

THE NEXT
by
Lewis Shiner

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FADE IN:

EXT. A SIDEWALK--NIGHT

Beginning a montage of quick, strobe like cuts--harshly lit, with a fraction of a second of black (and silence) between them, creating a dreamlike, lurching feeling. Alternately, the pauses could be even longer and the CREDITS could appear between the brief scenes.

We're looking through glass doors into a crowded bar somewhere in the San Fernando Valley--whatever glitz it has is a thin coating over a tawdry 70s fern bar. Loud ROCK MUSIC leaks through the doors. The name of the bar, Charlie's, is painted on the door.

INT. CHARLIE'S--CONTINUOUS

The MUSIC is very loud now. Dancers on the dancefloor--fairly upscale clientele. There are a few men around, but most of the customers are women. This shouldn't be too obvious at this point. We make our way slowly through the crowd. At the bar, there's a single empty stool. To the right of it is an attractive brunette in her early thirties named JENNIFER McKENNA.

The BARTENDER--a well-endowed woman in a low-cut top--pours a double Glenlivet with a single cube of ice. A twenty dollar bill appears on the bar.

Jennifer raises her glass, apparently in response to something we've said.

LATER

A half hour has passed. There is just a single empty glass in front of us, but three empty glasses in front of Jennifer. Jennifer is getting up from her bar stool, a shy, yet anticipatory look on her face.

Jennifer turns to look back at us with a smile as she's about to exit from the club into the street.

EXT. THE STREET--NIGHT

We're holding open the passenger door of a late model American sedan--an anonymous company car. Jennifer is getting in.

INT. THE CAR--NIGHT

We're looking across at a smiling Jennifer from the driver's seat.

But now we're accelerating hard. We're moving dangerously fast and the first signs of fear show up in Jennifer's face.

(Any remaining credits can go here.)

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET--DAY

An older, family neighborhood in Orange, on the southern edge of LA. It's a balmy, sunny day in obvious contrast to the previous scene. TOM DAVIS is in his late thirties, wearing a cheap suit, a pastel or striped shirt, and an unfashionable tie. He's walking down the driveway from a small, comfortable house toward a not-especially-new compact car. He's carrying a battered briefcase. Two teenagers, JASON, 15, and BRIAN, 12, circle him on their bicycles, razzing him half-seriously. They don't dislike him, exactly, but they're very disappointed in him.

JASON

Ever think about marrying again,
Dad?

BRIAN

I didn't know it was possible to
screw up a Pop-Tart breakfast.

JASON

Mom used to fix us bacon and eggs
and stuff.

TOM

A prophet is not without honor,
save in his own country, and among
his own kin.

He unlocks the driver's door of the car as the kids speed up and head toward the street.

BRIAN

Try not to get fired today, Dad,
okay?

EXT. THE 5 FREEWAY NORTHBOUND--DAY

Tom is driving with the window down. We hear the RADIO.

RADIO

A 25-year-old Encino man was charged today in last week's brutal murder of a Canoga Park woman. A source at the LAPD says the suspect belongs to a Satanic cult.

INT. LAW OFFICE--DAY

A dart board. Like a normal dart board, it's divided into 20 pie shaped wedges by lengths of wire, but there are handwritten labels stuck into each section. Every other label is "GUILTY"; alternating with them are other labels like "PLEA BARGAIN," "DEATH PENALTY," "MOVE TO DISMISS," etc. One tiny section, labelled in red, says, "INNOCENT."

A dart lands on a "GUILTY" wedge with a loud THUNK.

Reverse to show Tom and fellow lawyer PATRICK. Patrick is in his twenties and on the way up, and shows it: white shirt, suspenders, power tie, round-rimmed glasses, expensive, longish haircut. He has his feet up on his desk and is following through from his dart throwing motion. Tom leans against the wall behind him.

PATRICK

Guilty, guilty, guilty.

TOM

You're making racist assumptions based on the fact that the guy is black and the old lady is white. She never saw who took her purse--

PATRICK

I'm making assumptions based on the fact that your client--Collins, is that his name?

TOM

You know that's his name.

PATRICK

Your man Collins is a guilty piece of shit.

EMMA, an executive assistant, pokes her head in the door.

EMMA

Ms. Vallence wants to see you, Tom.

She's immediately gone again, but the atmosphere has changed in the office. Patrick takes his feet off his desk, Tom stands up and takes his hands out of his pockets.

PATRICK

Uh oh.

TOM

Maybe it's not that bad.

PATRICK

I'd ask for your office, but I wouldn't want your office.

TOM

I appreciate the vote of confidence.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE ROXANNE'S OFFICE--DAY

Tom reaches up to knock, stops, wipes his palm on his pants leg.

INT. ROXANNE'S OFFICE--DAY

ROXANNE VALLENCE stands with her back to us, looking out one of the windows in her corner office and admiring the view. The office is high enough up that all of LA seems to be spread out before her.

There's a KNOCK at her office door.

ROXANNE

Come in.

Roxanne turns around. She's probably in her late thirties, but looks younger than her age. She's beautiful in theory, but comes off cold. There are two other people in the room: WINSTON JAMES, fifties, somewhat roughhewn, obviously a senior member of the firm, and MATTHEW CLARKE, the DA of LA county, an ambitious, well-dressed man in his late forties.

Tom enters hesitantly and glances around the huge, sparsely furnished office, then recognizes Clarke and reacts in surprise.

ROXANNE (cont'd)

Tom, do you know our DA, Matthew Clarke?

TOM
Of him, of course.

ROXANNE
Matthew, this is Tom Davis.

CLARKE
Ah.

Roxanne has been telling Clarke about Davis, and why she's picked him for an assignment that concerns them both. Clarke shakes Tom's hand.

TOM
Pleased to meet you, sir.

CLARKE
Likewise, I'm sure. Roxanne,
Winston, see you tomorrow.

ROXANNE
Take care, Matthew.

Clarke exits.

ROXANNE
Have a seat, Tom.

Tom sits nervously on the edge of the chair.

TOM
About the Collins case--

WINSTON
This isn't about the Collins case.

ROXANNE
I assume you've heard about this so-called Devil Doll Killer?

TOM
It was on the radio this morning.
They arrested somebody?

WINSTON
A biker named Nathan Judd. A real piece of work. Priors out the wazoo, serious attitude problem...

ROXANNE
The judge ordered court appointed counsel and we won the draw.

WINSTON

And you'll love his personal hygiene.

TOM

Wait. Are you saying...you're giving me this case?

ROXANNE

I'm going to be out of town the last half of the week at my seminar, so you'll be on your own.

WINSTON

This is a cakewalk, Davis. You can do it with your eyes closed.

ROXANNE

I'll have Emma bring you the file.

TOM

Well, I don't know what to...This is great. You won't regret this. I'll do this right.

WINSTON

Davis? We're not exactly looking for William Jennings Bryan on this one.

Roxanne sits down, finished with the conversation, and begins going through her email.

ROXANNE

Thank you, Tom. Just copy me on all your paperwork.

Tom nods, smiles, glances briefly at Winston, then sees that they're done with him. He stands up and exits with as much dignity as he can manage.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE ROXANNE'S OFFICE--CONTINUOUS

As he closes the door, Tom's knees literally give out. He leans back against the wall, unable to believe he hasn't been fired.

TOM

Thank you, God.

INT. OFFICE OF AN UNNAMED LA DAILY PAPER--DAY

SUSAN ALTMAN, late thirties, attractive, smart, probably wears glasses, dressed in a khaki skirt, blazer, and low heels (newsroom dress code) looks up from her cubicle. She's near the editor's office, and she sees the door to that office open.

Two men walk out. One of them is ED BURLINGTON, her editor. He's wearing khakis, a sport coat, and an open-collared shirt. He shakes hands, with some reluctance, with WALLACE VANDERMEER, one of the owners of the paper. Vandermeer is wearing an Italian suit that cost more than Burlington makes in a month. He's in his thirties, expensively groomed, fit, and oozes self confidence. Burlington is taking his comments with poor grace.

VANDERMEER

I appreciate your hearing me out.

BURLINGTON

It's your paper.

Vandermeer laughs as if Burlington has made a joke. He claps Burlington on the shoulder.

VANDERMEER

Exactly!

Burlington starts to go back in his office, sees Susan, and hesitates. He takes a breath, as if deciding to get something over with, and approaches her cubicle.

BURLINGTON

Susan, I want you to take over the Devil Doll coverage.

SUSAN

I thought Jim was doing that.

BURLINGTON

I want Jim on this homicide in Hawthorne.

This case is so clearly Jim's beat that Susan is taken aback and doesn't really know what to say.

SUSAN

I...look, I thought we had an understanding when I came here. I wasn't supposed to be doing this kind of--

BURLINGTON
I'm giving you an assignment. Are
you listening?

SUSAN
Yes, but--

BURLINGTON
Get some background, talk to his
family, find out who the hell this
guy is, where he went wrong.
People magazine type of deal.
Maybe fifteen inches for Sunday.

SUSAN
Are you kidding? I can't do
anything in fifteen inches.

BURLINGTON
That's the budget.

SUSAN
(surprised)
You're burying this.

BURLINGTON
Are you telling me how to run the
paper?

SUSAN
No, I...

BURLINGTON
All right, then.

SUSAN
I'll do what I--

BURLINGTON
Good.

He walks away, leaving Susan in mid-sentence and puzzled. She watches him cross a few cubicles over to JIM SANDERS, a bright middle-aged crime reporter. Sanders is sitting with his feet up and his keyboard in his lap, typing. We can't hear what Burlington says, but Sanders straightens up and stares at him in confusion. He starts to say something and Burlington cuts him off. The two look at each other for a moment, then Burlington walks away.

Susan watches Burlington go back to his office and bang the door shut. Then she walks over to Sanders' cubicle.

SUSAN
Jim, what's going on?

JIM
Burlington just pulled me off the
Devil Doll story.

SUSAN
I know. He just gave it to me.
Fifteen inches for Sunday. So
what's up with that?

JIM
Well, he didn't seem happy about
it, if that counts for anything.

SUSAN
Vandermeer was just down here
talking to him.

JIM
That would explain it, then.
Remember when owners just owned
things, and editors did the
editing?

SUSAN
That was a long time ago.

JIM
Vandermeer. Where did he come
from, anyway?

SUSAN
I think he made it big with some
kind of on-line legal agency.

JIM
A lawyer. Figures.

SUSAN
Why would they want you off the
story? Or me on it, for that
matter?

JIM
Beats me. The paranoid in me says
maybe there's something they were
afraid I would dig up. The new
owners probably don't know you used
to do cops back in Chicago.

SUSAN

So they gave it to me thinking I'd screw it up?

JIM

Let's just say they assumed you don't have the resources and contacts that I do for this kind of story.

SUSAN

It's really getting ugly around here.

JIM

Don't forget the magic words: "At least you've still got a job."

SUSAN

So what do you know about the case?

JIM

You sure you want to be seen talking to me about it? Could get you in trouble.

SUSAN

C'mon, Jim, this is me.

JIM

(shrugs)

On the surface it seems pretty straightforward. The perp is a complete animal, the cops seem satisfied that he did it.

SUSAN

What about the Satanism angle?

JIM

I doubt this guy could pass the IQ test for a real coven. But this is LA. People do really sick things for stupid reasons every day.

SUSAN

So you're siding with the cops?

JIM

I wish you wouldn't put it that way. But nobody gave me any reason to think differently, until...

SUSAN

Until?

JIM

Until right now.

SUSAN

Does this mean you're still going to pursue this?

JIM

With an average of almost two homicides a day in this town? No way. But if you turn something up...

SUSAN

Yeah. I'll let you know.

INT. LA COUNTY JAIL HOLDING CELL--DAY

Tom is sitting at a scarred table reading a transcript when the door opens and a C.O. (Corrections Officer) enters with NATHAN JUDD. Judd is clearly a loser--short, unattractive, with long, greasy hair in a pony tail, lots of tattoos, including a Harley-Davidson logo on one wrist. He's in an orange jumpsuit and manacles, and he's apparently just said something that's really upset the C.O. Judd is smirking and the C.O. is fighting to control his temper.

C.O.

So you're defending this piece of shit?

TOM

That's right.

C.O.

Hope you never need a cop.

The officer parks Judd none too gently in a metal chair. Judd leans back, puts his hands behind his head, and drags his feet up onto the table, one at a time--no mean feat given the weight of chains on them. The C.O. sweeps his feet off with his baton and the chair legs CRASH back onto the floor.

C.O. (cont'd)

Feet on the floor, asswipe.

Judd loves the fact that he's wound the C.O. up. The C.O. walks over to the door, leans against it, and crosses his arms, the baton still out.

TOM
(to Judd)
My name's Tom Davis. The court has
appointed me to represent you.

He offers his hand; Judd ignores it; Tom shrugs and takes it
back.

TOM (cont'd)
You don't know it, but you got
lucky. One, because I'm with
Brock, James and Vallence, which is
one of the top criminal law firms
in the city. Two, because I like
my job, and I'm going to get you a
fair trial.

Tom pauses for a reaction. Judd begins to pick his nose and
examine his findings.

TOM (cont'd)
I've got a list of questions here.
I'm just going to start at the top
and work my way down. Is that okay
with you?

C.O.
You're wasting your time.

TOM
Let's start with the night of the
murder. Can you take me through
where you went and what you did,
starting around, oh, six or seven
that night?

Judd scratches his crotch through the heavy jumpsuit.

C.O.
He's not going to cooperate with
you. He's not going to cooperate
with anybody. He thinks he's a
tough guy. He's got some surprises
ahead of him.

TOM
Is that right, Nathan? Are you
really not going to talk to me?

When Judd continues to ignore him, Tom gathers up his papers
and puts them back in his briefcase, then settles back in his
chair, business over.

TOM (cont'd)

Do you ride, Nathan? I noticed the Harley tat on your wrist. My oldest boy wants a Harley more than anything in this world. He just can't decide if he wants the Fatboy or the Heritage.

Judd settles back in his chair, closes his eyes, seems to be ready to go to sleep. In the blink of an eye, the C.O. crosses the room and hits the back of the chair with his baton, making a loud crack and knocking Judd out of the chair so that he has to catch himself on the edge of the table.

C.O.

Wake up, asshole. Show some manners.

TOM

(to C.O.)

Listen, could you give us a minute in private?

C.O.

I really don't think you want to be alone with this guy.

TOM

I'll risk it.

The C.O. shrugs and exits.

TOM (cont'd)

Talk to me, Nathan. I can't help you if you--

Without moving a muscle, Judd is a different person. The smirking lout is gone, and there is active intelligence in his eyes.

JUDD

Shut the fuck up.

TOM

Okay.

JUDD

You're not going to help me. I'm already dead. The fix is in.

TOM

What are you talking about? What fix?

Judd is gone again. He shifts away in the chair and stares into space.

TOM (cont'd)
Nathan? Nathan?

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

An older apartment, with high ceilings and hardwood floors, tastefully furnished. Susan is sitting on one end of a couch, feet tucked up under her, drinking her millionth cup of coffee of the day, working on her laptop, which is plugged in to the outlet and to an Ethernet cable. She's changed to jeans and a sweater. Tom's at the other end of the couch, drinking a beer.

TOM
Right up to that moment I was thinking, "This is one I'm actually not going to mind losing." But now I don't know.

SUSAN
What are his priors like?

TOM
That's the thing. They're just biker stuff--public nuisance, D&D, nothing violent. There's an indecent exposure, but when I looked it up it was just for taking a leak in public.

SUSAN
Weird. The TV stations are trying to make him sound like the second coming of Charles Manson.

TOM
He's not even Manson Lite. And I don't like the fact that the District Attorney of LA County was in the office having a group hug with Roxanne and Winston when I came in.

SUSAN
You're off and running again, aren't you?

TOM

What, you mean getting emotionally involved in a case I can't possibly win?

SUSAN

It's endearing, in a wonky kind of way.

TOM

I think I may have a chance on this one. And this could be really big. Will you still love me when I'm rich and famous?

SUSAN

Maybe. What I do know is, Burlington definitely has to take me off the story now. With you defending Judd, it's a clear conflict of interest.

TOM

Sorry.

SUSAN

Don't be. I've interviewed enough guys like Nathan Judd to last a lifetime. I'm just interested to see who they give the story to next. An intern?

TOM

You really think they're trying to hide something?

SUSAN

Things have been going downhill ever since the new owners came in. And today one of the cronies they brought with them got busted for ripping off her movie reviews from some indie weekly. How could she imagine she wouldn't get caught?

TOM

I think arrogance is part of the pattern. Is it just me, or has lying turned into the national pastime?

SUSAN
It's certainly not just happening
in journalism.

TOM
Politics.

SUSAN
And big business, if there's a
difference. Con men are the
perfect free market capitalists.
Look at Enron and WorldCom and--

TOM
This is getting ugly. Can we go
back to Satanic bikers?

Susan puts the computer down.

SUSAN
I've got a better idea.

TOM
(big smile)
Oh yeah?

SUSAN
Dinner, Tom. I haven't eaten all
day.

TOM
Are you sure you want to trust me?
My kids think I'm trying to poison
them.

SUSAN
Better to have you to blame than
myself.

Tom stands up, kisses the top of her head, and starts for the
kitchen.

TOM
Speaking of horror stories, let's
see what's in your refrigerator.

EXT. TRAILER PARK--DAY

Tom is talking to a BIKER in full regalia--black leather
vest, torn jeans, gloves, Harley T-shirt. They're in front
of his trailer, where a huge Harley is parked. Tom has a
legal pad and is taking notes as the guy talks.

BIKER

Satanism? Bullshit. There's maybe a hundred honest to Christ practicing Satanists in LA, and Nathan ain't one of them.

TOM

Why would somebody claim he was?

BIKER

People don't like to think. Give 'em a stereotype--like Satanist Biker?--they'll go for it every time.

EXT. RURAL GAS STATION--DAY

Tom is talking to a MECHANIC in a greasy blue work shirt and jeans.

MECHANIC

Don't get me wrong, Nathan is not what you'd call a churchgoing type, but he's no devil worshipper either. You've met him, right? He just doesn't give a crap. Not about God, or the Devil, or you or me.

INT. OFFICE LUNCHROOM--DAY

Tom is talking to a CO-WORKER of the victim, in an employee lounge with plastic tables and chairs and vending machines. She's mid-twenties and dresses aggressively. There's nobody else around, but she's leaning across the table and whispering.

CO-WORKER

If I tell you something, do you cross your heart and hope to die it won't come back to me?

Tom puts his pen down to indicate they're off the record.

CO-WORKER (cont'd)

When I saw in the paper that she'd supposedly let this biker guy pick her up, I knew it was a lie.

TOM

She didn't like bikers?

CO-WORKER
 She didn't like guys. Not that
 way.

TOM
 You're saying she was a lesbian?

CO-WORKER
 Jennifer always said she didn't
 want to be labeled. But yeah.
 Dyke.

Tom winces at the epithet.

TOM
 You've seen her with...

CO-WORKER
 Chicks? Yeah. At this bar,
 Charlie's, one time. I don't go
 there much 'cause word's starting
 to get around that it's a dyke bar,
 but a friend of mine was DJing
 there. Jennifer was like groping
 this other chick.

TOM
 So if Charlie's is a...a...

CO-WORKER
 Dyke bar. You can say it. The
 dykes call it that.

TOM
 Whatever. What would Judd have
 been doing there?

CO-WORKER
 The guy they framed for it? A lot
 of guys get off on watching that
 kind of stuff. This is LA,
 remember.

INT. LAPD WEST VALLEY STATION, RESEDA--DAY

Tom is interviewing the plainclothes DETECTIVE who arrested Judd, and his PARTNER. The Detective is late forties, tired, overworked, the kind of cop who knows who the bad guys are and is okay with cutting corners. The Partner is younger and worried about the department's reputation.

TOM

But when you get an anonymous phone tip, you don't just assume it's the truth, you want some corroboration.

DETECTIVE

Judd's a bad guy. That's corroboration enough.

PARTNER

We got forensics, we got eyeball witnesses placing him at the scene--

TOM

What forensics? This wasn't in the report.

PARTNER

One of the victim's hairs on his clothing. Just came in.

TOM

He supposedly drained her blood, and all you could find was a single hair? He could have got that brushing up against her when he ordered a drink.

DETECTIVE

But he didn't.

TOM

How do you know that?

DETECTIVE

Twenty-three years in this business is how I know. Judd's a wrong guy.

Clearly this is going nowhere. Tom stands up and fires a parting shot.

TOM

The problem is, he may be the wrong guy.

As Tom walks away, Beacham shouts after him.

DETECTIVE

Fuckin' lawyers. If you get this guy off through some bullshit technicality, I hope you remember it when he kills the next girl.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE(cont'd)

It'll be the exact same as if you
killed her yourself.

INT. LAW OFFICE--DAY

It's late afternoon. Tom has just arrived back at the office and sees Roxanne in the hallway. She's got a sheaf of papers in her hand and she's moving fast.

TOM

Can I talk to you for a minute?

ROXANNE

I'm trying to get out of here
Thursday morning. I've got ten
million details to take care of.

TOM

It's important. I think Nathan
Judd was framed, and I can prove
it.

This gets her attention, but she's not happy about it. She glances at her watch.

ROXANNE

I've got dinner free. My date
cancelled, but I've still got to
eat. Spago, eight-thirty, take it
or leave it.

TOM

Uh, yeah, okay. Do I--

ROXANNE

Just meet me there, Tom, all right?
Jacket and tie would be nice.

She hurries off down the hall, leaving Tom flustered and embarrassed.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Tom is in his bedroom, tying his tie in front of the mirror. Jason (the older boy) stops in the hallway and sticks his head in.

JASON

Hot date?

TOM

Your old man is eating at Spago's tonight.

JASON

If you can afford to take Susan to Spago's, you can afford something better than that takeout pizza you fed us.

TOM

I'm meeting Roxanne there. This is for work.

Jason sidles in and sniffs his father's neck.

JASON

You're wearing aftershave to work now? Does Susan know?

TOM

Give me a break.

Jason goes back to the door and shouts down the hall.

JASON

Hey, Bri--we're going to the Gallaghers again tonight!

BRIAN (o.s.)

Excellent!

Tom sits down on the edge of the bed.

TOM

Come here.

Jason sits. He likes his father well enough, but he's definitely not up for any sentimentality, lectures, or physical affection. Tom knows this and respects it.

TOM (cont'd)

Things are looking up at work. I've cracked a pretty big case. I'm hoping this is going to make things a little easier on us.

Jason grins. He knows what his father is trying to say, but he's not comfortable with it, and so he's deliberately chosen to misunderstand.

JASON
Roxanne's hot, Dad. I'd do her too
if I had the chance.

TOM
I'm serious. It's not like I enjoy
driving a crappy car and wearing
second hand suits. That's not why
I got into this business.

JASON
Why did you get into this business?

Tom, trying to frame the right reply, can't get anything out
before Jason jumps up and runs out of the room.

JASON (cont'd)
Riiight. Don't do anything I
wouldn't do!

INT. SPAGO, BEVERLY HILLS--NIGHT

Tom and Roxanne at a garden table. Roxanne is showing the
WAITER something from the wine list.

ROXANNE
Let's have a bottle of that.

WAITER
Perfect. I'll get that right out.

Roxanne turns to Tom, and offers him a smile. She is
completely different than she was in the office, almost as if
she forgot Tom wasn't her date.

TOM
I've lived in LA all my life and
I've never been here before.

ROXANNE
You should get out more, Tom.

TOM
I've got two kids who still think
they're going to college someday.
We do most of our eating at home.

ROXANNE
How long has it been since...

TOM
Since Elaine died? Three years.

ROXANNE

Do--

TOM

...and two months. Sorry. Go on.

ROXANNE

You must miss her.

TOM

The truth is, we weren't doing too well even before the cancer was diagnosed, and it was a long couple of years afterwards.

ROXANNE

But you stayed with her.

TOM

I didn't want my kids to resent her for being sick. That would have screwed up their childhoods a lot worse than her dying.

ROXANNE

You're a good man, Tom. A lot of us count on that.

There are of course two ways to take that, but Tom only sees it as a compliment. He can take a lot of pain, but what seems to be an unexpected kindness slips past his defenses. For a moment it looks like he might choke up.

TOM

Thanks.

ROXANNE

So are you seeing anybody?

It's an odd, almost flirtatious question, and it takes him by surprise.

TOM

Uh, yeah, actually. I just met her a couple of months ago. She's a reporter.

ROXANNE

Is it serious?

TOM

I hope so. I'm a little old to be fooling around.

Understated, but coy eyebrow raise from Roxanne, as if to say, "oh yeah?"

TOM (cont'd)
Listen, about this Judd case...

Roxanne sighs slightly, as if disappointed to be talking business, and nods.

TOM (cont'd)
I talked to a bunch of his associates, guys he rides with, and they all say the Satanism angle is bunk.

ROXANNE
Tom, Tom. He's not necessarily going to tell his friends something like that. I mean, I'm sure there are all sorts of things about me you don't know.

Again, a slight smile here, as if to say, "but you could find them out if you wanted."

TOM
I also talked to the victim's friends, and one of them told me that Jennifer is--

ROXANNE
Tom!

Tom stops in mid-sentence. Roxanne softens again.

ROXANNE (cont'd)
I talked with Judd this afternoon and he admitted the whole thing. Apparently even a low life like him has some kind of conscience. He seemed to be feeling pretty guilty, in fact.

TOM
He told me he was framed.

ROXANNE
He's a pathological liar.

Tom reacts to those words, given the discussion he'd had with Susan.

ROXANNE (cont'd)
You can't believe a word he says.

TOM
Including the confession?

ROXANNE
He knew she was wearing Hello Kitty
underwear. He knew about a
lumpectomy scar on her left breast.

TOM
I thought they never found her
underwear.

ROXANNE
I think they were in her purse.
Trust me, Tom, the confession was
real. I wouldn't be surprised if
he cops a plea.

Tom clearly makes a decision not to contest this any further,
and smiles ruefully.

TOM
This was going to be my defining
moment.

ROXANNE
(laughs musically)
You'll have plenty of more chances
for that. Ah, here's the wine.

EXT. CANYON DRIVE, OUTSIDE SPAGO--NIGHT

Tom is just a little befuddled by the wine, grinning happily.
Roxanne is laughing again at something he said, as if he were
the most charming man in the world, one hand lightly touching
his arm.

ROXANNE
Are you okay to drive? I can drop
you if you like...

TOM
I'm fine.

ROXANNE
Okay, if you're sure, then. I
wouldn't want to have to bail out
one of my own guys.

TOM
It's not a problem.

She hands her keys and a five to the valet parking attendant.

ROXANNE
It's a white Z3.

TOM
I'm around the corner. I guess
I'll see you in the office
tomorrow.

She's dropped her hints, Tom has ignored them, and she's cooling down now.

ROXANNE
You probably won't see me. I've
got a long day finishing things up.

TOM
Oh, yeah, that seminar thing.
Where is that, anyway?

ROXANNE
Way far away from everything else.

TOM
Is Winston going too?

ROXANNE
I'm the only one from this office.
This is a very big deal, Tom. They
only invite the top attorneys from
across the country, and I mean
attorneys in the broadest possible
sense, not just trial lawyers. The
best of the best.

TOM
Well, I hope it goes well, whatever
it is.

ROXANNE
Me too.

TOM
Yeah, okay, good night, then.

Tom starts to walk away, then thinks of one more thing he wants to ask Roxanne--like maybe, what was she doing visiting his client. He turns back and sees something truly weird.

A city bus has stopped outside the restaurant, and Roxanne has stepped into the street behind it. Her eyes are closed and she's breathing in the exhaust--which is so foul that Tom can smell it all the way over where he's standing--the way somebody might stop to inhale the salt smell of the sea, or a fresh breeze coming in off the pines.

It's so disturbing that Tom turns away quickly, and hurries toward his car.

EXT. VENTURA BLVD, NEAR CHARLIE'S--DAY

Tom is driving and talking on his cell phone.

TOM

I just can't shake the feeling that she was coming on to me. I know how ridiculous that sounds, here in broad daylight...

(beat)

You're sweet, and last night, when I was with her, I could almost have believed it. That whole con man thing. I think they do it with pheromones or something. But there was just too much fishy stuff. I'm supposed to believe she was talking to my client behind my back? When she was too busy to talk to me in the hall? That Judd would break down and confess? To her? And how can she know all these details about the crime, like what kind of underwear Jennifer was wearing, that aren't in the file. Unless...

(beat)

I'm not sure I want to tell you what I'm thinking. It's in the category of the unthinkable.

He parks in the strip center in front of Charlie's.

TOM (cont'd)

I'm here. I'll call you tonight.

(beat)

Yeah, you too.

INT. CHARLIE'S--DAY

Tom walks up to the Bartender we saw in the opening montage. Today she's in a T-shirt advertising the bar (a size or two too small) and tight jeans. Tom has a folded magazine in one hand.

BARTENDER

It's Lawyer Man. How's the Devil Doll Killer today?

TOM

I would imagine he's still a completely obnoxious piece of human garbage, like the last time I saw him.

BARTENDER

I'll drink to that. What'll you have?

TOM

How about a club soda?

She fixes his drink.

TOM (cont'd)

When I was in here last time you neglected to mention that this is a lesbian pick-up joint.

BARTENDER

Is it?

TOM

Come on, don't kid me around. If this guy Judd really did it, he'll go down for it. He's not getting anybody's sympathy vote.

BARTENDER

"If"? Every night when I get off work, I have to have the bouncer walk me to my car. Why? Because this town is full of creeps like Judd.

TOM

How long did he actually talk to Jennifer?

BARTENDER

Not very long. He was pushy, but she brushed him off. Guy like him, I figure it pissed him off and he was waiting--

TOM

She brushed him off because--among other things--she was looking for a different kind of action. She was looking for a woman.

BARTENDER

Maybe.

TOM

And she found one, right?

The Bartender shrugs. Tom unfolds the magazine in his hand. It's a back issue of the LA Times magazine with Roxanne on the cover. The caption reads: "Hot Litigator: Roxanne Vallence." Tom takes a deep breath.

TOM (cont'd)

Is that who she found?

The Bartender studies the picture, flips open the magazine, looks at the other photos in the story.

BARTENDER

She's pretty hot looking, but we get hot looking women like her in here all the time. I can't say yes or no.

TOM

But Jennifer did leave with a woman.

BARTENDER

(beat)

Yeah.

TOM

Who looked at least a little bit like her.

BARTENDER

Yeah.

Tom throws a five on the bar.

TOM
Thanks for your help.

BARTENDER
Don't mention it.

Tom is on his way out the door when his cell phone rings. He checks the incoming number, then answers.

TOM
Hey babe.
(beat)
No, nobody told me. What happened?
(beat)
Son of a bitch. I'll call you
back.

He switches off the phone and looks up. The bartender is watching him curiously.

TOM (cont'd)
You don't have to worry about a
trial. Judd's dead.

The Bartender raises her right fist in quiet celebration. Tom turns away, disgusted.

INT. LA COUNTY JAIL--DAY

EMTs are carrying Judd out of his cell on a gurney, covered by a white sheet. There is no blood on the sheet. CRIME SCENE TECHS are working the cell, which is cordoned off with yellow plastic tape. The Detective from earlier is there, and every once in a while he glances over toward Tom with a hostile smirk. The C.O. who was with Judd at Tom's interview is there also.

TOM
Do we know the cause of death?

Everyone goes about their business.

TOM (cont'd)
So, what, nobody is going to talk
to me?

C.O.
You wouldn't want to hear what I
have to say to you. Your pal here
got what he was begging for. So
you can go find another ambulance
to chase.

The EMTs start to roll the gurney out and Tom stops them. He lifts the corner of the sheet. Shock moment: Judd's face is startlingly, ghastly white.

FIRST EMT

He cut his wrists and bled out.

Tom looks at the cell.

TOM

Where'd the blood go?

The EMT shrugs. Not his business. As Tom looks around with increasing aggravation, DA Clarke arrives, coming in behind Tom's back.

TOM (cont'd)

Can I get some answers from somebody? That guy is drained. There should be blood all over the cell.

CLARKE

Some of it went down the sink. He used the rest to write a full confession.

Tom turns and acknowledges Clarke. He is still a bit in awe of Clarke's position, but the awe is warring with his frustration.

TOM

That's, uh, pretty incredible, sir.

CLARKE

Nevertheless....

TOM

I mean, you've got two people completely drained of blood in the same week.

CLARKE

The Satanic cult--

TOM

He wasn't in a cult. Sir. I think you know that as well as I do.

CLARKE

What was your name again?

TOM
Davis, sir. Tom Davis. Can I see
this confession?

CLARKE
It's being transcribed.

TOM
When can I see it?

Clarke is a very powerful man, and he's put up with quite a lot from Tom, but he's now hit his limit. When he comes down on Tom, the conversation is over. Tom's the grasshopper and Clarke is the riding mower.

CLARKE
You have no need to see the confession. Not now, not ever. Your former client is dead, the case is closed, and your involvement with it is over. Do I make myself clear, Mr. Davis?

TOM
Yes, sir. Perfectly.

Clarke is immobile, seemingly larger than his actual size, authority personified. Tom takes a couple of steps back, then turns and walks out, head down.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE--DAY

Jason (the older) and Brian are watching TV as Tom enters the living room.

TOM
Turn that off a second, will you?

JASON
It's Beavis and Butt-head, Dad.

TOM
You've seen every one of those at least 20 times.

JASON
Yeah, but this is one of the good ones.

TOM
I need to ask you something. What do you guys know about...

BRIAN
About what, Dad?

TOM
About...vampires?

Jason mutes the TV. Tom has their undivided attention for the first time in months.

JASON
Is this about the Devil Doll murder?

TOM
What?

BRIAN
Her body was drained of blood.
It's so obvious.

TOM
So how do you know if somebody is a vampire?

JASON
It used to be easier, in the old days. The teeth, the cape. Nowadays it's harder. They can't stand direct sunlight. You may not be able to see them in a mirror.

BRIAN
They can't stand crucifixes.

JASON
Unless they're Jewish.

BRIAN
(quoting a punchline)
"Oy, lady, have you got the wrong vampire."

The two kids laugh exaggeratedly.

TOM
Go on. What else.

BRIAN
Garlic.

JASON
Yeah, garlic for sure. They can't cross running water.

(MORE)

JASON(cont'd)

They can't come in your house
unless you invite them.

TOM

And how do you...you know...

JASON

Kill them? Stake through the
heart. Then cut the head off and
stuff it with garlic.

TOM

Jesus, where do you guys get this
stuff?

JASON

I read Dracula for school. You're
the one always saying how great
books are. I thought it pretty
much sucked. Too slow. Anyway,
there's also fire.

BRIAN

Yeah, fire.

JASON

They burn really good.

TOM

Yeah, okay, thanks, guys.

BRIAN

Silver bullets.

JASON

That's werewolves, you imbecile.

TOM

Okay, fine, that's all I need to
know.

BRIAN

Maybe not the bullet part, but
vampires are allergic to silver,
too.

JASON

That's just a myth.

TOM

Guys?

BRIAN

No, it's not. They're corrupt,
see? And they can't stand pure
things. Pure silver. Pure
sunlight. Pure running water.

They're really into it now, forgetting Tom. He shrugs and
heads back toward his bedroom, pulling at his tie.

JASON (o.s.)

So, you're saying, what, they can
cross running water if it's got
industrial sludge in it?

INT. ROXANNE'S OFFICE--NIGHT

Roxanne is at her desk, leaning back in her chair, reading a
brochure for the Pleasure Dome, a huge enclosed resort in
northern California. There's a KNOCK at the door.

ROXANNE

It's open.

Tom enters. He's trying to act casual and doing a lousy job
of it.

TOM

Oh, hey. You said you'd be here
late and I...

He notices the brochure.

TOM (cont'd)

Oh, hey, is that your thing?

ROXANNE

seminar.

She folds up the brochure and puts it in the side drawer of
her desk. The drawer closes with a click, locking shut. Tom
fumbles with a small cardboard box.

ROXANNE (cont'd)

What is it, Tom?

TOM

I've always admired your taste, and
I was wondering...

The box pops open and a silver crucifix on a chain falls onto
the carpet. Tom bends over to pick it up. When he stands
up, Roxanne is next to him.

TOM (cont'd)
I bought this for my girlfriend,
but I could still take it back if
you think it's--

Roxanne stands very close to him and takes the crucifix out of his hand.

TOM (cont'd)
--tacky. Or anything.

She is clearly onto his ruse. She pretends to admire the crucifix, and dangles it between her breasts.

ROXANNE
It's lovely, Tom. Don't you think?

TOM
Uh, yeah. Very nice.

He's starting to get hypnotized.

ROXANNE
And Tom?

TOM
Yes?

ROXANNE
The next time you have a lot of
garlic in your spaghetti, you might
try a Tic Tac afterwards. I'm sure
your...girlfriend...would find you
more kissable.

She's very, very close. She's waiting for Tom to kiss her. He very nearly does, but in the lobby the elevator dings. Tom jerks back in surprise.

TOM
Is there somebody else here?

ROXANNE
Just the cleaning crew. They don't
come in here...if the door is
locked.

She takes a step toward the door, as if offering to lock it. Tom begins to understand that he is in way, way, over his head, and it scares him.

TOM
I have to go.

Another mood shift in Roxanne, similar to the one at the restaurant. Tom had his chance, and he blew it.

ROXANNE

Suit yourself. I'm going too.
I'll walk you out.

INT. LAW OFFICE LOBBY--NIGHT

The cleaning crew is down the hall; the lobby is dark. Tom's a little dazed. He pushes the call button for the elevator. It dings again and the doors open.

ROXANNE

You go ahead. I have to make a
quick call.

Tom gets on the elevator and looks back, as if halfway hoping she will change her mind and get in with him.

TOM

Good night.

The doors close. Roxanne watches them for a second or two, then picks up the phone and dials.

ROXANNE

Davis just left.
(beat)
Kill him.

EXT. THE 5 FREEWAY SOUTHBOUND--NIGHT

Tom is driving in a middle lane. It's late enough that traffic is fairly light. He is starting to relax, relieved that he got out of the office without being further compromised by Roxanne. He glances in the rear view mirror, sees a huge SUV coming up on him really, really fast.

TOM

What the hell...

He waits for the car to pass or slow down, and when it doesn't, he wrenches the wheel and scoots into the right lane just in time to avoid being rear-ended.

TOM

Jesus!

The SUV hits its brakes, trying to get behind him again. Tom sees this happening and slows down also.

As the SUV pulls up next to him, Tom tries to see the driver, but the windows are tinted to impenetrability. Suddenly the SUV lurches toward him, and Tom slams on the brakes and skids onto the shoulder and stops.

Tom digs out his cell phone, dials 911. He looks up, and the SUV has also pulled onto the shoulder. And it's now reversing toward him at full throttle.

Tom pulls back onto the freeway, almost causing a wreck as a car swerves around him, leaning on the horn. He fights to keep control of his car, and the cell phone flies out of his hand and falls onto the floor of the passenger side. He pushes the gas pedal to the floor, at the same time trying to reach down for the phone.

He's almost got his hand on it when the SUV appears again in the rear view mirror. Tom watches the traffic for a break, signals right as if pulling over again, then swerves left. The SUV falls for the fake and plows into another car, spinning it around 180 degrees and sending it head-on into yet another car. The cars collide at a combined speed of over 100 miles an hour and fly to pieces. Tom's face registers his understanding that he's just seen people killed...but that is all behind them now as Tom and the SUV continue to rocket down the highway.

The SUV is bearing down again. Tom brakes hard, skids across four lanes, and exits. He grabs the cell phone, tries dialing again. No answer.

TOM
Come on. Come on!

He ducks into a dark alley and douses the lights on his car. Looking out the back window of his car, Tom watches a few cars pass on the brightly lit street behind him and starts to get his breath.

OPERATOR (o.s.)
LA County 911. May I have your
name and location, please?

TOM
My name is Tom Davis, and I'm
somewhere near LAX. I'm on a cell
phone. Some maniac in an SUV is
trying to kill me.

OPERATOR (o.s.)
Are you in immediate danger right
now?

TOM

Not right this second, but--oh
shit.

The SUV has trolled past on the street and there's a squeak of brakes.

TOM

This guy killed some people on the
5 freeway. Follow the bodies and
the wreckage. He's back. I have
to go.

The SUV passes the mouth of the alley again, this time in reverse. Tom floors it out of the alley and onto the surface streets, turning his lights back on. He rolls up to a red light, runs it, takes a series of random turns as fast as he can, at one point braking to avoid hitting a PEDESTRIAN. Then, in his rear view mirror, he sees the pedestrian shaking his fist and swearing at him as the SUV comes up behind him and plows straight into him, knocking him ten feet through the air.

It's a horrible, blood-curdling sight, and Tom realizes he is probably not going to make it out of this alive.

The chase continues for another few blocks, with the SUV getting closer and Tom narrowly escaping being trapped. He's not paying any attention to where he is, just reacting. Every so often he leans on the horn, hoping to attract a cop.

The street he's on suddenly ends at a T intersection at a concrete embankment of the LA River. The SUV slows to a stop half a block from Tom, keeping enough distance to get up some serious speed, waiting for Tom to commit to either a right or left turn. Tom slows, stops just before the wall, gets out of the car and stands beside his open door, facing the SUV. There is a pause while they confront each other. Maybe the SUV is racing its engine. Then it leaps forward.

At that exact moment Tom jumps back in the car, throws it into drive, floors it into a right turn.

The SUV clips Tom's bumper at 50 mph, coming up off the ground on its left wheels as it tries and fails to swerve into him, then goes through the guardrail, over the embankment, and falls 50 feet to the dry grass of the riverbed, turning over in midair and smashing itself flat on its roof, a devastating crash that would clearly pulverize anyone inside.

Tom, horrified, pulls over and runs back to the point where the SUV smashed through the guardrail. All is quiet for a few long seconds, then:

The shattered driver's side window pulses.

It pulses again, then bulges outward. Something is still alive in the wreckage, and it's struggling to get out of the upside-down car. Tom fights down an impulse to run toward the wreck.

An arm emerges from the window, bleeding from a dozen tiny cuts. It claws at the ground, and slowly pulls the rest of the body behind it. The body is badly smashed up--one eye pulverized, one arm crushed, with bones protruding, the clothes shredded, one leg bent at an impossible angle. Slowly, without any obvious changes, the body begins to pull itself together. It gets to its feet and stumbles, then walks forward.

Within a dozen steps the figure is recognizable as a young, handsome man in the ruins of expensive, fashionable clothes. He comes to the foot of the embankment and looks straight at Tom. Slowly he raises one hand and points at him, as if to say, "I'm coming for you."

The hood POPS and a piece of smoking metal lands in the dry grass at the man's feet. The grass smolders, then begins to burn. It's nothing, really, just a small grass fire, and by the time the young man notices it, a small tongue of flame has reached out to gently kiss his pants leg.

The fire takes the man in an instant, as if he'd been soaked in gasoline--he practically explodes.

Tom begins to run. He gets to his car and drives furiously away as SIRENS--finally--begin to sound in the distance.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT IN DOWNTOWN LA--DAY

It's noon of the next day. Susan is waiting by the reservation desk of an upscale lunch spot, checking her watch. The phone, a wireless model, RINGS, and the MAITRE D' answers it.

MAITRE D'
Reservations.
(beat)
I'll check.

He looks at Susan.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)
Is your name Susan?

SUSAN
Thank you.

She takes the phone and moves to a secluded corner.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Tom?

TOM
Did anybody follow you?

(It might be effective to never show Tom during this conversation. If he's just a disembodied voice on the phone, it makes his situation seem all the stranger, and makes us feel Susan's worry, helplessness, and confusion.)

SUSAN
I don't think so. I got your email
--obviously. What's with all the
cloak and dagger stuff?

TOM
I'll have to tell you later. I
tried telling the story to myself a
while ago and I sounded like a
lunatic.

SUSAN
Are you okay?

TOM
So far. Look, I need you to do
some things. First, call the
Gallaghers and see if they can keep
the kids for a few days.

SUSAN
Okay.

TOM
Can you get your hands on a few
hundred dollars in cash? Maybe
five hundred? I don't want to use
my credit cards.

SUSAN
Yes.

TOM

And I need your digital camera, and the telephoto lens, and a couple of extra memory cards.

SUSAN

How do I get all this to you?

TOM

I want you to meet me at 7 tomorrow morning at that place I kissed you the first time. Don't say it over the phone.

SUSAN

Can you tell me anything about what's happening?

TOM

You remember that conversation we had the other night? They're not just amoral swindlers. It's worse than that. Much worse.

SUSAN

What are you saying?

TOM

You don't want to refuse to accept the obvious, just because it seems crazy, you know?

SUSAN

Because what seems crazy?

TOM

I think they're vampires.

SUSAN

You're right, this is going to be a tough sell.

TOM

Roxanne is at some kind of conclave with the big dog vampires from all over the country. My sense is, it's names we would recognize. I'm going to stake this place out, get pictures of everybody who goes in our out of there.

SUSAN

Where is it?

TOM
That's the problem. I don't know.

SUSAN
If you were some source telling me
this--

TOM
I'm not a source.

SUSAN
And a good thing, too. I don't
sleep with my sources.

TOM
They've already tried to kill me
once.

SUSAN
You didn't tell me that.

TOM
I didn't want to scare you.

SUSAN
And now you do?

TOM
I need you to believe me.

SUSAN
I never said I didn't.

TOM
If I can find where this place is,
I'm going.

SUSAN
Not without me you're not.

There's an emotional pause, and when Tom's voice comes back
on the line, he's choked up.

TOM
Thanks.

SUSAN
You sound like you could use some
sleep.

TOM
Soon. There's a couple more things
I have to do.

SUSAN
 Promise me you'll be careful.

TOM
 I miss you.

SUSAN
 That's not a promise.

TOM
 I'll see you tomorrow morning.

The phone goes dead and Susan holds it for a second, then wrings it slowly in her hands, almost overwhelmed with fear and helplessness. The Maitre D' approaches tactfully.

MAITRE D'
 Is everything all right?

Susan hands him the phone, fighting not to cry.

SUSAN
 No. No, I don't think it is.

She pushes her way past a well dressed couple and heads for the street.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM--DAY

Brian is looking out the window, bored. He's one of about thirty kids in the classroom. His TEACHER, a pleasant, overweight, balding young man, is trying to answer some thorny questions.

TEACHER
 ...so the point of a corporation, really, is for a group of people to be able to act together but be treated by the law as a single person. So in that sense, the corporation as a whole has to answer for what it does, but the individuals who make it up--

A knock interrupts him. A MESSENGER from the Principal's office, a girl of about Brian's age, comes in and hands the teacher a note. The teacher reads it and looks at Brian.

TEACHER
 Brian? You need to go to the Principal's office.

BOY
What'd you do, Brian?

GIRL
Shut up, Ian.

The girl has known Brian since his mother died three years ago, when his getting pulled out of class was a regular occurrence, and always bad news.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY--DAY

Brian and the Messenger walk past banners advertising GEOFF BROCK 8TH GRADE PRESIDENT and posters showing Brock--a junior version of Patrick from Tom's office, all expensive teeth, haircut, and clothes.

BRIAN
You know what this is about?

MESSENGER
I just carry the notes.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE--DAY

Tom is sitting on the edge of the Principal's desk. Behind it is the Principal herself, Ms. WATSON, a woman about his age, nice but not particularly glamorous. She's obviously known Tom for a long time. Standing to one side is Jason, nervously shifting his feet.

JASON
Then he tells me I'm supposed to take a cab over here. What's all this about?

TOM
Just hang on till Brian--

There's a knock at the door.

WATSON
Come in.

It's the Messenger and Brian.

MESSENGER
Do you need me for anything else, Ms. Watson?

WATSON

Not right now, Maria. Thank you.

She closes the door after her.

BRIAN

Dad?

WATSON

This whole business is reminding me unpleasantly of three years ago. Oh dear, I shouldn't have said that.

TOM

No, that's okay. I know what you mean.

(beat)

Thanks for all your help. Do you think we could have...

WATSON

Oh, yes, of course. Anything.

She gets up and goes to the door, then pauses.

WATSON (cont'd)

Nice to see you again, Jason.

JASON

You too, Ms. Watson.

WATSON

(to Tom)

When you're done here, I can run Jason back to the high school.

TOM

Thanks. That'd be great.

She leaves the three of them alone.

TOM (cont'd)

I've always been straight with you guys--

JASON

Not that speech again. Anything but that one.

TOM

Look, guys, this is serious. This case that I'm working has started to get dangerous. There's some seriously bad people involved and I'm afraid they might try to come after you.

JASON

This is the one that was going so well?

Tom winces. Jason inherited this skill from his mother.

BRIAN

Is this the Mafia or something?

TOM

No, but it's like that. I want you guys to stay at the Gallaghers for a few days. Go straight home with them from school, don't answer their phone or their door, don't believe anything you hear from anybody you don't know.

JASON

I think, in the interests of my own safety, you should let me carry a gun. A nine millimeter would be nice.

TOM

I need you guys to be ready to go at a moment's notice. We may have to leave LA for a while.

JASON

No way. I've got a date this weekend.

Tom's exhaustion gets the better of him and he slumps forward, head in hands.

BRIAN

Dad?

JASON

Hey, Dad, I'm sorry. I was just, you know.

Tom gets himself together and straightens up.

TOM
 It's okay. It's been a long couple
 of days. Just do what I said,
 okay? Promise?

JASON
 Sure, whatever.

Brian hugs Tom quickly, which Tom accepts with silent
 gratitude, and then goes out.

JASON (cont'd)
 About that nine...

TOM
 Go.

JASON
 Be careful, Dad.

TOM
 You too, son.

They nod at each other and Jason goes out. Tom stares after
 them for a long moment, wondering if he'll ever see them
 again.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES--DAY

Susan is at her desk, using her computer. She's in the
 Factiva database, which contains major newspaper stories from
 around the world. She's tracking the word "vampire" and
 she's limited the search to news stories. She's paging
 through the hits when her face registers that she's found
 what she's looking for.

She grabs a battered phone book, looks up a number in the
 blue pages, and dials. We hear the phone at the other end
 RING.

EXT. METROPOLITAN STATE HOSPITAL, NORWALK--DAY

Susan locks her car and walks toward the large, hybrid
 Spanish style building.

INT. STATE HOSPITAL--DAY

At the front desk, the RECEPTIONIST greets Susan. An
 ORDERLY, who is large enough to be able to control a patient,
 stands nearby.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

SUSAN

I talked to Dr. Chang a few minutes ago. I'm Susan Altman, from the paper.

RECEPTIONIST

And you're here to see...?

SUSAN

A patient named Jonas Fielder.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh yeah. The vampire guy.

SUSAN

That would be the one.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, Dr. Chang let me know. I just need to see a picture ID and have you sign the book.

Susan shows her driver's license and signs the book.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Thank you, Ms. Altman.

ORDERLY

I'll take you to Dr. Fielder.

INT. SUNROOM AT THE HOSPITAL--DAY

The Orderly shows Susan into a common room with overstuffed furniture, big windows, lots of plants. There are several PATIENTS present--one nodding off under heavy meds, one playing an electronic keyboard through headphones, one working on a jigsaw puzzle. FIELDER, thirties, is in an slacks and a sport shirt, staring off into space, a mystery novel open in one hand.

ORDERLY

Dr. Fielder, you have a visitor.

Fielder rouses himself, stands up, offers his hand to Susan. He seems quite normal and likable.

FIELDER

Hi.

Susan shakes his hand.

SUSAN

I'm Susan Altman. I'm with the newspaper.

FIELDER

I know the name. Pleased to meet you. Care to sit down?

ORDERLY

I'll be around if you need anything.

The Orderly moves out of earshot, but never gets too far away. Susan sits across from Fielder.

FIELDER

Is there something I can help you with?

SUSAN

I remembered reading about you in the paper a few months ago. You claimed there were vampires living in LA.

FIELDER

Not just in LA, though they're more common here. And of course the term "vampire" is rather sensationalistic and distracting. May I ask what your interest is?

SUSAN

This is in the way of background research at this point. Do you mind if I take some notes, and possibly quote you in a future story?

FIELDER

Be my guest. I've read some of your pieces. They seemed honest. It would be interesting to be quoted accurately for a change.

Susan takes out a notebook and quickly jots down a few notes.

SUSAN

I'll certainly do my best. You said "the term 'vampire' is rather sensationalistic and distracting."

Fielder registers his pleasure at being quoted accurately.

FIELDER

That's correct.

SUSAN

Can you elaborate?

FIELDER

Do you know much about evolution, Ms. Altman?

SUSAN

The usual, I suppose. But that was your field, correct? Evolutionary biology?

FIELDER

Indeed. Evolution is like anything else. It tends to work in fits and starts. You get some kind of major environmental stress, and mutations pop up. If the mutation provides an advantage, and if it breeds true, you can have a new species in pretty short order.

SUSAN

I would say our environment is pretty stressed right now. Especially in LA.

FIELDER

Exactly. And I had DNA evidence proving that new species has split off from the human race. Unfortunately, a predatory one. We're the sheep, and they're the wolves.

SUSAN

And they live on human blood?

FIELDER

Not exactly. I'll get to that in a minute. You're of course familiar with the term "sociopath."

She has a similar reaction to the one Tom had when Roxanne said "pathological liar." This is all weirdly familiar.

SUSAN

People with no real human emotions.

FIELDER

More or less. The technical name is Antisocial Personality Disorder. Symptoms include failure to form emotional attachments, lack of guilt, inability to take responsibility for one's actions. They're typically liars, con men--

SUSAN

Heads of major corporations?

FIELDER

Well, yes, exactly. Our economic and political climate favors ruthlessness, opportunism, lack of personal investment.

SUSAN

That's all well and good, Dr. Fielder, but that's hardly proof of a separate species.

FIELDER

It's not just the socio-economic environment these creatures are adapted for. They can metabolize carbon monoxide and dioxide. They even seem to require them.

SUSAN

That's why they love LA.

FIELDER

Though more and more cities are becoming habitable for them.

SUSAN

Tell me about the evidence.

FIELDER

I was doing a research study on sociopathology at UCLA. I discovered that a small, but significant number of my subjects had only 42 chromosomes. Normal humans have 46. And all my subjects with 42 chromosomes were sterile, male and female alike.

SUSAN

I don't get it.

FIELDER

Neither did I. How was this mutation getting passed on? Then, in the middle of it all, there was a murder on campus. It turned out the victim was some sort of sports person, so there was a lot of attention.

SUSAN

Oh my god. Tyrone Johnson, the quarterback.

FIELDER

That's right. He was--

SUSAN

--drained of blood.

FIELDER

You remember the case. So six weeks later one of my 42-chromosome women shows up pregnant. Her conception date matched the night of the murder. I did a DNA test on the amniotic fluid and identified the father. He was also in my study. Sterile again, of course.

SUSAN

Did you tell him what you were thinking?

FIELDER

No. I set a trap for him. I left a unit of whole blood in the lab fridge and made sure he knew about it. The next day it was gone, and he had live sperm cells.

SUSAN

So they have to drink human blood--

FIELDER

Or semen, which is not that different, biologically--

SUSAN

--to reproduce?

FIELDER

That's about the size of it. They crave both blood and semen, which makes them potential sexual predators--at least on male humans--as well.

SUSAN

So one or both of your vampires killed Tyrone Johnson. Did you call the cops?

FIELDER

That's how I ended up here.

SUSAN

What about your evidence?

FIELDER

My suspect put a virus into my computer and wiped out all my backups. He agreed to a DNA test and then faked the results.

SUSAN

Couldn't your lawyer do anything?

FIELDER

My lawyer was one of them, as it turns out. Didn't figure it out until afterwards, then I had a colleague test one of her hairs.

Susan's paranoia kicks in.

SUSAN

Do you mind telling me who your lawyer was?

FIELDER

No, not at all. Roxanne Vallence, of Brock, James and Vallence.

Susan reacts.

FIELDER (cont'd)

You know her?

SUSAN

I think she may have been after my boyfriend's...

FIELDER

Semen? I don't want to alarm you, but I would imagine she got it. They are very charming, very persuasive.

SUSAN

That's what I hear. Go on about Roxanne.

FIELDER

She had offered to take the case for free, and who was I to turn down a firm like that? I suppose I'm just lucky they let me live.

SUSAN

I was wondering about that.

FIELDER

The way I figure it, I'm actually helping their cause. I sound so crazy I discredit my own story. Roxanne as much as said that, right before she and my soon-to-be-ex-wife had me committed here.

SUSAN

You don't sound that crazy to me.

Fielder shrugs.

SUSAN (cont'd)

So how do we fight them?

FIELDER

Don't even try. They're physically weak, and in general they'll avoid any kind of struggle or confrontation. But they're nearly invulnerable--they can take almost any kind of physical punishment and recover in a matter of minutes. On top of which, they're cunning, and they have no scruples at all. They've taken us right out of the top of the food chain.

SUSAN

And they have no weaknesses?

FIELDER

Well...there is one thing. They produce ethyl alcohol as a by-product of their metabolism. It's in their sweat--it helps disseminate the pheromones that make people trust them.

Susan looks at him questioningly.

FIELDER

It makes them flammable. Another reason they don't like oxygen-rich environments.

Susan stands, impatient to check out his story, to start acting on this information. The Orderly, who's been hovering, starts to move in.

SUSAN

Thank you for your time. You've been a huge help. Can I come back and talk some more?

FIELDER

I'm not going anywhere.

SUSAN

Great. Thank you again.

Susan shakes his hand and starts to walk away. As she does so, Fielder goes off the rails. He does it quietly, in exactly the same calm, reasonable tone of voice he's been using the entire time.

FIELDER

Listen, do you have a way to get hold of President Gore?

SUSAN

(turning back)
President Gore?

FIELDER

Yes, yes, the real president. He's got powerful friends. They can get me out of here. His headquarters is north of the Arctic Circle.

SUSAN

Dr. Fielder, are you feeling all right?

FIELDER

If you can't help, you can't, it's just that I don't know how to reach him. The headquarters is near the entrance to the hollow earth. There are saucers coming in and out of there all day long...

The Orderly sits next to Fielder and rubs his neck gently.

ORDERLY

The lady has to go now, Dr. Fielder.

FIELDER

Okay.

ORDERLY

You go on, now, ma'am. We'll be fine here.

FIELDER

Bye now.

We see Susan's face as she hurries away, showing a mixture of confusion, sadness, and betrayal.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE--NIGHT

Tom parks his car on the side of the road at the top of Mulholland Drive, with a spectacular view of the lights of LA. He's recently woken up from a fitful sleep and he's stiff and sore as he climbs out of the car.

He could be thinking any number of things as he looks down at the city--maybe wondering where Susan is, or where his kids are. Maybe wondering how many vampires are prowling the streets.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT--NIGHT

Tom puts the remains of a salad and a milkshake onto his tray and puts them in the garbage. Then he walks down the hall to the bathroom, carrying a plastic bag from the drugstore.

INT. BATHROOM--NIGHT

Tom, bare to the waist, examines himself in the mirror. His two-day old shirt is wadded up on the counter, next to a new, recently used toothbrush, tube of toothpaste, and disposable razor. He's not looking that great. He dries his armpits with a paper towel, puts on deodorant and a new T-shirt.

He checks his watch, sighs, throws everything back in the bag, and heads for the door.

EXT. RITZY HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT--NIGHT

Tom, in his fresh T-shirt and shave, rings the buzzer outside a very exclusive apartment building. It's about 11 pm.

PATRICK (o.s.)

Who is it?

TOM

It's Tom.

PATRICK (o.s.)

(long pause)

You're not in very good odor all of a sudden.

TOM

I just got a big break, my friend, and Roxanne's pissed. Buzz me in, will you?

INT. PATRICK'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

It's very swank, furnished in Art Deco antiques and reproductions. Tom, just inside, is looking around in surprise. Patrick is in a robe--we get the sense Tom may have interrupted something, and there may be somebody in the bedroom.

TOM

Good grief, how much do they pay you?

PATRICK

I've got a little money of my own. What can I do for you, Tom?

TOM

Actually, I hope to be helping you, here, pretty quickly. The reason Roxanne is upset is I gave notice last night. I'm moving up to Latham & Watkins.

PATRICK

They hired you?

TOM

You don't know what I did with the Nathan Judd case.

PATRICK

Your client slashed his wrists. That doesn't seem like something to brag about.

Tom shrugs, and makes to leave.

TOM

If you're not interested...

PATRICK

Interested in what?

TOM

Coming with me. They've got a second senior litigator position open.

PATRICK

In exchange for what?

TOM

I just want to get a few things out of my office, but my keycard doesn't work any longer. Loan me yours, and I'll drop it in your mailbox when I'm done.

PATRICK

I don't think so, Tom.

TOM

Suit yourself.

Tom turns to go, and gets as far as his hand on the door.

PATRICK

Wait.

Tom hesitates.

PATRICK (cont'd)
There's no job with Latham &
Watkins.

TOM
(beat)
No.

PATRICK
Roxanne finally dropped the axe.

TOM
Yeah.

PATRICK
You're a decent guy, Tom. You're
just not a very good lawyer.

Tom opens the door and is really headed out this time.

TOM
I don't need insults right now,
Patrick.

PATRICK
Hang on, hang on. You should at
least be able to get your stuff.

Tom closes the door again, turns slowly. Patrick goes into his bedroom and comes out with a magnetic passkey, careful to close the door after him on his way in and out, as if there's somebody in there--boyfriend or girlfriend--he doesn't want Tom to see.

PATRICK
Don't forget to bring it back. I
don't want to end up like you.

TOM
Not much chance of that, is there?
But yeah, thanks.

He shakes Patrick's hand, and Patrick watches him leave.

INT. LAW OFFICE PARKING GARAGE--NIGHT

The clock above the gate where Tom gets his parking ticket says 3 am. His tires squeal in the echoing, deserted garage as he takes a spot near the entrance to the building. He gets out of the car, starts to walk away, then hesitates.

He goes back to the trunk and takes out a pair of emergency flares, which he puts in his back pocket.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING--NIGHT

Tom uses Patrick's key card to get in the building, rings for the elevator and paces while waiting for it, nervous, guilty. When the elevator arrives and the bell goes off he jumps a foot.

INT. LAW OFFICE LOBBY--NIGHT

Tom gets out of the elevator and looks around to make sure nobody else is in the office.

TOM
Hello? Anybody here?

He walks down the hall to Roxanne's office.

ROXANNE'S OFFICE--NIGHT

He turns on the light, goes straight to her desk. He tries the drawer; it's locked. He looks up, thinking hard--he has to make a decision as to how far he's willing to go.

TOM
In for a penny...

TOM'S OFFICE--NIGHT

He reaches in, flicks on the light, goes to his desk, finds a screwdriver.

ROXANNE'S OFFICE--NIGHT

He jimmys the lock on the center drawer of her desk. It's flimsy metal, but it still takes a bit of work. Finally it pops open, freeing the other drawers. Tom takes the Pleasure Dome brochure out of the side drawer and studies it for a few seconds, turning it over to see the map showing how to get there. Satisfied, he folds it lengthwise and puts it in his back pocket, next to the flares. He puts the broken drawers back into some kind of order and leaves the office.

TOM'S OFFICE--NIGHT

He puts the screwdriver back and gathers up a few files for his cover story. He hesitates when he comes to a framed picture of Brian and Jason. He picks up the photo and lets himself feel the sadness for a second or two, then:

The elevator CLANGS.

His nerves are stretched tight and he drops the photo on his desk, cracking the glass. He stares at it for a second, knowing this is not a good omen, then puts the photo on top of his stack of files. He turns toward the door of his office as:

FRANK, a uniformed security guard, appears in the doorway. He seems to know and like Tom, but he's also tense and suspicious.

FRANK

Oh, it's you, Mr. Davis.

TOM

Evening, Frank.

FRANK

It's almost three-thirty, Mr. Davis. Hasn't been evening for hours now.

TOM

Sorry if I made trouble for you. I was just on my way out.

Frank notices the framed photo.

FRANK

You're not leaving us, are you Mr. Davis?

TOM

What? Oh, that. Just need a new piece of glass for the frame.

FRANK

I'll go down with you.

INT. ELEVATOR--NIGHT

Two nervous men in a small elevator.

TOM
You were going for your realtor's
license, weren't you?

FRANK
That was a year ago.

TOM
Oh.
(beat)
How'd that turn out?

The elevator DINGS.

FRANK
Here we are.

The elevator doors open on Patrick and a SECOND GUARD.

INT. LAW OFFICE PARKING GARAGE--CONTINUOUS

PATRICK
Okay, thank you, gentlemen, I can
take it from here.

FRANK
Are you sure? Because we should
really call the cops in this type
of situation.

PATRICK
I don't think Tom did any real harm
up there. I'll just give him a
little talking to and then let him
disappear.

Tom's eyes are drawn to a can of spray paint sitting in plain
view near the door. He looks up, and sees that the security
camera has been sprayed over. He looks at Patrick. Patrick
smiles. Yes, he sprayed over the camera.

TOM
(to Frank)
On second thought, maybe you should
call the cops.

PATRICK
Shut up, Tom.

He looks at Tom as he says this, quietly, and he puts all the
power of his sociopathic persuasion into it.

We can see Tom consider Patrick's words as though they contained a gem of profound wisdom, and he nods as he complies.

Patrick then turns his "charm" on the two guards.

PATRICK (cont'd)
You guys can go back to work now.

FRANK
Yes, sir.

SECOND GUARD
Call us if you need anything.

Tom blinks, hard, a couple of times, stretches his neck, like a driver trying to keep from falling asleep at the wheel. There's just a trace of panic deep in his eyes because a part of him, the part that Patrick doesn't have hypnotized, knows this is a life or death situation.

The guards get into the elevator. Tom wants badly to tell them what's going on, but the words just won't come. The doors close and the elevator starts up.

Patrick takes the pile of folders and the photo from Tom's hand, looks through them, and tosses them on the floor of the garage.

PATRICK
What did you really go up there
for? Come on, Tom, hand it over.

Tom, still hypnotized, reaches for the brochure in his back pocket, and his hand finds the flares. This is where Patrick unwittingly provides his own undoing.

PATRICK (cont'd)
That's right, Tom. Hand it over.
Give me what you've got there.

Tom pulls out the flares and shows them to Patrick.

PATRICK (cont'd)
What the--

As if showing a child how the flares work, Tom grabs them to break them open and activate them.

PATRICK (cont'd)
No. Don't...

Tom's real personality comes to the surface long enough for him to break the flares open and throw them into Patrick's chest.

He steps back as Patrick bursts into flame, screaming.

PATRICK (cont'd)

NOOO!!!

The spell breaks. Tom shakes his head to clear it, and gives the burning Patrick a grin of primitive triumph. Then he looks both ways and sprints for his car as Patrick continues to burn, leaving nothing but ash.

The elevator doors open and Frank and the Second Guard rush out. There's nothing left of Patrick but a black smear on the concrete floor.

FRANK

Holy...

SECOND GUARD

We got to get help on this one.

FRANK

Yeah? Like who? You want to call the cops? What exactly are you going to tell them happened here?

SECOND GUARD

I...I don't know.

FRANK

Looks to me like some kids snuck in and set off some fireworks.

SECOND GUARD

And the camera?

FRANK

Kids these days got no respect for property.

He turns to look at the Second Guard and suddenly he is very serious.

FRANK (cont'd)

I was out of work for a year and a half before this. I'm not making waves. I am keeping this job.

Suddenly there is a SCREAMING OF TIRES as Tom roars by in his car.

We get a glimpse of his panicked face behind the wheel as he swerves around the two guards and they dodge out of his way.

SECOND GUARD

And what about him?

FRANK

I have a feeling we won't be seeing him any more.

INT. LAW OFFICE PARKING GARAGE--NIGHT

Tom barrels through the gate of the parking garage, smashing the wooden barricade arm, and SCREAMS into the deserted street, fishtailing away toward the freeway.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT--DAY

A long, long shot of the open parking lot of an oyster bar in Malibu. There's a view of the ocean in the distance. All we can hear is the CRASHING of the waves. We can just see Tom through the open window of his car, checking his watch, fretting. Finally Susan's car pulls up next to his.

Tom and Susan both get out. Tom rushes to her and wraps her in his arms. He's shaking, quite possibly crying.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR--DAY

Susan is driving, Tom is sitting forward, very keyed up.

SUSAN

But then, right at the end, he completely loses it and starts talking about flying saucers and the hollow Earth--

TOM

Which is why nobody else has ever believed the other stuff.

SUSAN

The vampire stuff.

TOM

The stuff that's actually true.

SUSAN

Listen to us.

TOM

It's like Brian and Jason arguing about whether Spider Man could beat up Batman.

SUSAN

Except...

TOM

Yeah. This is really happening. Except...

SUSAN

You're the only one who's actually seen it.

TOM

Yeah.

Susan doesn't want to be jealous. It's not really her nature. But there's a question she has to ask.

SUSAN

There's one more thing. He said it's not just blood they crave, but...other bodily fluids.

TOM

Ah. So that's what Roxanne was up to. It wasn't just my boyish charm.

SUSAN

He said they're very persuasive.

TOM

When I was alone with her in her office, it was like I was hypnotized or something. I was lucky to get out.

SUSAN

So nothing happened.

TOM

No.

SUSAN

You didn't come back to my place, and...

TOM
If I'd let her do that to me, I
wouldn't be here now.

Without looking away from the road, Susan reaches over and
combs her fingers through Tom's hair, the way she would pet a
cat.

SUSAN
I know, sweetie. I believe you.

TOM
About Roxanne, or about the vampire
business?

SUSAN
All of it.

TOM
Why? I mean, how can you?

SUSAN
I wouldn't have gotten this far
without a really good bullshit
detector. You're not lying, and
neither was Fielder.

TOM
Until he went off the rails.

SUSAN
That was different. His whole look
changed. There was a light in his
eyes, and it went out when he
started raving. In any case, I
mean to find out what's going on
firsthand.

TOM
Even if it means driving to Eureka?

SUSAN
What's in Eureka?

Tom takes out the brochure.

TOM
The Pleasure Dome.

SUSAN
I've heard of that. Didn't IM Pei
design it?

TOM
One of his students, it says here.

SUSAN
So suddenly you're interested in
architecture?

TOM
That's where Roxanne is.

SUSAN
You're sure this is what you want
to do? Go up there after them?

TOM
I'm not going after them. I just
need to find out enough to protect
myself.

He starts to read the brochure again.

TOM (cont'd)
It looks like there's plenty of
places you could spy on them from
the woods...

He breaks off and looks away.

TOM (cont'd)
I can't read this now, it makes me
carsick.

He's not kidding. He is sick. He bends over, gripping his
own arms.

SUSAN
Tom? Are you okay? Do you need me
to pull over?

TOM
I killed a man last night. Just a
few hours ago.

SUSAN
Patrick? That wasn't a man. That
was some kind of...thing. A
monster.

TOM
I used to make fun of his haircut.
I hated it that he got all the high-
profile cases.

(MORE)

TOM(cont'd)

But when I lit him up, it was like this total caveman feeling of joy. Triumph. I can still feel it, and it makes me sick and scared. I don't want to be like that.

Susan edges over and pulls onto the shoulder, then in one motion puts the car in park, takes her seat belt off, and gathers Tom in her arms.

SUSAN

We like a little caveman once in a while. As long as you don't make a habit of it.

TOM

I wanted to be like him. I wanted the big cases, the money. The Z3s.

SUSAN

That's not you.

TOM

No. No, I guess I don't have what it really takes.

SUSAN

If you did, I wouldn't be here now.

TOM

We have to find a way to get clear of this. I can't live the rest of my life like this.

SUSAN

We'll think of something. I promise.

INT. MOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

A budget motel room on the interstate near Eureka. Susan flips the switch by the door as she and Tom enter, turning on a single lamp by the queen size bed. They've got a few odds and ends--bottled water, shampoo, a change of clothes--in plastic bags from a big box discount store. They're both exhausted from the long day's drive.

TOM

I can't believe you finally let me drive your car.

SUSAN

It was time to take the
relationship to the next level.
How does it feel?

TOM

What I'm feeling right now doesn't
have much to do with you and me.

SUSAN

And I feel like I'm going to die if
I don't pee.

Susan goes into the bathroom and closes the door. Tom gets the brochure and a small stack of standard copier paper with printing on it out of a plastic bag. Then he reaches under his shirt to pull out a large, tightly folded piece of paper. He unfolds it to reveal a topographical map of the area. He spreads it all out on the bed and gets a glass of water. The toilet FLUSHES and WATER RUNS, muted by the bathroom door. Tom stands looking down at the items on the bed, drinking his water. Susan comes up behind him and puts her arms around him.

TOM

I still feel bad about stealing
from a library.

SUSAN

The map? We'll mail it back when
we're done. Show me this brochure
you risked your life over.

They sit on the bed, two people comfortable with each other's bodies, Susan with her arm around his back and her head resting on his shoulder. Tom starts to read from the brochure. We get just a glimpse of the pictures, enough to tantalize us, but no more.

TOM

"Your next corporate conference
will make an unforgettable
impression when you--"

SUSAN

Skip the hype and show me the
pictures.

Tom pages through the pamphlet. They look.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Wow.

TOM
It is beautiful.

SUSAN
"In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
a stately pleasure dome decree
where Alph, the sacred river, ran
through caverns measureless to man
down to a sunless sea..."

TOM
Yeah, yeah, I had Coleridge in
college too. It says here they can
accommodate 200 guests, plus
support staff. Sealed environment,
in case you're allergic to all that
nature around you.

SUSAN
They'll like that. They can have
all their unburned hydrocarbons and
monoxide brought in special. What
did you find on the Web?

Tom gathers up the sheets of copier paper.

TOM
A lot of technical stuff that I
can't see us needing.

SUSAN
Like what?

TOM
Here's a floor plan of the support
areas--kitchen, control room,
server room, stuff like that.
Stuff we won't need because we're
not going inside. Here's a menu
from a Microsoft retreat they had
there.

SUSAN
What's this one?

TOM
Structural details. The place is
completely suspended over the gorge
on steel cables.

SUSAN
So if we could just cut the
cables...

TOM

Don't even kid around about it. We are no match for them. We're going to take some pictures--you did bring the camera, right?

SUSAN

It's in the trunk.

TOM

Good. So we'll take pictures and keep our heads down and get out alive with the information.

SUSAN

And then what?

TOM

If Fielder is right--

SUSAN

Big if.

TOM

We have to assume he's telling the truth about the chromosome stuff. Otherwise we've had it. There has to be a pretty simple test just to count chromosomes. You can publish a story that will force these people to get tested--

SUSAN

It's not that easy, you know. I have to sell an editor on it. I have to have at least two sources, neither of whom I'm sleeping with and neither of whom is in an institution.

TOM

We can get a DNA sample. A strand of Roxanne's hair from her office. All we have to do is get the ball rolling.

SUSAN

I'm not disagreeing. We have to get the photos. But I should be the one to do it, and you should stay here.

TOM

Susan--

SUSAN

Hear me out. I'm a pro at this. I'm more likely to recognize political figures than you are. I'm a better photographer. I've done undercover work. And they don't know me. If I get caught, I can pass for a backpacker who got lost.

TOM

Your logic is flawless.

SUSAN

Thank you. So you'll--

TOM

No. No way I'm letting you go up there alone.

It clear Tom is not backing down. Susan reluctantly smiles, touches his lips with her fingertips.

SUSAN

Okay, caveman.

TOM

Okay, then.

Tom yawns suddenly. He's exhausted and yet totally tense at the same time.

SUSAN

Yeah, me too.

TOM

I'm never going to sleep. Not with this ahead of us.

Susan stands up, gathers up the papers on the bed and tosses them on the floor, then begins to unbutton her shirt. She smiles knowingly.

SUSAN

Oh, yes you will.

INT. MOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

Later. The light is out, and Tom and Susan are in spoon formation. Tom is just drifting off to sleep, holding Susan loosely from behind. Susan's eyes are open.

SUSAN
(whispers)
Are you awake?

TOM
Mmmmmmmmmmm.

SUSAN
I need you to promise me something.

TOM
What?

SUSAN
I need you to promise me you won't
ever lie to me. Anything else I
think I could stand.

TOM
You're saying I can mess around, as
long as I tell you about it?

SUSAN
Don't tease. I'm scared. I can't
stand the idea of living in a world
where truth doesn't matter at all.

TOM
I know, baby. I hate it too.

SUSAN
Promise.

TOM
I promise I will never lie to you.

Susan closes her eyes and is instantly asleep. Now it's Tom who lies with his eyes open, thoughts racing.

EXT. A SIDE ROAD--DAY

Susan's car climbs along a twisting road into the forest. The sun is barely up, and there's a heavy ground fog. Even though it's daylight, the feeling is creepy, ominous.

An OLD MAN is walking by the side of the road, carrying a fishing rod and tackle. Even though she wasn't close to hitting him, Susan is startled and swerves widely around him. He looks suspiciously at the car as it passes, and Tom recoils from his glance.

They pass the entrance to the Pleasure Dome, which is guarded and barricaded, and keep heading upwards.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR--CONTINUOUS

Tom is looking at the topographic map, Susan is driving. Both look a little haggard and scared.

TOM
It looks like there should be a
turnoff coming up on the right.
Like a logging road or something.

SUSAN
There it is.

They pull off onto a dirt road that winds under massive redwood trees.

TOM
Anywhere along here.

Once they're out of sight of the main road, Susan pulls off between two trees and stops the car. They sit for a second as the engine ticks and birds squabble in the distance.

SUSAN
Want to turn back?

TOM
Yes.

She watches to see if he's serious. He is, but he's going ahead just the same. He opens the passenger door. Susan pops the trunk.

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST--DAY

They both get out and walk around to the back of the car.

There are new camping supplies there, still in plastic bags. A tent, sleeping bag, air mattress, lantern, a couple of cheap backpacks. Also a camera bag. They load up the packs and lock the car.

Tom removes a cheap compass from its packaging, gets it settled down, and consults the topographic map.

TOM
Shouldn't be more than a mile or two. That way.

The direction he's pointing is perpendicular to the road. Susan nods and there's another brief pause as the danger of what they're doing settles over them like a cold mist. Tom reaches out, Susan takes his hand, and they walk into the woods together.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE FOREST--DAY

Long shot of Tom and Susan, separated now, struggling uphill. Susan in the lead, Tom behind. Tom stops to catch his breath. Susan looks back and Tom, guilty, hurries to catch up.

EXT. STILL DEEPER IN THE FOREST--DAY

It's an hour later. Tom is clearly exhausted, sweat-stained, ready to drop. Susan is not in much better shape.

TOM
Sorry, but I'm going to have to take another break. Racquetball every other week is not adequate training for this.

SUSAN
Just another minute. There's something up ahead.

Tom and Susan walk toward us, then, as they emerge from the trees, Susan drops to a crouch and gestures for Tom to get down. Together they crawl to the lip of a cliff, their fatigue and their packs forgotten, awe and amazement on both their faces.

REVERSE TO SHOW:

The Pleasure Dome, suspended over rushing white water like a grounded space station. Tom and Susan lie on the edge of a cliff in the foreground. The dome itself is white, glittering in the morning sunlight. Birds circle above the dome, but below Tom and Susan.

The forest all around is a deep, velvety green, the sky cloudless blue.

SUSAN

Almost funny, isn't it?

TOM

What's that?

SUSAN

That they'd come to a place like this. It's everything they're trying to destroy.

TOM

I don't think a sense of the ironic is one of their strong points. Do you hear something?

There's a faint sound of HELICOPTER ROTORS in the distance. They look up, scanning the sky, and Susan points.

SUSAN

There. A helicopter.

As they watch, the helicopter swoops down and carefully lands on a helipad on solid ground on the left side of the canyon. We can just see SECURITY GUARDS in caps, shades, and flak vests, carrying automatic weapons, run out of the dome and across a wide footbridge to greet the helicopter.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Do you have the binoculars?

Tom squirms out of his pack and fishes through it, finally pulling out the binoculars. Susan has her hand out for them, but Tom doesn't notice. He rolls back to the cliff edge and focuses them on the dome. Susan shakes her head and smiles forgivingly.

TOM

Looks like they're just unloading supplies or something.

Through the binoculars we see that UNIFORMED WORKERS in white pants and T-shirts have run onto the pad. They have begun to unload refrigerated containers and wheel them back into the dome.

(We don't know this yet, but what they're bringing in is a huge supply of human blood for the afternoon's festivities.)

Tom finally hands off the binoculars to Susan.

SUSAN

The helicopter's not the only way
in and out though, is it?

TOM

There's a road, off to your right.
See the other walkway?

Through the binoculars we see the main entrance. There's another GUARD standing there, smoking. As we watch, an OFFICER comes up and appears to be shouting at him about the cigarette, which the guard quickly throws to the ground and crushes out with his boot.

We follow the footbridge over the vertiginous drop to where it disappears into the trees on the right bank of the river.

SUSAN

So we're in great shape. We'll be
able to see them however they
leave.

TOM

Yep.

Susan lowers the binoculars and looks at Tom with sympathy.

SUSAN

I can take the first shift. If you
want to, we could set up the tent
and you could sleep for a while.

TOM

As long as you don't mind, yeah.
I'd like to try.

SUSAN

And you remember what we agreed on.

TOM

Never give you a live animal for a
present?

SUSAN

I'm serious, Tom. If something
happens and they only get one of
us...

TOM

Yeah, yeah. I know. No heroics,
go for help.

SUSAN
Come on, I'll help you get set up.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE FOREST--DAY

The clearing is a few hundred feet from the cliff, far enough away that the cliff edge isn't visible. Tom and Susan are a couple of minutes from having the tent set up. The contents of their packs are scattered around the clearing--food, water, Susan's expensive digital SLR camera with telephoto lens and auxiliary battery pack. They talk as they work.

SUSAN
I know we're kind of making this whole thing up as we go along, but have you thought about what happens after we drive out of here with our list of names?

TOM
You write your story--

SUSAN
I mean what happens to us. Here, let me do that.

She takes the support from Tom, who's been fumbling with it, and threads it through the tabs on the tent.

SUSAN
Too many family camping trips when I was growing up. What I was saying is, they're already after you, and--

TOM
Yeah. Now they're going to be after you, too.

Tom gets out the air mattress and begins to pump it up.

TOM (cont'd)
We're going to have to hide out. Mexico or someplace.

SUSAN
And your kids?

TOM
I keep going over it and over it, but it comes out the same. I can't leave them behind.

(MORE)

TOM(cont'd)

First of all, I'd miss them too much. Secondly, I can't take the chance of them being used as hostages.

SUSAN

This really sucks, you know. We had a good life. We both worked so hard to get it. And it's gone. Everything. Our careers, our houses, our friends, our books, my grandmother's china...

She's nearly in tears. Tom stops what he's doing and goes to her, holding her.

TOM

I know, sweetheart. I'm sorry I--

She pushes him away, gently.

SUSAN

Don't you dare. You're not the one I blame for this. But Roxanne and her pals? They owe me.

With a flick of her wrist, the tent is standing up.

TOM

You're amazing.

He throws the air mattress and a sleeping bag inside.

TOM (cont'd)

I'd ask you in, but it's only our first date...

SUSAN

Wise guy. I'll wake you up in a while.

She kisses him quickly, grabs the camera, and heads back toward the cliff edge. Tom watches her go, then crawls inside.

INT. TENT--DAY

He gets the sleeping bag onto the air mattress and stretches out on his back, hands tucked behind his head.

TOM

This is not going to happen.

He turns over, his eyes slowly close, his hands twitch twice, and he's fast asleep.

EXT. THE CLIFF--DAY

Looking out at Susan from the trees. It's at least an hour or two later. She's watching the Pleasure Dome through the viewfinder of the camera.

THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER:

The helipad. The copter sits there quietly. One armed GUARD idles nearby.

The front entrance. Two GUARDS talking, seemingly complaining about something.

ON SUSAN:

She checks her watch, rubs her neck, shifts her position. Then she once more sweeps the amazing vista in front of her, pausing as she sees a Red-shouldered Hawk on a nearby branch. She focuses on him and watches breathlessly for a second or two, maybe snaps a picture. Then the hawk sees something and leaps into the air at the same time that Susan hears a distant RUSTLING.

She turns back toward us and her eyes go wide.

INT. TENT--DAY

Tom is fast asleep and SNORING. A twig SNAPS outside the tent and Tom jerks awake. He lies for a moment motionless, then, as quietly as possible, he gets into a crouch.

He eases back the tent flap and looks around.

REVERSE TO SHOW:

Six armed guards like the ones at the helipad, cap and shades, M-16s, surround the tent, and all of their weapons are pointing right at Tom. He slowly and carefully puts up his hands; there's nothing else for him to do. The SQUAD LEADER points to one of the other guards.

SQUAD LEADER

Look around, see if there's anybody else.

EXT. THE ROAD--DAY

The guards emerge from the forest at the same place where Susan's car is parked. There are two jeeps there. The squad leader, a beefy ex-military type, points to the back seat of one of them with his M-16.

SQUAD LEADER

You. Davis, is that your name?
Get in.

Tom obeys. His hands have been cuffed in front of him, and that makes getting in the jeep awkward. The guards start to split up between the two vehicles. One of the younger ones, a green kid named WASSERMAN, heads for the same jeep that Tom is in. The Squad Leader grabs him by the scruff of his neck, turns him, and shoves him toward the other jeep, then gets in next to Tom.

SQUAD LEADER

Go.

They take off.

EXT. THE BIGGER ROAD--DAY

As they turn onto the paved road, Tom can't keep himself from looking around.

SQUAD LEADER

Looking for somebody?

TOM

Just looking.

SQUAD LEADER

You're up here with somebody else
and you lied to us about it? It's
your ass.

EXT. THE DOME PARKING LOT--DAY

The guards--except for the two drivers--pile out of the jeep, more slowly than they got in. The Squad Leader again motions to Tom with his gun.

SQUAD LEADER

Out.

As Tom complies, the jeeps squeal off and head for some unseen staging area. The Squad Leader addresses the remaining guards.

SQUAD LEADER (cont'd)
Wait here. I'll find out what they want me to do with him.

He goes in. The other guards mill around, clearly not eager to go inside. Wasserman lights a cigarette, missing the irony of his complaint:

WASSERMAN
I can't breathe in that fucking place.

Daniels, next to him, is one of those slightly older, know-it-all types.

DANIELS
That's because the clients turned the 02 down.

WASSERMAN
The what?

DANIELS
The 02. Oxygen, you moron. They got it down around 18 percent instead of 21 where it ought to be. One of the tech guys told me.

WASSERMAN
What the hell they do that for? That's fucking weird.

TOM
(almost to himself)
Because the more oxygen there is, the easier things catch fire.

Daniels shoves Tom, hard enough to make him take a step back.

DANIELS
Shut up, asshole. We want your comments, we'll ask.

WASSERMAN
They don't seem that weird or anything. They seem nice.

DANIELS

Yeah, they're okay--for a bunch of lawyers. They want low O2, they can have low O2.

WASSERMAN

Hey, you know who I thought I saw? Was that really--

DANIELS

(nodding toward Tom)
Shut the fuck up, all right?

WASSERMAN

Oh, yeah. Right.

The Squad Leader comes back out, points to Wasserman.

SQUAD LEADER

Okay, Wasserman, come with me.
(to Daniels)
Daniels, back to your post.
(to Tom)
Okay, asshole, let's go.

INT. PLEASURE DOME--CONTINUOUS

The Squad Leader and Wasserman march Tom down the entry hall. This is another breathtaking shot. The place is very high tech, with exposed girders and huge expanses of window that open onto the forest, the rocks, and even show the rushing water 50 feet or so below the floor.

To the left, up a couple of steps, is a dining room/banquet hall that can seat 200, with a view all the way around. To the right is a lounge area, and past that, offices, and past that, the kitchen.

Tom is awed by the view, but also wrinkles his nose at the air.

TOM

(to Wasserman)
You're right, it does stink in here.

SQUAD LEADER

Shut up.

He gives Tom a shove to keep him moving down the hall. They come to a door labeled SECURITY and the Squad Leader opens it and pushes Tom in.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE--CONTINUOUS

With Wasserman and the Squad Leader behind him, Tom enters, blinks, and then reacts to the sight of:

DA Clarke, wearing an expensive suit and tie, sitting on one corner of the security officer's desk.

TOM

What are you doing here?

CLARKE

I'm in charge of security for the event. But I think it's a lot more interesting to ask what you're doing here.

SQUAD LEADER

You know this guy?

CLARKE

We've crossed paths.

TOM

So you're one of them.

Clarke doesn't have to ask what Tom's talking about. He can see it in Tom's eyes.

CLARKE

(to the guards)

Thanks, I'll take it from here.

Tom holds out his cuffed hands.

TOM

Can you take these off before you go?

The Squad Leader looks at Clarke, who nods. The Squad Leader takes the cuffs off and puts them back on his belt.

SQUAD LEADER

He gives you any trouble, you let us know.

Clarke opens his suit coat to show a shoulder holster and .38 Special.

CLARKE

I'm not expecting any problems.

SQUAD LEADER
(laughs)
Yes, sir.

Wasserman and the Squad Leader exit and close the door.

CLARKE
Sit down, Davis. You've got a lot
of explaining to do.

TOM
Do you really drink human blood?

CLARKE
Congratulations, Davis. You just
committed suicide.

TOM
I left the whole story with
somebody before I left LA. If
anything happens to me--

CLARKE
Oh, please. That would be Susan
Altman, correct? You've just
killed her too.

There's a firm knock at the door, and Roxanne enters,
talking.

ROXANNE
What's the deal, Matthew? It's
time for the banquet.
(sees Tom)
Oh.

CLARKE
He set off one of the perimeter
alarms. The security guys found
him in a tent in the forest.
There's a great view of the dome
just a few feet from where he was
camped.

ROXANNE
Alone?

CLARKE
We think so. I intend to make sure
before I kill him.

ROXANNE
Tom, Tom, Tom.

CLARKE

He knows.

ROXANNE

Everything?

CLARKE

Enough. Too much.

ROXANNE

Okay. Make it look like an accident.

CLARKE

Do you want his blood?

ROXANNE

Given the Judd business, another drained body might be a little too much. No, a fall into the river should do the trick. It'll explain the crushed skull.

TOM

You can send me to my death, just like that?

ROXANNE

I'm in a bit of a hurry just now, Tom.

TOM

After the way you flirted with me at dinner?

ROXANNE

Tom...

TOM

I was there the day you joined the firm. I showed you how to work the copier. You've met my kids.

Roxanne, on the way out, pats Tom's cheek.

ROXANNE

Goodbye, Tom.

She opens the door, then looks back at Clarke.

ROXANNE (cont'd)

Everybody's heading for the banquet.

(MORE)

ROXANNE (cont'd)

Better wait before you take him out. No reason they should have to see him and get distracted from the big moment.

CLARKE

Okay.

Roxanne exits and closes the door after her.

TOM

The big moment? What are you doing, giving out awards?

CLARKE

Something like that. Just make yourself comfortable. Once everybody's settled, I'll take you out and kill you.

TOM

Do you not feel anything?

CLARKE

I feel lots of things. I just don't feel upset at the thought of killing you. All these empathic emotions of yours, there's nothing real about them. They're just a trick your genes played on you. It's like religion.

TOM

What?

CLARKE

It's the same thing as these emotions of yours. It's just a fluke of the genes whether you're a believer or not. I mean, some old white guy with a beard, who kills kids with AIDS and lets his priests screw their altar boys? I'm supposed to worship that?

TOM

So what do you feel?

CLARKE

Right now, I feel great. I like winning. Ever see a cheetah bring down a gazelle?

TOM

I take it I'm the gazelle.

CLARKE

Welcome to mother nature.

EXT. MAIN STREET OF FRESHWATER, CA--DAY

Susan's car comes barrelling down the street and squeals into a parking space in front of the Humboldt County Sheriff's office. She jumps out, slams the door, and runs toward the station.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE--DAY

It's a small storefront office. There's a female Dispatcher, MAVIS, at a long counter that separates the entry area from the station proper. The entry area has a few plastic chairs along the wall and a coke machine. Visible behind the counter are three or four desks, two of which are occupied. At one of them is a deputy named BERT LITTON, 50s, potbellied, flat-top haircut. At the other is Deputy DAVE KINKAID, early thirties, neatly pressed, ambitious, and media ready. Both are working at out-of-date computers, apparently struggling with reports.

SUSAN

Is the sheriff in? There's an emergency.

MAVIS

He's in court. Deputy Kinkaid is here. What seems to be the problem?

Susan looks at Litton and Kinkaid, neither of whom looks up or registers Mavis's words. She looks back at Mavis.

SUSAN

It's my boyfriend. We were camping in the woods and these armed men came and took him away.

MAVIS

Like cops, or what?

SUSAN

I think they were security guards from the Pleasure Dome.

At the words "Pleasure Dome," Litton--the fat deputy--makes a noise that could be either derision or indigestion, but probably the former.

MAVIS

Back up a little. Why'd they take him and not you?

SUSAN

I was...I was hiking, and he was still asleep. When I came back he was gone, and I heard the sound of them crashing through the trees. I chased after them, but by the time I caught up they had him in a jeep and were driving away.

MAVIS

Did you ask at the Dome?

SUSAN

You can't just drive in there. There's a guardhouse, and...and I was afraid.

Litton coughs, and this time it's obvious enough that Mavis turns around to glare at him. Then she pulls the keyboard over to her and starts to type.

MAVIS

Name of the missing person?

SUSAN

He's not a missing person. He's in that dome, and I want somebody to go up there with me and get him.

MAVIS

We have to fill out a report--

SUSAN

This is an emergency! You can fill out the paperwork later.

There's a momentary standoff as the two stare at each other, then Kinkaid slowly pushes back his chair. The screech of the chair legs on the linoleum floor is startling in the silence. Kinkaid stands up and walks over to the counter.

KINKAID

You folks aren't tree huggers, are you?

SUSAN

No, we--

KINKAID

What were you doing up there in the woods?

SUSAN

Camping, I told you--

KINKAID

This at the state park?

SUSAN

No, up by the Dome.

KINKAID

On the Dome's private property?

Litton makes another noise and Kinkaid talks over his shoulder at him.

KINKAID (cont'd)

You got something to say to me, Litton?

LITTON

Just clearing my throat.

KINKAID

Maybe you should clear it outside.
(to Susan)
Like I was saying--

SUSAN

We didn't cross any fences. There weren't any signs.

KINKAID

They're incorporated as their own city, up there. Got their own police force. Got to. They get heads of state.

MAVIS

(to Susan)
Speaking of which, did you hear who's up there now?

KINKAID

Mavis, I've warned you about that.

MAVIS

Oh, yeah. Sorry.

SUSAN

Are you going to help me or not?

KINKAID

You'll need to take it up with the folks at the Dome. We've got no jurisdiction. Now, they've got a business office in Eureka--

He's wasting his breath by this point, because Susan has already turned and is heading for the door.

INT. SUSAN'S CAR--DAY

She's driving frantically down the main street of Freshwater, looking from side to side, trying to find somebody willing to help her.

There's a WHOOP of a siren and a flash of light, and a sheriff's squad car pulls up behind her.

SUSAN

Oh for God's sake, now what?

For just an instant, as she looks in the rear view mirror, Susan thinks seriously about trying to make a run for it. If Kinkaid is one of them, as he seemed to be...

Her cooler senses prevail and she pulls to the curb. She watches anxiously as the flashing lights go off and, finally, the driver's door opens. Litton, in hat and shades, steps out.

Susan waits a full second or two then, almost grudgingly, rolls her window partway down.

Litton bends over, takes off his shades, and smiles. It's not a pretty smile.

LITTON

Ma'am, that dome is in Humboldt County. That's jurisdiction enough for me.

Susan lets out an audible SIGH of relief.

LITTON (cont'd)
If you'll step into my cruiser,
we'll pick us up a warrant and go
find your boyfriend.

INT. PLEASURE DOME SECURITY OFFICE--DAY

Wasserman enters the office, nods to Clarke. Clarke is where we last saw him, more or less. Tom has slumped in a chair, hung up somewhere between despair and panic.

WASSERMAN
They're all inside.

CLARKE
All right.

He stands up, puts his gun away, and looks at Tom.

CLARKE (cont'd)
Let's go, Davis.

Tom stands up, his body moving slowly but his brain racing. The guard has an M-16, and Clarke has the pistol. There's no chance of trying anything.

CLARKE
We'll take him through the
maintenance hallways, then out onto
the south landing.

WASSERMAN
Out onto the landing?

CLARKE
Don't worry about it. Just help me
get him there and I'll take care of
the rest myself.

INT. HALLWAY--CONTINUOUS

They file out into the hall outside the security office, Clarke in the lead, then Tom, then Wasserman. The doors to the banquet area are now closed and the sound of a VOICE through a PA system is audible, but we can barely make out the words.

VOICE

--and of course to all the
volunteers who gave of themselves
so selflessly to make this
possible--

There's laughter and scattered applause in response to this.

Clarke punches in a combination to open a door next to the kitchen, leading back into the service area of the dome. They enter an area of metal catwalks, exposed duct work and clumps of wiring, and various kinds of machinery--air conditioners, water purifiers, elevator motors and cables, etc. From their catwalk it's a 12-foot drop to a solid floor below.

They pass a waist-high wire gate with a large sign saying "HVAC / Authorized Personnel Only." A perpendicular catwalk leads off to a bank of computerized equipment. Tom notices this and files it away, his brain continuing to race, looking for any possible chance of escape.

They follow the catwalk as it jogs to the left, and eventually come to the outside wall of the dome. There is a locked door with another keypad and a sign saying "Outside Access / Authorized Personnel Only." On either side of the door are windows, through which we can see the canyon and the rushing water below.

Clarke has to key in the combination again. There's a bit of business here where Tom tries to see the numbers he's typing and Wasserman catches him at it and gives him a shove.

TOM

What difference does it make? Five
minutes from now I'll be floating
dead in the river.

WASSERMAN

I didn't hear that.

TOM

What's the matter? Don't have the
stomach for this job?

CLARKE

Shut up, Davis. I'll shoot you
right here if I have to.

He keys in the combination and opens the door.

EXT. PLATFORM OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

Clarke leads the three of them out onto a metal platform that resembles the landing of a fire escape. Metal stairs go up and down from here, allowing workers access to the skin of the dome. There's a strong wind that adds to the vertigo of the view--a drop of 50 or 60 feet into the swirling water.

CLARKE (cont'd)

I can't be sure the fall alone will
kill you.

(to Wasserman)

Give me your baton.

Wasserman puts his hand on his baton, but doesn't take it out of his belt.

WASSERMAN

I'm not sure about this...

CLARKE

What?

WASSERMAN

This is cold blooded murder you're
talking about.

CLARKE

Fine. Go inside. I'll take care
of it. Just give me the baton.

Wasserman hands it over, reluctantly, and reaches for the door just as his shoulder radio squawks. It's the voice of the Squad Leader.

SQUAD LEADER (o.s.)

Wasserman? You got DA Clarke
there?

WASSERMAN

Yeah, he's here. What's up?

SQUAD LEADER (o.s.)

We got a crisis at the front
entrance.

CLARKE

(raised voice)

I'll be there in a minute.

SQUAD LEADER (o.s.)
 Sir, all due respect, we need you
 here now. I'll explain when you
 get here.

Clarke walks to the end of the balcony, from which he can just see the road that leads to the front of the dome. The lights of Litton's cruiser are visible on the other side of the trees.

CLARKE
 Crap.

Clarke, deeply annoyed, goes back to Wasserman and hands him the baton.

CLARKE (cont'd)
 Just keep him here until I get
 back. Do you think you can do
 that?

WASSERMAN
 Yes, sir. I--

CLARKE
 If he tries to escape, shoot him.
 Are we clear on that?

WASSERMAN
 Yes, sir. I--

CLARKE
 Good.

EXT. PLEASURE DOME FRONT ENTRANCE--DAY

Susan and Litton are in a standoff with the Squad Leader, who is backed up by two heavily armed guards--Daniels and another one from the group that captured Tom.

LITTON
 There's nothing to discuss. That's
 a legal search warrant. It means I
 get to go in there and look around.

SQUAD LEADER
 I don't make the rules, sir. My
 orders say there are issues of
 National Security here and nobody
 goes in without specific approval
 from the head of security.

LITTON

If you don't let me in there...

Litton is bluffing, of course. There's no way the sheriff would back him up on this.

SQUAD LEADER

Yes?

At that point Clarke walks out the front door.

CLARKE

What the hell is going on here?

He sees Susan, who also recognizes him.

SUSAN

DA Clarke. This is a surprise.

CLARKE

Ms. Altman. I expect I'm even more surprised than you are. What are you doing here?

SUSAN

I'm looking for a friend of mine. A lawyer named Tom Davis.

CLARKE

I don't believe he was on the invited list.

SUSAN

Your hired goons kidnapped him from our camp site this morning.

CLARKE

That statement is so riddled with false assumptions that I hardly know how to answer it.

LITTON

Are you holding Tom Davis on these premises?

CLARKE

No.

LITTON

Do you mind if we look around just be sure?

CLARKE

Yes.

LITTON

We have a warrant--

CLARKE

This is a matter of national security.

LITTON

So the rumors are true.

CLARKE

I'm not confirming anything. I'm simply telling you that this is bigger than Humboldt County, and you are way, way over your head. Now turn around and go back to Jerkwater, or wherever the hell you came from.

LITTON

Freshwater. They call it that because the water there used to be fresh, back before people like you came along. You just pissed me off, mister. Now either you let me in for a nice, quiet look around, or I call up the State Police and State Militia, and we'll come in there by force and take this place apart.

Litton and Clarke stare at each other for a long second, then Clarke stands aside. Litton gestures for Susan to go ahead of him.

CLARKE

Not her. No reporters.

LITTON

Sorry. I need her to identify Davis. After you, ma'am.

EXT. PLATFORM OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

Tom has his back to the railing that comes perpendicularly out of the side of the dome. He's a few feet from the combination-locked door, which he can't open, that leads back inside.

Wasserman stands across from him, M-16 cradled loosely. He's sweating his way through this, second by second, praying he doesn't have to make a decision.

TOM

Wasserman, that's your name, right?

WASSERMAN

I'm not talking to you, I'm not listening to you, I'm just waiting for Mr. Clarke to get back.

TOM

We could go back inside right now, you could call the sheriff or the highway patrol or somebody, and you could walk away from this.

WASSERMAN

Walk away? What are you talking about?

TOM

I'm a lawyer too, you know. If you let Clarke go through with this, you're an accessory to murder. You could get life. At the very least, your career is over.

Wasserman points the rifle vaguely in his direction.

WASSERMAN

That's enough. No more talking.

TOM

Whatever you say. I'm just trying to help.

WASSERMAN

You can help me by shutting up.

TOM

You're not going to shoot me just for talking, are you?

WASSERMAN

I'm warning you...

TOM

Because now we're getting into Murder One.

Wasserman slings the M-16 over one shoulder and pulls out the baton, clearly intending to shut Tom up that way.

This is what Tom has been waiting for. In a flash he slips through the railing and jumps for the metal support underneath, dangling by his arms above the water.

Wasserman bangs on the metal floor of the deck with the baton in frustration, and leans out over the edge of the platform. He can see Tom dangling below the platform, but can't reach him with the baton, though he takes a few wild swings.

Meanwhile, Tom has maneuvered himself into position, monkey bars style, in front of a window that opens onto a lower floor. He begins swinging back and forth, getting momentum, then raises both feet and slams his weight into it.

The window doesn't break, and the shock goes all the way through his arms. The pain is visible on his sweating face--this is not as easy as he thought it would be. His feet thrash as he struggles to get his balance back.

Wasserman takes the stairs downward as he unslings his M-16. The stairs are on the opposite side of the platform, and there's a tangle of girders and supports underneath, so he doesn't have a great shot at Tom, but he aims the rifle nonetheless.

WASSERMAN

You stupid asshole! Climb back up from there, now!

Tom kicks at the window again, but it's reinforced glass, and clearly hopeless.

Wasserman pulls the trigger. Nothing happens. Panicking, he stares at the gun, sees the safety is still on, switches it off, raises the weapon, and fires again, a short burst of half a dozen bullets.

Three of them ricochet off the metal undercarriage of the platform, showering sparks. One pings into the metal shell of the dome. One hits the window and cracks the glass into a spiderweb pattern, like a broken windshield.

(Note: Litton and Susan are inside the dome now, which is soundproof, so they won't hear these shots.)

The last bullet creases Tom's side. The impact spins him hard, pulling one hand loose. He struggles, trying not to look down at the water below, and gets both hands around the girder again. He's in shock, not really feeling the pain yet, but the hand is not as strong as it was, and he has to fight to keep his grip.

Wasserman is shocked by what he's done, and lowers the rifle for a moment when he sees he's hit Tom.

WASSERMAN

Holy--

Then he sees that Tom is swinging again, toward the newly cracked window, and he raises the rifle again, just as:

Tom swings himself with all his might at the window and lets go.

INT. SERVICE AREA--DAY

Reverse shot of the cracked window, which explodes inward in a shower of Plexiglas nuggets as Tom crashes through it, falls, and rolls across the floor.

His face reveals his state of mind--more animal than human. He's desperate, battered, and running solely on will power. As well as the bullet graze on his side, he's now got dozens of tiny cuts from the glass.

He scrambles to his feet and looks around. He's on the floor below the catwalks that he had been on a few minutes before. There's a set of metal stairs leading up and he lurches toward them and starts to climb.

INT. HALLWAY--DAY

Clarke, Litton, Susan, and the Squad Leader are just inside the entrance.

LITTON

Is that running water I'm hearing?

SQUAD LEADER

It's a recording. The dome is completely soundproof. But the clients like hearing the water.

Litton stops again in the corridor outside the Banquet Hall. There are windows in the double doors that the waiters use, and a GUARD in front of the doors.

LITTON

What's in there?

CLARKE

That's the Banquet Hall.

(wistfully)

Where I'm supposed to be right now.

(tough)

You are not going in there.

LITTON
 (to Susan)
 Take a look.

The Guard gets a little twitchy at this point, but Clarke nods that it's okay. Visible through the window are tables full of handsome, well dressed professionals of both sexes, finishing a light lunch.

SUSAN
 No...I don't think they'd have him
 in there...

CLARKE
 Can we get this over with?

Susan turns to Litton and shakes her head.

SUSAN
 This feels hopeless. I don't think
 we're going to find him. He could
 be anywhere.

INT. SERVICE AREA--DAY

Tom climbs over the gate into the HVAC area. There's a spreading red stain above his waist on the right side, where the bullet grazed him.

The control station has an electronic dashboard with all manner of readouts, a keyboard, and a mouse.

TOM
 C'mon, c'mon, where's the oxygen?

He glances back at the sound of a door opening, as Wasserman re-enters from the platform.

Close on the monitor screen. There's a digital readout showing the actual percentage of oxygen in the air, and a slider bar next to it. The readout shows 17.9 percent.

Tom clenches his left fist quickly as he sees the control.

TOM
 (whisper)
 Yes!

Using the mouse, he pushes the slider bar all the way to 100 percent, then looks back toward the door. Wasserman is blinking in the semi-darkness.

The readout clicks to 18.0 percent.

Tom climbs over the gate, being careful of his injured right side, and pounds down the catwalk toward the main hall. Wasserman, hearing the sound, spins around.

WASSERMAN

Hey!

Tom ducks through a door on his right marked KITCHEN.

INT. KITCHEN--DAY

This is a dream kitchen, high tech, well laid out, if not spacious, clean as an operating theater. Note that the stove is ultra modern electric, with solid burners--no open flames, not even old fashioned coils. The place is hopping. Waiters are stacking dishes in industrial sized sinks. Others are filling goblets with what looks like red wine from a refrigerated keg. One of them stops to admire a full glass.

WAITER

Man, what I wouldn't give for a glass of this.

2ND WAITER

Unless you're willing to give your life for it, you'd better put it on that tray and deliver it where it's supposed to go.

Gradually they notice Tom and their activity slows to a halt. These are all apprentice vampires, young and eager to work their way up the power chain, and they recognize that Tom does not belong there.

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 19.9 percent. It clicks over to 20.0.

EXT. PLATFORM OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

The door swings in, revealing an irritable Clarke, who has taken another route through the maze of catwalks in the service area.

CLARKE

Finally! Wasserman, I hope you--

He steps out onto the landing, which is deserted.

CLARKE (cont'd)
Wasserman?

He looks around, sees the broken window.

CLARKE (cont'd)
Wasserman!

INT. SERVICE AREA--DAY

Wasserman is on the catwalk in front of the door that leads out into the main hallway. He adjusts his hat, readies his M-16, ready to charge through, then has second thoughts.

INT. HALLWAY--CONTINUOUS

Reverse from the other side of the door. The door eases open and Wasserman sticks his head out, looks both ways, and ducks in again.

INT. SERVICE AREA--CONTINUOUS

Wasserman gathers himself outside the kitchen door, the only other place Tom could have gone.

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 23.3 percent. 23.4.

INT. KITCHEN--DAY

The young staff of waiters isn't quite sure what to do about Tom, but he clearly doesn't belong, and any minute one of them is going to call for help.

So Tom rushes past them, down a corridor, and toward a set of double doors that leads into the banquet hall.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--DAY

This is the centerpiece of the Dome, and an architectural marvel. It occupies half the circle, with a stage along the straight interior wall, including a rear projection screen.

The ceiling is two stories tall, and windows run the full height of the exterior walls, with a spectacular view of the canyon, the water, and the redwoods.

There's a balcony most of the way around the outside, with sliding glass doors periodically that open onto it. They're closed now, of course, to keep out the fresh air, and gauzy curtains mask the sliding doors.

The tables are on different levels, individually illuminated by light fixtures that can be drawn up into the ceiling. The struts and supports are all part of the ambience of the room, which is very high tech and very luxurious.

All the tables are full. Ages run from early thirties to mid fifties, everyone looking very fit, everyone very well dressed. There is perfect gender balance--in fact, men and women alternate at every place at every table.

We linger on a few tables and see a few familiar faces. Here's Roxanne with a young man who looks like an underwear model. At another table is Wallace Vandermeer, one of the owners of Susan's newspaper.

One table in particular holds someone Very Important--he has his back to us, but the Secret Service guards flanking him give away the fact that this is someone very high up in--perhaps at the top of--the American government.

Waiters are moving among the tables, distributing the goblets. On stage a pair of MCs, male and female, in evening clothes, are cracking forced jokes with little conviction. It looks a bit like the introductory speeches at the Oscars.

MALE MC

And so the kid says, "Don't worry.
The world's smartest lawyer just
jumped out of the plane with my
backpack."

There's a little laughter, a bit giddy. No one is paying much attention to the stage.

FEMALE MC

That's pretty lame, Dave. But
fortunately it looks like our wait
staff has just about distributed
the last of the refreshments, so
we'll be having that toast very
soon. Not soon enough for most of
you I imagine...

During this speech, Roxanne turns to the handsome young man at her side and wrinkles her nose.

ROXANNE

Does it smell funny in here to you?

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 27.8 percent. 27.9.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--DAY

Tom bursts through the double doors that lead from the kitchen. There is stunned silence for a split second, then:

The Secret Service men reach for their weapons.

A PIERCING ALARM goes off.

Wasserman comes flying out behind Tom, weapon raised.

The Very Important person hides under his table. Others begin to stand up or look around in alarm, many of them reaching protectively for the goblets in front of them.

Clarke enters through one of the main doors next to the stage, and freezes when he sees Tom. He takes out a walkie talkie, speaks into it, and the alarm ceases. It's suddenly very quiet in the banquet hall.

ROXANNE

(under her breath)

Unbelievable.

CLARKE

I apologize for this incident. If all of you will please take your seats, we'll have things under control in just a moment.

Tom begins backing toward one set of sliding doors. More armed guards come in through the main doors next to the stage.

Clarke motions to his men to spread out.

CLARKE (cont'd)

Set your weapons for single shot. Wait until you have him in the clear. There will be no accidents, is that understood?

ROXANNE
 (to herself)
 No more accidents, you mean?

Tom takes his cue from Clarke and tries to use the crowd for cover as he continues to move closer to the glass doors. He's also clearly stalling for time, waiting for the oxygen level to get a little higher.

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 33.1 percent. 33.2.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--CONTINUOUS

Tom stops at one of the tables, finally noticing the goblets. He snatches one and sniffs it.

TOM
 Blood.

MAN AT TABLE
 (nervously)
 Put that back.

Tom snatches another goblet and makes as if to pour both of them on the floor. The right arm isn't as high as the left, and it's clearly causing him pain to hold it up. The man whose goblet Tom took is clearly thinking about going against his nature and confronting Tom physically. The woman next to him puts a hand on his arm.

WOMAN AT TABLE
 (to man)
 Wait.

TOM
 So that's what this is all about.
 "Only the best of the best," you
 said. And you're all up here for
 some kind of sick mating ritual.
 To make new little monsters.

Roxanne stands up to face him.

ROXANNE
 The human race is washed up, Tom.
 We're what's next.

CLARKE
Roxanne, please. Sit down. Let us
handle this.

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 39.9 percent. 40.0 percent.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--CONTINUOUS

The armed guards are fanning out, trying to get a clear shot at Tom through the crowds. Tom is watching them, dodging and weaving, moving steadily backwards toward the glass doors, holding the goblets up as a feeble hostage.

ROXANNE
Shut up, Matthew.
(to Tom)
You're washed up because you're
greedy. You made the world that
we're adapted to. You destroyed
your environment. You made money
the measure of everything. Now you
get to see who's really bad.

TOM
Okay, Roxanne. Let's see.

He throws both goblets high into the air, underhand--again, at considerable cost in pain to his right side. They seem to hang there for a long second as Tom turns and lunges for the glass door to the balcony, sweeping aside the flimsy curtain and grabbing for the handle.

As Tom fumbles with the latch, Wasserman finally gets a clear sight on him. He fires a single SHOT from his M-16 that stars the Plexiglas next to Tom's head. Wasserman takes a breath and aims again.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

Susan and Litton were walking down the path, about a hundred yards from the dome, but have pulled up short at the sharp CRACK of the bullet breaking the glass.

SUSAN
What was that?

LITTON
I don't know.

There's a second SHOT. Now that the window is broken, it's audible outside.

LITTON (cont'd)
That was a gunshot.

They both turn and start back toward the dome at a run.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--CONTINUOUS

Tom gets the latch undone and throws the door open.

CLOSE ON: DIGITAL READOUT

The oxygen level is now 47.1 percent and rising more quickly. 47.2, 47.3 percent.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--CONTINUOUS

Wasserman fires again as Tom dives through the door and rolls to the very edge of the balcony.

EXT. THE BALCONY--DAY

We see what Tom sees: the rushing water 60 feet below. The gorge is narrow here and the water is deep and moving fast.

INT. THE BANQUET HALL--CONTINUOUS

Wasserman fires again, and this time the bullet ricochets off the steel support, sending a shower of sparks into the thin curtains in front of the windows.

There's a long second where the curtains show just a few brown, singed spots. It looks like nothing is going to happen. Then they erupt in flame.

CLOSE ON: ROXANNE

Her eyes go wide.

THE BANQUET HALL:

The flames touch the first of the vampires, and she goes up in a ball of fire. It begins to spread in a huge chain reaction.

EXT. THE BALCONY--DAY

The glow from the spreading fire illuminates Tom as he looks back at the fire, then rolls over the edge of the balcony, under the guard rail.

He hangs suspended for a moment. His right arm can't take the strain, and lets go. Then, just as the dome explodes in flame, he lets go with the left as well and falls.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

Susan and Litton hit the dirt as we see their end of the dome now bursting into flame as well.

EXT. THE RIVER--DAY

Looking up, we see Tom falling toward us, backlit by the flames.

A moment later he hits the water, feet first, and goes under. Burning debris from the dome smashes into the water all around him.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DOME--DAY

What once was the dome is now a fireball. Litton grabs Susan's arm, gets into a crouch, and starts pulling her toward the parking lot.

SUSAN

Tom...

LITTON

There's nobody left alive in there.

Susan continues to struggle for a moment out of reflex. While she watches, the steel cables holding up the entire structure of the dome begin to melt. As one breaks, the others go, and the floor--like a saucer under the fireball--tilts, heaves, and finally tears loose and plummets into the river.

LITTON (cont'd)

Come on.

SUSAN

(stunned)

What?

LITTON

If anybody did survive that,
they're going to wash up
downstream.

She's still hesitating. Litton starts running, pulling her after him.

LITTON (cont'd)

Come on!

EXT. RIVERBANK--DAY

The river roars by, at first clear, then cluttered with debris--a half burned tablecloth, the leg of a nightstand, a dead pike, killed by the heat of the dome. Then, at the edge of the water, a body hangs up on a rock, face down.

It's Tom. He lies there for a few seconds, then, sputtering, pulls his head out of the water. On hands and knees, he crawls out of the water and collapses on the shore.

Finally, slowly, he sits up and looks around. There's a highway overpass that crosses the river only a few dozen yards downstream. The Old Man that they passed that morning is standing on the overpass, fishing in the river, watching Tom with only the faintest curiosity.

Holding the wound in his side, which is seeping blood, limping on both legs, Tom manages to climb up the embankment to the roadway.

TOM

Hey!

The Old Man looks at Tom but doesn't say anything. Then he turns back toward the river and begins to reel in his line, which might get snagged on the debris.

Tom staggers out onto the bridge.

TOM (cont'd)

Hey! You need to get help!
There's a fire up at the dome!

The Old Man looks up to where the dome used to be. There's a thick column of smoke up there, black and dirty-looking. Then he stares down at the river. There are bodies in it now. He shakes his head.

INT. LITTON'S CRUISER--DAY

Litton is driving, Susan in the passenger seat, lights and siren going as they make good time down the twisting road.

LITTON

Those people up there. There was something not right about them.

(beat)

Beyond their being lawyers, I mean.

SUSAN

Yes.

LITTON

Are you going to tell me?

Susan shakes her head and looks out the window. Then she thinks better of it.

SUSAN

I'll tell you one thing. If there's anything left of them--and there won't be much--you need to do DNA testing. Tell them to count the chromosomes.

LITTON

Count the chromosomes.

Susan considers briefly telling him more, but this is enough.

SUSAN

That's it.

They come around a turn, see the Old Man at the bridge, packing up his tackle box, and see somebody diving into the trees on the far side.

SUSAN

Stop the car!

EXT. THE BRIDGE--DAY

The cruiser screams to stop. Before it can finish lurching back on its suspension, Susan has her door open and is running down the road.

SUSAN

Tom! Tom!

Tom slowly emerges from the woods, scarcely able to believe what he sees. Susan embraces him and they cling to each other tightly.

SUSAN
How bad are you hurt?

TOM
You could squeeze...a little more softly.

SUSAN
(crying and laughing)
Sorry.

Litton has come up behind them.

LITTON
Get him in the cruiser. We'll take him to the hospital.

TOM
No...hospitals...

Litton looks to Susan.

SUSAN
Got any doctors that owe you a favor? We're going to have to make ourselves very scarce for a while.

LITTON
I expect that could be arranged.

As the three of them walk toward the cruiser, Tom leaning on Susan, they pass the Old Man. Tom stops to ask him one last question.

TOM
Hey, mister. How come you wouldn't go for help?

OLD MAN
Wasn't anybody up there but a bunch of bloodsuckers.

TOM
(stunned)
What?

OLD MAN
Lawyers! Let 'em burn.

The Old Man walks away. Tom begins to laugh. There's an edge of hysteria in it. Litton and Susan, who are not laughing, help him toward the car.

We pull back as Tom and Susan get in the back of the cruiser. Litton gets in the front and drives away, this time without the siren. As we continue to pull back, a fire truck passes them going the other way, uphill toward where the dome used to be, lights and sirens blazing.

We pan up to the sky, where the last of the smoke is slowly dissipating in the clean air coming out of the forest.

FADE OUT.