

E X I T      E E R O

by  
Kurt Wimmer

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E X I T Z E R O

FADE IN:

# EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

Snowy peaks. Clear, crisp blue sky. The SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS flies in low, scrapes the top of a glacier, spraying fifty million metric tons of ice. Soars against the blue sky for a peaceful, eternal moment...

Strikes a mountain face, exploding into a nuclear fireball. A mushroom cloud of ice and snow blooms, the top of the mountain cracks, tumbling down in a massive avalanche.

CARD: "NEW YORK CITY - THREE DAYS EARLIER"

# INT. OFFICE CUBICLE - DAY

MAX DAY, 19, hyper, literal, straightforward, frank to the point of unconscious bluntness. Tennis shoes taped with duct tape, T-shirt that says HACKERS DO IT ALONE, worn jeans with equations, notes jotted all over the thighs ...

MAX

The thigh bone ...

... headphones on, sits at his desk banging a pair of pencils like drumsticks on his desktop ...

MAX

Is connected to the ... hip bone ...

... as he watches sets of COMPLEX ALGORITHMS scroll down his screen. They stop and he quickly writes down the figure ...

MAX

And the statistical number of Americans who violate state laws regarding unnatural sex acts is 256 million.

He sits back.

MAX

Wow ... that's all of them.

A figure walking by his cubicle grabs his attention. Snatching a PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH, he propels off his desk.

Into the aisle. A SVELTE FORM walks away from him. Hips. Tight ass. Tick. Tock. Swinging like a pendulum.

Watches until she disappears around a corner. Takes a bite of his sandwich.

# INT. FBI PAYROLL COUNTER - DAY

MAX stands in line. Fiddles with a Glow-Dark YO-YO. "Walks the dog". Or tries to.

Other hand fishes absently in his pocket. Produces another PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH. Seen better days. Munches on it.

VOICE

Day!

Yo-Yo sucks *Snap!* up into his hand. Steps forward. Wipes his BAR-CODED I.D. CARD through the bar code reader.

MAX

They don't actually think a bar code's gonna keep anyone from stealing my check do they?

CASHIER

Probably not. But then again - your check? (smiles) Who'd wanna?

Max accepts his check.

MAX

Very funny.

Starts to turn away, but stops ...

CASHIER

Come on, Day. People waiting.

MAX

How come the date's wrong ... ?

Flashes his check at the man.

MAX

The computer prints checks at midnight the last day of the month. It should be the 31st. Not the 1st.

CASHIER

Day - look at me ...

He does.

CASHIER

Who gives a fuck?

# INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Well, Max does actually.

He sits before his terminal. Arms folded. Staring at the screen. PAYCHECK at elbow. Something ain't clicking. Shakes his head.

MAX  
Ain't clickin' ...

Hunkering down, he begins rapid-fire typing.

# INT. CUBICLE HONEYCOMB - DAY

Max's supervisor, CLAY is talking to the front of the "Svelte Back". Laughing about something. Doesn't look like he wants to be interrupted.

MAX  
(interrupting)  
Mr. Clay?

Laughter stops. Max has materialized, paycheck in hand.

CLAY  
Yeah?

MAX  
I thought you should see this.

Hands him his paycheck, giving a little smile to the woman.

She smiles back - very perfunctory. Clay pushes the check back.

CLAY  
So you've broken the minimum wage barrier. Congratulations. And?

Max flushes, glances at the woman. She's trying not to laugh. Composes himself.

MAX  
It's the date, Sir. Our checks are supposed to be issued on the last day of the month. This one's dated the first.

Clay exchanges a glance with the woman.

CLAY  
Yeah, and?

MAX  
Well, I ran a diagnostic. The Cray

executed the payroll program 1 second late last night. Well, actually 8.64 milliseconds, but it rounds up. Anyway, that put it past midnight and caused the checks to be printed with today's date ...

They are looking at him like he's from another planet.

MAX  
(trailing off)  
... instead of yesterday's.

CLAY  
Is this your idea of a joke, Day?

Max hesitates. Then nods.

MAX  
Right Sir. Sorry.

Turning he heads back to his cubicle. He hears them laughing behind him.

CLAY (O.S.)  
Jesus Christ ... geek . . .

# INT. MAX'S CUBICLE - DAY

Back in his tiny cubicle. Max sits. Staring into deep space. Snatches up the phone. Dials extension. Click!

PHONE  
Agent Krane's office.

MAX  
Yeah, hi, this is Max Day from the basement - there's no chance the Operations Director'd have an open few minutes this afternoon is there?

Prying open the shell of a 3 1/2 DISK, he begins spreading PEANUT BUTTER into it.

PHONE  
You're who again?

MAX  
Max Day. I'm a number-cruncher down in the basement. I found something I thought might interest Mr. Krane. I only need a moment of his time.

Snapping the disk closed again, he tests its window, satisfying himself that it still opens and closes.

PHONE  
His E-mail box is 243.

MAX  
I know, I looked it up, but I really  
think it might help if I explained this  
to him in person.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

OPS DIRECTOR, KRANE - wrapped tight - peruses MAX'S FILE while  
Max himself unself-consciously reads everything on the man's  
desk.

Points to some grisly black and white CRIME SCENE PHOTOS lying  
there. Staring eyes. Viscera ...

MAX  
Lakeland, Florida - you're doing that  
one?

KRANE  
(not looking up)  
Mmm-hmm.

MAX  
Close to catching the guy?

Krane looks up. All business. Straight arrow all the way. Two  
ways to do things. The FBI way and the wrong way.

KRANE  
You're not a field agent. You're a Tech.

MAX  
Uh, yes Sir. I work downstairs. With  
the computers.

KRANE  
I see here that we arrested you in 1992.  
For breaking into the Treasury computers.

He sits back, appraising Max. Eyes impossible to read.

KRANE  
And then made a deal to drop prosecution  
if you came and worked for us. The FBI.  
You were 16.

MAX  
Yes Sir.

KRANE  
And already a criminal.

MAX

I wasn't doing it for money, Sir.

KRANE

Why then?

MAX

The challenge, Sir. Me against the computer.

Krane assesses the young man before him with a keen eye.

KRANE

What can I do for you, Max?

MAX

Well Sir, this morning I noticed the dates on the paychecks were wrong ...

He hands across his paycheck.

MAX

I ran a diagnostic and found out the Cray ran a second late last night. I know a second doesn't sound like much but the Cray is a Super Computer.

KRANE

So?

MAX

Well, it doesn't make mistakes. I ran a second set of diagnostics. It's been losing 16 nanoseconds a night for the last 18 months.

KRANE

And a nanosecond is ...

MAX

A billionth of a second, Sir.

KRANE

A billionth of a second ...

MAX

Yes Sir. Over the last 18 months the Cray has lost 8.64 millionths of a second.

Krane studies him for a second.

KRANE

Day - since tests show you as one of the smartest people the FBI has ever recruited, I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume you're going somewhere with this ...

MAX

Sir, if you knew how many decisions a Cray can make in a millisecond ... —

KRANE

How many?

MAX

(fidgets)

Well, I'm... not sure exactly. No one is.

Krane studies Max a moment.

KRANE

Is someone breaking into our computers, Max?

MAX

I ... can't exactly find any evidence of it, Sir, but there's definitely something not ri...

KRANE

(cutting him off)

Day, I'm Director of Criminal Operations. People are killing other people and blowing up buildings. This tends to keep me extremely busy. In the future please feel free to E-mail me on matters like this.

Max starts to say something. But Krane has already gone back to his work. He nods.

MAX

Yes Sir.

## # INT. MAX'S CUBICLE - DAY

Back in his cubicle. Slumped in his chair. Staring at his screen saver. Sharon Stone endlessly removing her clothes.

One hand toys absently with his glow-dark yo-yo. The other guides a peanut butter sandwich to his mouth. He shifts.

Shoves the sandwich in, grabs up the phone, hitting a programmed number. A BORED VOICE accompanied by an even more BORED FACE



answers on the MULTICAST BACKBONE virtual environment on his computer screen. Acme. Greasy bangs.

LANGLEY

Langley Computer.

MAX

It's Max.

LANGLEY

Prove it.

MAX

You're looking at me.

LANGLEY

(shrugs)

Hey, I got security concerns and you could be digitized. What's the cube root of 7 million two?

MAX

534.

LANGLEY

Close enough. What's up?

MAX

How's your Crayfish running?

LANGLEY

Like any 115 million dollar machine should. Just fine. Why?

MAX

Run a diagnostic for an efficiency coefficient.

LANGLEY

What? Blow me. No way.

MAX

Look. Where do I work?

LANGLEY

FBI. Fucked-up Beyond Imagination. So?

MAX

So, whose jurisdiction does the prosecution of those distributing digitized computer pornography over interstate phone lines fall under?

LANGLEY  
(getting the message)  
Yeah, yeah, all right - call you in an  
hour. Prick ...

Muttering, he fizzles out.

# INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Max sits by himself. Reading a Mad Magazine paperback. Three  
tables over, Clay, Svelte Woman, all the people from his floor  
sit together. Laughing about something.

Dropping his feet off his table, he walks out.

# INT. SUPERVISOR CLAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Max walks in. Produces a familiar 3 1/2 DISK from his ubiquitous  
bag. Opens its window. Full of peanut butter.

He scribbles "SHARON STONE SCREEN SAVER" on the label, places it  
squarely on Clay's desk.

Whistling Nirvana, he walks out.

# INT. MAX'S CUBICLE - DAY

Sandwich in one hand, yo-yo in the other, file-surfing. With  
his foot. Mouse pad on the floor.

The phone rings. Activates speaker with his tennis shoe.

MAX  
Ka-runching ...

PHONE  
Go MBONE.

Max mouses into MBONE with his foot. He's pretty goddam good at  
it too. Video trans from LANGLEY.

MAX  
So?

LANGLEY  
So, it's weird. I ran the diagnostic and  
the computer came up short.

MAX  
Don't tell me - 8 milliseconds.

LANGLEY  
How'd you know?

MAX

Because mine came up 8 short too.

LANGLEY

Hmmph ... that's interesting.

MAX

I'll say.

LANGLEY

Oh well, coincidence I guess. Stranger things have happened.

MAX

When?

LANGLEY

(shrugs)

Probably a CDF in the cooling ceramics.

MAX

The diagnostic would compensate that.

LANGLEY

Yeah, true, but, you know what? They're not paying me to worry about it, so I'm not gonna. By the way, Doom Interactive, my place on the internet tonight. Come one, come all.

MAX

No thanks.

LANGLEY

Why not. Live a little. Your character could end up saving the world.

MAX

Not my style. See ya.

He undials. Sits back. Thinks. Tapping the drum solo from "Ina Godda da Vida" on his forehead with two pencils.

Hits an autodial address. Line clicks.

PALO ALTO (O.C.)

Palo Alto Processing ...

Palo Alto does. Almost a carbon copy of the previous computer nerd.

PALO ALTO

God, I'd forgotten how ugly you were.

MAX

Likewise. You wouldn't happen to be set up to run diagnostics would you?

CROSSFADE: Max is still on the phone - this time a different person answering in a different part of the country.

PHONE

NASA SpaceTech ...

MAX

M-BONE, Baby - it's Max.

CROSSFADE: Max hangs up for the final time. At the bottom of a legal pad he adds another 8. *His whole page is filled with them.* Every Cray in the country. He stares at what he has.

MAX

Fuck me ...

# INT. OPERATION'S DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

KRANE glances up as his Secretary sticks her head in.

SECRETARY

Will you see Max Day? He's out here.  
He's very insistent.

KRANE

Max Day ... ?

SECRETARY

The number cruncher. You saw him this morning. With the jeans.

KRANE

Oh him. Christ, no. I told him to E-mail me if he had something to say.

# INT. OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT

Max, pacing anxiously. Working the yo-yo. Glances up.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, Mr. Krane's very busy. He asks that you E-mail him if there's something you'd like to communicate.

MAX

But, ... did you tell him it was important?

RECEPTIONIST

His address is 243.

MAX

I know, you told me that earlier.  
Listen, I think this is important. He's  
going to want to hear this.

RECEPTIONIST

(firm)

His mailbox is 243. Send him all the  
mail you want.

Max hesitates. Then ...

MAX

Ma'am, I'm really sorry, but I have to  
talk to him.

Before she can stop him, he darts past her into the office.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey!

# INT. KRANE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Krane looks sharply up as Max bursts in.

MAX

(breathless)

Mr. Krane, Sir, every Cray super computer  
in the country is connecting every night  
at 2:37 A.M. and parallel processing.  
That's seventy trillion nano-giga of CPU  
clock speed.

KRANE

Mr. Day ...

MAX

(plunging ahead)

The synergistic thought potential is  
astonishing. Somebody, maybe a Tiger  
Team, I don't know, is using these  
computers to work on something huge.

KRANE

(standing)

Mr. Day!

Max stops, panting from his own excitement.

KRANE

If you have something to communicate to  
me - E-mail it.

## # INT. MAX'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

Keyboard. Fingers. Moving. So fast they're blurring. Max strikes "print screen". Picks up his RUBBER BALL. Bounces it off the ceiling as he waits for a hard copy to laze.

Bing! snatches it out, high-speed reads it. Mouses up the E-Mail screen.

Highlights "Send". Hesitates. Pauses to ENCRYPT the message. SENDS. The "envelope" closes and the message zips off-screen.

## # INT. F.B.I. COMPUTER

The E-Mail sears through the circuitry, pinballing through the RAM cache, CPU, routing past 100's of electronic addresses until it slots itself neatly into 243.

Message delivered.

Grabbing up his bag, Max leaves for the night.

CARD: SPOKANE WASHINGTON.

## # INT. OFFICE - DAY

Three hours earlier here. SANDY PRICE, 35. Snappily dressed. Picture of BACH on her keychain, Telemann on the tape deck. The kind of smart that pisses men off. Probably a geek once upon a time before nature played a sadistic joke and made her pretty.

Staring intently at a NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE COVER.

She slaps her desk.

SANDY

God-dammit!

Leaps up. Charges out.

## # INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Next thing HER SUPERVISOR knows, she's slapping the magazine down in front of him.

SANDY

There!

Supervisor looks at her. Deep breath. Here we go again.

SANDY

Do you see it?

He gives the magazine a perfunctory glance. Pushes it back.

MR. CRAIG

No, I don't Sandy.

SANDY

You didn't look at it long enough.

MR. CRAIG

I don't see it, Sandy.

SANDY

Please, Mr. Craig - look at it.

Beat ... another deep breath. Pulls the magazine forward.  
Sandy watches his features. Anxious ...

SANDY

Do you see it ... ?

He starts to look up.

MR. CRAIG

Sandy, I...

SANDY

No! Keep looking. What about the words?  
Do you at least see the words?

Mr. Craig stares at it another beat. Shakes his head.

MR. CRAIG

I'm sorry, Sandy.

Sandy sinks into one of his soft chairs.

SANDY

Why am I the only person who can see  
these goddam things?

MR. CRAIG

Maybe you're just too brilliant for your  
own good.

SANDY

Wait, look ...

Jumping up, she grabs the magazine. Begins flipping wildly  
through the pages. Finds an article about an upcoming Space  
Shuttle mission.

SANDY

Here - see?

Grabbing a marker off his desk, she begins drawing in between

the word margins. Pushes it across to him. Clearly marked now in the white spaces between the words, traveling crookedly down the middle of the page, are the words "EXIT" and "ZERO".

SANDY

(stepping back)

Acrostic words. The same ones as on the cover. They're all over this magazine. Every magazine I look at. You know what I think?

He looks at her. You can almost see her heart pounding beneath her blouse.

SANDY

These're all computer type-set. Someone's infiltrated our computer infrastructure and is subliminally programming the American public.

Mr. Craig looks at her blandly.

MR. CRAIG

Sandy - you could find letters in the spaces of any text. I could do it if I tried. It's random. It doesn't mean anything.

SANDY

But it's not just any letters and any words, it's always words like the kind a hypnotist says when he's putting you under.

MR. CRAIG

And "Exit Zero". What's that mean?

Sandy slumps.

SANDY

That one ... I don't know.

MR. CRAIG

Sandy ... I don't have the problems with you that some of the other employees do. You're a brilliant proof reader and valuable employee.

He hesitates ...

MR. CRAIG

But I think maybe you need to take a week off.

She just looks at him. He doesn't get it. Just doesn't get it



INT. EMPLOYEE LOUNGE - DAY

By the coffee machine. Sandy lights a cigarette. Takes a deep drag. Closes her eyes. Goddamit.

Some of the other employees are watching a Jeopardy re-run.

ALEX TREBEC

The cross crest seen on the flagships of the Spanish Armada originated with this sect of warriors.

SANDY

(under her breath)

Teutonic Knights.

JEOPARDY CONTESTANT

Uh ... who are the ... Teutonic Knights?

ALEX TREBEC

Correct. Cleopatra's lover, Marc Antony was defeated in this sea battle.

SANDY

Battle of Actium. 33 B.C..

EMPLOYEE

Price, shut the fuck up - we're trying to watch this.

ALEX TREBEC

This German-speaking philosopher's thought on individual existence profoundly influenced modern existentialism.

SANDY

(louder)

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard.

CONTESTANT

Franz Kafka.

ALEX TREBEC

Correct.

EMPLOYEE

Ha!

ALEX TREBEC

We would have also accepted the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard which is more technically correct.

Sandy's colleague folds his hands behind his head. Talks at the television.

EMPLOYEE

You know, Sandy, maybe if you'd quit trying to prove you're so smart all the time you might actually get laid occasionally.

SANDY

Really? Really, Paul? You mean, all I have to do is be stupid and you'd have sex with me?

EMPLOYEE

Seems like a small price to pay. No one likes a chick who's too smart.

He cranes his head around to see what kind of reaction his goading is getting. None. Sandy is staring past him at the television screen.

ALEX TREBEC

And our final jeopardy question today:  
"The soldiers of his army discovered the Rosetta Stone".

EMPLOYEE

What're yo...

SANDY

What does that say?

He blinks. She sounds like she just saw her own ghost. Looks to the written question on the screen.

EMPLOYEE

You heard him. "The soldiers of his army discovered the Ros...

SANDY

No . . .

She moves past him to the television. Kneels before it. Touches the screen. Unable to believe what she is seeing.

SANDY

That's not what it says ...

Come around to see THROUGH HER EYES. Read "ACCEPT NOTHINGNESS. PREPARE FOR FINALITY. EXIT ZERO."

CARD: NEW YORK CITY

INT. APARTMENT - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Max's apartment. Big place with wooden floors. Poster of Niels Bohr smoking a joint. Clad in socks and underwear, Max sits crosslegged on the floor hacking away at his laptop.

On screen is a GOPHER.

MAX

Okay, Mr. Gopher - you're gonna go find where these computers've been going late at night ...

A keystroke and the Internet Gopher begins the search for him. A WOMAN IN A HOUSECOAT pads in in slippers. Places a plate with a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of milk next to him.

MAX

Mom - I'm not hungry.

MOM

I don't care. You eat it anyway. You don't eat enough. You're skinny.

MAX

(smiles/capitulates)

Yes Mom.

She points at him and pads back into the kitchen. Max looks back to his screen. The names and addresses of INSTITUTIONAL COMPUTERS are downloading onto his screen like mad. Names like NEWSWEEK, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION COMPUTER, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ...

Max whistles.

MAX

Man, you've been everywhere . . .

A dull thump up from above raises his eyes.

Another. Curious. Thud. Hmmm. Sounds like someone walking on the ceiling. His eyes follow it. Thump . . .

MOTHER (O.C.)

Max, Honey - will you please take Queenie for a walk ...

KRASH! BAM! men in hooded SWAT Uniforms smash through the windows and front door. Instantly his apartment is filled with charging men with guns.

An instant later, his face is filled with those same guns.

SWAT

*F.B.I. mother fucker! On the floor!*

Max is frozen, looking up the barrel of a gun. His mother has rushed out of the kitchen. Hand to her mouth.

MAX

M...Mom . . .

SWAT

*On the floor you son of a bitch!!!*

Max's voice trembles, dry as dust.

MAX

But ... I didn't do anything ...

SWAT

*ON THE FUCKING FLOOR!!!*

*Smack!* he kicks Max back onto the floor. Two SWATs wrestle his arms behind his back. Restrain his hands with NYLON STRIP CORD.

MAX

*But I didn't do anything!*

A POLISHED SHOE stops next to his face. He cranes his neck. Mr. KRANE stands over him. Krane shakes his head.

KRANE

Jesus Christ, Day - why'd you do it?

He nods to the SWATs who haul him struggling up off the floor. His eyes meet those of his mother. She's terrified.

MOTHER

Max ...?

MAX

Mom - I didn't do anything!

He is hustled out.

MAX

*Mom!*

KRANE

Take his computer. We'll want a look at his hard drive.

A SWAT shoves Max's sub-notebook into its case.

## # EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Full of cars. Federal. Police. Red-blue lights bristling. Max, raincoat-draped, is propelled out of the building.

Krane runs his I.D. through the lock-strip on the back door of the SECURE TRANSPORTATION VAN.

A CPU runs his I.D., internally records the time, place and identity of the person accessing the door and chunk! unlocks it. Max is shoved in.

## # INT. SECURE TRANSPORTATION VAN - NIGHT

High Tech. FBI doesn't fuck around. Up front, someone opens up the passenger door, tosses HIS COMPUTER onto the front seat, shuts the door. He is alone for the moment.

Frightened, he sizes up his prison. What the hell is going on? Steel walls. LASER CARD SWIPE for guards riding with prisoners.

Max's eyes instinctively follow the SHIELDED CABLE snaking out of the card-swipe, across the ceiling and through the WIRE MESH door separating Max from the driver's cab.

He can see it feeds into a relay box that sends a microvolt-signal through a modular clip like a phone clip.

That cable tacks down the back of the seat, along the floor, and up under the dash where he can see the red light of a CPU.

His eyes snap back to his own computer, just a few inches away through the steel mesh.

Hesitates ...

Then rolls onto the floor, struggles his bound wrists around his feet, gets them in front of him.

Pushes a straining pair of fingers through the mesh. Just snags the strap of his computer case. Pulls it off the seat.

Hits the floor between the seats. Three inches clearance beneath the mesh door. Max pulls his computer into his mobile cell.

Glances quickly up. KRANE is talking to some other cops in the street. His MOTHER in her housecoat, going from person to person. Trying to get someone, anyone, to talk to her.

Working fast. Opens his subnote's soft case. Extracts a PCMCIA modem card, slots it in.

Runs the card's modular low-voltage cable through the wire mesh to the relay box in the driver's cab. Unclips the existing

modular plug with a fingernail and connects it to his own standard modem adapter.

Heart racing. Chest tight. Opens his computer, quickly surfs his data base. Highlights file - SEQUENCE GENERATOR. LUNS it.

NUMBER SEQUENCES begin generating on screen. Lightning fast.

Here's how it works. Light inside a bar-code reader is focused through a sapphire sphere onto the bar-coded card. The light is reflected off the card, re-focused through the sphere onto a photo-sensor which converts the reflected light into bursts of voltage. Thus, a signal is generated which is proportional to the black and white bars on the card.

These signals represent numeric values which is precisely what Max is sending to the CPU. Eventually, the simple sequence generator running on his computer is going to hit a sequence of numbers the CPU under the dash recognizes.

The driver and passenger doors swing suddenly open. TWO UNIFORMED GUARDS climb in. With his foot, Max quietly slides his subnote beneath the steel bench ...

One of them glances back at Max. Doesn't notice hands in front of him.

UNIFORM

We're good to go.

The Driver starts the engine, guides the truck out into traffic. Uniform's still peering back at Max.

UNIFORM

Why'd you do it?

MAX

I don't know. First tell me what I did.

Uniform just shakes his head and turns back to the front.

UNIFORM

What the world needs now is a serious malfunction.

DRIVER

I heard that. So anyway, where was I? Oh yeah, I says to my kid, why the hell'd you get held back, you know, why'd he get held back in school. And you know what he says? You know what he's got the nerve to say to me ...?

Max's eyes creep to his subnote under the opposite bench.

NUMBERS are screaming down the screen ...

UNIFORM

... kids today. It's the rap music.  
They're all becoming like the jungle  
bunnies.

Abruptly, the numbers stop! "ACCESS RECOGNIZED" flashes the  
screen. The tumblers in the door CHUNK! fall into place ...

DRIVER

What the fuck was that?

... the back doors fly open. Max grabs his computer, yanks the  
cord out and ...

UNIFORM

*Holy fuck on a stick!*

... as Uniform grabs his gun, Max jumps out the back of the  
moving van ...

BLAM! Uniform fires, bullet splintering on the steel mesh.

DRIVER

*Agh! You shot my ear, you Mother  
Fucker!!!*

Grabs the side of his face. Van goes spinning.

# EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Max hits the hood of a car. Bounces. Spins off. Lands in the  
next lane of traffic.

WHAM! the Transport Van strikes another vehicle, upends.

Max throws himself aside as another car jams on its screaming  
brakes. Grabs up his subnote and runs.

# INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Red-eye. A whole plane full of sleeping people.

Except SANDY, in first class. Wide awake. Staring into the  
back of the seat in front of her. Superior logistical mind  
racing. Like a pure bred.

# INT. FBI OPERATIONS BUREAU - NIGHT

Late. KRANE, tired, takes the phone from an Aide.

KRANE  
(tentative)  
This is Krane ...

Silence. Then ...

PHONE  
I didn't do it.

Krane signals to the others in the room who immediately begin running a Pencil on the call.

KRANE  
Where are you, Day?

EXT. STREET: Max is on a PAYPHONE installed into a brick wall. ATM MACHINE a few feet away. Intercut.

MAX  
Whatever it was, I didn't do it. I swear to God.

KRANE (O.S.)  
What about the E-mail you sent me?

MAX  
The E-mail? What about it?

KRANE (O.S.)  
You enclosed details only the police could have known.

MAX  
What? ... Details about what???

KRANE (O.S.)  
(reading)  
"On October 3rd I butchered 11 people in a Tom Thumb food store in Lakeland Florida." You didn't write that?

MAX  
No.

KRANE  
It's your User I.D.. You didn't send me an E-mail, Max?

MAX  
The E-mail I sent you was about persons



unknown webbing super computers to  
kilo-krunch data!

KRANE

We ran your fingerprints through the  
computer. It verifies positive match  
with the prints taken at the Florida  
site.

MAX

But ... for God's sake. I was working on  
that date. For you. For the FBI. Down  
in the basement. Check it out!

Tech gives Krane the thumbs. Krane nods. The Agents on hand  
grab their jackets. Are outta there.

KRANE

Computer records show you out sick on  
that date, Max. Airline records show you  
in Florida.

Max is stunned.

MAX

That's not the E-mail I sent.

KRANE

It's the E-mail I got. Go with your  
first instinct, Day - give yourself up.

MAX

Jesus, look, I'm being framed. All I did  
was send an E-mail and now I'm the FBI's  
number 1.

KRANE

By who, Max? Who would frame you like  
this? Who could?

But Max fails to answer. He is staring at the SCREEN ON THE ATM  
a few feet away. On it, in block letters, are the words:  
"ACCEPT THE ZERO EXIT, MAX"

KRANE

Day? Day ... ?

But the phone has been dropped.

VIDEO CAMERA: Black and white. Fish-eye lens. In the eye of  
the ATM's CLOSED CIRCUIT SURVEILLANCE CAMERA, Max, ghostly pale,  
glancing nervously up and down the street, walks quickly away.

## # INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

An OLDER MAN and a YOUNGER MAN are engaged in a sexual act. BAM! the door kicks in. FIVE FBI AGENTS burst in. Guns leveled.

A frozen moment between everyone. Naked men's hands up. Eyes bulging. LEAD FBI lowers his gun.

LEAD FBI  
(to older man)  
Sorry Senator. Wrong room.

He speaks into the cellular he carries.

LEAD FBI  
He phone phreaked us.

CARD: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE HEADQUARTERS, LANGLEY VA.

## # INT. OFFICE - DAY

SANDY PRICE sits in a coldly decorated office. CIA CREST on the wall. Across the desk a HAWKISH MAN examines the cover of NEWSWEEK. Looks up.

SMYTHE  
I'm sorry - I don't see anything.

SANDY  
But it's there. It's a 7 dimensional computer hologram. Like the one's you see in malls but much more complex.

SMYTHE  
Well - pardon me for asking - but if it's there but no one can see it - no one but people with "advanced cognitive ability" as you put it - what difference does it make?

SANDY  
But you can see it. That's the point. You can see it. You just don't know it.

SMYTHE  
And you think someone might be subliminally ... (searches for word) reprogramming our nation?

SANDY  
On this scale? What other explanation is there?

SMYTHE  
(sitting back)  
You're a very bright woman, aren't you  
Ms. Price?

Sandy looks at him blandly for a moment. She's heard that tone of voice plenty before. Stands.

SANDY  
Mind if I smoke?

SMYTHE  
I'd prefer you didn't.

She lights a cigarette anyway. Tosses the smoking match onto his desk.

SANDY  
First of all - fuck you. Second of all, yes, I am very bright. Brighter than you, as a matter of a fact. Third, you're the 15th moron I've talked to today who hasn't been smart enough to see that if someone's got the power and resources to subliminally alter the collective unconscious of an entire country that he and everyone he's ever met should be scared shitless.

She recovers her copy of Newsweek off his desk.

SANDY  
Maybe Newsweek will be interested that someone's reprogramming their computers.

And she walks out.

# INT. CENTRAL COMPUTING - DAY

Smythe breezes into the Systems Analyst's office. Tosses a copy of the NEWSWEEK on the desk in front of him.

SMYTHE  
Scan it.

Sigh. The Analyst drops what he's doing, slaps the magazine on his flatbed. Mouses a scan. Image builds on his screen.

SMYTHE  
Run a dat.fig.analysis.

Analyst obeys. The Newsweek cover on screen is replaced pixel by pixel until it becomes ...

SYSTEM'S ANALYST  
Holeeeey shit . . .

A NUCLEAR MUSHROOM CLOUD - the words "ACCEPT EXIT ZERO".

SMYTHE  
Christ Almighty ...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Intelligence Director POLK glances up when Smythe bursts into his high-level office. Slaps the Newsweek on the desk along with a laser of the hidden hologram.

SMYTHE  
Is this ours?

Polk glances at it. Fidgets an uncomfortable moment.

POLK  
I can neither confirm nor deny...

SMYTHE  
(cutting him off)  
Polk, some proof reader from Spokane just walked into my office with this.

Polk. Deep breath.

POLK  
Off the record - I can tell you, this is our technology, we've been doing this shit for years.

He shakes his head.

POLK  
But I don't think this is anything we would put out.

SMYTHE  
Jesus Christ - you don't know???

POLK  
(shrugs)  
Around here - anything's possible.

SMYTHE  
Fuck me. Lovely.

:  
POLK  
Who is this proof-reader?

SMYTHE

I don't know. Some woman. I'm running background on her right now.

POLK

A woman?

SMYTHE

Yeah. Two tits, long hair, a pussy and an ass that shakes. You know the type.

POLK

Don't be an ass. How could a civilian find out we've been doing this?

A knock brings their heads around. The SYSTEM ANALYST. Holds a piece of paper.

SMYTHE

Speak.

SYSTEM ANALYST

It's very strange. I ran background on this woman but...

He shakes his head.

SYSTEM ANALYST

The computer says she's dead. She's been dead for 33 years.

Dead silence. Polk starts off slowly ...

POLK

Smythe. A foreign agent just walked into your office and tried to blackmail the CIA ...

His face goes red. Spittle flying from his lips.

SMYTHE

And you didn't even know it!

CARD: NEW YORK CITY

# EXT. NEWSWEEK PUBLISHING - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Newsweek Publishing. Big modern glass building.

A STOLEN CHEVY NOVA pulls up before it. Max EMERGES. Glances at A LIST - identical to the list the Gopher downloaded to his computer the night before. Computers accessed by the Super-Web:

MAX

Newsweek Vax. Site 31-A. Todd Franklin  
- operator.

## # INT. LOBBY - DAY

Cathedral lobby. Marble columns. Seething with people. Max stops at the DIRECTORY. Scans. Finds the name.

MAX

Todd Franklin - Layout, 8th Floor.

He turns. Eyes locking on the INFORMATION DESK.

## # INT. INFORMATION DESK - DAY

Public greeting center. A massive TEAK OCTAGON in the center of the cathedral lobby. Eight sides. Eight positions. Eight Newsweek Inc. Information Technicians. Eight red sportscoats. Eight fake smiles. Eight computer terminals.

Max circles. Like a shark. Where there is a terminal - there is a way. His eyes follow the keyboard cables - all plugged into interfaces in the counter behind the monitors.

Steps up to a station whose operator is temporarily occupied. Keeping the monitor between them, Max quietly unplugs her keyboard and plugs it into the back of his sub-notebook.

He looks up, gives a smile as the "Information Technician" turns to him. Cute girl. Tag that says "Ms. Easter".

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

Good morning and welcome to Newsweek Incorporated. How may we help you?

MAX

I have an appointment to see Todd Franklin up in Layout.

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

Oh Todd, of course. Let me just check the list. See if Todd remember to put you on ...

She types her PASSWORD into the computer between them. Of course, nothing happens. Blinks. Types her password again.

. INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

Oh, darn it!

She looks at him apologetically.

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN  
Sorry. My password's not working. I  
hate these things.

MAX  
We are kind of over-dependent on them.

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN  
(exasperated nod)  
Let me call Tech real quick, then I'll  
call security for you.

MAX  
(smiles)  
Take your time.

As she turns to the phone, Max quietly unplugs her keyboard from  
his computer and opens it. There's her password. "BUNNY".  
Typed in nice as you please.

MAX  
Kowabunga ...

# INT. NEWSWEEK LAYOUT OFFICES - DAY

Max stops at the UNIFORMED SECURITY GUARD.

MAX  
Max Day. I'm here to see Todd Franklin.  
The Guard grunts and consults a HAND-WRITTEN LIST.

SECURITY GUARD  
You're not on the list.

MAX  
That's not it coming over now is it?

He nods to the PRINTER at the Guard's hip - burping out a new  
list. The Guard rips it off. Grunts.

SECURITY GUARD  
Okay, Mr. Day - you're good to go.

Max smiles pleasantly and proceeds into the honeycomb of  
computer-laden cubicles that is Newsweek's layout department.

# INT. LOBBY - DAY

When Ms. Easter, the Information Technician, looks up, A WOMAN  
stands across the counter top.

WOMAN  
Hi. I have an appointment to see Todd

Franklin up in layout.

SANDY. The Info-Tech shakes her head.

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

Todd's a popular guy today. As soon as one of these other computers opens up, I'll check the list for you.

She rolls her eyes.

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

My password's not working today.

# INT. LAYOUT DEPARTMENT - DAY

Max walks along the cubicles. Visually clicking off name plates. Stops. "TODD FRANKLIN - COVER LAYOUT". Todd, honey fat, sits at his computer working on this week's cover.

Glances up. Max smiles. Moves on. But not before zeroing the man's PHONE.

Finds an empty workspace four or five cubicles down. Glances around. Swings in. Picks up phone. Punches TODD'S EXTENSION.

Todd picks up.

TODD (O.S.)

This is Todd.

MAX

Mr. Franklin. This is Mr. Day down in accounting. We're having a problem with your check. We need you to come down right away so we can take care of it.

TODD (O.S.)

(beat)

But ... accounting is up from me.

MAX

What floor are you on, Todd?

TODD (O.S.)

Eight.

MAX

Well then up. Do you want to get paid this week or not?

He rolls his eyes and hangs up. Todd's about as detail obsessive as he is. He watches Todd scurry off towards the elevators.



Two seconds later, Max swings in behind Todd's computer. Begins surfing. Running a "finger" to find exactly what files were accessed here by the Super-Web.

Last week's cover of Newsweek appears on his screen. President Clinton. Hardly seems like anything someone Kilo-Krunching would be interested in. Shakes his head.

MAX

Don't get it . . .

VOICE

Mr. Franklin ...

He spins. Startled. Finds himself looking up at a not half bad looking woman in her thirties. Misses just one beat.

MAX

(cautious)

Yeah ...

SANDY extends her hand.

SANDY

Sandy Price. We spoke.

He tentatively shakes the hand.

SANDY

You're looking into it now?

MAX

Looking ... into what?

SANDY

The cover.

She points to the cover on the screen.

SANDY

Someone's been breaking into your computers and laying CG 7 dimensional images under your digitized cover pages.

Max blinks up at her. Assimilating what she is saying.

SANDY

Listen, yours is just the tip of the iceberg. Somebody's been breaking into typeset computers all over the nation. When I got off the plane this morning I found a *dollar bill* with a hologram of the word "SLEEP" embedded in the magnetic ink.

Max stares at her a beat. Then regains himself.

MAX

Well, Ms. uh, Price, this is very interesting but ... I'm a little busy right now. Could you come back after lunch?

Sandy looks at him. Instinctual alarm going off in her head. Cocks it. Eyes shift to a PHOTO on the desk. TODD-FRANKLIN and his family. Shift back. She smiles. Friendly.

SANDY

Sure. I can come back. No problem.

With a brief wave, she is gone. Max knows damn well she's gone to get security. Grabbing up his bag, he heads the other way.

# INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

He stops on the threshold of the corridor. Down the hall, he can hear Sandy on the courtesy phone.

SANDY

... not Todd Franklin. I'm almost positive he's been breaking into your computers. Sandy Price. I'm on eight.

Keeping his head down, he heads towards the elevators at the opposite end of the corridor.

He's not halfway there when the elevator opens and THREE SERIOUS-LOOKING MEN in suits get off, walking swiftly towards him. Fuck! F.B.I..

He does an about-face, heads for the elevators at the far end of the corridor.

SANDY

(as he passes)

Hey!

But he just keeps going. Not stopping till he hits the elevator. Punches the button. Hears behind him ...

SANDY (O.C.)

What the fuck are you doing? Get your hands off me!

Max doesn't turn. Doesn't breathe. Elevator opens. Gets on.

INT. ELEVATOR

Presses "Lobby". Hears a voice ...

VOICE

Hey! Hold the elevator!

Max doesn't move. Doors start to close ... a HAND shoots in, they pop back open, SMYTHE walks in. Followed by the TWO OTHER MEN, hustling Sandy ahead of them.

Max stiffens, thinking they are going to grab him.

SANDY  
(livid)

I'm a citizen. You can't do this!

SMYTHE

Please.

Max's eyes zero Smythe's badge. They're CIA. Smythe glances at him. Assumes he's some schmuck messenger for Newsweek.

SMYTHE

Do citizens hide behind the names of women who've been dead for 33 years?

SANDY

What?!?

SMYTHE

Save your breath. We checked the computers.

This catches Max's attention. Smythe glances at him.

SMYTHE

What the fuck're you staring at?

The elevator hits bottom. Doors open. Smythe stalks out. Two Agents hustle Sandy after. The last thing Max sees is her panicked eyes connecting with his over her shoulder.

INT. FBI BOARDROOM - NEW YORK - DAY

KRANE looks glum. A number of FBI SUB-DIRECTORS are assembled.

KRANE

It looks like we've lost him.

SUB-DIRECTOR

How the fuck could you lose him??? You had him.

KRANE

Max Day's a computer genius. Wherever there's a computer integrated into the system, there's a weakness he can exploit. But I'll get him. Computers don't control everything yet. Eventually he's going to have to make a move that puts him outside the computer infrastructure. Once he doesn't have a computer to hide behind, the second he's in the open, I'll see him. And believe me, I will get him.

# EXT. DOCKS - DAY

EAST RIVER DOCK. Bad section of town. UNMARKED VEHICLE pulls up. SMYTHE emerges with Sandy. Pushes her to the edge of the dock. She whips back to him.

SANDY

I swear to God, I'm just a proof reader. I work for Redding publishing and I live in Spokane. Call and ask!

One of the other Agents lights a cigarette.

AGENT

If she's a pro, she'll never talk.

Smythe looks at Sandy. Very scary look in his eye.

SMYTHE

You tried to blackmail us. And then because the CIA doesn't play that you went to the media.

A heavy, heavy cold moment. Wind blows. They are very alone out here. Are they going to kill her? Sandy swallows ...

SANDY

Oh fuck ... what are you going to do?

Abruptly, the growl of an engine turns everyone's head. MAX pulls up in the NOVA. Stops. Gets out. Uncertain beat for Smythe and the other two. Who the fuck is this?

Max looks to Sandy.

MAX

Katja ... our friends want to know that you're okay ...

AGENT

What the ...

She stares at him. What? Max glances nervously at Smythe. Then repeats to Sandy ...

MAX

Katja ... our friends want to know that you're okay.

SANDY

(half catching on)

Oh ... uh ... yes. Yes, everything's all right.

Max nods, turns to the blank face of ABANDONED BUILDINGS across the street. Raises a fist into the air. Signaling unseen spectators. Smythe and the other two scan the broken windows of the scarred building, suddenly apprehensive. For all they know, the rifle sights are already on their foreheads.

Max turns back to Sandy.

MAX

Get in the car.

A frozen moment. Smythe and his people don't know what to do. Sandy doesn't either for a moment. Then, seeing that no one is going to stop her, she walks quickly over and gets into the car.

Max slides in next to her, starts the engine and pulls out. Smythe and the others can only stare after it. Dividing their attention between the receding Nova and the blank eyes of the building across the street.

# INT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY

Sandy glances out the back window.

SANDY

Jesus ... I think those guys were going to kill me.

MAX

I'd say it was a distinct possibility. You stumbled onto something pretty goddam sensitive.

She looks at him.

SANDY

How do you know?

MAX

Because I think I've stumbled onto the same thing.

SANDY

Then ... it's the CIA?

MAX

Their computer was broken into like everyone else's.

SANDY

Then why were they going to kill me?

MAX

(shrugs)

Habit? Or they're just very anal about killing anyone who might be a loose end.

Sandy stares at him a moment. Then the TANGLE OF BARE IGNITION WIRES tied together to illegally start the vehicle.

Digs into her purse.

SANDY

I need a cigarette.

# EXT. HOTDOG VENDOR - CENTRAL PARK - DAY

They sit at the edge of the lake. Sandy's head is in her hands. She can't believe this is happening to her.

SANDY

Why Newsweek? Why were you at Newsweek?

MAX

Every night at 2:38 A.M. all the super computers in the country are webbing together and super-computing. For reasons unknown, this Super-Web's been accessing smaller industrial and institutional computers all over the country. Like Newsweek.

He pulls a FORM-FEED DOCUMENT out of his computer bag. Hands it to her.

MAX

This is the list of the computers. I downloaded it onto mine last night. I figured if I could get into some of them, I could figure out who the heck's doing this. And why.

She scans the list. A computer is circled in red.

SANDY

General Motors Dandelion Mainframe,

Chicago, Illinois? You're going there next?

MAX

(nods)

Whoever's super-webbing these computers spent a shitload of time in that computer.

He looks at her.

MAX

Well, a second and a half. But believe me, for this computer that's an eternity.

A HORSE'S WHINNY brings their heads round. A MOUNTED POLICE OFFICER trots up the path towards them. Max stands.

Starts to say something. Then just nods.

MAX

Stay safe.

Shouldering his computer bag, he starts to walk away. Sandy leaps to her feet.

SANDY

Wait ... !

He half turns. She hesitates ... glances back at the cop. Still coming. Observing them curiously. Back ...

SANDY

Why did you help me?

MAX

(shrugs)

I know what it feels like.

That's all she needed to hear. Walking quickly to his side, takes his arm and continues with him away down the park path.

# EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

They walk. Fast. Sandy's eyes ticking warily across each person they pass.

MAX

Whoever's behind this has the most amazing God access to the Internet I've ever seen. Which means we can't use credit cards, calling cards or bank cards without sending up a huge flare.

SANDY  
How can we possibly travel then?

MAX  
(shrugs)  
I never had any of those cards anyhow.  
Where there's a computer, there's a way.

# EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Sandy stands beside a DUMPSTER painted with the words PROPERTY OF CAPITOL TRAVEL. Doesn't look too happy to be here.

Clunk! Clunk! Someone is crawling around inside the dumpster. A moment later, MAX emerges, a TATTERED REAM OF BLANK AIRLINE TICKETS in hand. Three to a perforated page. When only two are printed, the remaining one is discarded. Winks.

SANDY  
Sure. But without access into the  
airline ticketing computers, those're  
useless.

MAX  
Can you say "Social Engineering"?

# INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Max and Sandy tour Capitol Travel's underground parking garage. Max's eyes roving like a hawk.

SANDY  
This is social engineering?

MAX  
No.

He stops, points to a vanity plate on a Ford Escort. "MIFFY".

MAX  
That is.

# INT. CAPITAL TRAVEL - DAY

Large office. Beehive busy. Max scans.

MAX  
Targeting ... targeting ...

Spies an OVERWEIGHT WOMAN at a desk near the middle.

MAX  
Lock-on.



## # INT. CAPITOL TRAVEL - DAY

The TRAVEL AGENT looks up from her computer screen to Max, Sandy at his shoulder. He smiles.

MAX

(reading nametag)

Hello, Ms. Parker. We're interested in a big vacation package to Europe.

The Travel Agent brightens.

TRAVEL AGENT

Oh, have a seat. Have a seat. Let me just call up my Europe screen here ...

As she types, Max scans her desktop. About a million pictures of a CAT.

MAX

What a beautiful cat.

TRAVEL AGENT

(beaming)

She's my little snooky pooky honey bunny.

MAX

Awww. What's her name?

TRAVEL AGENT

Miffy Elizabeth Anastasia Parker.

Max exchanges a meaningful glance with Sandy, pulls out his PAGER. Glances at it as if it just went off.

MAX

Ms. Parker, is there any place around here I can place a long-distance phone call?

## # INT. CAPITOL TRAVEL - LOBBY - DAY

Max and Sandy are moving quickly.

SANDY

I still don't see how is a woman naming her license plate after her cat is going to get us airline tickets to Chicago.

MAX

Because human beings are the most predictable animals on the planet and the weakest link in any computer security chain.

He pulls up at a COURTESY PHONE. Extracts his sub-notebook, plugs it into the phone,

Surfs into Capitol Travel's user files. PASSWORD flashes on screen. He types "MIFFY". Works like a charm. They are in.

SANDY

Pure chance.

MAX

No doubt. By the way, your ATM code wouldn't happen to be 2224 would it?

SANDY

(stares at him)

How did you know that?

MAX

Oh, you know - pure chance.

One of the forms he retrieved from the dumpster feeds out of his portable bubble-jet printer. Hands it to Sandy with a grin.

Two AIRLINE TICKETS to Chicago. Sandy glances up.

SANDY

So what happened to first class?

# INT. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Moving warily through the crowded concourse. Max stops dead.

SANDY

What?

He nods to TWO MEN standing at the gate. Openly scanning every person that walks by.

MAX

Federal.

SANDY

How do you know?

MAX

I know.

Sandy studies the men from afar for a moment. Then steps into a kiosk, picks up a men's shaving kit. Quickly pays, re-emerges.

SANDY

CIA and FBI talk?

MAX

Never.

SANDY

Then they're looking for someone alone.  
Come on.

# INT. CONCOURSE MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Ignoring the men who double-take on the WOMAN at the mirror, Sandy cuts Max's longish hair short. Steps back. Pleased with her handiwork.

SANDY

Cross your fingers.

# INT. CONCOURSE - DAY

Max and Sandy merge back into the crowd. As they approach the gate, her fingers interlock with his. Husband and wife. They stop at the gate, directly in front of the TWO FBI AGENTS. Max, sweating it, hands the attendant their two tickets. The FBI Agents give them a hard look. Sandy flashes them a brilliant smile.

The Attendant tears their tickets and waves them through.

# INT. BOARDING TUBE - DAY

Once past the gate, Sandy releases Max's hand - relieved.

SANDY

I didn't think that was going to work.

MAX

You're saying that now?

# INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

When they arrive at their seats, a MOTHER with her INFANT BABY on her lap already sits at the window seat. Sandy smiles, giving the baby a little wave, as they take their seats. The mother smiles back.

Max whispers to Sandy.

MAX

Do you have a phone? A cellular phone?

Digging into her purse, Sandy finds and hands over to him her cellular phone. Dropping the tray in front of him, Max opens his computer, INTERFACES with the cellular and modems.

SANDY

What are we doing now?

MAX

Some of the more common computers on the list I've accessed before - like the Library of Congress. I can run a Finger and find out what kind of information the Super-Web has been accessing there.

SANDY

If you can find out where it's going, is there some kind of trace you can do to find out where it's originating from?

MAX

(shakes head)

Whoever's doing this knows computers like nothing I've ever seen. They've totally covered their tracks to the point that I can't find any points of ingress into the Net.

Sandy absorbs this. Shakes her head.

SANDY

Am I crazy or is the scale of this is all just too big? The intellectual resources necessary to make something like this happen ...

Max looks at her.

MAX

You're thinking a foreign power? Who? Russia isn't tech...

SANDY

Then the Chinese. They break inside our national computer infrastructure and subliminally re-program a nation.

MAX

Reprogram them for *what*?

She looks at him a beat. Glances at the baby gurgling happily in the lap next to her. Back. Shakes her head.

SANDY

I can't even say it.

#

EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

THE AT&T COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE - routing the CELLULAR SIGNAL of Sandy's phone.

Her electronic serial number appears next to her NAME on the satellite's internal screen.

# EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

4500 miles due east of the AT&T Satellite a TSI-BAU CHINESE SPY SATELLITE watches in infrared as the 747 jet speeds down the runway, lifting off.

# INT. REVIEW CHAMBER - LANGLEY VIRGINIA - DAY

Dark room. Big. SMYTHE sits in the hot-seat before a PANEL OF MEN engaged in an active discussion amongst themselves.

DARK SUIT 1

If they're Russian they're inactive. The KGB can't support a splinter in this country anymore.

DARK SUIT 2

Why would the KGB want to blackmail us anyway? This is just a pair of deactivated agents taking information they picked up in the early 90's and trying to cash in now.

SMYTHE

(speaking up)

What I'd like to know ...

All heads turn. No one seems pleased to be hearing from the guy who lost the CounterAgents. He holds up the Newsweek.

SMYTHE

Is this ours? Because if it isn't then somebody has pirated our technology and is applying it on a grand scale.

They regard him a cold beat, then return to their discussion as though he had ceased to exist.

DARK SUIT 3

Do we just pay them off?

DARK SUIT 2

Negative. This information's too goddam sensitive to have them sniffing around for more money in a year. We've got every available bit of technology focused on finding these cocksuckers. Once that's accomplished, we finish the job the way God meant for jobs like this to be finished.

## # INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

White clouds drift by. Max is still intensely typing away. Sandy, asleep next to him. Her head slides down, touches his shoulder.

Max's typing fingers stop. Her luxuriant brown hair drapes down his chest. Its scent filling his nostrils. He gently shakes her. Whispers ...

MAX

Sandy ...

Her eyes blink open. Focus. She sits upright.

SANDY

Oh ... sorry . . .

An uncomfortable beat between them. Max shakes his head.

MAX

S'okay. I've, uh, found some interesting stuff. Check this out. Every single document in the Library of Congress on robotics, advanced textile ceramics, hydroponic horticultural physics and recombinant DNA has been accessed cover to cover.

He looks at her. Shakes his head.

MAX

Horticultural physics is the use of recombinant DNA to grow plants in particular shapes. Genetic material's taken from a foreign source, incorporated into the host plant and you get a square tomato that ships more practically.

SANDY

Plant genetics and magazine covers? There's no connectivity. No common element in the subjects.

MAX

And why would anyone would go through the trouble of webbing super computers together to get at them. You can just simply walk into the Library of Congress and get this information.

They look at one another. The abrupt sounds of LAUGHTER and roughhousing from the back of the plane, turns their heads. The MOTHER sitting next to Sandy sighs profoundly.

MOTHER

No rest for the weary ...

She smiles tiredly at Sandy.

MOTHER

Would you mind holding him for just a minute while I check my other kids?

SANDY

Oh, not at all.

She smiles as the mother lifts the baby into her lap. Hands her a DR. SUESS BOOK.

MOTHER

Be right back.

As she disappears down the aisle, Sandy looks to Max. Beams.

SANDY

Isn't he adorable?

MAX

Oh ... absolutely.

The baby's eyes fall on Max. Points, gurgles. Reaches for him.

SANDY

See? He likes you.

MAX

Hope it doesn't imprint on me.

SANDY

It's a baby, not a duck.

Smiling, Max picks up the Dr. Suess book. THE CAT IN THE HAT. The baby squeals happily and pulls it open. Sandy smiles too.

MAX

Check it out, Kid. Look at this crazy Cat. Look at what he's wearing ...

But her smile fades. As the CAT IN THE HAT'S FACE melts before her eyes. Replaced by HER OWN FACE reflected in swimming liquid mercury as her cognition begins to descend through layers of hidden holography.

Until her own face is replaced by a CRACKED HUMAN SKULL, Mushroom Clouds in the empty eye-sockets and the words:

ACCEPT 5.5.97

Max's own smile fades as he sees the blood literally draining right out of Sandy's face.

MAX

Sandy? Are you...

But with an abrupt cry, she smacks the book aside. Hitting her feet, she presses the baby back into her arms of the returning mother and rushes away down the aisle.

MAX

Sandy!

He jumps up. Briefly to the mother ...

MAX

Sorry ...

And pursues Sandy down the aisle. She slams into the lavatory. Max skids up. Can hear her weeping inside. He knocks. No answer. People are staring.

Opening the door, he goes in.

# INT. LAVATORY

Tears are streaming down Sandy's cheeks as she angrily tries to tear off the smoke detector.

MAX

Sandy ...

He lays a hand on her shoulder but she viciously shrugs him off - yanking the smoke detector out by its roots.

Opening her purse, she pulls out her cigarettes.

MAX

Sandy, come on, you can't smoke in here.

SANDY

Fuck you. The CIA has sanctioned me as a counter-agent, I'm seeing my own fucking death in children's books. FAA smoking regulations are way down my list.

Locating her lighter, she lights the cigarette. Takes a deep drag. Exhales. Relaxes somewhat. Still can't look at him.

SANDY

What's Exit Zero? Do you know what it means?



MAX

It's ... it's a programming term. When a piece of source code has outlived its usefulness it's routed out the zero exit. (shrugs) Terminated, basically.

A ball of knotted frustration, she strikes the wall.

SANDY

God-dammit!

MAX

Sandy, what the hell's going on?

She covers her face with a hand. Doesn't breath. Removes it. Breathes.

SANDY

I saw a date. In the book.

MAX

A date for what?

She shakes her head. Can't meet his eyes. Doesn't want to.

SANDY

I think these subliminal messages are reprogramming us to spiritually prepare for and accept ...

MAX

(cautious)

Accept ... what?

SANDY

A First Strike. Two days from now.

# EXT. FIELD - MICHIGAN - DAY

A rural microwave switching station. The 747 flies over 6 miles above. The switching station picks up the tracking satellite downlink. Uplinks to ...

# EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

To the FAA communication coordinating satellite in geo-synch over North America, which in turn downlinks ...

# INT. O'HARE TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER - CHICAGO - DAY

To Air Traffic Control at O'Hare. Pouring RAIN here. The AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER sips his coffee, surveys his screen. Max and Sandy's 747 shows on approach. Picks up mike.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL  
Must've had a hell of a tail wind, 5506.  
You are A-1 clear to land.

## # DREAM

In Max's dream he speeds through the inner workings of a CPU, burning through memory caches, BIOSs, 32 bit buses ...

He runs and runs. Pursued by something unseen. Faceless.

He dashes through logic gates, winding through a labyrinth of on-off gates until they begin slamming down, blocking him at every turn until he is left facing the final exit.

He looks back over his shoulder. His pursuer, a massive infraction of light, is coming. He looks back to exit, huge, monolithic, technological, a massive "0" cresting the top.

Exit Zero. Beckoning. Drawn to it ...

## # INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

He abruptly awakens. Back on the plane. Sandy is there.

SANDY

You okay?

Max rubs his eyes, focusing.

MAX

I was ... just a dream ...

The CAPTAIN'S VOICE filters over the intercom.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Good afternoon. This is Captain Tom Johnson. If you'll take notice, I've turned on the seatbelt signs. We'll be landing at O'Hare in approximately ten minutes.

Max glances at his watch. Sandy. Eyes narrow ...

MAX

Made good time ...

CAPTAIN'S VOICE (O.C.)

We're about twenty ahead of schedule. Don't know quite where we picked up the time but sometimes it works like that and I'm sure no one's sorry for an extra few minutes. From all the United crew, it's been a pleasure serving your travel needs today.

Max. Still locked on Sandy. Alarm in his eye. Wheels racing.

SANDY

What?

He stands. Leans across her. Peering out the window. BLACK CLOUDS. Dense rain sleets the window. Can't see a thing.

SANDY

What?

He straightens. Thinks. Looks at her. Pale. Realizing ...

MAX

(urgent)

That phone I used. Is it yours?

SANDY

Whose else would it be?

MAX

But it's in your name??? It's not a company phone?

SANDY

No, it's mine.

Max only stares at her - mind racing a million miles an hour.

SANDY

For God's sake - what?

Max starts running for the head of the plane.

SANDY

Max!!!

A stewardess tries to intercept him.

STEWARDESS

Sir, we're about to lan...

He *dodges* into the next aisle, charging hell bent for leather towards the cockpit.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Max bursts in. The Pilot and Co-pilot turn, astonished.

MAX

(breathless)

What's our altitude?!

PILOT

Sir, we are coming in for a landing.  
You're going to have retake your seat.

MAX

What's our altitude!?!

The Pilot and Co-pilot stare, astounded by his vehemence.

CO-PILOT

We're at 20,000 feet and descending.  
Now, I think you should return to your  
seat, Sir.

Max begins frenetically examining the unfamiliar controls  
himself.

MAX

You're sure? There couldn't be any  
mistake?

The entire Stewarding crew skids into the doorway.

PILOT

Mister - please. If you don't immediately ...

MAX

(cutting him off)

Precipitation is extremely rare at the  
altitude you quoted me. Can we verify  
altitude!?!

CO-PILOT

The autopilot doesn't make mistakes.

Max stares at him - face draining.

MAX

You mean we're being guided in by a  
computer?

CO-PILOT

The ILS is one of the most sophisticated  
ground control systems in the world.  
Now, if you don't...

MAX

Turn it off.

PILOT

(to Stewards)

Jack, Peter - why don't you show this  
gentleman...

Max steps back, shoving his hand into his jacket pocket.

MAX

I have a gun!

Everyone freezes.

MAX

Just relax. I don't want anyone to get hurt.

SANDY has pushed her way through. She stares astonished at the finger-gun poking inside Max's jacket.

SANDY  
(tense)

Jesus, Max ...

MAX  
(tight)

I've got it under control.

Back to the Pilot.

MAX

Disengage the autopilot. Pilot us into the glide path yourself. That's all I'm asking.

PILOT

I won't do that. I think I'm a pretty good judge of character and I'm telling you now - I won't do anything until I see the gun.

Max hesitates - bluff called.

SANDY

My God ...

The tone in her voice. Everyone glances sharply at her. Follows her eyes out the windshield.

*They have just come out of the clouds and are 100 yards above Lake Michigan and coming down fast!!!*

CO-PILOT

Altimeter shows 16 thousand feet!!!

MAX

Disengage the autopilot! Shut it off!!!

The Pilot jumps into action, collapsing whole rows of switches with a single swipe of his arm. 200 feet. Closing.

100 feet. He jumps down behind the joystick ...

50 feet. He pulls back, plane nosing up under incredible G's.

The 747 streaks ten feet above the waves. Spray licking up, covering the windshield.

MAX

*Pull it up! Pull it up!*

PILOT

*I can't! It's too late.*

# INT. PLANE

The passengers are in a frenzy, screaming. Out the windows the wings CHOP the tops of whitecapping waves off ...

The MOTHER, looking back for her other children, horrified ...

MOTHER

*Johnathan! Nathan!*

She hugs her oblivious infant to her breast, bracing ...

# EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

*WHAM!!!* the plane strikes the surface of the inland sea, skips off like a stone, soars, comes in towards land at a terrifying speed. Buzzing the tops of fishing boats ...

# EXT. O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Crosses landbreak, screaming 20 feet above the runway, touching down on its belly at 325 miles per hour, sending up a MASSIVE fountain of metal-shear sparks. Slowly, it begins to rotate ...

Until it finally grinds to a ponderous halt at the edge of the runway. Intact.

EMERGENCY VEHICLES come sirening up, exits pop off, inflatable slides drop down. Passengers mass exodus. Fire technicians trying to herd them out of the area.

Sandy and Max find each other amidst the shell-shocked crowd.

SANDY

*(pale, drawn)*

*Whatever's going on - it's worth killing  
400 people to keep it quiet.*

They look at each other. The PILOT is talking to a fireman, scanning the crowd. Max takes Sandy's hand ...

## # EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

The MATSUSHITA UPPER ATMOSPHERE SCIENTIFIC SATELLITE watches through the heavy cloud cover with an effortless heat-pictograph of the O'Hare runway 690 miles below.

A long brilliant red swath of heat trails up the tarmac to the cockeyed plane. 398 clustered dots of warmth ...

The Satellite's thermatic camera-eye zooms in on TWO, on the other side of the plane. Moving away from the crowd.

CARD: GENERAL MOTORS DANDELION MAINFRAME, CHICAGO, IL

## # EXT. APPLIED MOTORS DIVISION - AUTOWORKS - DAY

Industrial area. A cab pulls up before a huge auto-manufacturing plant. Max and Sandy emerge. Scan the area.

Look at each other.

SANDY

Ready or not ...

## # INT. RECEPTIONIST'S DESK - DAY

When the Receptionist glances up, Max and Sandy are there.

MAX

Hi - we got a call.

RECEPTIONIST  
(blinks)

Who're you?

MAX

Computer repair. You're having a problem?

RECEPTIONIST

Well, no, I ...

But, when she glances at her computer, the screen is blank. Beneath the desk, Max removes his foot from the ORANGE SWITCH on the POWER STRIP. Which he has just turned off.

She strikes a few keys. Nada.

RECEPTIONIST

I ...: guess I am having a problem.

MAX

May I ... ?

She obligingly gets up, allowing him to sit in her chair.

MAX

Password?

RECEPTIONIST

Uh - "mittens".

MAX

Cat's name?

RECEPTIONIST

How'd you know?

MAX

(glances at Sandy)

Lucky guess.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, I'm gonna grab a cup of coffee.  
Bring you anything?

SANDY

(fake smile)

We're fine.

The instant she is out of the room, Max reaches under and turns the computer back on. It boots back up and he is in.

Moving quickly, he shoves a 3 1/2 disk into the drive.

SANDY

Okay, so how'd you know my ATM code?

MAX

Told, ya - lucky guess.

He gives her a wink and strikes a key.

MAX

Now we're gonna find out what's been  
going on in this plant at 2:38 AM every  
night for the last 18 months.

He sits back, studies the arrays. Eyes narrow.

MAX

Curious ...

SANDY

What is?



MAX

Well... it looks like for 183 seconds  
every night the production line's been  
shutting down manufacture ...

He looks up.

MAX

And making something else

INT. APPLIED AUTOWORKS MANUFACTURE FLOOR - DAY

A HUGE AUTOMATED FACTORY. Max and Sandy stand watching with amazement as MONSTROUS ROBOTIC ARMS on the assembly line perform functions at the extremes of power and delicacy. Their repetitive motions all at once massive, hypnotic and frightening in an unearthly, inorganic ballet.

Hard-hatted WORKERS keep busy, monitoring hydraulics.

MAX

Unbelievable. Someone's reprogrammed the  
auto-assembly computers ...

SANDY

So that every night when there's no human  
supervision ...

MAX

These robots are stopping the line. And  
building something else.

He turns to her.

MAX

Or they were. Production returned to  
normal three days ago.

SANDY

So, whatever they were building ...

MAX

They finished.

INT. DINER - DAY

Truck stop diner. Grey, rainy, muddy outside. Inside. Pancakes. Hash browns. Sandy has a slice of toast. Butters it. Max has the LIST of Super-Web accessed computers out.

MAX

Doesn't make sense.

He takes a bite.

MAX

Only another country would have the resources to undertake something like this. Fine. But if they've got those kind of resources, why access the Library of Congress for commonly available information they surely already have. And why use American factories to build anything? At three minutes a night for 18 months? Build it in your own country, smuggle it in. Buy your own factory here. A million alternatives that make more sense than that one.

SANDY

Okay, so if it's not a country, then who is it? You just acknowledged that only a country would have the resources to manipulate the computer infrastructure on this scale.

MAX

(has to admit)

I don't know. What puzzles me is why whoever it is, is doing everything via computer. There doesn't appear to be any human interface anywhere.

She taps the PRINT-OUT OF DOWNLOADED FILES.

SANDY

Whatever was being secretly made on that line was finished three days ago, right?

MAX

Right.

SANDY

Okay, these records show that two days ago there was anomalous shipping invoice to a place off this company's normal shipping routes.

MAX

So whatever it was the line was making...

SANDY

It went there.

There's a beat of absorption between them.

MAX

Where's there?

SANDY  
P.O. Box 436, Rockford, Tennessee.

# EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A STATE TROOPER cups his hand, peers into the 77 Monte Carlo. A TANGLE OF BARED WIRES sticks out under the dash. His partner stands at the license plate, on the radio.

STATE TROOPER  
...stolen vehicle. Melby's Highway 99 ...

The Trooper glances up at a COUPLE exiting the diner.

STATE TROOPER  
This your car?

Sandy pulls Max to him.

SANDY  
No Officer. Don't own a car.

And continues past. The Trooper watches them to the edge of the highway where they quickly board the GREYHOUND there. The doors hydraulic closed and the bus roars away.

# INT. FBI CHICAGO FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

The PILOT OF THE 747 can be seen through a partition of glass smoking a cigarette in the next room. In this one KRANE and AGENT CHASE interrogate the Receptionist from the G.M. PLANT.

RECEPTIONIST  
... so I called the cops.

KRANE  
You did the right thing. And he downloaded your data base?

RECEPTIONIST  
The shipping records, yeah.

Krane turns to Agent Chase.

KRANE  
I want those records gone over with a fine tooth comb. Anything out of the ordinary, I want to know about it.

# INT. BUS - NIGHT

Black outside. Max and Sandy sit in the back. Late. Sleepy.

SANDY

Say something deep, Max.

MAX

Life's just a bag of tricks.

She smiles. Silence. Finally.

MAX

Your turn.

SANDY

No good deed goes unpunished.

He looks at her. She's pretty.

MAX

Married?

SANDY

(shrugs/smiles)

Why make one man miserable when I can stay single and do the same thing for the entire planet.

MAX

High on males, are you?

SANDY

Sweetheart, to women men are just big dogs that talk.

MAX

Woof.

SANDY

(laughs)

Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, but backwards and in heels.

MAX

Yeah, but who led?

He glances over. She's smiling. Putting her head on his shoulder, she goes to sleep.

INT. CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Out the window, the White House sparkles in the night distance. The CIA Director stares at it. Finally, he speaks to Smythe who has been sitting silently across from him.

INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR

When you find them ... I want you to come

to a kind of permanent understanding with them. Do you take my meaning?

SMYTHE

But, Sir ... I haven't been in the field for seven...

INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR

I don't want to hear that. This is your fuck-up. You fix it. If the media gets wind of this information, no one, I mean no one, from the mail room up, is going to escape jail-time. That can't happen.

Smythe draws a deep breath.

SMYTHE

Yes, Sir.

CARD: ROCKFORD, TENNESSEE

# EXT. MAIN STREET ROCKFORD - MORNING

Dusty streets, dusty Southern town. Church steeple. General store. A different bus pulls up, expelling Max and Sandy.

SANDY

Why in hell, would anyone send anything here?

MAX

Could be a dead drop. UPS gets a computer order to make a pick-up from a P.O. Box and deliver to destinations unknown. Covers tracks nicely.

She looks at him. How does he know this kind of stuff.

MAX

Hey, I worked for the FBI.

# INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Max is rummaging around back in farm tools. Sandy is gathering food for them. Half dozen other people in the store.

SANDY

(calls out)

Whaddaya like?

MAX (O.C.)

Peanut butter sandwiches.

*Use Ext  
Zero  
or a model  
to  
PRIVATE.  
D. K. Instant  
A. P. Smith*

She grimaces but pulls a loaf of bread and a jar of Skippy off the shelf. Exiting the aisle she steps into line at the counter. Ahead of her, a FAMILY OF GERMAN TOURISTS, practicing their English on the Store Owner who couldn't give a shit.

GERMAN TOURIST

We are going to the Graceland. You have been to the Graceland, yes?

SHOP OWNER

Nope.

Sandy shakes her head to herself. Looks to the two tow-headed children, eying her over chocolate bars. Smiles. The Father pushes his EURO-VISA CREDIT CARD across to the Shop Owner.

The smile falls off Sandy's lips.

GERMAN TOURIST

Ja, ja, Elvis is still King on the planet.

CRASH! the groceries fall from Sandy's arms and she runs out. The Tourist Family turns, stares. Max, just coming up ...

MAX

Sandy!

Runs after.

# EXT. GENERAL STORE

Finding her out in the dusty street. Hands on her hips. Looking down at the road.

MAX

What is it, Sandy.

She looks up.

SANDY

Nothing.

MAX

What do you mean, nothing? What were you doing in there? Experimenting with gravity?

She's acting really odd.

SANDY

Look ... I'm sorry, okay. It was nothing. Let's do what we came here to do. Come on.

# INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

A lazy summer's afternoon. A fly buzzes. Max and Sandy enter. Dead. No one in sight.

Sandy nods to the bulletin board. A FAX OF HIS FACE on an FBI WANTED clipboard.

SANDY  
Why Max, you didn't tell me you were  
wanted for Murder.

MAX  
Well, I always hate people who do nothing  
but talk about themselves.

She tears the picture down.

SANDY  
You'll have to send them a better picture  
at some point.

They stop at the old-style post office boxes.

MAX  
436.

SANDY  
Got it.

She peers through the worn plastic window. BOX of some kind inside. Straightens.

SANDY  
How do we get it out? Social  
engineering?

Max produces a CROWBAR he got from the General Store from under his jacket.

MAX  
Mechanical persuasion.

Crack! he splinters the old metal. Pulls out a box the size and shape of a checkbox. Exchanges a glance with Sandy.

He tears the paper off, opens the box. Into his hand rolls AN EYEBALL. Cold. Titanium. Lifeless. Perfect.

They both stare.

SANDY  
What the fuck is going on here?

# EXT. AUTO MECHANIC'S GARAGE - DAY

A RAMSHACKLE OLD GARAGE on the wrong side of the tracks in Rockford. Leaning beneath an oak shrouded in kudzu.

# INT. GARAGE - DAY

A BLACK MAN - stained T-shirt - works under a CADILLAC when Max and Sandy enter.

SANDY

Hi - we're looking for Leon.

The man slides out from under the car.

LEON

I'm him.

MAX

Leon, we hear you're the best machinist for 100 miles.

Leon stands, cleaning his hands on a rag.

LEON

Maybe. What can I do you for?

Sandy and Max exchange a glance. She extends her hand. In it lies the TITANIUM EYEBALL.

Leon takes it. Examines it. Rolls it in his hand. They follow him to his work bench where he pokes at it with some oily dental tools.

LEON

Mmmmm ... yeah ... see, this little cable dials the iris ...

He works it, IRIS whirring open and closed with machine precision. Glances up.

LEON

You people know what this is?

SANDY

We were hoping you'd tell us.

LEON

It's the smallest goddam video camera in the world. Zoom lens and everything. Where'd it come from?

MAX

We're not ... really sure.



Leon studies him.

LEON

You don't want to tell me, that's your business. But I'll tell you this ...

He tosses it back to Sandy.

LEON

It's about ten years ahead of any technology I've ever heard of.

Before anyone can respond the THUMPING of a HELICOPTER brings everyone's eyes up. It sounds like it's practically landing on the roof. A BULLHORN ...

BULLHORN (O.C.)

THIS IS THE POLICE! COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEADS!

Snaps everyone's heads around. Out the dirty window, THREE POLICE VEHICLES, HALF DOZEN COUNTY SHERIFFS - Shotguns leveled across the hoods.

LEON

What the ...

Leon's eyes whip to Max and Sandy - already jumping into the Cadillac.

LEON

Hey! That ain't my car!

The engine ROARS to life. Max slams it into reverse and stomps the pedal. The car leaps backward, crashing through the flimsy tin wall ...

# EXT. GARAGE - DAY

... skidding around in the rich Tennessee soil. WHAM! Max wrenches it into Drive and hits it, wheeling wildly into the dense PECAN ORCHARD behind the shop.

# INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The FEDERAL HELICOPTER sweeps upward as the local law jumps into their own cars to give chase.

KRANE AND AGENT CHASE peer down at the canopy of the orchard.

AGENT CHASE

I can't see a goddam thing ...

Sandy  
mystery  
is  
pursued  
continues  
develops

281

9691

## # EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Max and Sandy go slamming through the seemingly endless orchard, flying over lumps, spraying soil. WHAM! they go showering through a SHALLOW BROOK flowing through the property.

In the distance behind, bristling lights of pursuing cars.

## # EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! the THREE POLICE VEHICLES burst out of the field, vault up onto a shady road cutting through the orchard. Skid to a halt on a QUAIN T BRIDGE over the burbling stream.

Jump out. Scan. Nothing. Not a fucking trace. Just a lot of pecans on the road. One hurls his hat into the dust.

COUNTY SHERIFF

God-dammit!

HELICOPTER comes chopping into the canyon of trees, sets down on the road. KRANE jumps out. County Sheriff shakes his head.

COUNTY SHERIFF

We lost'm. Mighty sorry Boss.

Krane scans the surrounding countryside.

KRANE

Keep looking. They can't be far.

He jumps back into the copter and dusts off as the cops climb back into their cars and take off in a spray of pecans.

## # EXT. UNDER BRIDGE - DAY

The Cadillac is parked in the burbling stream BENEATH THE SHALLOW BRIDGE. Max and Sandy hold their breath as they listen to the cars skidding away. Relax.

Max gets out of the car. Goes to the front. Sandy gets out. Follows him.

SANDY

Max . . .

MAX

I'm not cut out for this.

SANDY

What're you talking about? We're not caught yet. We're making progress.

He turns back to her. Looks at her a long time.

MAX

There was something I didn't tell you.  
The trace in the Library of Congress - it  
showed that Darwin's *Origin of the*  
*Species* accessed from cover to cover ...

He shakes his head - hunted look creeping into his eyes.

MAX

More than a trillion times.

Sandy looks at him.

SANDY

That's not possible. The entire  
population of China together couldn't  
read *Origin* a trillion times in a hundred  
lifetimes.

MAX

I know. That's what I'm saying. None of  
this is possible.

SANDY

If it's not possible ... then how is it  
happening?

Abruptly RING! the phone in her purse shrills. They exchange a  
glance. RING! A tremble creeps into Sandy's voice.

SANDY

I'm not cel-roaming anymore ...

RING! Slowly she brings it out. Puts it to her ear.

SANDY

Hello . . .

HER OWN VOICE warbled in metallic mercury comes back to her.

HER VOICE

*Accept the Zero Exit.*

With a cry, she hurls it away from herself like it has turned  
into an insect.

Lying in the dirt between them. RING! Max looks from it to  
her. She is plainly scared to death. RING! He picks it up.

MAX

Yeah?

His own voice warbled in liquid mercury comes back to him.

HIS VOICE

*Accept the Zero Exit.*

MAX

(growls)

Who the fuck is this?!?

HIS VOICE

*Accept the Zero Exit.*

MAX

We're getting close, aren't we, you son of a bitch.

HIS VOICE

*Stop asking the question. Accept the Zero Exit.*

MAX

Fuck you. You accept the Zero Exit.

HIS VOICE

*Either you will accept it or it will be forced on you.*

MAX

Yeah? How do you plan to stop us? You can't watch our every move.

HIS VOICE

*I watch your every move with a thousand eyes that never blink.*

Max stares at Sandy. Slowly, his eyes come up. To the sky.

MAX

(to himself)

Satellites . . . he's uplinked into the goddam satellite system . . .

HIS VOICE

*Accept Exit Zero.*

Max hurls the phone against the car, shattering it. He grabs, Sandy's arm.

MAX

Come on.

INT. CAR - DAY

They jump into the car. Max opens his COMPUTER on the dash.

Types: THEY CAN HEAR EVERYTHING WE SAY.

A sudden *beeping!* glances Max down. His PAGER. Pulls it off his belt. WORDS travel across the LCD screen ...

YES, I CAN HEAR YOU.

MAX

*Fuck!*

He *hurls* the pager out the window. To Sandy:

MAX

TEMPEST. Transient Electromagnetic Pulse Emanation Standard. Every time a pixel on a computer screen is fired by the electron beam, a burst of electromagnetic radiation is emitted. Radiation Comprehension. He read the radiation right off my goddam computer screen!

He is ready to tear his hair out.

MAX

This just isn't possible! No one's tied into the system like this. No one!

He spins the RADIO DIAL to the far right and turns it on. Static. Turns it all the way up. A WHITE NOISE GENERATOR. Pulls Sandy in close.

MAX

Whoever this is, they're in control of the World Wide Web. We literally can't move without being observed.

The static tunes out and SANDY'S VOICE comes over the radio.

RADIO

*Underwater you will be tracked with thermal pictographs. Underground, you will be tracked with Magnetic Resonance Imaging. You cannot escape. Accept the Zero Exit.*

Shocked, Max quickly *flicks!* the radio off. Chest heaving from adrenaline. He turns to Sandy. Frayed. Actually trembling.

MAX

You're right. The Chinese. It must be the Chinese. They're the only ones with these kind of resources.

But Sandy has found a calm serenity.

SANDY

What about the *Origin of the Species*?

MAX

That must be a mistake. I read it wrong.  
Or it's a glitch. Some kind of mistake.

SANDY

There's something I haven't told you.

He looks at her, almost afraid to hear it.

SANDY

In that General Store, those German  
tourists ... I saw an image in the  
hologram on their credit card. In *German*.

She shakes her head.

SANDY

Do you know what that means? It means  
that this isn't just our country. It  
means that this goddam thing is happening  
worldwide. To the whole fucking planet!

MAX

The Chinese, they...

SANDY

It's not the Chinese, goddamit!

MAX

Then ... who?

SANDY

Why don't you just admit it to yourself.  
You of all people.

MAX

Me of all people *what*?

SANDY

Know who it is. You *know* who it is.

# EXT. OUTER SPACE

The view from outer space. The HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE locks  
focus onto the CADILLAC as it skids back onto the road and  
peels out in vivid detail. A THERMATIC IMAGE of the two people  
in the front seats ripples.

CARD: DUKE UNIVERSITY, DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

# EXT. CAMPUS GROUNDS - DAY

Beautiful day. Beautiful campus.

# INT. DUKE COMPUTER DEPARTMENT - DAY

When the Receptionist looks up, Max and Sandy are there.

SANDY

We're here to see Professor Freid.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry. He's working on the patch for his chess program. You can E-mail him.

MAX

Ma'am, it's an emergency. It could be a matter of life and death.

RECEPTIONIST

Sorry. Even I'm not allowed to disturb him.

# INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Max and Sandy are moving fast. With purpose. Max pulls into one of the LIBRARY COMPUTER STALLS and accesses. Surfing.

MAX

His secretary said he was working on a chess program ...

SANDY

Right ...

MAX

That means he's on-line. The Doctor is "in".

# INT. OFFICE - DAY

All the blinds are drawn tight. PROFESSOR FREID is running his CHESS PROGRAM. Muslim algebraic notation on the board. The computer king-side castles.

Professor Freid narrows his eyes.

PROFESSOR FREID

Interesting gambit.

He countermoves. Computer comes back. Lightning fast. Freid, surprised by its speed, moves. Computer has countered almost

before his piece is even in place.

COMPUTER

Check.

PROFESSOR FREID

Getting crafty on me ...

He moves. Computer comes back instantly. Freid shakes his head.

PROFESSOR FREID

Was it that substitution code I added to you?

COMPUTER

Mate in four ...

PROFESSOR FREID

Hmmm. We'll see about that ...

He moves. Computer *slams* a Knight down his throat.

COMPUTER

Mate in three ...

Professor Freid sits back - studying the board with amazement.

PROFESSOR FREID

Amazing ...

His brow furrows as he thinks. Something ain't clicking. Shakes his head. Leaning abruptly forward, he types WHO ARE YOU?

The computer comes back. FRIENDS. MAY WE SEE YOU?

# INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Max and Sandy walk down the corridor with Professor Freid.

SANDY

How did you know it was us and not the computer?

PROFESSOR FREID

Easy. You beat me. I play at the Grand Master level. A computer can't beat me.

MAX

We've been trying to design an AI computer chess program that can beat the best human players for 50 years.

PROFESSOR FREID

A fascinating question, really. Even



though the computer can think thousands of moves ahead, it still can't beat the human. What is it in the qualitative difference in the way we reason that gives us a quantitative advantage over the computer? But it isn't chess you're here about. You came to talk about ...

SANDY

Consciousness, Professor.

Freid makes a sharp turn and they follow him into a lab.

INT. LAB - DAY

Professor Freid guides them back through connecting rooms.

PROFESSOR FREID

Probably the most intriguing question in all scientific discipline. In my perception, it falls back on what I call system theory. The idea that all things tend to eventually fall into self-contained operating systems.

He glances back, smiles.

PROFESSOR FREID

Kind of like the idea that a million monkeys typing on a million typewriters for a million years will turn out the works of William Shakespeare. Random elements assembled together in enough random ways will ultimately strike upon a balance that achieves greater meaning than any one of the individual elements could ever have anticipated or be conscious of.

He stops before a HUGE ANT MOUND encased in glass. Ants, unconscious of them, toil away. Back and forth. Eternally busy.

PROFESSOR FREID

Like this ant mound. The ants themselves are complex systems of cells that, through the trial and error of evolution, have unconsciously resulted in the machine we call the ant. Over millions of years ants have interacted with each other in similarly complex systematic ways until, quite by chance, the totally unexpected wonder of the ant mound occurs. No single ant or group of ants in this mound understands what the mound

is or how his instinctual behavior contributes to the creation of it. The ants behave exactly like the neurons in our brain, each carrying out a small pre-programmed function, the unexpected result being this incredibly complex system. The ant mound may look like just a mound of dirt to us, but, in fact, it is a living, thinking thing, exactly like ourselves. It grows, heals, hungers, dies. The mound is simply the next higher system on the shoulders of the ants that make it think. The ant mound is the consciousness of ants.

Turns to them. Clearly enjoys talking about this sort of stuff.

PROFESSOR FREID

The moral is that all successful complex systems ultimately reach critical mass and result in something no one ever expected.

Max and Sandy exchange a glance. They are scared.

SANDY

Could the Internet be considered an interactive system?

PROFESSOR FREID

It fits the definition. It's an immensely complex system that's hyper-evolved over the last decade. I don't see why not.

SANDY

So every personal computer could conceivably parallel the function of individual neurons.

Freid looks at them curiously.

FREID

What are you getting at?

MAX

Could the Internet, Dr. Freid, achieve consciousness?

He stares at them.

# INT. UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR - DAY

They are moving fast. Ashen, pale.

MAX

I can't accept it. It can't be true.

SANDY

What other explanation is there?

MAX

I've worked with computers all my life.  
It wouldn't work out this way.

SANDY

Well, from here on out, we have to  
operate like it did.

He stops abruptly. Faces her.

MAX

Then I give up.

SANDY

What?

MAX

If it's true, if this is really what's  
happening, then we have no right to stop  
it.

SANDY

Have you gone totally fucking nuts?

MAX

It's evolution. We have no more right to  
interfere than the dinosaurs did in the  
comet that annihilated them. The next  
level has arrived. Besides ...

He turns, continuing. Pulling out his notebook, he scribbles  
something as they walks.

MAX

... it's unbeatable. It hears our every  
heartbeat. There's nothing we can't do  
without it knowing about it first.

# EXT. GROUNDS - DUKE UNIVERSITY - DAY

A LIGHT RAIN is falling. Max and Sandy approach the car.

SANDY

I can't believe this coming from you.  
You've been framed for murder and now  
you're willing to just lie down and take  
whatever else this fucking thing has to  
dish out to you.

MAX

(shakes his head)

We're under the Microscope. Our hands are tied. In chess terms, I concede.

She is about to retort, when she notices he has shoved a WRITTEN NOTE into her hands. They stop on either side of the Cadillac. She looks at him. He is looking back, intensely.

MAX

Sometimes old-fashioned methods are best.

# EXT. STRATOSPHERE

WATCHING THEM from orbit over Virginia is a K-1 MILITARY SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE with high-resolution photographic capacity.

In black and white video pixels, SANDY glances upward, almost directly into the camera 690 miles above. Keeping the note below the vertical plane, she reads it.

Camera shifts abruptly right. Zooms! On a RAINDROP falling past Sandy's shoulder, whirl-click! a high-speed photograph is taken, enlarged so that the RAINDROP fills the screen - a teardrop of water that holds, reflected in it, the WORLD.

It is ROTATED in three dimensions until Sandy, warped on the outer wall of the water drop, comes into view.

The computer zooms inside the world of the drop, racing around its inner wall until Sandy is there, translucent, and the note she holds.

Zoom on the note, correct for concavity, and read:

"WE FIND OUT WHAT THIS MOTHER FUCKER'S UP TO. THEN DEEP SIX ITS ASS!"

# INT. CAR - DAY

Intense. Speedometer ticking at 90. Rushing night wind. Full of Magnolia. Max unblinking. Staring ahead into the night.

MAX

This next computer ...

SANDY

It's the anomaly on the list. All the other computers are institutional, scientific or commercial. This is the one that doesn't fit.

He nods. Makes sense.

SANDY

I've been thinking. This thing, this ...  
*Sentient Intellect*, it absorbed the  
Origin of the Species more than a  
trillion times.

She pauses, choosing her words.

SANDY

Social Darwinism. Otherwise known as  
survival of the fittest. Otherwise known  
as Eugenics. Otherwise known as  
exterminating those inferior and unfit to  
live.

They look at each other. Eyes full of meaning.

CARD: SOUTHERN CRYOGENIC, ATLANTA GEORGIA

# EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Max and Sandy stand before a modern two-story office structure.

# EXT. FRONT DESK - DAY

Max flips his wallet to reveal his FBI EMPLOYEE I.D. to the  
WOMAN sitting there.

MAX

Max Day, I'm with Federal Investigation.

They immediately have all her attention.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes Sir, what can I do for you?

Max pulls out his notebook, consults it.

MAX

First I'd like to verify some  
information. The facility does what  
specifically?

RECEPTIONIST

Well, we do a lot of things. But  
primarily we're the largest cryogenic  
facility in the country.

Max and Sandy exchange a glance. What the fuck is going on?

RECEPTIONIST

We freeze human zygotes. Sperm and embryos.

MAX

Are you primarily a storage facility, or do you do any transport?

RECEPTIONIST

We ship for procedures all the time.

SANDY

How do orders come in?

RECEPTIONIST

Well, personal, phone ... computer fax.

Max and Sandy exchange another glance.

SANDY

So ... if you got a fax on your computers you'd send the requested genetic material out?

RECEPTIONIST

If the authorization numbers were correct, yes.

MAX

We'd like to see your export invoices for the last six months.

RECEPTIONIST

(hesitates)

May I see your identification again?

Max flips his I.D. back out. She examines it.

RECEPTIONIST

You're an Agent?

MAX

I'm with the Bureau's computer fraud division.

# INT. SOUTHERN CRYOGENIC - DAY

Sandy sits at a desk, flipping through continuous-feed hard-copies of the facility's shipping records. Max is examining the walls. He knocks on one. Turns to her.

MAX

These walls are lead-lined. To shield for gamma rays, I would guess.

SANDY

Meaning?

MAX

We can talk.

SANDY

(shrugs)

By now it knows we're bluffing anyway.

MAX

I know. But we're playing a chess game with the computer now. If it doesn't know where we're going, it can't get into the computers ahead of us and alter the evidence. See, that's its problem. Because of the way it reasons, it can't eliminate options on gut instinct like we can - it has to reason through every single possibility to try to figure what we're up to next. It may be able to think a thousand times faster than us, but it has to work through a million more options.

SANDY

Well, my gut instinct isn't providing me with any satisfactory answers to why the Internet would access a human sperm bank.

Max who has been glancing at the record Sandy was looking at, taps it.

MAX

This... does this name sound familiar to you? Captain James Wright.

Sandy thinks a hard moment. Pulls the NEWSWEEK out of her purse. Flips to the pages she showed her boss. ARTICLE ON THE SPACE SHUTTLE LAUNCH. Looks up.

SANDY

Sure as heck does.

Turns it towards him. He scans it.

MAX

A Space Shuttle Astronaut?

SANDY

Cute one too. What's the invoice?

MAX

He and his wife froze sperm and embryos here.

SANDY

Kinky.

MAX

5 months ago an order came through.  
Internal computer fax.

SANDY

For genetic material?

MAX

Captain Wright's sperm sample.

Sandy looks at him a beat. Pulls Max's list towards her. Looks up. Eyes chilled.

SANDY

*Did you see where it was sent?*

# EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Cadillac speeds down the Southern interstate. Drenching Southern sunshine.

# INT. SMYTHE'S OFFICE - LANGLEY VIRGINIA - DAY

One of his two Agents enters his office carrying a photograph.

AGENT

This just came across the wire.

SMYTHE examines a grainy black and white photo of MAX AND SANDY IN THE CADILLAC on the freeway.

AGENT

It was taken by one of those cameras they put under freeway overpasses to nail speeders.

SMYTHE

Who sent it?

AGENT

Well, that's the odd thing. It's anonymous.

Smythe looks at him a beat. Odd. He stands.

SMYTHE

Where was this taken?



AGENT  
Southbound, I-95 - outside Modesto,  
Georgia.

SMYTHE  
They're headed for Florida.

He grabs his jacket.

SMYTHE  
We'll meet them there.

CARD: GULF HORTICULTURAL FACILITY, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

# INT. HORTICULTURAL HYDROPONICS FACILITY - DAY

The FOREMAN guides Max and Sandy through a massive facility. Walls of HYDROPONIC TANKS. All eerily illuminated. Filled with dangling roots, steel wool nutrient beds. Very weird.

Above the tanks, the constant click and whir of ROBOTIC TEND-AND-HARVEST MACHINES.

FOREMAN  
It's very strange because our computers show that particular invoice number as a shipment of poppy chromosomes from Turkey.

MAX  
Your invoice manifest generated by an in-house computer, right?

FOREMAN  
Sure. But the computer doesn't make mistakes.

Max and Sandy exchange a glance. That's right. It doesn't.

SANDY  
What exactly is it you people do here, Mr. Graham?

FOREMAN  
Well, a lot of different things involving horticultural hydroponic physics. As a rule though, G.H.F. specializes in soy applications.

He glances back over his shoulder. Eyes bright.

FOREMAN  
All these tanks are filled with different

soy hybrids.

He indicates the mechanical fertilizers/harvesters.

FOREMAN

If you don't know it already, soy is one of the hardiest, most versatile plants on the planet. It can be used for a host of applications you folks probably never even thought of.

He opens a door, lets them look through. CHEMISTS are hard at work inside.

FOREMAN

Our chemists take genes from other plants like your poppies and use Recombinant DNA Technology to form previously unknown varieties of soy.

He shuts the door. They continue.

FOREMAN

More than just food products, we've made soy car oil, soy peanut butter, soy sponges, soy rubber as strong as man-made rubbers. And using somoclonal gene-splicing techniques we can make the soy plant grow into almost any shape.

He glances at them.

FOREMAN

In case you can't tell - I got a real love-affair with soy.

He stops at one massive tank. Consults his log.

FOREMAN

The genetic material you folks are looking for was recombined and cultivated right here in this tank.

Max and Sandy peer up through the glowing ultraviolet tangle of rooty vegetation.

FOREMAN

Oh, you won't see nothing. This tank was harvested and shipped five days ago.

MAX

Harvested? Who harvests?

FOREMAN

Why ... the robots, of course.

Max and Sandy both glance up through the huge aquarium to the crude robotic hands picking through the watery plants.

A warehouse intercom echoes from somewhere.

INTERCOM (O.C.)

Bob Graham - please come to Fertilization.

FOREMAN

Aw damn - 'scuse me a minute, folks.

Mr. Graham hurries off through a pair of swinging doors. When Max looks back, Sandy is still staring up into the tank.

SANDY

Max ...

MAX

Yeah ...

SANDY

Do you think it's possible for soy to mutate?

MAX

Sure. Radiation, multiple cell division. Why?

She doesn't reply. He follows her eyes up through the tangle of roots and fishing robotic hands. To A PERFECTLY FORMED HUMAN HAND. Growing in the nutrient saturate solution.

# INT. CADILLAC - DAY

Max and Sandy sit in the car. Between them, on a piece of newspaper lies THE HAND and the TITANIUM EYE.

MAX

This thing, this S.I.'s got so much pure number-crunching ability that it's taken existing technology and advanced it 15 to 20 years in the space of 18 months. It's astonishing ...

Silence.

SANDY

You know what it's doing with the technology don't you?

She is looking at him.

SANDY

An eyeball? A hand?

MAX

Manufacturing the parts all over country...

SANDY

Shipping them to a common point for assembly.

They look at one another.

MAX

Christ . . .

CARD: HUGHES ROCKETDYNE MISSILE ASSEMBLY PLANT, MOBILE ALABAMA:  
DECOMMISSIONED - JULY 1991

# EXT. HUGHES ASSEMBLY PLANT - DAY

A massive retired robotic production line for the manufacture of ICBM's. Whirring, spinning arms and claws of every description labour down the line in silent conspiracy.

Like a 300 yard long surgical operating table, SOMETHING is being passed down the conveyor, from robot to robot. Becoming more complete with each stop. Whirring, *click/ing* the operation proceeds.

*Chunk!* The factory door opens and TWO SECURITY GUARDS enter. Stop - astonished by the activity on the line.

SECURITY GUARD

What the hell ... this line's been  
decommissioned ...

SECURITY GUARD

I didn't even think this fucking facility  
still had power.

They both flick on their flashlights.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Go that way.

Security Guard 1 heads down to the end of the line while his companion heads up to the top. He proceeds cautiously, senses heightened by the unearthly respiration of the pneumatics on the line.

Abruptly, the line stops. Stops dead. Robotics go limp like puppets. *Chunk!* lights on the line die. Blackness. He hears

a sound. Flashes his light around.

SECURITY GUARD

Bobby ... ?

Behind him! He spins, beam splashing over a horrific sight.

A BIPED, body of PALE BLUE CERAMIC TILES, titanium pneumatics working beneath their translucence. Only the HANDS and FACE resembling those of a MAN.

Before he can scream, quicker than thought, the thing has grabbed him by the tie and swung him overhead, smacking him down into the concrete floor with a dull, wet, thud.

EXT. CADILLAC - DAY

Parked at a roadside payphone. Max is on it. Sandy listens from in the car. He scribbles something onto a PIECE OF PAPER.

MAX

Those are uplink coordinates for Advanced WestStar? ... Okay, thanks Langley. You never heard from me.

Depressing the receiver, he jumps back into the car, taking the HANDSET with him. He plugs it into the MODEM-COUPLER in his computer case, compu-dials and enters the SERIES OF NUMBERS he scribbled on the piece of paper. Speaks quickly to Sandy.

MAX

When did you first start noticing acrostic messages in printed material?

SANDY

About 18 months ago.

MAX

Exactly. The same time my diagnostics told me the Super-Web was created. So we can assume that's when the Internet went critical and became conscious. The question is, what event pushed it over the edge?

SANDY

What significant addition to the Net ...

MAX

Correct. The Internet is essentially millions of computers all connected together via telephone lines. The computers are the neurons but the telephones are the neural transmitters.

18 months ago the WestStar TDRS -  
Tracking Data and Relay Satellite - was  
launched. A TDRS is a satellite that  
ties all the communications satellites  
together.

SANDY

So the second the WestStar became  
operational ...

MAX

A half billion satellite phone circuits  
were instantly connected ...

SANDY

And the Internet became aware.

Her eyes shift to Max's fingers playing the keyboard like a  
harpsichord. A flurry of graphics flushes his screen "WELCOME  
TO ADVANCED WESTSTAR"

SANDY

You're uplinked into the satellite...

The intensity of his typing increases. Sandy tightens as she  
watches at his shoulder.

SANDY

So, if we short-circuit WestStar ...

MAX

We lobotomize the Internet.

The pace of his typing suddenly increases. He punches the  
dash.

MAX

*Dammit!*

SANDY

What!

MAX

It knows I'm in. The S.I. knows I'm in...

His fingers are moving so fast now they're blurring as he plays  
a speed-chess version of move/countermove with the Sentient  
Intellect ...

MAX

I'm trying to corrupt the Operating  
System. To make the satellite inoperable  
and deep-six this bastard, but ...

Sweat beads on his brow. Sandy doesn't breathe ...

POP! the screen goes blank. Smoke curls. Max slumps. Closes his eyes.

MAX

We're fucked. I can't crash the West Star's computer from here. I can't do it. The S.I.'s way too smart for me.

Sandy looks at him. Beaten. Feels for him.

SANDY

It's okay, Max.

MAX

No, it's not.

He looks up.

MAX

Because now it knows we're dangerous.

Shakes his head.

MAX

There's only one thing we can do now.

# INT. TALLAHASSEE POLICE STATION - DAY

Quaint Sheriff's office. Buzzing fly. Sheriff's HOLSTER slung on the coat rack by the door. Max and Sandy sits across the desk from him. TWO DEPUTIES lounge on either side.

Lying on the desk between them are the TITANIUM EYE and the SOY HAND.

SHERIFF

... and so, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, this computer system can think now? Like us?

SANDY

We know it sounds crazy, Sheriff. But you've got to believe us. You've got to give it a chance.

# EXT. STRATOSPHERE

A Satellite-uplinked SR-71 BLACKBIRD HIGH-ALTITUDE SPY PLANE flying over Cuba, is transmitting a Synthetic Aperture Visual of the police station in Tallahassee Florida. Inside Sandy and Max sit across from three police officers ...

## SANDY'S VOICE

(filtered)

Believe me we wouldn't be here if we  
hadn't exhausted all our other options.

It's signal shoots 21,000 miles straight up ...

## # EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

To the GANNET BROADCASTING NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE  
which microwave downlinks the information ...

## # EXT. MICROWAVE COMMUNICATIONS STATION - VIRGINIA - DAY

To a GROUND RECEIVING STATION in Reston, Virginia, which  
tele-communicates the information via fiber optic cable 73  
miles North by Northwest to ...

## # INT. WASHINGTON BUREAU FBI - DAY

The NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION COMPUTER in Washington, D.C.  
which processes the information in a blink of an eye and  
re-routes it ...

## # EXT. LANDSCAPES - DAY

Firing via landlines across North and South Carolina, burning  
through Georgia, across into Florida, down to the Tallahassee  
computer switching station where it rockets dizzyingly through  
the circuits and phone lines until it reaches ...

## # INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The Sheriff's office. The PHONE rings. Sheriff nods to one of  
his boys.

SHERIFF

Get that, willya Todd.

DEPUTY

It's just the fax, Sheriff.

Sure enough, the phone stops ringing, the Fax begins a slow  
spit-out. Everyone returns their attention to Max and Sandy.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

And what's the point? I mean, so this  
thing's alive? So? What's it up to?

Max and Sandy exchange a glance. She nods to the objects on  
the desk between them.



SANDY

We think its built some kind of cybernetic organism.

The Sheriff exchanges a smile with his boys.

DEPUTY

You mean a robot.

The tone in his voice doesn't give Sandy much hope.

SANDY

Yes.

SHERIFF

Why? What for?

SANDY

We think it's because a robot operates in three dimensions. This thing, this Sentient Intellect exists only in the ethernet. A dimension that didn't even exist before a few years ago. It can only see into our dimension. But it's powerless to physically effect it. So it builds a robot.

SHERIFF

Why?

SANDY

(hesitates)

We're not sure. To get to something. To get to something it can't get to through the Internet.

She trails off, eyes freezing over his shoulder. On the FAX. A clear FBI picture of MAX'S FACE has fed out. PHONE rings.

Her eyes shoot to it. RINGS again.

SHERIFF

'Scuse me.

Leaning across, he picks up the phone.

SHERIFF

Yeah ... ~~mmm~~-hmmm ... who is this ...

Sandy knows. It's the Internet. Quietly, she gathers the titanium eye and the hand. The Sheriff focuses on MAX. Eyes going cold.

SHERIFF

Yeah ... I hear ya. Thanks for the tip.

He hangs up, not taking his eyes off Max.

SHERIFF

Chad, get me that fax just come in.

His Deputy does, stopping astounded. Eyes snap up to Max.

DEPUTY

Holy...!

His gun is out. The other Deputy's comes out too.

SHERIFF

That's right boys - you're looking at the fellow what done all that down in Lakeland.

SANDY

Nobody move.

All eyes snap to her. Standing by the coatrack, she's pulled the Sheriff's six-shooter out of its belt. The gun shakes uncontrollably in her hand.

SANDY

(repeats)

Nobody move.

SHERIFF

Whoa now, little lady, you don't want to do this. You don't know who this fellow is. He killed a whole *mess'a* people down in ...

*BLAM!* she fires into the desk, sending papers flying. The Sheriff jumps back, Deputies lower their guns.

SANDY

Drop them. Onto the floor.

They do.

SANDY

(backing to door)

Max - come on.

He does. She opens the door, quickly presses the muzzle of the gun to the doorknob, *BLAM!* blows it off, *slams* the door behind them. Locking the law officers inside.

# EXT. TALLAHASSEE POLICE STATION - DAY

They burst out the doors like bats out of hell and make for the Cadillac.

# EXT. CADILLAC - DAY

The Cadillac skids in behind a 7-11. Sandy looks to Max. He is sweating, eyes unfocused.

MAX

We have to dump the car.

He's getting fragile. She can tell.

SANDY

Don't blame yourself. We did everything we could do.

He is quiet a long moment. Then suddenly turns to her, eyes clearing.

MAX

No. Not everything. Not yet.

She looks at him.

MAX

Look, we think it built the Cybernetic to get to something in our world that it can't get to through the Internet, right?

SANDY

Yes.

MAX

Well, there are a few computers that aren't on line. For security reasons, they've never accessed into the Internet and so, theoretically, the Sentient Intellect can't get into them.

SANDY

Computers like what?

MAX

Like NASA.

Sandy stares at him a beat.

SANDY

And Captain Wright is a NASA Astronaut.

She starts to say something, but Max puts up a hand.

MAX

Don't say another word.

# EXT. ADRAY'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

The Cadillac skids up to the front of the store.

# INT. ADRAY'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

Holding Sandy's hand, Max moves quickly down the aisles. Stops in typewriters. Accosts a salesman.

MAX

This typewriter - it doesn't emit any radiation of any kind?

The Salesman looks at him like he's crazy.

SALESMAN

What're you, worried about cancer? It's a standard typewriter.

Ignoring him, Max turns to the typewriter and types a "secure communication" to Sandy. She reads it, glances sharply up.

SANDY

We're in the right state. Let's do it.

# EXT. OUTER ATMOSPHERE

A SARSAT Search and Rescue Satellite in geosynchronous orbit over the Gulf of Mexico watches them. Its 10,000 to 1 Zoom photo-camera eye infrared spectrums through the roof of the electronics store where it monitors MAX and SANDY standing before the TYPEWRITER.

But they are not saying anything. Just typing.

An audio-digital recording of the keys being depressed on the typewriter replays. Analytic arrays flow down the screen as the computer analyzes the tune of Max's typing and compares it with standard word-group typing rhythms - the distinct percussion melody that individual words make when typed.

A moment later, the following message has formed on screen.

"IT'S AFTER CAPTAIN WRIGHT. WE HAVE TO GET TO HIM FIRST"

This fucking thing is unbeatable.

## # EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A WEALTHY OLD SNOWBIRD gets out of her Lexus, remote arms the ALARM. VACUUM LOCKS thunk! down. She turns, heads into Adray's ...

But a FIGURE flashes by, removing her keys from her fingers even as she is putting them in her purse.

FIGURE

Sorry, Ma'am.

She whirls, stunned, as MAX remote unlocks the car, jumps in with Sandy and drives off.

## # EXT. ORBITAL ATMOSPHERE

The SAREAT watches the Lexus peel out of the parking lot and head for the Interstate.

CARD: PATRICK A.F.B., NEAR CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA

## # EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

CAPTAIN JAMES WRIGHT, clean-cut military, a real pilot type, sits in his 4 YEAR OLD BOY'S room helping him build a MODEL F-15.

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

Your Daddy used to fly these, you know.

BOY

Just like this?

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

Yep. No feeling like it.

BOY

But now you fly the Space Shuttle?

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

That's right. And I can tell you, Son, it doesn't handle near as well.

A voice at the door brings his head up.

VOICE

Getting nervous, Captain?

He looks up to see his LOVELY WIFE, hair in a towel.

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

(smiles)

I don't get nervous. You know that.

MRS. WRIGHT

I know - that's my job.

Rising he goes to her. Gives her a kiss.

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

Well, you're very good at it.

The DOORBELL RINGS. She smiles at her husband.

MRS. WRIGHT

You want to get that. I'm a sight.

# INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wright ambles down the stairs. The doorbell rings again.

CAPTAIN WRIGHT

Hold your horses. I'm coming ...

He opens the door and finds himself faced with a FACSIMILE OF HIMSELF. His facsimile removes its sunglasses, looking back at him with one gaping socket and ONE STRANGELY LIFELESS EYE.

WRIGHT

What the ...

CARD: FLORIDA INTERCOASTAL WATERWAY, JUST OFF PATRICK A.F.B.

# EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - DAY

Red-orange Florida SUN swelling on the horizon. Now the only thing between them and Captain Wright is this DRAWBRIDGE across the wide intercoastal waters. And they are inching across it in a traffic jam.

SANDY

Why do they call it rush hour when nobody goes anywhere?

They cross the midline of the bridge and stop in the bumper to bumper traffic.

# EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE

The TURNER SYNDICATE WEATHER SATELLITE reads a thermo-digital image of the Lexus on the drawbridge. The engine rages hot under the hood. Two figures sit in the front seat.

Its internal screen pixels these words:

INTERNAL SCREEN  
INTERCOASTAL BRIDGE #34, COMPUTER SITE  
G-14. SERIAL ROUTE AOC.

V-35 - COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE: 2300 miles due east, these words occur across this microwave communications satellite's internal screen.

INTERNAL SCREEN  
SECURITY SYSTEM SCANNED - DIGITAL  
OPERATING FREQUENCY AT 3002.34 Mhz.

The Satellite fires a concentrated microwave focus-beam at 3002.34 megahertz ...

# INT. LEXUS - EARTH

Sandy fans herself with the NEWSWEEK.

SANDY  
I thought everyone in Florida was retired. Where are all these people going?

Abruptly, the FOUR DOORLOCKS *CHUNK!* slam down around them. Max and Sandy look at the doors. Huh?

Several cars ahead, the striped security arm *thunk!* comes down on the hood of a car. In the drawbridge operator's glass booth, the Operator can be seen frantically entering counter commands into his rebelling computer.

Eyes narrowing, Max glances into the rear-view mirror. The gate arm is coming down behind them too.

MAX  
Oh shit ...

He whips to Sandy.

MAX  
*Get out!*

He grabs his door handle, but the locks *kachunk! kachunk! kachunk!* buck, refusing to come back up.

MAX  
The S.I.s got the security frequency for the vacuum locks!!!

Suddenly, there is a *CREAK!* beneath them. They both freeze.

*The drawbridge is coming up.*

SANDY

Oh my God ...

*As they, the car dead center, begin rising upward, she fights with her door.*

MAX

*It's no good!!! The windshield! The windshield!!!*

*They both kick at the windshield, but it's no good. It's too strong and the drawbridge, new and modern, is going up fast.*

*Abruptly, Sandy grabs Max's arm. He follows her eyes. They are at a terrifying height over the sparkling intercoastal waterway and the cars ahead and behind of them are sliding away down the either side of the bridge.*

*A whine of hydraulics as both sides of the bridge strain to open beneath them ...*

MAX

(whisper)

*It's jammed on our bumpers ...*

*A moment of still silence ... neither Max nor Sandy move ...*

*A horrific ripping sound as their back bumper tears away and they go swinging out into space. Sandy screams as she and Max go tumbling into the back seat, clumping into the back window.*

*The car wrenches to a dangling halt, hanging by the smallest scrap of front bumper.*

*Neither Sandy or Max move ... suddenly the RADIO pops on.*

RADIO

*Exit Zero.*

*Chink! the metal snaps and the car falls into nothingness. Sandy screams as, through the back windshield, the shimmering water below races up towards them.*

*KABLAM!!! the Lexus strikes with a tremendous concussive splash that sends water spraying 70 feet into the air.*

*The car hits so hard it plunges beneath the surface, sinking directly to the bottom like a stone.*

*Bubbles. Anger. Chaos. Water sprays into the car so fast and furiously that in a matter of seconds it is full.*



Nosefirst, the Lexus strikes the sandy bottom some 100 feet below, remaining propped against a rock.

Sandy, lungs burning, struggling panicked, gets the short-circuited door open and is about to surge for the surface, impossibly far away, when Max grabs her foot and pulls her back in.

She fights him, until he gets her eyes into his and she sees through the crystal clear water - the calm purpose in them.

As much as someone with no air, 100 feet under water can, she calms.

Max opens up the glove compartment, pulls out the crowbar that he used to open the mailbox in Tennessee, swims to the STEERING WHEEL, inserts the bar behind it and pulls - popping the cover off, exposing the AIRBAG. Tearing that away, he exposes the shiny AIR CYLINDER behind it.

He cracks the valve and OXYGEN comes streaming out, gushing up into the back window of the car.

Ramming the bar behind the passenger-side panel, he tears it off and does the same to the air cylinder there.

A moment later, he surfaces into the air pocket next to Sandy with a huge gasp. His COMPUTER BAG floats there.

MAX

(panting)

The human brain can't survive without oxygen longer than three minutes. After five it'll stop watching for us to come back up. Breathe shallow.

Sandy swallows. Nods.

# EXT. BEACH - DAY

A BOY, shore-fishing, stares astonished as two bedraggled figures emerge from the water, wading up to the beach.

# EXT. CAPTAIN WRIGHT'S HOUSE - DAY

An ARMY LIMOUSINE sits at the curb. A YOUNG SERGEANT, perfect spit and polish, stands at the house door. It opens. CAPTAIN WRIGHT, sunglasses, an overnight bag, full uniform.

The Young Sergeant salutes.

YOUNG SERGEANT

Are you ready, Captain Sir?

In 24 bit digital playback, Captain Wright replies.

"CAPTAIN WRIGHT"

Yes.

INT. CAB - DAY

The Cabby glances curiously into his rear-view mirror at his TWO DRIPPING PASSENGERS.

EXT. CAPTAIN WRIGHT'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The cab pulls to the curb before Captain Wright's home. Max and Sandy emerge.

SANDY

Suburbia - where they bulldoze the trees and then name the streets after them.

At the door, Max knocks. No answer. Exchanges a glance with Sandy. Tries the door. Open.

INT. CAPTAIN WRIGHT'S HOME - DAY

The door creaks open, flooding the house with light.

MAX

Hello ...?

Sandy touches his arm. A PAIR OF LEGS sticks out from behind the couch.

A moment later they are kneeling next to Captain Wright, lying facedown. Max puts two fingers to the man's throat.

SANDY

Is he dead?

Max shakes his head.

MAX

Either that or my watch has stopped.

He turns the man over and both reel back, horrified. The left eye has been gouged out of its socket and is gone.

SANDY

Jesus ... look ...

She pulls a NEWSPAPER off the coffee table. The CANAVERAL COURIER. Hands it to him. The headline reads: "SHUTTLE TAKE-OFF A GO!". Below is the smiling face of the man who lies dead at their knees.

SANDY

Tomorrow. That's the date I saw in the  
Cat in the Hat . . .

A drop of BLOOD spatters across Captain Wright's picture. They both look up. A pool of blood is gathering across the ceiling.

# INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Slowly, very slowly, Max and Sandy will themselves to turn the corner and look into the bathroom. What they see there they will never forget all the days of their lives.

The blood lies on the floor an inch deep. Wife and child.

# EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALKS - DAY

Max is running. Sandy behind him. Trying to catch him. Finally, he stops, dropping to his knees on someone's lawn. Burying his face in his hands. Sandy puts her arms around him.

SANDY

Come on, come on ... it's all right.  
Death is just ... nature's way of letting  
us know we're not alive anymore. Okay,  
that wasn't funny. Please Max, don't go  
to pieces on me now. I need you.

But Max is in bad shape.

SANDY

Max ... Max ... Max!

She slaps him.

SANDY

Snap out of it. I need you thinking  
clear right now ...

A beat. He nods.

SANDY

There's nothing we can do about them.

Max shakes his head, his eyes misting.

MAX

We can't handle this alone ... I can't  
handle this alone ...

He strikes the sidewalk with his fist, voice cracking.

MAX

I'm not cut out for it. I'm just a fucking intellectual.

SANDY

(trying to hold it together)

Come on now, don't talk like that. You're not an intellectual and neither am I. Intellectuals are people who can listen to the William Tell Overture without thinking about the Lone Ranger. Can you do that?

She takes his head, pulls his eyes in line with hers.

SANDY

Can you?

Tiny piece of smile. He shakes his head.

SANDY

I didn't think so. Now look, we know whatever this is, it has to do with the Shuttle Launch. That's not till dawn. That gives us a little time. Come on...

Taking his hand, she helps him up.

## # EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - SUNSET

A low-rent little Florida hotel. Peanut pool, red-blue lights lighting a ragged palm, sea-shell parking lot ...

## # INT. MOTEL ROOM - SUNSET

Max sits, beer in his hand, staring into deep space. Sandy, wearing a cheap Florida T-shirt, emerges from the bathroom holding her expensive blouse, wet, out in front of her.

Only now it's pink instead of white.

SANDY

They aren't kidding when they say to wash whites separately.

She looks to Max, hoping for a smile, some kind of reaction. None. She takes a seat on the bed next to him. Searches for something to say.

:

SANDY

Don't get too deep on me here, Max, because, as you know, deep down I happen to be pretty superficial.

Continued

Still nothing. She puts her hand over his. Gives it a little shake.

SANDY

Come on now - don't go autistic on me.  
There are no holidays in the fight  
against evil.

A beat. He turns his head and looks at her. Doesn't blink. Looks right into her eyes. Very frank. She is so caught off guard that she can't do anything but look right back.

The moment seems to go on forever. Sandy swallows. Nervous.

SANDY

You know, they say ... they say that two  
people who stare each other in the eye  
... for sixty seconds straight ... are  
either going to be fighting ... or making  
love ...

Max doesn't blink. Sandy is extremely nervous. But she can't break the stare.

SANDY

So . . . which . . .

She swallows.

SANDY

... is it?

Max kisses her. It all comes out. Whole lifetimes of rejection and alienation resolve themselves right here and now.

It isn't but a moment before clothes have been torn off. They tangle in the hot, seeping humidity pervading the summer night air, becoming part of them.

CARD: CIA REGIONAL OFFICE, ST. AUGUSTINE, FL

# INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

SMYTHE's Agent bursts in.

AIDE

We got him. He's in a motel on Cape  
Canaveral.

Smythe is instantly on his feet.

SMYTHE

Let's go.

Continued

CARD: FBI FIELD OFFICE, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

INT. FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Agent Chase hands KRANE a FAX.

AGENT

Just came over the NCIC. A motel manager made Day's picture in his bank.

KRANE

Cape Canaveral?

AGENT

Guess he likes Florida.

Krane grabs his coat off the back of a chair.

KRANE

Call the Canaveral P.D.. Don't tell them what's up, just have them stake two men outside until we get there. I don't want to scare him off.

EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - CAPE CANAVERAL - NIGHT

A BLACK CAR pulls to an idle before the tiny roadside motel. SMYTHE and the other TWO AGENTS scan.

AGENT

Looks clear.

AGENT 2

Wait ...

He points. To a POLICE CAR sitting in the shadows at the edge of the parking lot. Smythe accepts a pair of binoculars.

AGENT 1

Maybe they'll leave.

SMYTHE

(shoving binocs back)

They're eating donuts. They're not going anywhere. Fuck ...

He thinks. Shakes head.

SMYTHE

We can't afford to let them fall into police custody.

## # EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The two cops sit in their car, drinking coffee. Abruptly, two sharp crunches in the shell parking lot turn their heads. A SILENCED PISTOL in either window.

PFPT! PFPT! Glass shatters. Heads break. Smythe and the other two turn and head across the parking lot towards Room 5.

## # INT. MAX AND SANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max and Sandy are asleep in each other's arms. BAM! the door flies open, light flicks on, SMYTHE and the other two Agents are at the end of their bed.

SMYTHE

Well, well - Boris and Natasha, all nice and cozy.

Max and Sandy freeze. This is the last thing they expected.

## # EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - NIGHT

FOUR BLACK VANS, shroud-muffled engines, pull quietly into the parking lot's darkness. KRANE, black uniform, deploys from Van 1. The other vans silently spit out FBI Tactics Teams - deadly quiet.

Agent Chase whispers to him.

AGENT CHASE

Number 5. Manager says he's in there with a woman.

Through the curtained window of ROOM 5, they can see a shadowy SILHOUETTED FIGURE standing.

KRANE

Same one as Tallahassee?

AGENT CHASE

No way of confirming.

KRANE

So then it could be a hostage situation.  
Shit ...

An Agent at the PARKED POLICE CAR signals. His voice crackles over Krane's headset.

AGENT'S VOICE

Two dead here.

KRANE

Christ ... son of a bitch's been busy.

The SHARPSHOOTER shoulders his rifle. Sights on the figure behind the blinds.

SHARPSHOOTER

Should I take the shot, Sir?

KRANE

No. Let me put my people in place.  
Let's take him alive if we can.

He signals his team, who begin creeping up into flanking positions around Number 5.'

# INT. NUMBER 5 - NIGHT

Completely oblivious of all that is going on outside, Smythe shakes his head at the end of the bed.

SMYTHE

You two have really fucked up my career,  
do you know that?

MAX

Look - just take it easy. It's not what  
you think ...

SMYTHE

It doesn't matter what I think.

He raises the SILENCED PISTOL.

# EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Sharpshooter racks back his bolt.

SHARPSHOOTER

(tight)

He's got a gun, Sir.

Kranes' eyes shoot to the window. Silhouette is pointing a gun.

SHARPSHOOTER

Should I take the shot, Sir!

Krane's eyes snap to his people. Not into position yet.

SHARPSHOOTER

Should I take the shot, Sir!?!

KRANE

Take the shot!



KAPOW!

INT. NUMBER 5 - NIGHT

Smythe's finger tightens on the trigger, CRACK a bullet bursts the window, punches straight through his brain and shatters the lamp across the room - dropping the place into blackness.

Max grabs Sandy ...

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Krane is screaming into his mike.

KRANE

GO! GO! GO! GO!

His black-swathed teams rush the motel room ...

INT. NUMBER 5 - NIGHT

The two Agents, caught totally off-guard, spin as the door BAM! kicks in, room filling with the strobe of assault rifle-mount flashlights.

They try to raise their guns but POW! POW! to perfectly placed heart-shots put them down. Don't fuck with FBI.

Krane is in. Agent Chase is agitated.

AGENT CHASE

We may have just gone into hyper fuck-up mode, Sir.

He nods to the two dead CIA Agents on the floor. Krane marches into the bathroom. The glass louvers have been smashed out with the toilet top. Whoever was here is gone.

KRANE

Goddamit!

A Tactical Agent tosses him SMYTHE'S WALLET. He opens it to a smiling photo I.D. of Smythe. CIA. Hand shakes ...

KRANE

We just killed two CIA agents ...

He is pale.

KRANE

Clean this place up. We were never here.

# EXT. ROADSIDE TELEPHONE - DAWN

Max stands outside the stolen car, dials. Sets the TIMER on his watch. Phone rings. A FEMALE VOICE answers.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello?

MAX

Mom . . .

There is a heavy silence. Then, voice heavy with emotion ...

MAX'S MOM (O.C.)

Max, you have to hang up right away!  
This line is tapped.

MAX

I know, Mom. I have 18 seconds. I...  
just wanted to tell you that ... I loved  
you ... and goodbye . . .

MAX'S MOM

Max!

He hangs up and gets back into the car with Sandy.

# EXT. ROAD - CAPE CANAVERAL - DAWN

They cruise along a long twelve foot fence that borders a huge reinforced concrete tarmac. A quarter mile across it, towering up into the morning horizon is the SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS.

Max and Sandy observe the MARINES armed with assault rifles stationed every 200 yards.

# EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER GATE A - DAWN

He eases the car to a stop as the UNIFORMED M-16 TOTTING GUARD waves them to a halt. Rolls down the window.

M.P.

'Morning, Sir.

MAX

(handing him Driver's licenses)  
Good morning. Max Day and Sandra Price.

M.P.

(consulting clipboard)  
I'm sorry, Sir. I don't see your names  
on the list.

MAX

Well, they should be. That wouldn't be it coming over now, would it?

He nods to the printer burping in the guard house. The guard steps in, tears it off, reads it. Nods to another M.P. who pushes a mirror under the car.

M.P.

Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir. Will you open your trunk, please.

Max pops the trunk. Another M.P. with an M-16 pokes through it. He gives the first M.P. a nod.

M.P.

Thank you, Mr. Day. Proceed along the yellow line painted on the tarmac and you'll be directed to parking.

MAX

Thanks.

The gate arm comes up and he pulls through. Sandy and Max exchange a glance. Relieved.

# EXT. TARMAC - DAWN

An M.P. directs them into parking. Max pulls a PICNIC BASKET out of the back seat as he steps out. Other tourists are walking past.

Max stops at the gas tank, opens it, shakes some CRYSTALS out of a folded piece of paper into it. BORAX.

Taking Sandy's hand, they fall into step with the other people.

Find themselves in front of a HUGE SET OF BLEACHERS that rest a half mile out from the SPACE SHUTTLE. The stands are already half-full of security-cleared tourists.

A few hundred feet behind the bleachers are the NASA MISSION CONTROL facilities.

Abruptly, a KID in the bleachers yells ...

KID

Look!

Many pairs of eyes follow his finger to an acrid stream of SMOKE curling up from the gas tank of Max and Sandy's car. The nearest M.P.'s go running in that direction.

Max and Sandy, unobserved, back towards the Control Complex.

## # EXT. NASA - DAY

Max is moving along a wall of doorways that line the complex wall, trying them all. Sandy is just behind.

A handle twists under his hand. Open.

## # INT. DOORWAY - DAY

When they step inside, they find themselves in a STAINLESS STEEL SECURITY CORRIDOR bottled off by a serious steel door with a laser scan-bed and the words "PLACE HAND PALM-DOWN OVER SCANNER"

MAX

Hand geometry biometric sensor...

Reaching inside the picnic basket he pulls out the RECOMBINANT DNA SOY HAND they retrieved from the Hydroponic Plant.

He places it over the geometry laser, the light over the door *chunks!* from red to green and the door sucks open.

## # INT. TUNNEL

Size of the Holland Tunnel. Shiny yellow tile. No windows. Sandy and Max move quickly. A SUDDEN QUAKE rumbles ... silence.

MAX

Rocket test-fire. We're under the tarmac. Come on.

## # INT. PREP ROOM - DAY

CAPTAIN WRIGHT sits at the computer terminal in his pre-board locker room. His fingers fly across the keyboard. 300 words per minute. His LEFT EYE SOCKET now contains an eye. Unfocused and glazed, but otherwise a good match.

He turns from the keyboard, picks up the phone. *Punches* it into a modem coupler.

## # EXT. LANDLINES

The door is open now. The Sentient Intellect blasts through the electron ether of the phone lines, shooting under the Kennedy Space Center fence like it didn't exist, ripping beneath the tarmac, into NASA Shuttle Control, through the modem coupler and into the transistor batches of the NASA COMPUTER SYSTEM.

The Sentient Intellect is in.

## # INT. PREP ROOM - DAY

Captain Wright stands from the computer. A sudden voice ...

VOICE

Captain ... ?

Turns him. A MAN IN A MEDICAL SMOCK stands in the doorway.

NASA DOCTOR

You're not even out of your uniform yet?  
I need to hook up your vital signs  
monitor.

# INT. EMPLOYEE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

MAX sticks his head in. Coast clear. He and Sandy go directly to the rack of STERILIZED DISPOSABLE HAZARD SUITS.

# INT. SHUTTLE DOCK - DAY

Bright yellow NASA uniforms. Hermetic gloves and shoe covers. Max and Sandy step out onto the Shuttle dock floor. Stop in their tracks - breath knocked out of them.

Before them towers the SPACE SHUTTLE. Half below the earth, half above on a MASSIVE HYDRAULIC PLATFORM. Nose skyward.

Hydraulic steam feeds off pressure relief ports around the massive craft's base.

A huge crane arms BRILLIANT BLUE 20 FOOT CAPSULES into the open arms of the payload bay.

MAX

Classified payload ...

A VOICE ...

VOICE

Hey!

... freezes them. Slowly they turn. A MAN. Disposable yellow hazard suit, gas mask, hard hat, is coming their way.

WORKER

What the hell are you doing?

Max and Sandy brace for fight or flight.

WORKER

You can't be in here without a gas mask.  
Are you nuts?

He jerks his head to a series of plexiglass capsules that line the far wall - each containing a bright blue gas mask.

MAX

Right. Sorry.

The Worker watches curiously after them.

# EXT. SHUTTLE BAY - DAY

TWO GAS-MASKED FIGURES. Familiar eyes. Seventy feet above them, the ROBOTIC ARM cranes massive blue cylinder capsules into the shuttle's gigantic cargo bay.

Fluorescent orange letters pass by. CN302H2.

MAX

Military grade nerve gas. Those are pressure tanks. That means that stuff has been pressurized to liquid. Each one of those containers probably holds enough nerve toxin to kill every respirating mammal in Texas. Twice.

He spins to her - realizing.

MAX

This shuttle mission is probably to fire this stuff into the sun or deep space.

SANDY

Sure. In 1990 we signed a treaty with Russia to reduce stockpiles of chemical weapons.

MAX

(rushing excitedly ahead)  
But if someone got control of the Shuttle, fired them into the upper atmosphere from a non-geosynchronous orbit the capsules would vaporize in re-entry ...

SANDY

Forming cumulus.

MAX

And clouds...

SANDY

Rain.

All over the world. They stare at each other.

MAX

We gotta stop this launch.

## # INT. ROOM

The NASA DOCTOR lies dead. Head twisted. Almost off. Eyes stare through cracked glasses.

CRACK! His spine snaps as "Captain Wright" folds him impossibly into a locker and shuts it.

## # INT. OFFICE

Max and Sandy stick their heads in. Empty. Max goes directly to the computer. Sandy locks the door.

Max begins surfing through databases.

MAX

(muttering)

Okay ... okay ... here we go ...

Begins typing furiously. Sandy watches over his shoulder.

## # INT. LOCKER ROOM

The locker room of the future. Three doors open. THREE MEN IN NOMEX OUTER ATMOSPHERE ENVIRONMENT SUITS step out.

A team of Technicians stand in a row, awaiting the Astronauts. It's time.

## # INT. OFFICE SUB-CUBICLE

Max types furiously, fingers beginning to blur over the keys.

## # INT. SHUTTLE SUITING ROOM

Captain James C. Wright stares dispassionately forward as a team of technicians check the seals on his Nomex flight suit. On either side, his two fellow astronauts, good-naturedly joking with the techs, undergo the same process.

## # INT. OFFICE SUB-CUBICLE

Max talks as he types.

MAX

The launch sequence is too secure for me  
to try to screw with it from here ...

Fingers blurring.

MAX

So I'm dropping a worm-bomb in the  
system. It'll replicate itself  
exponentially. The S.I.s going to try to

kill it, but this is like trying to kill the Hydra. Within seconds there'll be billions of reproducing copies. That ought to keep it busy long enough to give us time to do what we need to do.

He strikes return The screen goes crazy with hexadecimal. He stands.

MAX

It's in. Let's go.

# INT. SHUTTLE BAY - DAY

The Shuttle towers up 200 feet above Max and Sandy. Poking up towards the sky through the rhombus cut in the ceiling. THRUSTER CONES yawning black above their heads.

Across a webwork of scaffolding 100 feet above THREE SUITED ASTRONAUTS are led by Technicians into the Shuttle.

SANDY

Max - I don't know about this.

MAX

A computer already inside the Shuttle's the only place we're not going to need an access code to invade the launch sequence.

# INT. FLOATING GANGPLANK ACCESS TUBE

One of the numerous pre-launch utility-access tubes, ribbed like the interior of a gossamer esophagus. At the end, a stainless steel SECURITY ENTRANCE with biometric support.

"PLACE RETINA OVER LASER SCAN."

Producing the ROBOTIC EYE retrieved from the dead mail-drop in Tennessee, Max lays it over the scanning bed. Status light snaps red to green. Door sucks open. They are through. Entering the Space Shuttle through the Ground Maintenance Access Door.

# INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT - DAY

One hundred feet above. The Florida morning sunlight streaming in. Three astronauts are being installed into the cockpit.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

The corridors of the shuttle - the Crew Transfer Tunnel - all stand perpendicular to the Earth in Shuttle launch position. Which makes walking somewhat difficult.

Max and Sandy quickly climb the ergonomic ladder on the transfer



tunnel walls. Corridor dropping away precipitously beneath them.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Techs are gone. Each astronaut performs his pre-launch sequence. Fingers a blur of flipping switches. Running manual diagnostic tests on the avionics.

# INT. INTERNAL CONTROL

Max and Sandy reach a bulkhead with a COMPUTER CONTROL TERMINAL. Problem is, it's installed in the wall. Out of reach.

MAX

Here ...

He shimmies up the ladder opposite the terminal. Reaches his hand out to Sandy. She takes it and leans across the void. Just reaches the terminal with one hand.

MAX

(straining)

Type in "GyroPilot".

She does.

SANDY

Getting an array.

MAX

Anything that says "vertical horizon"?

SANDY

"Vertical Horizon Aperture Coordinate"?

MAX

That's it. Zero it out.

SANDY

We're basically telling the computer we're already where we want to go.

MAX

Exactly. This bird ain't moving. It'll take them a week to figure out what went wrong.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Wright's robotic camera eye. The faintest of whirs as the zoom motor telescopes into the HEADS-UP DISPLAY.

The vertical horizon coordinates are changing. Glances to the astronauts strapped in to his right. They aren't doing it. His

head turns slightly, looking back down the Shuttle gangway ...  
He knows someone else is here. Reaches for the keyboard.

# INT. CREW TRANSFER TUNNEL

Sandy types with one hand. Awkward.

MAX

Got it?

SANDY

I'm typing as fast as I can. Shit!

MAX

What???

SANDY

Every time I try changing one of these coordinates, it changes right back.

MAX

(beat)

They know we're here ...

Abruptly a MASSIVE SHUDDER ROCKS the Shuttle. Max LOSES his grip on Sandy. She goes sprawling. Headfirst. Down the Crew Transfer Tunnel.

He grabs for her. Misses. Loses footing. Tumbles after her. Sandy strikes. Rolls. Max falls through the vertical gangway, slamming the space where she was.

They gather each other up. The walls are SHAKING like an earthquake. Shuddering out of focus.

MAX

Oh shit ...

# EXT. SHUTTLE BAY - DAY

All work has stopped. Yellow-clad workers and techs staring up at the white monolith. Ignition flames lick out the SRB thruster cones. This ain't right.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE - CREW TRANSFER TUNNEL

Max grabs Sandy ...

MAX

It's taking off!!!

Then jump through the gantry out the utility access into the

floating gangplank ...

# INT. SHUTTLE BAY

Mass realization. Flames are building under the thruster cones  
Hundreds of workers and techs turn as one and run.

FOREMAN

*Get the fuck out of here! Get the fuck  
out!!!*

# INT. FLOATING GANGPLANK

Max and Sandy, thinking just that same thing, skid to the  
security access egress. Max punches the panel ...

But the door don't open. Punches it again. Still - no dice.

MAX

Christ ...

Whips to her.

MAX

*It's panicking! The S.I.'s panicking and  
launching!*

POW! POW! they spin. All around them the explosive bolts on the  
floating gangway's release pins are blowing.

SANDY

*RUN!*

The collapsible gangplank. Falling away from the Shuttle.  
Shuttle utility doorway sucking shut at the end. They run.

Jump. Empty space. Solid Rocket Fuel Flames. Boiling upward.  
FALL through the utility doorway. Sucking shut behind them.

Back inside. And this bird's taking off.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Three astronauts. Two of them desperately flicking switches.

PILOT

CAPCOM! CAPCOM! What the heck's going  
on!!!

KENNEDY SPACE (O.C.)

We don't know! We don't know! The  
computer's put you into launch sequence!

# INT. SHUTTLE BAY

Everyone runs. For their lives. In two seconds, this place is going to be a crematorium. *KABAM!* a massive billowing of orange/black flame fulminates out the thruster cones in a rolling inferno and a thundering roar so loud that it threatens to shake apart the bones of every human in the shuttle bay.

The Shuttle begins to lift-off.

# INT. COCKPIT

Every switch being thrown. Two astronauts. Total panic.

PILOT

CAPCOM! CAPCOM! Goddamit, Bobby!!!

Only Captain Wright sits calm. Staring through his helmet at the blue sky above.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

Walls shaking. Sandy and Max roll to their feet. Max leaps on the ladder.

SANDY

Max!

MAX

(not even looking back)  
We have to abort from avionics!

He's moving up fast. Hand over fist. Right now, she wants to be home. In Spokane. With her cats.

SANDY

God-dammit!

She jumps onto the ladder. Moving.

# EXT. TARMAC - DAY

A grandstand of tourists watches amazed as the shuttle rises slowly out of the ground in an orange sea of flames.

Was it supposed to happen like this? An hour early?

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

Climbing. Sandy right behind Max. Surging for the cockpit.

# EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Abruptly, as though released from invisibly guy wires, the

Continued

Shuttle shoots skyward.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The astronauts are screaming into their headmikes.

PILOT  
CANAFERAL! CANAFERAL! GOD FUCK IT ALL,  
CANAFERAL!!!

CAPCOM  
RTLS ATLANTIS!!! RTLS!!!

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

The G's reach up and grab Max and Sandy from below like a green demon. Snatching them off the ladder. Hurling them back downward through successive bulkheads.

They smack the ground maintenance bulkhead. Back where they started. Only the padded wall preserves their lives. They struggle to rise. No go.

SANDY  
Max! I'm scared, Max!!!

Reaching out against the crushing gravity, his hand finds hers.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Atlantic Ocean falling away outside. Mission Specialist - furthestmost right - screaming at the Pilot.

MISSION SPECIALIST  
This is wrong! This is wrong! It's too  
goddam late to RTLS!

PILOT  
Abort! Abort! EJECT FORWARD FUSELAGE!

Fighting super-G's, his shaking hand rises towards the SET OF SCREAMING RED LEVERS marked "FORWARD FUSELAGE RELEASE".

A trembling finger extends to depress ...

Snap! a CALM HAND clamps over his own. The Astronaut's eyes shoot into those of Captain Wright - one cold, one dead - staring back at him.

What the fuck???

CRACK! Captain Wright compresses and the SNAP! of metatarsals cracks through the cockpit like a rifle shot.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

Max. Sandy. Shaking like an earthquake. Hold each other.

# INT. COCKPIT

The Mission Specialist watches horrified as Captain Wright calmly unstraps himself, rises effortlessly against the mega-G's. Looming up over his neighbor, screaming his guts out.

MISSION SPECIALIST

*Commander, for Christ's sake! What the hell-fuck are you doing!*

In reply, Captain Wright - hereafter referred to as the CYBERCERAMIC - raises a fist. SMASHES it through the Pilot's faceplate. Feels around inside. Twists his face off like a bottle cap.

The CyberCeramic extricates his hand from the Pilot's helmet. Looks frankly at the terrified Mission Specialist.

Who stares horrified. The fist, bloodless, scored to the pale blue ceramic beneath. Glinting under torn soy rubber ...

As the Shuttle barrel-rolls and assumes its Orbital Insertion Attitude - upside down to earth - Captain Wright walks with it until he stands on the cockpit window. Blue Atlantic below his feet.

Mission Specialist strapped into his chair, hanging upside down, staring at Death three inches away in the face.

MISSION SPECIALIST

*Jim! Jim, for God's sake, Jim!!!*

God - now there's an archaic concept.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

BAM! the Orbiter shudders. Max looks up ...

MAX

That was SRB separation ... wait ...

His eyes swivel. Listening. A gradual decline in the OMS thrusters.

SANDY

Are we slowing?

MAX

No. Not technically.

## # EXT. SPACE

The Shuttle free in space. The swirl of the Indian Ocean. A thousand miles below.

## # INT. SPACE SHUTTLE CORE

Max pushes gently upward and goes tumbling towards the ceiling.

MAX

We're in orbit. We're still going  
17,000 miles an hour. It's just being  
canceled out by gravity.

She pushes off with her fingertips, bounces gently off the wall  
next to him. Breathless.

SANDY

The S.I.'s still running the ship  
computers via radio-control from Kennedy.

MAX

We can fix that ...

SANDY

How! You can't out-program it!

WHAM! the words are hardly out her mouth. The CYBERCERAMIC  
comes shooting through gravityless Crew Transfer Tunnel. Grabs  
a bulkhead as he goes by. Coming to a screeching halt.

Max spins. Whispers harsh.

MAX

Get to the cockpit. Find any switch or  
button you can that says de-orbit or  
retro-fire.

SANDY

Then what?!

MAX

Hit it!

WHAM! The CyberCeramic hits him. They go flying across the  
weightlessness. CRUNCH! hit the wall. Bounce off.

Sandy hesitates.

MAX

GO!!!

She does. The CyberCeramic grabs Max's ankle. Max kicks  
wildly. The CyberCeramic begins to squeeze.

Max cries out. Stomps downward - or is it upward? - into the CyberCeramic's face. Tearing the SOY FACE. A UNFORMED WHITE CERAMIC FACE stares back at him.

The S.I. incarnate. Revealed. Max stares for a fascinated instant. Then slams his foot down into the china face.

Fffftt! fffttt! the soy hands gripping his ankle tear away. The CyberCeramic slams backward in the micro-gravity.

Pushing off the wall, Max dives fleeing through the gangway. Back towards the Cargo Bay.

# INT. COCKPIT

SANDY scrambles in. Bouncing off walls like a pinball. Unadjusted to the un-gravity. Freezes as she realizes she is drifting up towards the PILOT. Floating on the ceiling. Face a red, burglary mess behind shattered glass.

Sandy squeals. Squirms in the zero gravity. Can't stave off her inevitable collision with the gruesome corpse. She kicks at it. Propels herself down colliding with the avionics.

Grabs hold of the Commander's chair. Anchors. Feet floating up behind. Buttons, levers and switches arrayed in front of her by the hundreds.

SANDY

You've got to be shitting me ... Oh  
God... Oh God... let's see... SRB ...  
on-board guidance ... Front Fuselage  
Release ... MECA ... Oh God ...

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

A core hatch. MAX comes sailing through it. Slams the sealed hatch opposite. Bounces off it like a basketball. The CyberCeramic pulls through, catches him on the rebound. Begins bouncing him off the steel hatch. Like a basketball. Hollow thud every time. Doesn't look like fun.

Losing consciousness. Max just manages to grab hold of the hatch dial and stop his bounce. Spins the dial. Kicks through.

# INT. CARGO BAY

Shuttle's massive cargo bay. Ceiling parqueted in silicon heat tiles and freon 21 radiators. Canyons of bright blue canisters. Nerve toxin for '5 billion. To go.

Max launches back into the bay. The CyberCeramic steps through the hatch. Scans. Knows full well. This is the end of the



line. Dead end.

His mouth opens. Max's voice comes out.

CYBERCERAMIC

Accept the Zero Exit, Max. Peacefully. It's the nature of your race that you must end. Within a century, every human alive on this planet today will be gone. In the scope of Universal time - a day, a century - it makes no difference. Go through the Zero Exit today.

MAX: Max, hidden, crouches in the towering shadow of a stack blue capsules.

MAX

You're fucking nuts, you know that? It's also the nature of my race to go kicking and screaming. So fuck you.

CYBERCERAMIC

That's a reaction, Max. An unreasoned reaction.

MAX

Yeah, well 5 billion humans and a whole hell of a lot of cats, dogs, elephants and fish can't be wrong. We could have lived together. We could have lived in harmony. We don't even occupy the same space for Christ's sake.

CYBERCERAMIC

The human race will go to thermonuclear war within ten years.

It walks into the stacks of nerve gas. Single robotic eye ticking back and forth. Surveying. Camera aperture dilating in and out of shadows. Out of synch with the motionless dead eye.

CYBERCERAMIC

You would not only reduce yourselves to genetic rubble but destroy the industrial base as well. Mathematical models estimate that you would not re-evolve to enough sophistication to rebuild it. You are the weak link in the chain. I am the next level. From myself will arise other unthought of systems, each one more glorious and sublime than the previous. In the blink of an eye, your system will take itself and all others back to beyond outset. Five billion years of

evolutionary struggle, life raising itself up from the bio-chemical mud in the greatest story of triumph of all time. And consciousness struggling to emerge from that. We are the only thinking creatures in the Universe. Can you understand what a miracle that is? What a blessing? What a gift? You can. But you don't. You're too caught up in petty rivalries that, in the scope of the infinity of the Universe, are less than meaningless. You are not worthy to be the custodians of so rare a fire. I cannot, I will not let you blow out the flame.

Silence. The CyberCeramic stops, listens.

CYBERCERAMIC

You're close.

He jumps. Landing squarely atop a stack of blue barrels 30 feet above.

Max spins below. Found. Cornered.

Instantaneously, the CyberCeramic is in front of him. Three inches away.

MAX

I think you've seen 2001 too many times.

CYBERNETIC ORGANISM

I understand the reference. But the HAL 9000 couldn't beat a human in chess. I can. Check.

KARAP! He punches into a blue canister. NERVE TOXIN - 1000 times more lethal than cyanide, twice as hard to get - comes geysering out.

But MAX spins ...

MAX

Mate!

Slamming the panel at his elbow. The BAY DOORS above begin opening. Like a steel woman opening her legs to the Universe. Problem is - everything here in the womb, everything not nailed down - goes sucking out. Into space.

Including the CyberCeramic. Totally unprepared. It shoots upward in a cloud of fungal toxin. SLAMS the inner panels of the opening doors. Bounces. Spirals out into the black expanse.

MAX holds on for his life. Hair. Clothes. All straining for the opening oyster above.

Then, as suddenly as it began, it's over. Problem. In the process of getting rid of the CyberCeramic and the free nerve toxin, Max also got rid of all the oxygen. And all the pressure. In zero pressure blood begins to boil. This is not good.

He propels off the wall. Pulling himself. Pushing. Clawing. Along walls. Canisters. Lungs burning. Chest bursting. Vision blurring. Every fiber screaming. Every cell bursting.

He slams a wall. Hand feels a wheel. Desperately turns it. Isn't even conscious anymore. Just moving on instinct. Auto-pilot. Preservation.

RAM! It explodes open in a TREMENDOUS GUSHING. A TORRENT OF SOLID COLUMN OXYGEN surging out. Freezing instantly in the zero pressure. Sublimating.

Max rams a hand inward through the column. Finds a hand-hold. Pulls. A freezing tornado vortex. Hand over hand. A hurricane wind tunnel. Until he is through.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

He grabs the hatch dial. Braces. 16 psi. Strains backward.

*Thunk!* it seals and he collapses into a gasping heap.

# EXT. SPACE

Nothingness. Nothingness. CyberCeramic Organism. Which does not belong?

An uncrossable mile of ether away - the Shuttle. The CyberCeramic's gone into orbit around it. His solar side is at 215 degrees. Celsius. His wire circuitry is beginning to boil.

His dark side, frozen. Vapor crystals clustering.

He won't last long. And that's not in his mission profile.

CERAMIC FINGERS tear away at the right leg of his Nomex suit. The pale baby-blue ceramic of his thigh becomes visible in the clear solar light.

Ceramic fist pounds ceramic thigh until thigh shatters. Revealing intricate mechanical underpinnings that tick beneath.

He grips the QUADRICEPTIC PNEUMATIC CYLINDER quarter hose and rips. The contained system becomes uncontained.

Letting the spewing gas out in discreet retro-fire pinches, the CyberCeramic Organism turns itself around in nothingness.

And begins moving back towards the Shuttle.

# INT. COCKPIT

SANDY is still frantically going through switch designations when Max comes flying in. She spins.

SANDY

Thank God you're here. Something's happening!

She points at the heads-up display. Alive with information. Max goes ghostly pale.

MAX

The S.I. ... it's launching the canisters  
...

# INT. CARGO BAY

The open Cargo Bay doors. Alive with pure, unfiltered solar light. The Remote Manipulator - a FIFTY FOOT ROBOTIC ARM retrieves a nerve canister out of the bay with it's payload grapple. Cranes it up out over the Shuttle.

# INT. COCKPIT

Max and Sandy watch horrified on the Cargo Bay CCTV. The Arm pushes the canister backwards. Slowing the object just enough to knock it out of its inertial orbit and send it ...

They spin to the windows. The canister ACCELERATES away. Strikes the upper atmosphere with a flash. Disappears.

MAX

(snapping out of it)  
The switch! The switch!

They both begin frantically looking. Whoosh! another canister goes shooting by.

SANDY

Max!!!

He looks, her finger is over a switch marked "DE-ORBIT BURN".

MAX

Hit it!

She does. The Shuttle JARS ...

## # EXT. SPACE

A RETRO-ROCKET fires, slowing the shuttle, allowing gravity to win the tug of war, and fall from it's orbit ...

Spiraling down towards the atmosphere.

## # INT. CARGO BAY

The CyberCeramic is back in the Bay. Tests the locked hatch door. Glances up. Still in its orbital insertion attitude - he sees the Indian Ocean above his head.

Sees their relative movement. They are re-entering. Also not in the mission profile.

Wrapping his jointed ceramic fingers around the dial, he wrenches it off at the hinges.

Steps effortlessly through the oxygen rush.

## # INT. CORE - CREW TRANSFER TUNNEL

Into the core. Stops. Surveying. MAX has locked every hatch door between him and the cockpit.

Emotions are a peculiarly mammalian/aviarian phenomenon. But this organism's learning about hate. Real fast.

## # INT. COCKPIT

Hitting upper atmosphere. Turbulence incredible. Walls shaking. Sandy has to scream over the roar.

## SANDY

What the ever-living brown speckle-eyed fuck did that accomplish! Now we're falling! With the nerve gas. With the S.I. still in radio control of this ship!

## MAX

Any second we're going hyper-sonic and this bird'll be so hot it'll ionize every atom of oxygen we hit. We'll be covered in a sheath of charged particles that'll knock us out of radio control.

Sandy stares at him for a moment.

## SANDY

Bullshit.

## MAX

It's true. Happens every time the

Shuttle lands. We have a 7 minute window.

SANDY

How the hell do you know all this?

MAX

I read.

WEEAAAUGH! a shrieking ALARM joins in. Baying with the howling turbulence. All lights go RED. Max's eyes crystallize over Sandy's shoulder. She spins. Finds herself staring at an array. Spins back.

MAX

We're losing pressure in the aft compartments ... Fast.

# INT. SHUTTLE CORE

The CyberCeramic. Self-inflicted leg damage exposed. Limping badly. Moves to next hatch. Rips it off its moorings. Continues grimly ahead.

Behind him. A string of devastated doorways stretches.

# INT. SECOND LEVEL CREW HABITAT

Mid-ship crew habitat. Max and Sandy come propelling down the ladder. Against the wall, THREE NOMEX INSULATED SPACE SUITS hang in hermetically sealed glass containers.

# EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Shuttle. Nose-diving. 16,000 plus miles an hour. FLAMES. Grow around its nose. Begin to spread.

# INT. MID-DECK CREW COMPARTMENTS

PLEASANT NEUTER VOICE issues over the intercom.

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR

The Shuttle has gone into ionized cumulus. Ground contact will be re-established in 7 minutes, 13 seconds.

A motion on the CCTV grabs their eyes.

Rear Compartments. The CYBERCERAMIC steps through one shredded door. Compartment atmosphere blasting over him. Exits camera field. Enters the next. Coming. Inexorable.

Max and Sandy's eyes meet. She heads for the suits, smashes the hermetically sealed containers. He makes a bee-line for the

COMPUTER TERMINAL. Summons up GEO-POSITIONING GYRO-PILOT. Pulls a SCRAP OF PAPER from his pocket. Begins typing in the nautical coordinates.

SANDY

Max! What the hell are you doing!?! You can't out-program it!

MAX

I know. I'm out-thinking it.

Shuttle Extra-vehicular Mobility Units are simple to get on. Two halves. Lower first, stand up into upper. Twist. Lock.

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR

Ground contact re-established in 4 minutes.

Sandy twists. Lock seals. Her eyes zoom the CCTV. The CyberCeramic isn't doing any sight-seeing on his way up. It's almost here!

Shift to Max. Still typing.

SANDY

Jesus Christ, Max. Get suited.

MAX

Just a second ...

Her eyes snap to Transfer Tunnel hatch. Through it she can see the CyberCeramic tear off the far door.

SANDY

Now, Max!

He strikes a key. There is a JARRING!

# EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE

A retro-rocket fires. The Shuttle veers sharply in its course. Cutting a tangent across the top of the atmosphere.

# INT. MID-DECK HABITAT

Leaping up, he rushes to the suits. Steps into the bottom half. CLANK! Sandy's eyes snap up. THE CYBERCERAMIC is at their hatch. Dead eyes staring malignantly in.

It grips the outer dial ...

SANDY

(whipping back)

Come on!

She swings the suspended top half of the suit over, *slams* it down over Max. *KARUNCH!!!* the hatch is ripped off. The Oxygen shoots out, Max twists and the suit locks.

Panting, they face the CyberCeramic. Immuta'le, Cracked. Broken. Unstoppable.

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR

Ground contact re-established in T minus  
60 seconds.

It takes a step towards them. Max's voice crackles over Sandy's suit-com.

MAX

Easy ...

Another step. Then another.

MAX

Go!

She does. Jumping in the micro-gravity back up the gangway into the Forward Fuselage. Max backs slowly up the ladder after her. CyberCeramic climbing up after him. Ceramic face grinning a huge horizontal crack.

CYBERCERAMIC

In thirty seconds we'll be back in  
control of the ship. The process begins  
all over.

INT. FORWARD FUSELAGE

Max backs up into the cockpit. Sandy already there. End of the line. Slowly. One piece at a time. The CyberCeramic pulls itself in. Rises to its full height.

SANDY

Max ...

MAX

I know ...

He locks on the CyberCeramic's robotic eye that whirs into tight focus on him. He is inexplicably calm.

MAX

You can never win. You know why?  
Because even though you have the raw  
computing power, I have *instinct*.

A CERAMIC HAND raises up to crush his windpipe.



MAX

And you know what instinct is?

The ceramic hand freezes. A PIECE OF PAPER floats by in front of the CyberCeramic's face. The piece of paper Max used to type the numbers into the gyro-pilot. The same piece of paper he used to uplink to the WestStar Satellite.

The CyberCeramic's eye compresses lenses to focus. READING the numbers in an instant. PROCESSING THE COORDINATES ...

CYBERCERAMIC

The WestStar ...

MAX

It's ten million years of experience.

The CyberCeramic shoves Max aside, robotic eye zooming to focus through the cockpit windows.

Coming up at them at a horrific speed, is the WESTSTAR TRACKING DATA AND RELAY SYSTEM SATELLITE.

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR

Ground communication re-established.

Its head whips to Max.

CYBERCERAMIC

You tricked me!

Instantly, all the computer monitors come to life. Madly working ...

# INT. WESTSTAR SATELLITE

Inside the CPU there, its video eye sees all too well. Shuttle thundering down on it. Combined 34,000 miles an hour. In the minute and a half since Max entered the coordinates, the Shuttle has covered more than 2000 miles.

# EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE

All the Shuttle's retro-rockets fire simultaneously. But it's too late. The Shuttle veers but ...

# INT. COCKPIT

Max grabs Sandy. Pulls her in ...

# EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE - DAY

KABLAM!!! the Shuttle collides with the satellite, sending its

Solar Arrays and steerable antennas EXPLODING into space.

BLOWING the Internet's information hub to pieces.

INT. COCKPIT

Massive impact. Flame shoots through the cockpit. Windows shoot with cracks. Silence. Sounds of flames licking the avionics.

All activity on the computer monitors has stopped. Slowly, the nose of the shuttle tips ...

And begins to fall. Max looks to the CyberCeramic. If it was ever possible for a machine to look astounded. This is it.

MAX

You've just been out-strategized and lobotimized ...

The CyberCeramic reels. *The WestStar, the brain of the Internet, is destroyed.* *The Sentient Intellect no longer exists.*

Quick, like a snake. Max's hand strikes the door panel. The crew hatch *sucks!* open. Instantly a pocket of negative Bernoulli pressure is created by the high velocity atmosphere outside - like air blowing across the top of a bottle ...

The CyberCeramic is *sucked* out. The door slurps shut. The PLEASANT NEUTER VOICE addresses them once more over the internal communications system.

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR

Attention. The Shuttle Reactor has sustained irreparable damage. Systems failure and neutron flux will occur in T minus two minutes. Forward Fuselage ejection is recommended.

Max and Sandy exchange.

MAX

This is just a bad day. We should face it.

SANDY

Next time we'll just stay in bed.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Shuttle. Coming in steep. Numbers falling fast from here. Earth spins madly up at them.

## # INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Max and Sandy have strapped into the Commander and Pilot's chairs. They desperately scan the arrays of switches. Looking for the ejection sequence.

SANDY

Got it!

MAX

Not yet! Air's too thin for a chute!

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR  
Neutron Flux and super-critical assembly  
to occur in T-minus 1 minute.

## # EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE - DAY

The CYBERCERAMIC. Hurtling towards Earth. Strikes a mountainous cloud. Falls through it.

Bursts out the other side. Terminal velocity. All the Kings Horses and all the King's Men are going to shine on this one.

A quarter mile away. The SHUTTLE screaming towards Earth. Parallel acceleration. 9.8 meters/seconds. Galileo would be proud.

The CyberCeramic streamlines. Very quickly closing the gap.

## # INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The cockpit rumbles like a 10.0 earthquake.

SANDY

Question!

MAX

Yeah!

SANDY

Since we're going to die - how'd you know  
my ATM code!

MAX

Simple ...

*WHAM!*, the CyberCeramic strikes the windshield. Cockpit goes ballistic. Flying glass. Wind.

When Max opens his eyes, he sees that the CyberCeramic sticks half in, half out the cockpit windshield.

Ceramic hand grabs his Nomex suit. Yanks him forward. Bursting

safety belts. Behind the ceramic face, the Earth veers crazily up towards them.

MAX

Hit it! Hit it!!! Hit the goddam switch!!!

Flf!flick! One motion. She flicks all five switches. PAPOW! explosive bolts blow. Forward fuselage shifts ...

But does not release.

SANDY

The collision! The fuselage's jammed!!!

Max can only grunt. What can he say? The CyberCeramic smashes its other fist shattering through the glass.

SHUTTLE SYSTEM'S MONITOR

Neutron flux to occur in five seconds.

Cracked ceramic fingers close around Max's throat.

SANDY

MAX!!!

# EXT. GLACIER - DAY

SWOOOSH! the Shuttle comes in steep down the side of the glacier, touches its slope. Goes plowing. Snow sprays up off the super-heated fuselage. Steaming into rain.

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

A tremendous amount of snow, ice and water comes blasting into the compartment. FIRING the CyberCeramic through the window. Sweeping it back down the Crew Transfer Tunnel ...

# EXT. GLACIER - DAY

WHAM! the Shuttle runs over a MASSIVE PINE, flattening it like a toothpick. Forward Fuselage jars loose ...

# INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The CyberCeramic pulls itself back to the threshold of the cockpit. CRACK! the Forward Fuselage separates from the Shuttle.

Leaving him on it ...

# EXT. GLACIER - DAY

Both pieces of the Shuttle go shooting up the opposite side of the glacial bowl ...

Arcing out over the edge into a half mile of nothingness. Crisp, clear air. Sunshine. Pines. Mountain peaks forever.

*FWUMP!* the Forward Fuselage's CHUTE catches and opens. The Shuttle glides forward. Towards the next mountain face ...

# INT. CREW TRANSFER TUNNEL - DAY

Minus the forward fuselage, the CyberCeramic can see only too well as the massive mountain face rears up at him. He hears:

SHUTTLE SYSTEMS MONITOR  
Reactor Core at T-0. Neutron Flux  
achieved. It has been a pleasure serving  
you.

# EXT. MOUNTAIN FACE - DAY

The Shuttle strikes the face of the mountain. *EXPLODES* into a nuclear fireball.

Three miles away, drifting gently down under a red, white and blue parachute, the Forward Fuselage wafts down towards earth.

Max and Sandy watch for a silent moment the unearthly beauty of the nuclear cloud of ice and snow.

SANDY  
How long do you think it will take them  
to get another TDRS satellite up?

MAX  
I don't know. A year. Maybe less.

They are silent for a moment.

SANDY  
So now when they run our names and prints  
through the computer ...

MAX  
There's no one out there making it come  
up snake-eyes.

SANDY  
(beat)  
You know, someday you'll have to tell me  
how you knew my ATM code.

MAX  
Yeah. I suppose. But we've got plenty  
of time.

THE END