expose you to that.
It's not right for you or me. Be reasonable.

JEZZIE
(Pouting, she turns to look out the window)
When will you go? Tomorrow?

JACOB
Soon.

JEZZIE
(She sits pensively in her chair. JACOB leans
over and stares at her questioningly) What are
you looking at me like that for?

JACOB
I just can't believe it, that's all.

JEZZIE
Believe what?

JACOB
That you're not yelling and screaming and
throwing things. It's not like you.

JEZZIE
Oh, come on.

JACOB
I'm amazed. Are you feeling all right?

JEZZIE
Stop it, Jake.

JACOB
You got something up your sleeve?

JEZZIE
Shut up. You're gettin' me angry.

JACOB

Thata girl.

JEZZIE

You wanna see me get really angry? (His eyes
twinkle suggestively) Try leavin' without me.

JEZZIE smiles. JACOB doesn't.

CUT TO JACOB heading WEST on 42ND STREET. His walk is light and bouncy. PEOPLE on the street seem cheerful, still filled with Christmas spirit. He stops to browse and look at the movie stills in front of one of the 42nd Street theatres. He buys himself a bag of cashew nuts. He seems genuinely happy.

CUT TO JACOB entering the huge GREYHOUND BUS STATION on the corner of 9TH AVENUE. He checks out all the PEOPLE around him. Not a DEMON in sight. JACOB hurries to the TICKET WINDOW and gets in line. The TICKET SELLER looks up at him.

JACOB

Tucson. One way. For tomorrow.

SELLER

How many?

JACOB

(Hesitating) One.

SELLER

(Stamping out the ticket) That'll be \$119.75.

JACOB pulls out MICHAEL'S credit card. The SELLER rings it up. While he is waiting JACOB notices a POLICEMAN looking at him. The stare unsettles him. The SELLER hands JACOB his ticket. He takes it and hurries into the CROWD. Looking back he notices that the POLICEMAN is following him.

CUT TO JACOB entering the MEN'S ROOM. He hurries into one of the stalls, drops his pants, and sits. He eyes the graffiti on the walls and then notices a hole, the size of a half dollar, cut out of the partition between him and the next stall. He glances at it curiously and leans forward to examine it. He is shocked to see an eye staring back at him.

JACOB

Goddamn it! (He covers it with his hand. A pencil jabs his palm. He yells) Fucking fairy.

Two lips form around the hole. A tongue wags obscenely. JACOB is about to shove his pen into it when the mouth speaks.

VOICE

Dream on!

JACOB

(Shocked) What?!

The mouth is gone. JACOB hears the stall door fly open and feet running from the room. He jumps up and grabs his pants. He dashes out of the MEN'S ROOM. He hears footsteps and chases after them. JACOB bursts into the MAIN LOBBY. Heads turn to look at him as he nearly crashes into a PASSER-BY. He scans the vast space inside the terminal. He has lost him.

CUT TO JACOB as he enters the HOTEL ROOM. JEZZIE is already there watching the evening news. She is still in her postal uniform, lying on the bed. She taps the mattress, inviting JACOB to lie next to her. A WOMAN is crying to a REPORTER on the T.V.

WOMAN

It's been four days. No word. Nothing. It's not like him. He's never done anything like this before. It's like he just disappeared from the face of the earth.

REPORTER

The Bureau of Missing Persons is confounded by the continuing surge of reports . . .

JACOB snaps off the T.V.

JEZZIE

What'd you do that for? It's an interesting story. All these people are still disappearing. Right off the street. (Staring at JACOB) Hey, what's wrong? Are you all right?

JACOB

I'm okay. I just don't want to listen.

JEZZIE

You look upset.

JACOB

(Angry) I'm not upset.

JEZZIE

Jake, what is it?

JACOB

I'm tired.

JEZZIE

You look terrible. What happened? (He turns away. She stares at him for a moment, concerned) Jake . . . is it the antidote?

JACOB
Goddamn it. Why do you say that?

JEZZIE
Look at yourself. You look like
you've seen a ghost.

JACOB
Shit! Can't I just have a hard day?

JEZZIE
You can have anything you want.

JACOB
Then don't bug me.

JEZZIE
I'm not bugging you. Come and lie down.
I'll give you a massage. (She taps the
mattress again and JACOB joins her. She
unbuttons his shirt) Where'd you go today?

JACOB
(Evasively) Mid-town mostly.

JEZZIE
Oh yeah? What was happenin' there?

JACOB
(Looking away from her) I picked up my
ticket. (He pauses) I'm leaving in the
morning, Jez.

JEZZIE
(Tensing) Oh? (Acting innocent) Where
you going?

JACOB
(Nervously) West.

JEZZIE
(Growing angry) Where West? New Jersey?

JACOB
Don't be funny.

JEZZIE
I always liked the West, west of Indiana
anyway. But you gotta give me time to pack.

JACOB
Stop it, Jez. Don't do that.

JEZZIE
Do what? I haven't done a thing.

JACOB

Don't play games with me. There's nothing more to say.

There is a quiet rage building in JEZZIE'S eyes as she continues to stroke JACOB'S chest. He tries to relax and give himself over to the movement of her hand. Silently she leans over and begins licking his stomach. JACOB'S eyes close. His stomach hardens. He reaches back and adjusts the pillow beneath his head. Slowly, JEZZIE works her way back up to his chest. Her tongue darts in and out suggestively. Her eyes are burning with anger. Her mouth poises itself over his nipple. She toys with it for a few seconds and then chomps down hard. The bite draws blood.

JACOB screams. His eyes shoot open. For the flash of an instant he sees a DEMON hovering over him, a hideous horned creature licking his blood. JACOB flies off the bed as the creature hurls to the floor. JACOB is ready to pounce on it when he sees that it is JEZZIE lying at his feet. His head begins reeling. He backs away from the bed, not taking his eyes off JEZZIE for a second. He backs to the closet and grabs his coat.

JEZZIE

Jake. What are you doing? Look, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bite. Let me get you a towel.

JACOB grabs his wallet and his glasses. He backs toward the door.

JEZZIE

Jake, don't. You can't leave. You're not seeing things clearly. The drug's wearing off.

She stands up and begins to approach him. JACOB lifts up a desk chair and holds it in front of him. Blood is running down his chest.

JEZZIE

Jake, don't leave me!

JACOB throws the chair at the floor, opens the door, and hurries into the HALLWAY. JEZZIE scurries around the chair and runs to the door. She yells after him, but he is already gone.

CUT TO JACOB running out of the HOTEL. He does not stop running. He heads down FIFTH AVENUE toward WASHINGTON SQUARE. He passes beneath the lights of the Christmas tree and speeds through the park. Throngs of PEOPLE are still coming home from work. They glare at him as he rushes by. JACOB speeds through the dark cold night heading down Thompson Street toward SOHO.

As JACOB runs the STREETS OF NEW YORK seem to lose their identity. Slowly they are transformed into the byways of a darker world. Blasts of steam shoot out of sewers and hot fumes belch from the backs of cars. Demonic eyes peer out of busses and store windows. Creatures straight from a Bosch painting emerge from subways and move along the sidewalks. JACOB runs like a man possessed, charging through the horror around him. Suddenly he stops and digs into his pocket. He stares for a moment at MICHAEL'S card and then shoves it back into his coat.

CUT TO JACOB running up the stairs in a SOHO LOFT BUILDING. It is a dingy, industrial staircase, poorly lit. He reaches a door with MICHAEL'S name painted on it in large black letters. He knocks loudly. There is no answer. He pounds on it. Another door opens on the floor above. A head sticks out.

MAN

You looking for Mike?

JACOB

(Panting hard) Where is he?

MAN

I don't know. He hasn't picked up his mail in days. There's a whole pile. It's not like him.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Coming from inside the MAN'S APARTMENT)
He's probably got a new boyfriend.

MAN

I called his lab a couple of days ago.
He hasn't been there either. If you want
to leave a message . . .

JACOB has a frenzied look in his eyes. He searches around the staircase and sees a pile of lumber stacked in a corner. He grabs a two-by-four and lunges at the door.

MAN

What the hell are you doing?

JACOB doesn't answer. He smashes wildly at the door until the lock flies open.

JACOB charges into the dark space groping for a light. He finds it. The LOFT is a disaster area. Nothing is standing. JACOB runs from room to room. In the back he discovers a large private chemistry lab. Glass vials and bottles are shattered on the floor.

JACOB rifles through the cabinets, recklessly searching. A few bottles are intact but their labels mean nothing to him. He reaches for one cabinet and notices a reddish liquid oozing out from the bottom. He opens it. MICHAEL'S severed head stares him in the face. It is smiling.

A scream rings out as the MAN from upstairs sees what JACOB has seen. JACOB jumps back, trips, and falls over MICHAEL'S headless body. It is lying sprawled across the floor.

MAN

(In quiet horror) Oh my God!

JACOB stumbles to pull himself up. He is in a state of unrelieved panic. He runs past the MAN and spills out the door. He takes two stairs and three stairs at a time, nearly flying to the street. He rushes into the icy air and runs wildly down the sidewalk as fast as his legs will move.

Suddenly JACOB charges into the side of a building. Over and over again he hurls himself against it. He grabs for the bricks. His fingers insert themselves into the crevices. It is as though he is trying to merge with the wall. After a series of bloody assaults he stops, turns around, and slides to the pavement. He sits there panting like a dog, staring up at the streetlight. The light grows brighter for a moment and fills the screen.

A DOCTOR'S head, wearing a surgical mask, blocks out the light. He speaks quickly.

DOCTOR

Give me the forceps. Hurry up, damn it.
How's his heart?

ATTENDANT (V.O.)

Not good.

The DOCTOR'S head backs out of the frame. The light is blinding. Suddenly MICHAEL'S smiling face appears. He looks directly at JACOB.

MICHAEL

You are all right.

CUT TO JACOB, startled. He looks again, only this time it is another face looking at him, another MAN.

MAN

Are you all right? (JACOB doesn't answer)
Do you need help?

JACOB just stares at him. The MAN shrugs his shoulders and continues walking down the street. JACOB follows him with his eyes until he rounds the corner. The street is suddenly empty and dark. JACOB seems terribly lost, on the verge of total despair.

CUT TO JACOB walking aimlessly down long SOHO STREETS. Out of nowhere a taxi appears, its lights the only sign of life and warmth in the dark night. JACOB steps into its path. It is hard to tell if he is trying to stop the cab or waiting to be hit. The taxi screeches to a halt. JACOB stares at it a moment and then steps to get in. The DRIVER tries to pull off but JACOB yanks at the door and drags himself inside.

JACOB
(Barely audible) I'm going to Brooklyn.

DRIVER
Sorry, Mac. Not with me you're not.

JACOB
What are you talking about?

DRIVER
I get lost in Brooklyn.

JACOB
I know the way. (The DRIVER shakes his head defiantly. JACOB reaches into his pants and pulls out a twenty dollar bill. He hands it to him) Look, this is all the money I've got in the world. You take me home and it's yours.

DRIVER
(Taking the twenty) Okay, Mac. Where's your home?

JACOB
Well it's not mine exactly. It's my ex-wife's.

DRIVER
Listen, I don't care whose home it is. Just tell me how to get there.

CUT TO THE TAXI heading down WEST BROADWAY, approaching the BROOKLYN BRIDGE, crossing the EAST RIVER, and driving through dark BROOKLYN STREETS. JACOB'S face passes in and out of dense shadows. Everytime he is bathed in light his image seems to alter. Something in him is falling away. His eyes are growing brighter.

CUT TO JACOB getting out of the TAXI and entering the LOBBY of a BROOKLYN APARTMENT BUILDING. JACOB is greeted by the DOORMAN.

DOORMAN
Dr. Singer. It's been a long time.

JACOB
(Greeting him warmly) Hello, Sam.

DOORMAN

(Noticing JACOB'S battered condition)
Are you all right?

JACOB

I'm okay.

DOORMAN

Do you want some help? I can call upstairs.

JACOB

No, don't. But thanks.

CUT TO JACOB stooping in front of an APARTMENT door and reaching his hand underneath a section of hallway carpet. It comes back with a key. He inserts it into the lock and gently opens the door.

JACOB

(Calling out) Hello. It's me.

The lights are on and the APARTMENT looks comfortable and cozy.

JACOB

Hello? Is anyone home? Jed? Eli? Daddy's here.

There is still no answer. JACOB is surprised. He walks into the LIVINGROOM and then the KITCHEN. No one is around. He walks into his old BEDROOM and then the BOYS' ROOM. There is no one home. He sees his image in the BATHROOM mirror and turns away in disgust. He walks back to the LIVINGROOM. He is surprised to hear footsteps coming down the hall. He turns around and calls out.

JACOB

Esther, is that you? I hope you don't mind.
I needed to come home.

JACOB is startled to see JEZZIE enter the room. She does not seem her usual self. She seems larger, more imposing.

JEZZIE

Hello, Jake. I knew you'd come here in the end.

JACOB

(Nervously) Where's Esther? Where are the boys?

JEZZIE

Sit down, Jake.

JACOB

Where are they?

JEZZIE

Sit down!

JACOB

No! What's going on? Where's my family?

JEZZIE

It's over, Jake. It's all over.

JACOB

Where have they gone?

JEZZIE

Wake up! Stop playing with yourself.
It's finished.

JEZZIE stares at JACOB with a frightening, powerful glare. Her lips snarl. Her tongue begins darting in and out, only now it is not a nervous habit but a conscious act. JACOB'S body feels the first waves of an inner tremor. His legs are shaking.

JACOB

What's going on?

JEZZIE smiles at him. Her tongue wags and suddenly shoots from her mouth beyond human extension. JACOB recoils.

JACOB

(Whispering to himself) This isn't happening.

JEZZIE

Your capacity for self delusion is remarkable,
Dr. Singer.

JEZZIE'S head begins to tighten and squeeze, as though she is suffering from cramps. JACOB watches in horror as her skull gives birth to pointed horns.

JACOB

Oh God!

JEZZIE

What's wrong, Jake? (She mocks him)
Forget to take your antidote?

JACOB

(Screaming) Goddamn you!

JEZZIE

(Smiling and then laughing) I loved your chemist, Jake. The height of fantasy. And your vision of paradise (She laughs with a humiliating tone) A most romantic creation. You're quite a dreamer, Jake. Only it's time to wake up.

JACOB'S eyes are locked on JEZZIE. His mouth is wide open. His body is shaking badly. He tries to back away from her but his legs barely move.

JEZZIE

There is no where to run, Jacob. You're home.

Suddenly the pictures on the wall crash to the floor. Books fly across the room. Plaster from the ceiling breaks off in huge chunks and slams to the carpet. Light bulbs and lamps explode. JACOB runs to the door. He pulls it open and screams. He is on the edge of a fiery abyss. JEZZIE laughs with a new intensity of demonic force. JACOB spins around.

JACOB

WHO ARE YOU?

JEZZIE

How many times have you asked me that?
How many times?

JACOB

TELL ME, DAMN YOU!

JEZZIE

(With consummate power) You know who I am.

Suddenly JEZZIE reaches for her tongue and pulls at it with all her might. It is an act of total, unrelieved grotesqueness. With each yank the horror grows as JEZZIE literally pulls herself inside out before JACOB'S eyes.

The emerging creature is JEZZIE transfigured, a demonic presence beyond anything we have seen before. It is black and covered with a thick oozing slime. Its head, still recognizable as JEZZIE, is rodent-like, with piercing green eyes and terrible horns protruding from its brow. Its powerful arms have long spiked claws. Its feet are cloven hooves. Extending from its back is a long, thick, muscular tail that whips around the room with devastating force. It throws furniture crashing through the air.

A sudden cracking sound emerges from the DEMON'S back. Dark forms penetrate the air. JACOB is breathless as huge wings unfold and spread out to the livingroom walls. The sound of their flapping is deafening. The walls shatter from their blows. As they crumble, darkness appears on the other side. There are no other rooms. The VOID envelopes them. The INFERNO emerges in all directions. The DEMON roars.

DEMON

(With JEZZIE'S voice) Still love me, Jake?
(It laughs and reaches out to him) COME!

CUT TO JACOB'S face. He has gone beyond fear. An intensity of rage is building in him that we have not witnessed before. His whole image seems transformed by it. He glows like a volcano before it erupts.

Suddenly he explodes. The full fury of the ladder detonates inside him. He yells at the DEMON with all his might.

JACOB

NO!!!!!!

With a power and energy of devastating force he attacks the DEMON. JACOB is battling for his very soul and tears at the DEMON with an animalistic fury that takes it by surprise. Its giant wings flap furiously, lifting them both up off the floor. JACOB keeps fighting. He claws, bites, and rips at the wings, decimating their delicate fabric.

The DEMON, shocked, and trying to gain control, crashes up through the last fragments of the ceiling. JACOB does not let go. They burst into the fiery darkness. The room crumbles beneath them and disappears into the void.

The abyss opens beneath them. JACOB continues his attack. His legs are locked around the DEMON'S waist. His hands dig into her eyes. The DEMON shrieks and surges downward with awesome velocity.

The CREATURE charges into a rocky slope, smashing JACOB into its cliffs. JACOB claws at her wings, shredding as much of them as he can reach. The DEMON takes a huge chunk out of JACOB'S arm. JACOB screams, grabs a rock, and shatters the DEMON'S teeth. The DEMON falls to the ground. JACOB holds on.

All of a sudden the CREATURE begins to shrink. JACOB is shocked and struggles to contain it. As it dwindles in size it reorders its shape. Within seconds a powerful INSECT is cupped in his hands. JACOB tries to crush it but it stings with such force that JACOB'S entire body recoils. The stinging persists. JACOB hurls himself to the ground on top of his arms to hold the CREATURE down. So massive is the INSECT'S attack, however, that JACOB'S whole body heaves off the ground with each sting. Then the attacks subside. JACOB waits for the next blow.

Suddenly JACOB'S body shoots straight up. His hands fly apart as a new life form erupts between them. He holds on tightly as flesh and blood mold and expand between his fingers. The new body takes rapid shape. It is a CHILD. JACOB grasps it with all his might as it completes its identity. He is horrified when he sees it. It is his son.

ELI
Daddy!

JACOB
Oh God!

ELI
You're hurting me.

JACOB
(Yelling) Stop!!!!

ELI
Daddy. Let go.

JACOB
What do you want from me?

ELI
LET GO!

JACOB does not let up. In an instant his SON explodes into a gelatinous form, constantly undulating and changing shape. JACOB fights to keep it in his grasp. Within its translucent mass a new body is forming. JACOB stares at it with growing terror. It is himself. A terrible perplexity fills JACOB'S eyes as he struggles to dig in and destroy his own image. He recoils as his own voice calls out to him.

VOICE
Who the Hell do you think you're fighting?

The words shock him and for the first time, he lets go.

Instantly the image disappears and the jelly-like mass dissolves into an oily liquid rapidly encircling his feet. JACOB looks down at the shallow pool spreading out beneath him. Its surface reflects a smoky, unearthly light.

JACOB gazes into the darkness. He is all alone. The quiet overwhelms him. The only sound is his own breath. He looks around, in all directions, but can see nothing. The CAMERA holds on him as he stands waiting for the next assault, but nothing comes. He is left only with his anticipation and with himself. He stares at the terrible darkness.

A subtle phosphorescence begins to glow in the liquid beneath JACOB'S feet. He steps away from it, but it follows his movement. Suddenly, as if by spontaneous combustion, it bursts into flames. JACOB screams and tries to run but the flames move with him, lapping at his legs. He cannot escape them. As far and as fast as he runs the fire is with him. He yells and cries and screams as the fire eats at his lower limbs. He falls and jumps back up again, his hands charred. His eyes grow wild.

JACOB

Oh God, help me.

Instantly the flames roar and engulf him. It is total conflagration. JACOB'S skin blisters and turns black. His flesh crackles. Writhing in pain he runs through the flames but can find no freedom from his suffering.

All at once JACOB stops running. He throws his hands up into the burning air and stands motionless, in absolute agony. It is a gesture of total submission and surrender to forces beyond himself. His flesh bubbles and chars but something is suddenly quiet inside him.

Through the flames JACOB'S dark form can be seen as it slowly sits down, like a Buddhist monk, in the midst of the holocaust. He appears a figure of sudden nobility as the flames annihilate him.

Gradually the fire dies. JACOB'S body, his flesh like a charred and brittle shell, sits motionless, beyond pain. An orange glow from the embers of his body slowly fade, leaving him in the final darkness.

The SCREEN stays dark for as long as possible. Then, slowly, an eerie light appears in an unfamiliar sky. It backlights JACOB, revealing his silhouette. The CAMERA dollies slowly toward him. It approaches the burned and unrecognizable remains of JACOB'S face. It is the face of death. The CAMERA holds on the image.

Suddenly, with shocking impact, JACOB'S eyes move. Within the crumbling shell of a body something is still alive, still conscious. The eyes survey the darkness and the first stirrings of a new light.

It is dawn. JACOB'S dark remains are suffused by a preternatural glow. Slowly, huge orbs begin to appear on the horizon. JACOB'S eyes open to the growing light as they seek out the familiar in the still dark landscape. Gradually the orbs begin their ascent like a thousand suns rising at the same time. JACOB'S eyes widen as his new world stands revealed. He is sitting in the GARDEN OF LIGHT, the Rousseau paradise he has visited once before.

A sudden burst of light fills the sky directly overhead. The vegetation around him is instantly illuminated with its soft glow. Like a gentle breeze MICHAEL descends from the light and stands radiant before JACOB. He smiles and the air itself seems to brighten. MICHAEL quietly approaches JACOB'S body.

MICHAEL

I am with you, Jacob.

JACOB stares at him through dark eyes with a mixture of awe and disbelief.

MICHAEL

(Speaking with a gentle compassion)
It's all right now. It's over. You've won.
You're here. (JACOB stares at him questioningly.
MICHAEL reaches out his hands) Trust me.

Softly MICHAEL places his hands on top of JACOB'S head and begins to peel at the charred flesh. Layer by layer he strips it away. Then, with an unexpected gesture, he rips away a whole section with one quick pull. A BLAZE OF LIGHT bursts through the gaping hole in JACOB'S head and beams into the air around them. It is an astounding sight.

MICHAEL

Come on. Don't make me do it all. (His eyes sparkle) Stand up. (JACOB'S eyes are bursting with wonder) You can do it.

Slowly JACOB begins to stir. He moves feebly at first, like an old man. His black flesh creaks and cracks and through each sudden fissure another beam of light blasts out with laserlike intensity.

MICHAEL

Stop hobbling. Your flesh can't hold you anymore.

JACOB nods in response and takes a huge, gigantic breath. His lungs expand and suddenly all the old flesh bursts from his body as a radiant being of light breaks through beneath it. JACOB stands transfigured, filled with his own luminosity. His face is like a child's as he stares in amazement at his own hands, glowing with light.

MICHAEL directs JACOB'S vision to the sunrise. It is majestic, almost biblical in its grandeur. Great rays of light penetrate vast cloud formations and descend into the GARDEN. Slowly the clouds, as if orchestrated by some higher power, begin to part. A massive light complex emerges from behind them. JACOB watches, awestruck, as the CELESTIAL STAIRWAY stands revealed. It reaches down from unknown heights, radiating an infinite power and grace. It touches down far in the distance, hovering over many acres of the GARDEN. JACOB'S eyes are filled with its splendor. MICHAEL looks at him and nods.

MICHAEL

Go on, Jacob. It has come for you.

JACOB cannot speak. His eyes are fixed on the STAIRWAY dazzling him from afar. He can see ANGELIC FORMS moving up and down it. Suddenly, as if transported by light itself, he feels himself floating up into the air. He looks down upon EDEN sparkling below him. His mouth is wide open as he soars above it.

The light pulsating from the STAIRWAY is brilliant and thrilling. JACOB'S own inner light intensifies as he approaches it. The STAIRWAY grows increasingly wondrous as we draw nearer. It is long and vast beyond expectation. It pulls JACOB toward it.

STREAMS OF ANGELS enter the stairway like a fast flowing river. It carries them instantly within its current up beyond the visible reaches of the glittering sky. Billowing clouds glow in a parade of colors and the starry heavens seem to part as the STAIRWAY reaches beyond all known dimensions.

JACOB stares at the light that is about to absorb him. It is a moment of total euphoria. He surges into the stream as the brilliant light of the stairway overwhelms the screen.

Slowly the brightness of the screen condenses into a smaller light source. For a second the light brightens and then flashes off. An overhead surgical lamp remains stubbornly in view.

A DOCTOR leans his head in front of the lamp and removes his mask. His expression is somber. He shakes his head. His words are simple and final.

DOCTOR

He's gone.

CUT TO JACOB SINGER lying on an operating table in a large ARMY FIELD TENT in VIET NAM. The DOCTOR steps away. A NURSE rudely pulls a green sheet up over his head. The DOCTOR turns to one of the aides and throws up his hands in defeat.

TWO ORDERLIES wheel JACOB'S body past rows of other DOCTORS and NURSES fighting to save lives. A YOUNG VIETNAMESE BOY pulls back a screen door to let them out of the tent. It is a bright, fresh morning. The sun is rising.