

FLICKER

written by

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based on the novel by

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OPEN ON:

EXT. BEACH - ISLAND - DAY

JON GATES, 20's, wearing a TUNIC, unshaven; hair unkempt, walks along the beach.

JON (V.O.)

Will they come for me -- and try to torture it out of me? Or do I just wait here for the end of the world? Maybe I won't even know when the end comes. I'll just live out the rest of my life on this island. Maybe that means I'm luckier than you.

FADE TO BLACK, THEN --

FRAME IS FILLED WITH -- SLUG COUNTDOWN:

FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE --

-- As the RHYTHMIC SOUND of A PROJECTOR gets LOUDER -- then:

CLOSE ON A PROJECTOR LENS -- THE FLICKERING LIGHT --

[ -- CREDIT SEQUENCE -- "FLICKER." -- ]

MOTION PICTURE SCREEN - PROJECTED FILM IN PROGRESS

The film is in BLACK & WHITE; circa 1930's. BIBLICAL EPIC; ACTORS in ROBES, SANDALS. SOUNDTRACK MUSIC -- very Wagnerian. A NON-DIALOGUE SEQUENCE: a CROWD follows a MAN who's only seen from behind.

The film's speed SLOWS. Music gets distorted. A BARELY DISCERNIBLE EFFECT: the HEADS of the people in the crowd seem to slightly PULSE, as if changing SHAPE.

The film SLOWS MORE. FLICK, FLICK, FLICK -- the crowd moves more slowly. The FLICKER between frames is more visible. PUSH IN CLOSER ON -- the HEADS of the people in the crowd. In FLASHES, the heads MORPH into HIDEOUS DEMON HEADS, a horrific ARRAY.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. OLD 30'S-ERA BUILDING - DAY

With a SIGN: "UCLA FILM PRESERVATION PROJECT."

INT. LAB ROOM

A clean-cut Jon Gates, a little nerdy, albeit handsome, slowly works a WET GATE OPTICAL PRINTER.

CLOSE ON - PRINT GATE

Jon advances an old, haggard FILM, frame by frame. Each succeeding frame stops under a BRIGHT PROJECTOR LIGHT and a COPY of the frame is PRINTED onto a BLANK FILM STOCK. The next frame moves into position; then, the next ...

Then the old film won't advance. CLICKS of Jon attempting to turn the lever. The frame that still sits under the bright, hot light begins to MELT --

-- And suddenly BURSTS INTO FLAME in an EXPLOSIVE MANNER, making a sharp hissing noise.

WIDE ON LAB

Jon flinches back as -- MORE of the old film IGNITES with a SHRILL WHISTLING SOUND and enough explosiveness to VIBRATE the machine.

Jon rapidly reaches for the reel of the old film, gripping it to yank it off the arm -- but -- all of the old film on the reel EXPLODES into FLAME.

JON

AHHHH!!

Jon whips his hands back. His left hand has a SERIOUS BURN. The reel BLOWS LOOSE and ROCKETS onto the top of a table, knocking over some bottles. The fluid from one of the bottles IGNITES. FILM CANISTERS on SHELVES nearby loom ominously.

DR. GORDON RITTENAUER, 60's, beard and glasses, throws open the door, rushes inside, seizes a FIRE EXTINGUISHER and SPRAYS FOAM all over the flaming table.

INT. OPEN WORKSPACE AREA - UCLA ARCHIVES

Jon and Gordon sit by a desk near the open lab door, where some smoke emerges in wisps. Jon has an ICE PACK on his hand.

JON

I'm so sorry, Gordon.

GORDON

Don't be silly. I'm glad you're okay.

JON  
The film got stuck.

GORDON  
I figured.

JON  
How did nitrate stock ever get projected  
without blowing up?

GORDON  
Who says it didn't?

Gordon puts his hand on Jon's shoulder, squeezes.

GORDON (cont'd)  
Let's be thankful that it was only a  
newsreel.

INT. JON'S HONDA CIVIC - MOVING - LATER

Gordon, smoking a cigarette, which he holds outside the window, rides in the passenger seat. Jon pulls to a stop in front of a FRUMPY OLD HOUSE. Gordon starts to get out.

GORDON  
You want to watch that Kidlat Tahimik  
movie? I'll make my famous baked Alaska.

JON  
Uh, well, I can't. I'm going out with  
Sharkey. It's a screening of "Blue  
Angel" at Chipsey Goldstone's mansion.

GORDON  
Ah -- High society.

JON  
Well, Sharkey's just going as the  
projectionist. And I'm his tag-along.

GORDON  
Have fun. Thanks for the ride.

Gordon ambles to his front door. Jon watches him with a trace of sadness, then leans to the passenger window --

JON  
But let's do it tomorrow night.

Gordon turns back, gives him a weak smile.

EXT. SHOWART THEATRE - LATE AFTERNOON

An ART FILM VENUE with marquee: "MEYER VS ANGER" -- and posters: "MONDO TOPLESS, MOTOR PSYCHO, INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME, SCORPIO RISING."

INT. SHOWART LOBBY

DON SHARKEY, forties, pudgy, hippie-esque, hovers with Jon over his notes on a big calender for upcoming programming.

JON

Sharkey, why don't you ever throw in some Truffaut or Goddard?

SHARKEY

My theatre, my mojo.

TWO THEATRE WORKERS move around the area, cleaning. One is a SCRAWNY BOY, KIRK. He says "hi" to Jon with the "Spock" hand sign from "Star Trek."

KIRK

Sharkey's the God of Scheduling.

Jon sees a FEMALE WORKER, AMY, who's a pretty teenager.

JON

Who's that?

SHARKEY

Amy. Just hired her yesterday. She's a film buff -- very buff.

EXT. GOLDSTONE MANSION - BEL AIR - NIGHT

VALETS on the main road park the arriving cars. Sharkey's BEAT UP OLD VAN evades the valets and digs into a spot that's half on the road and half in some ivy-covered ground. Out comes Sharkey, Jon -- and Amy.

INT. MASSIVE HOME THEATRE - LATER

The PARTY is in full swing. Seventy overstuffed SEATS in rows face an exhibition-sized SCREEN. The GUESTS all swarm around the REAR of the seating area with cocktails.

Jon is with Sharkey and Amy in a corner. They sip drinks, scan the faces.

AMY

Hey -- over there, it's --

JON  
Don't say any names out loud. That marks  
us as gawkers.

AMY  
Brad Pitt!!

INT. LARGE OPEN ATTIC - LATER

Sharkey leads Amy and Jon into the dim attic. There are HUNDREDS of METAL FILM CANNISTERS stacked everywhere. The whole collection is in disarray. Sharkey pokes around, looking at fading TAPE STRIPS with TITLES.

SHARKEY  
Chipsey's not too organized. Since his  
old man died, the collection is a mess.

Jon stares around the whole attic in disgust.

JON  
Storing film in here?! It's criminal!

Jon has started looking at titles; he stops at one, IN HORROR, nearly hyperventilates.

JON (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
He has Murnau's "Faust?!" There's only a  
handful of prints in the world!

Jon opens one of the CANNISTERS containing "FAUST," inspects the film.

JON (cont'd)  
Sharkey -- it's starting to ROT!

SHARKEY  
(spots it)  
"Blaue Engel." Come on, give me a hand.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - LATER

Sharkey has the first reel ready. He, Amy and Jon all look through the glass at the theatre stage --

INT. HOME THEATRE

-- As CHIPSEY GOLDSTONE, 40's, dapper in attire, steps in front of the screen with a YOUNG WOMAN. The crowd, all seated, becomes quiet. The Woman is early thirties, dressed like a post-modern version of a Parisian cafe BOHEMIAN. Her comportment is regal. She's stunningly good-looking.

CHIPSEY

Now, a few words from Claire Swann.

CLAIRE

First, I want to thank Chipsey. His late and great father, Ira, amassed quite a collection of films, and it's very generous for his son to grace us with these wonderful screenings.

APPLAUSE from the crowd. Chipsey smiles.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

As some of you know, I'm a great lover of old films. I've been called a celluloid archaeologist.

Scattered chuckles.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

They watch Claire. Jon fidgets, shifts position.

JON

That's what Claire Swann looks like?

AMY

Who is she?

SHARKEY

One of the film critics at the LA Weekly.

CLAIRE

A film classic is an expression of its moment in history. "Der Blaue Engel" is von Sternberg's cynical rendering of moral degradation that mirrored the debasement of the Weimar Republic.

SHARKEY

She talks like she writes.

JON

Like an egotistical bitch.

SHARKEY

Half the film-going audience in town considers her a joke.

JON  
 And the smarter half ...  
 (begrudging; hating it)  
 ... knows she's always right.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON Sharkey -- as he changes a reel. He turns and sees -  
 - only Amy.

SHARKEY  
 Where's Jon?

Amy shrugs. Sharkey peeks out at the ballroom, sees Chipsey reacting to Jon whispering in his ear. Chipsey gets up and heads for the booth.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
 Oh, shit.

The door opens; Chipsey enters with Jon following.

CHIPSEY  
 Sharkey, who is this interesting young fellow?

SHARKEY  
 Jon Gates. He's, uh --

CHIPSEY  
 He's so serious. I think he's going to have me arrested.

JON  
 I'm just suggesting, for proper storage, some kind of temperature controls --

CHIPSEY  
 (sexily)  
 I guess I have a problem controlling my temperature.

SHARKEY  
 (to Jon)  
 Don't dis the host, man.

CHIPSEY  
 It's okay. I promise to take better care of those old films. Scout's honor.

The FILM BREAKS. Sharkey rapidly moves to rectify the situation. Chipsey smiles wryly at Jon.

CHIPSEY (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
That'll teach me.

Chipsey leaves the room. Jon reacts with bewildered ire, then gazes out at the theatre.

Jon spots Claire, who turns to look toward the projector. Her eyes meet Jon's. They lock for a beat.

Sharkey gets the film taped. He re-starts the projector. Jon leaves.

SHARKEY  
Jon? Where are you going?

INT. LARGE OPEN ATTIC - MOMENTS LATER

Jon creeps toward the reels of "FAUST." There are FOUR of them, 20-minute 35mm. Jon tries to carry TWO, but can only manage ONE at a time.

He turns and slowly starts back to the door. There's a CREAK from across the attic. He stops. A beat. No sound. He starts forward again. As he gets closer to the door, his peripheral vision catches something and he turns.

-- IT'S AN OLD MAN, STARING AT HIM. He GASPS and almost drops the cannister. He sinks to his knees to keep it from hitting the floor, and it BANGS.

JON  
I was just, uh -- !

-- It's a WAX FIGURE -- from a 50's B MOVIE -- ruined by the heat, melted into a hideous humanoid appearance.

INT. STAIRCASE

Jon slowly creeps down a long staircase. He gets to the base of the stairs and darts into --

INT. KITCHEN

Where he huddles against a pantry to hide from the SERVICE WORKERS. He sees a back door.

EXT. SIDE OF MANSION

Jon emerges, avoids being seen by Valets on the driveway.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD

Jon gets to Sharkey's van. He sets down the cannister, unlocks the side door. He throws it open. He picks up the cannister, sets it inside --

-- and a PUFF of SMOKE blows all over him. He turns to see --

-- Claire, smoking a cigarette, staring at him.

CLAIRE

What are you doing?

JON

I'm taking this film ... to be restored.

CLAIRE

Chipsey told you to?

JON

... Yes.

CLAIRE

Prove it. Let's go ask him.

JON

Okay, look -- I'm secretly borrowing this film in order to save it.

CLAIRE

Who the hell are you?

JON

Jon Gates. I'm a film restoration expert for the UCLA Preservation Project. I specialize in positive to negative reconstruction and I've contributed research to various articles in Cahiers Du Cinema and --

CLAIRE

Did I ask you to spew out your resumé? You're a thief.

JON

Look. It's Murnau's "Faust."

Claire reacts with visceral, deep interest -- as Jon opens the cannister.

JON (cont'd)

The outer edge is starting to rot. Goldstone stores his films in the attic with no temperature or humidity control.

CLAIRE  
The proper thing to do is convince  
Chipsey --

JON  
Do you know him?

CLAIRE  
Yes.

JON  
And you could convince him?

CLAIRE  
(conceding)  
... No.

Claire's demeanor changes. She stares at the film, unable to mask a growing concern. Jon goes in for the kill:

JON  
You're this great advocate for the  
sanctity of classic film. What kind of  
hypocrite would you be if you helped  
condemn this refugee piece of art back to  
its death house?

CLAIRE  
How do I know you're legit?

JON  
Follow me to the archives.

CLAIRE  
I will.

JON  
Okay. First, you can help.

She stares at him. CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC

Jon and Claire get on opposite sides and lift up the three remaining cannisters, carrying them together. They strain, bump into stacks of other films, struggle toward the door.

INT. STAIRCASE

They slowly sneak down, trying to keep hold of the cannisters, Claire on the lower end.

They HEAR the sounds of GUESTS' CHATTERING, getting louder -- the screening is over.

INT. KITCHEN

They have to STOOP LOW as they carry the film, staying below COUNTER LEVEL.

EXT. KITCHEN DOOR

As they escape unseen, Claire whispers to Jon:

CLAIRE  
My car. Until I know who you are.

EXT. ROAD

Claire's Peugeot now sits next to Sharkey's van with the trunk open. The side of Sharkey's van is open. Jon and Claire lift out the original cannister from the van and put it into Claire's trunk with the other three -- just as Sharkey and Amy approach.

JON  
Claire, this is Sharkey and Amy.

CLAIRE  
Hi.

SHARKEY  
Delighted.

JON  
Sharkey owns the --

CLAIRE  
-- The ShowArt Theatre. I know.

SHARKEY  
Claire Swann stealing a film? Rad.

CLAIRE  
I am not stealing -- !

SHARKEY  
"Faust?"

Sharkey looks at the cannisters; Jon looks at Sharkey. Beat.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
Let's watch it.

JON  
Now?

SHARKEY  
(to Claire)  
What do you say?

Claire looks at the cannisters, then looks at the group. She smiles; her arrogant guard is down. She's a film geek, too.

CLAIRE  
Yeah.

Sharkey and Amy get into the van. Claire and Jon get into the Peugeot.

Sharkey's engine STARTS for a quick beat, then DIES. In that sudden window of silence --

AMY  
-- Now he likes her?

Sharkey starts the engine and pulls the van away.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT

Claire starts her car with a wry look at Jon.

CLAIRE  
So, now you like me?

JON  
She ... misunderstood something I said.

CLAIRE  
Mm-hm.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - MOVING - LATER

As Claire drives, she casts an appraising look at Jon.

CLAIRE  
You have a degree in film?

JON  
Bachelors, UCLA. What about you?

CLAIRE  
A Masters in critical studies from NYU.

JON  
(trying to joke)  
Ah, then, you don't watch films -- you consider them.

CLAIRE

Quite true. So, tell me, do you enjoy doing restoration work on films?

JON

Yeah. I feel like it's important.

CLAIRE

It is.

She keeps her eyes on the road; Jon smiles at her.

INT. SHOWART PROJECTION BOOTH - LATER

Jon and Sharkey move an OLD 35MM PROJECTOR into place; the usual one is off to the side.

Jon and Sharkey open the cannister labeled "1." Claire flicks her lighter, about to light a cigarette.

JON

WHOA!

SHARKEY

NITRATE!

Amy looks wide-eyed at all of them. Claire flicks off her lighter, showing deep embarrassment.

CLAIRE

Sorry. I wasn't thinking.

Jon cannot open the canister. He looks closely at it.

JON

This canister is soldered shut.

CLAIRE

What? That's crazy.

Sharkey moves to the table.

SHARKEY

Never seen that before.

Sharkey digs around a mess of various tools, objects on the table. He lifts a CAN OPENER.

CLAIRE

Are you seriously going to -- ?

JON

Be careful.

Sharkey digs the can opener into the edge of the canister and begins to turn it. A LOUD HISS emerges from inside the canister.

Jon and Sharkey lift the first reel out of canister #1. They set it on the table. Jon notices an AGED, BROWNE SLIP of PAPER -- with GERMAN WRITING. He grabs at it; it's STUCK, so it RIPS in half. He carefully pulls the other half loose. He and Sharkey and Claire look at it.

CLAIRE  
Just a packing slip.

Jon turns both halves over and holds them together. There's a VERY FAINT, FADED, HAND-DRAWN DIAGRAM. It's an ASYMMETRICAL PATTERN of SQUARES; each SQUARE has a different NUMBER inside.

Jon puts the two torn pieces into his pocket. He sees a SHORT STRIP of PURE BLACK FILM, running along the edge of the cannister. He tries to remove it, but it's STUCK.

AMY  
What is that?

JON  
Scrap.

Sharkey closely scrutinizes the film's first REEL.

SHARKEY  
Sound strips? Isn't "Faust" silent?  
Maybe this is a newer print, with some  
soundtrack music slapped-on.

CLAIRE  
(sarcastic)  
Spectacular.

JON  
... But why would a newer print be  
nitrate?

Sharkey takes the film to a table, starts threading it under a powerful MAGNIFYING LENS.

SHARKEY  
Credits are in German ... "Faust" is  
"Faust" in German, right?

CLAIRE  
Last I checked.

SHARKEY

"Hat Gerecht Filmen Sie Studios?"

CLAIRE

That's not right. Murnau's studio was  
Universum Film A.G.

SHARKEY

Okay, the title ... "Judas Jedermann?"

CLAIRE

What?!

SHARKEY

This is some other film.

Jon and Claire are instantly at Sharkey's elbows.

SHARKEY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

"Hergestellt durch Die Oculus Gruppe."

CLAIRE

That's the producers ...

(reads)

"Geleitet durch Max Kassel?!"

SHARKEY

That's the director?

CLAIRE

Oh, my God. I don't believe it.

JON

Who is he?

CLAIRE

This is a lost film

SHARKEY

Is this the same as the "Max Castle,"  
spelled like "Castle?"

JON

You mean William Castle?

CLAIRE

No, no -- Max.

SHARKEY

There's a legend he made a film in  
Hollywood. It's lost, too. "Queen of  
Venus."

JON  
Two lost films?

Claire takes another look through the magnifying glass.

CLAIRE  
 (correctly:)  
 "(Yoo-dus Yay-der-mahn)." "Judas  
 Everyman."

JON  
 What do you know about it?

CLAIRE  
 Made before World War II. Supposed to be  
 a masterpiece, but no one I've ever met  
 has seen it.

SHARKEY  
 Well, let's throw it up!

Sharkey and Jon load the film onto the projector and thread  
 it. Sharkey turns on a series of switches.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
 Tonight, here, at the ShowArt Theatre, we  
 make history. We --  
 (he scowls at the projector)  
 Awwwww -- DAMN IT! The cooling system is  
 broken.

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - LATER

Sharkey, with a screwdriver, labors over a MOTOR. Claire and  
 Amy look around the MASSIVE COLLECTION of films, videos,  
 posters, memorabilia.

Jon holds a PHONE, listening to the rings.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Gordon, asleep on the sofa, TV showing STATIC, stirs, sits  
 up, leans over, picks up the phone.

GORDON  
 Hello?

JON  
 Gordon? Sorry to call so late. Listen,  
 I -- we -- uh, Sharkey -- uh, we found a  
 film.

(MORE)

JON (cont'd)  
 It's called "Judas Jedermann." Made by  
 Max Castle. Do you know anything about  
 it?

A beat as Gordon becomes more awake. He stands, begins to  
 pace.

GORDON  
 That's ... astonishing.

JON  
 Yeah, that's what everyone is saying. I  
 should bring it by the lab. It's got  
 some deterioration.

GORDON  
 Yes -- bring it in tomorrow. I'll see  
 you in the morning.

They hang up.

END INTERCUT -- ON GORDON. His face shows a deep intensity  
 as he stares into the middle distance, then checks his watch,  
 then stares at the phone. He picks up the phone and punches  
 a long string of buttons -- an international call.

GORDON (cont'd)  
 (into phone)  
 Hallo, Ich will nach einem film fragen.

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT

As Sharkey continues to tinker.

AMY  
 (to Claire)  
 Have you seen anything at the ShowArt?

CLAIRE  
 Uh. No. It's not my thing.

JON  
 What's not your thing?

CLAIRE  
 Saying that trash is art -- by using the  
 word "mondo" to legitimize it.

SHARKEY  
 Ah. Yes. A true connoisseur of art  
 films. "The Leopard." Boring  
 pretention.

CLAIRE  
I'm more flexible than that.

SHARKEY  
It's cool -- I need your type to hate  
what I show -- it gives me street cred as  
an underground scenester. Right, Jon?

JON  
You can find art anywhere if you apply  
enough intellectual masturbation. Right,  
Claire?

CLAIRE  
You tell me.

Sharkey holds up the motor.

SHARKEY  
It's fixed.

AMY  
Should I make some popcorn?

INT. SHOWART - HOUSE - LATER

Claire and Jon are sitting in the back row, sipping from  
paper cups. LOUD, WAGNERIAN-STYLE MUSIC STARTS.

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

Sharkey and Amy watch through the PORTALS in the front wall.

INT. THE SCREEN

"JUDAS JEDERMANN" begins; credits in GERMAN.

REVERSE ANGLE - THE PROJECTOR

MOVE IN ON - LIGHT - LENS -- FLICKERING

Then PULL OUT -- MOVING AWAY from the PROJECTOR [TIME LAPSE]

SHOT OF SCREEN

Black and white -- END CREDITS, WAGNERIAN MUSIC.

Jon and Claire just stare forward as the film FLAPS.

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

Sharkey and Amy, also just staring. A beat. Sharkey finally goes to the projector, turns it off. Amy, *WEEPING* softly, walks out of the booth. Sharkey follows.

INT. LOBBY

Jon and Claire emerge from one side; Sharkey and Amy from the other.

JON

Mind-blowing. The whole film is a series of powerful symbols that tell a story.

CLAIRE

It's ground-breaking. The images were iconic rather than indexical.

JON

What is that supposed to mean?!

CLAIRE

I clarified what you were groping for!

AMY

It was a disgusting piece of shit.

SHARKEY

Like you know fuck-all about film. Fucking thing was brilliant.

CLAIRE

Castle did something I've never seen before! He executed a radical sort of hermeneutic reconfiguration of story and image!

JON

What kind of bullshit "word salad" are you trying to toss?!

CLAIRE

You can't grasp what I said, you stupid shit?!

SHARKEY

(grabbing his crotch)  
Grasp this, bitch!

AMY

It made me sick!

SHARKEY

You make me sick!

Amy SHOVES Sharkey. He SHOVES her back. Claire SHOVES Sharkey.

CLAIRE

Leave her alone! Who the fuck are you to invalidate her experience?!

Sharkey shoves Claire repeatedly.

SHARKEY

I don't have to take any shit from you!

Jon steps in on behalf of Claire, blocking Sharkey's arms on his last attempt to shove.

JON

Wait a fucking second, Sharkey, you don't have to get -- !

SHARKEY

Fuck you, too, Gates! You brought the bitch!

AMY

Is it because we're women, you pig?!

SHARKEY

No, in your case, it's because you're a dumbshit!

Amy SLAPS Sharkey; Sharkey SLAPS Amy; Claire, enraged by this, SLAPS Sharkey; Sharkey tries to slap Claire, but Jon blocks it; Sharkey SLAPS Jon.

AMY

FUCK YOU!! FUCK YOU!!!

Amy suddenly runs out the front glass theatre doors. They see her stop on the sidewalk, turn, flip the bird -- her face twisted with bitter, humiliated rage. She then whips back around, away from them, starts across the street --

-- AND SHE'S SPLATTERED AND FLATTENED BY A SEMI RIG.

-- DROPLETS of BLOOD reach the BOX OFFICE WINDOW. SCREECHING OF TIRES mixes with the reflexive SCREAMS OF HORROR from Jon, Claire and Sharkey.

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF SHOWART - LATER

Amy's BLOODY CORPSE, on a stretcher, under a blanket, is being loaded onto a CITY MORGUE hearse.

A POLICEMAN takes a statement from Sharkey as Jon and Claire stand nearby.

EXT. CURB - IN FRONT OF SHOWART - LATER - NIGHT

Jon sits on one side of Sharkey, arm around his shoulder. Claire sits on the other. Sharkey, sniffing, teary-eyed, smokes a JOINT. They are all DAZED.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BIBLICAL DESERT VILLAGE - DAY [BLACK & WHITE]

PEOPLE IN BIBLICAL ATTIRE SPEAKING IN GERMAN -- MEN AND WOMEN, TEENAGE BOYS AND GIRLS, OLD MEN AND WOMEN, IN THE STREET -- ALL REPEATEDLY STABBING EACH OTHER in DEMONIC RAGE.

CUT TO:

INT. JON'S APT. - BEDROOM - DAWN

Jon, asleep, WRITHES around in bed. He AWAKENS, sweating.

INT. JON'S APT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A small, cheap apartment. There are ROWS and ROWS of VIDEOTAPES on shelves with sliding plastic doors lining the walls. Film POSTERS on the walls. Jon pours fresh coffee into a cup as he holds a phone to his head.

JON

Sharkey? It's Jon. Pick up. Are you awake? Sharkey?

Jon gives up, hangs up the phone. He rubs his eyes, takes another sip of coffee. He goes to a stack of papers, pulls out an L.A. WEEKLY. He flips through pages and finds the MASTHEAD. He dials a number.

INT. OPEN OFFICE AREA - LA WEEKLY - DAY

ON CLAIRE'S CUBICLE

Where she's staring blankly at her computer screen. She looks terrible. Her phone rings; she answers.

CLAIRE  
Claire Swann.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JON'S APT.

Jon sits at his desk with the TWO PIECES of the TORN PACKING SLIP, turned over to the back side with the HAND-DRAWN DIAGRAM.

JON  
Hi. It's Jon.

Claire sighs, slumps, rubs her eyes.

CLAIRE  
Jon. Ohhhh. Are you as fucked as I am?

JON  
Yeah.

CLAIRE  
That girl ... is really dead, isn't she?

JON  
Yeah.

Jon uses CELLOPHANE TAPE to stick the two sides of the diagram together.

CLAIRE  
I had nightmares about that damned film.

JON  
I did, too.

CLAIRE  
It was so brilliant at getting deep into your subconscious.

JON  
The way Castle shot that epilogue, with all the people killing themselves -- It was so visceral.

Pause. They both silently wash over with grimness.

CLAIRE  
How's Sharkey?

JON  
I don't know. I think he's still asleep.

A silence. They seem to feel each other's mood.

JON (cont'd)  
 Claire ... ?

CLAIRE  
 Yeah?

JON  
 Do you have any free time today?

CLAIRE  
 Come over right now.

END INTERCUT as they hang up. Jon carefully puts the diagram into his WALLET, then puts his wallet into his pants pocket.

INT. JON'S HONDA - LATER

Jon idles by the curb as Claire emerges from the L.A. Weekly building and gets into his car. They look at each other, tired, grim, but somehow connected. Jon pulls away.

CLAIRE  
 I don't care where we go, just drive.

JON  
 I'm going to the UCLA Preservation Lab.

CLAIRE  
 Perfect.

JON  
 I want Gordon to see the film. I have to pick it up from Sharkey.

Claire lights a cigarette.

CLAIRE  
 I got my period today.

JON  
 Ah. Well. Okay.

CLAIRE  
 It's fifteen days early.

A long beat as Jon doesn't know what to say.

EXT. REAR OF THE SHOWART

Jon is at the top of the steps that lead to an APARTMENT. He knocks on the door.

JON  
Sharkey? Wake up. Sharkey?

EXT. SIDE OF SHOWART - MOMENTS LATER

Claire watches as Jon takes a KEY and unlocks the side door.

JON  
(re: the key)  
Sometimes I project for Sharkey when he's passed out.

INT. SHOWART PROJECTION BOOTH

Jon and Claire move to the cannisters marked "Faust."

EXT. UCLA PRESERVATION VAULTS - LATER

As Gordon opens the door, he smiles at Claire.

JON  
Claire Swann, Dr. Gordon Rittenauer.

GORDON  
We've met before -- at an Ophuls retrospective.

CLAIRE  
(offers her hand)  
I remember. Nice to see you again.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE

Gordon, ashen-faced, sits at his desk. Jon and Claire sit in chairs.

GORDON  
She just ran right out and got hit?

JON  
Killed instantly.

GORDON  
That's terrible. I'm sorry. How's Sharkey?

JON  
He's not up yet.

GORDON

He doesn't have any plans to show this film, does he?

JON

I don't know -- but he'll probably want to. Why?

GORDON

It could cause some problems.

JON

Problems?

GORDON

Who owns it?

A beat as Jon and Claire look at each other.

JON

Chipsey Goldstone. But he doesn't know we have it. In fact, he doesn't know he owns it. The cannisters are marked Murnau's "Faust." I saw the film was in bad shape, so I took it.

Jon leans forward to enthusiastically press this point:

JON (cont'd)

Gordon, wait till you see it. "Judas Jedermann" is way ahead of its time. It has a gritty cinéma vérité texture, with hand held camera work like a hyperrealistic, pseudo-documentary

CLAIRE

(topping Jon's enthusiasm)  
-- But it's also formalistic, in a way. It's as if Rembrandt had treated his paintings with a glaze that covered more than it revealed.

Gordon looks at each of them in turn, considering this.

GORDON

Well, I did some digging last night. Tried to find what I could in my library. Got some tidbits from different books.

Gordon slides over open BOOKS and refers to them. WE INTERCUT WITH PHOTOS from German films and film sets.

GORDON (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Max Kassel. Born in 1915 in Berlin. He grew up working on the sets of Murnau, Pabst, Lang. First, just a little boy running errands. By the age of fourteen, he was drawing designs that were used in some films. He started experimenting with lenses and lights at the age of sixteen. Age 23, he directs "Judas Jedermann." No one knows what happened to the film. It became the stuff of legend. Collectors have hounded it since. As for Max, he hides out during World War II. He comes to Los Angeles in 1945. Nothing really known about him until 1952, when he directs B-movie "Queen of Venus" -- produced by Ira Goldstone.

JON

Oh -- so that's why Ira had "Judas" in his collection.

GORDON

(continuing)

"Queen of Venus" is never released. Some say it wasn't finished; that Max was fired. Or it's because Ira had a heart attack. Max Castle leaves Los Angeles. He crosses the iron curtain to East Berlin. The Communists detain him, then quickly deport him. The plane he's on vanishes. He's never found.

JON

Vanishes?

INT. OPEN WORKSPACE AREA

A BACK DOOR is propped open. Jon and Gordon carry the cannisters inside. They open the first cannister. Gordon looks at it.

GORDON

"Vixens on the Rampage?"

Jon opens each cannister, lifts each reel, looks. When he gets to the last one, he gives an embarrassed look to Gordon.

JON

Sharkey switched cannisters.

GORDON  
What's this?

JON  
Slug.

Gordon goes to cannister #1 and takes hold of the SHORT BLACK STRIP of FILM. It's stuck to the cannister. He gently works it until it COMES LOOSE. Gordon holds it up to the light, studies it closely.

GORDON  
Solid black.

Gordon tosses it towards a trash can. It misses, landing on the floor.

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - LOBBY - LATER

Sharkey, eyes bloodshot and yellow, hair matted, carries cannisters with Jon and Claire.

SHARKEY  
(defensive; irritable)  
I figured it was a good thing to put the film into cleaner cannisters. Sue me.

INT. JON'S HONDA - MOVING - LATER

Sharkey, in the backseat, smokes a JOINT and GUZZLES from a pint whiskey bottle. Claire, in the front, smokes a cigarette.

JON  
I'm still obsessed with that downward spiral shot. How did he do it?

CLAIRE  
He was doing things that didn't show up in film for another ten years.

JON  
I think I hear a book coming.

CLAIRE  
Or at least a lengthy article.

Sharkey appreciatively slaps the back of Claire's seat.

SHARKEY

Yeah, baby!! Claire, you're gonna help me put the ShowArt in the fucking spotlight!

CLAIRE

How so?

SHARKEY

I'm going to have a special screening of "Judas Jedermann." Can you grasp what kind of historical event it's going to be?

JON

The film's in German. No subtitles.

SHARKEY

People will absorb it through their membranes.

Claire lets out a GASPING CRY. Jon whips his head to see what she does --

-- THE UCLA ARCHIVES BUILDING is ON FIRE.

Jon STOMPS on the brakes, losing control and BANGING the bumper of a parked car. He throws open the door and runs toward the building.

EXT. ARCHIVES BUILDING

Jon runs toward the front door. Claire and Sharkey get out of the car.

CLAIRE

Jon! Don't!

SIRENS in the distance.

INT. OPEN WORKSPACE AREA

Jon enters. The SMOKE is thick. Jon coughs, squints, ambles forward.

JON

Gordon! Gordon!

Jon makes his way through a SURREAL "COMBAT ZONE" -- NITRATE FILMS EXPLODE, AND THE TOPS AND BOTTOMS of the CANNISTERS ROCKET through the air -- with SHRILL WHISTLES -- and SLAM INTO THE WALLS, SMASH WINDOWS, SMASH LIGHTING FIXTURES. The NOISE is DEAFENING -- and deeply UNNERVING.

Jon has to duck and flinch, as if entering a crossfire -- while also coughing and wiping his eyes.

In the FLASHES of explosions, in the SMOKE, the VAGUE appearance of DEMONIC, ANGRY FACES can POSSIBLY be seen.

JON (cont'd)

Gordon!

Jon can see, up ahead -- LIGHT from a side room. He makes his way to the door, almost getting killed by flying cannisters. A RAPID MOVEMENT of SOMETHING -- a SHADOW?

INT. SCREENING ROOM

Jon steps inside, trying to wipe away the dense smoke. The SCREEN has BURNED TO a CRISP -- as well as the CEILING TILES, which are GONE.

Sound of PROJECTOR RUNNING; sound of FILM FLAPPING.

Jon's feet hit something. He rubs his eyes, fans at the smoke and looks down.

It's Gordon, DEAD. His face, neck and chest are SOAKED with BLOOD. His LEGS are AFLAME.

Jon FLINCHES with HORRIFIC SHOCK. His feet SLOSH in the massive LAKE of blood on the floor.

JON

Gordon ... oh, God ... !

The BACK of his NECK is SLAMMED by SOMETHING -- A FLAMING piece of WOOD ...? From a SIDE ANGLE ...? He's UNCONSCIOUS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAY [BLACK & WHITE]

Jon walks toward a FIGURE in BIBLICAL ATTIRE who is leaning over a shadow. As Jon gets closer to the Figure, it turns its head, revealing Sharkey -- smiling malevolently, who is holding a KNIFE soaked in blood. On the ground lies GORDON, almost DEAD, still flailing. Sharkey resumes STABBING Gordon.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Jon SCREAMS himself awake, DRENCHED IN SWEAT. He has a BANDAGE around his neck and the back of his head.

Sharkey sits on one side; Claire on the other. They both squeeze his hands. Jon's eyes focus on Claire, then Sharkey - - and his consciousness suddenly refills with awareness and memory of what's happened. He begins to WEEP.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. BURNED-OUT ARCHIVES BUILDING - DAY

There are two UNIFORMED COPS standing guard over the taped-off ruins.

Jon -- now without bandages -- parks his Honda, gets out, stares at the scene, pale and devastated. A POLICE DETECTIVE who's been waiting, gets out of his car.

DETECTIVE BRACKEN

Jon Gates?

Jon nods.

DETECTIVE BRACKEN (cont'd)

Detective Bracken, LAPD Homicide.

Det. Bracken escorts a shaky, dazed Jon into the building.

DET. BRACKEN

If you have any sense of anything being stolen, I want to know.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE

Jon steps inside, followed by Det. Bracken. Jon wells over with grief, then pulls himself together.

The office is HALF-BURNED. The other half is completely intact, normal. The DESK is HALF-BURNED. Jon looks around blankly, turns ... then turns back.

JON

The books are gone. On his desk ... researching Max Castle.

DET. BRACKEN

Books? -- Probably burned.

INT. HALLWAY

Jon steps out of the office, glances at the open door to the screening room. Jon goes into --

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH OF SCREENING ROOM

The projector and stand LIE on the floor -- the PLUG lies OUT of the SOCKET -- yanked by the fall. The booth is UNBURNED.

Jon kneels down by the broken projector. He removes the take-up reel, which is filled with a film. He pulls down some of the film to look closely.

JON'S POV - CELLULOID FILM

The FRAMES show an old BLACK & WHITE FILM - the SOMNAMBULIST, CESARE, walking through an impressionistic night skyline.

JON (O.S.)  
"Cabinet of Dr. Caligari."

ON JON

He removes the reel from the projector.

INT. SCREENING ROOM

Completely burned, floor to ceiling. Jon winces at the memory of finding Gordon. TEARS start flowing. Det. Bracken puts a hand on his shoulder to lead him away.

DET. BRACKEN  
You were very close ... ?

JON'S OFFICE

Jon enters and places the film reel onto his desk. He SEES -- a post-it note: "BUY GORDON'S B-DAY GIFT." His tears renew.

EXT. BURNED-OUT ARCHIVES BUILDING

Det. Bracken leads Jon back outside.

JON  
What do you think happened?

DET. BRACKEN  
Too early to tell. Break in, theft, accidental fire, accidental death in a struggle, maybe. Or the fire was arson. Maybe the killing was intentional. We have to look at everything.  
(checks his notepad)  
Do you deal with a place in Berlin called "Bundes Archiv?"

JON  
Yeah. Why?

DET. BRACKEN  
 Dr. Rittenauer called it about midnight  
 before the day he died. Talked for  
 fifteen minutes.

INT. JON'S APT. - DAY

Jon talks on the phone.

JON  
 Sprechen Sie Englisch? This is Jon  
 Gates. I'm calling for Friedrich.  
 (a beat)  
 Friedrich? Listen, I have some  
 unbelievable news. Gordon is dead.  
 Looks like murder. He --

FRIEDRICH'S VOICE  
 I cannot talk.

The call is DISCONNECTED. Jon, outraged, re-dials.

JON  
 This is Jon Gates again. May I speak to  
 Friedrich? What?! I just spoke to him!  
 I JUST SPOKE TO -- !

The call is DISCONNECTED. Jon lets out an angry sigh. He's  
 about to reach for the phone when it RINGS, startling him.  
 He answers.

JON (cont'd)  
 Hello?

FRIEDRICH'S VOICE  
 Jon?

JON  
 What the hell happened to you?!!

FRIEDRICH'S VOICE  
 Gordon called here about Max Castle,  
 about "Judas Jedermann."

JON  
 I know. Who did he talk to?

FRIEDRICH'S VOICE  
 I don't know. Do you have a print of  
 that film?

JON  
 Yeah.

FRIEDRICH'S VOICE

Get rid of it. Burn it. And leave town  
for awhile.

JON

What the hell are you -- ?

The call is DISCONNECTED. Jon angrily dials a number. He  
hears a GERMAN RECORDING for "BUNDES ARCHIV."

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - PROJECTION BOOTH - DUSK

Claire and Sharkey are staring at Jon.

JON

The place is called "Bundes Archiv." I  
don't know what's wrong with Friedrich.

CLAIRE

So, Dr. Rittenauer called that number --

JON

-- Right after I called him and told him  
we had "Judas Jedermann."

CLAIRE

Well, what is your friend suggesting?

JON

I don't know -- that some person in  
Berlin tipped off someone in L.A.?

CLAIRE

Film collectors don't murder.

SHARKEY

Shit, how do you know that? People have  
killed for paintings.

CLAIRE

Jon, I know this is a hard time, but ...

JON

It could've been an accidental killing --  
or not. But it had something to do with  
"Judas Jedermann."

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - DAY

Jon and Sharkey stand by a STEENBECK which is playing "Judas  
Jedermann." A VIDEO CAMERA is RECORDING it from the playback  
screen; AUDIO CABLES are connected.

INT. SHOWART HOUSE - LATER

Sharkey and Jon lift a SECTION of SEATS -- FOUR seats on a PLANK. They lean this plank onto another row of seats. Exposed underneath is an unfinished slab of concrete. Sharkey fingers around the edge until he finds a notch. Jon helps him and they lift up a THIN SLAB of concrete.

JON  
Good hiding place.

A three-foot-deep HOLE gapes before them. Inside are BAGS, VIALS and BOTTLES of DRUGS.

JON (cont'd)  
What the hell, Sharkey? Are you a regional distributor?

SHARKEY  
I'm always prepared.

They begin to put the "Judas" CANISTERS into the hole.

INT. SHARKEY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jon labels TWO video cassettes as "Judas Jedermann." Sharkey taps on the big CALENDAR GRID on the wall with the scheduled programing.

SHARKEY  
The 18th, baby. Screening of "Judas Jedermann."

JON  
Sharkey, I'm not so sure ...

SHARKEY  
I'm sure. It'll be a peak event. It's been a long time since I've had one.

INT. LECTURE HALL - UCLA - DAY

Jon, holding one of the "Judas" video copies, stands with a PROFESSOR and a female GRAD STUDENT. GERMAN WORDS fill the blackboard.

JON  
I need the dialogue translated.

PROFESSOR  
(taking the video)  
"Judas Jedermann?" Sounds interesting.  
(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)  
Susan, would you like to translate a film  
for credit?

SUSAN  
Sure.

JON  
(to both)  
Thank you.

EXT. JON'S APT. - LATER - DAY

Jon is about to enter his apartment when a car rushes to a  
stop. It's Claire in her Peugeot.

CLAIRE  
I talked to Chipsey. Come on. We're  
going to dig through his father's  
collection.

INT. GOLDSTONE BASMENT - LATER

Jon and Claire are sifting through piles of SCRIPTS, PHOTOS,  
BOOKS, POSTERS.

JON  
HEY!

Jon pulls out a small LOBBY CARD -- "QUEEN OF VENUS" -- with  
the photo art being OLGA TELL in a spacesuit. A truncated  
poster, it only has "STARRING OLGA TELL; PRODUCED BY IRA  
GOLDSTONE; CINEMATOGRAPHY: ARNOLD ZIPSKY; WRITTEN AND  
DIRECTED BY MAX CASTLE."

JON (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
I thought the film was never released.

CLAIRE  
It wasn't. This is just a mock-up for  
the lobby card. See? It's pasted on.  
(a beat)  
Arnold Zipsky shot this film?

JON  
Arnold Zipsky ... wow. Is he still  
alive?

CLAIRE  
I don't know.

JON

We can call I.A.T.S.E. What about Olga  
Tell?

CLAIRE

She died in a fire at her house. Back in  
the 50's.

EXT. OLD SECTION OF HOLLYWOOD - BASE OF HILLS - DAY

Claire's Peugeot moves slowly down the street.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT

A NOTE on I.A.T.S.E. letterhead has an ADDRESS written on it.  
Claire checks the houses as she goes. She slows the car to a  
stop.

EXT. OLD GOTHIC HOUSE

Jon and Claire walk to the front door. Jon knocks.

ZIPSKY'S VOICE

(from speaker)

[COUGHING]. Who is it?

Claire steps close to the speaker.

CLAIRE

Mr. Zipsky? I'm Claire Swann, a film  
critic for the L.A. Weekly.

ZIPSKY'S VOICE

Why should I give a shit?!

CLAIRE

You should've gotten an Oscar for "Glory  
Road" and "Johnny Champion" and "Symphony  
of a Million."

ZIPSKY'S VOICE

Fuck the Oscars! I got one! I use it to  
crack walnuts!

CLAIRE

You're one of the three best  
cinematographers of all time.

ZIPSKY'S VOICE

Who the fuck are the other two?!

CLAIRE

Tissé and Freund.

ZIPSKY'S VOICE

Right about Freund, wrong about Tissé.

CLAIRE

Okay, the third one is ... Gregg Toland.

Beat. The locks CLICK in sequence. The door opens and BANGS into a WHEELCHAIR. ARNOLD ZIPSKY, 70's, struggles to open the door and roll back away. He has a cigarette in his mouth. He reacts with lascivious interest when he sees Claire.

ZIPSKY

What do you want?

Claire smiles beguilingly at Zipsky.

CLAIRE

Can you tell me about working with Max Castle on "Queen of Venus?"

Zipsky's demeanor turns very sour.

ZIPSKY

Get the hell out of here.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry -- was it an unpleasant experience working with Max?

ZIPSKY

I loved Max. And I'm not going to let anyone fuck with his name. How the hell could you possibly know about him, anyway?

JON

We've seen "Judas Jedermann."

ZIPSKY

Liar.

CLAIRE

We have the film. We watched it. And it's a masterpiece.

ZIPSKY

Did it do anything to you?! What did it do to you?!

JON

Have you seen it?

ZIPSKY

No, damn it -- and neither have you! Or you'd tell me what it did to you!

CLAIRE

It really disturbed us. And --

JON

And a girl who watched it ran out of the theatre and got killed by a truck.

Zipsky stares at them a beat, somewhat convinced.

ZIPSKY

You show me the film, then we'll talk.

He shuts the door.

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - LOBBY - LATE NIGHT

Sharkey lets Jon into the CLOSED theatre.

JON

You have it up on the projector?

SHARKEY

Yeah. You're sure Zipsky's coming?

JON

I hope so.

Kirk is cleaning up. He sees Jon and moves right to him.

KIRK

Jon. I'm so sorry about what happened.

He gives Jon a one-arm shoulder hug.

JON

Thanks, Kirk.

Sharkey goes to the door and opens it. Claire steps inside with a companion -- a DASHING MAN in his 50's, well-dressed.

CLAIRE

Jon, Sharkey -- this is Colby Mathers.

MATHERS

(shaking their hands in turn)  
Pleasure.

CLAIRE

Colby's a good friend of mine.

Mathers smiles and puts an arm around Claire's shoulders.  
Jon notes this, less than pleased.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
He's a major film collector.

MATHERS  
I had some dealings with Gordon  
Rittenauer. May I offer my sincere  
condolences?

JON  
Thanks.

CLAIRE  
I called Colby after we found "Judas  
Jedermann." He knows a lot about German  
film. He could help us.

JON  
How?

MATHERS  
Well, I only know a little about Max  
Castle, I'm sorry to say.

A RAPPING at the locked door. Jon turns to see Zipsky in his  
wheelchair, smoking. Jon quickly hurries to the door and  
opens it.

INT./EXT. DOORWAY

Jon sees an OLD WOMAN with long white hair covered with a  
scarf -- standing ten yards back down the sidewalk.

JON  
(to Zipsky; re: Old Woman)  
Is your friend coming in?

ZIPSKY  
Who? I don't know her.

Jon rolls Zipsky completely into --

INT. LOBBY

-- And right up to Sharkey.

JON  
Sharkey, this is Arnold Zipsky.

Sharkey shakes Zipsky's hand.

SHARKEY

Don Sharkey. An honor to meet you.

Sharkey holds out a BLU-RAY DISC.

SHARKEY (cont'd)

Would you mind signing this? Blu-Ray  
disc -- "Glory Road."

Zipsky takes the disc.

ZIPSKY

These things look like shit.

He signs it with a snap; wheels away. Mathers stares curiously at Zipsky, who's started to wheel himself toward the theatre.

ZIPSKY (cont'd)

Crank it up already.

INT. SHOWART HOUSE - LATER

Jon and Claire sit in the back, enraptured and uncomfortable. Jon looks around. Mathers -- seen in profile -- looking DOWN -- nodding, smiling, as if only listening. Zipsky stares at the screen in rapt attention. Kirk watches from the dark back corner.

A LOUD SCREAM from the film. Mathers still does not raise his head to look. Jon notices.

INT. SHOWART LOBBY - LATER

Into the empty lobby rushes Kirk, who immediately runs for the door. He PUNCHES the panic bar to open it; hurries out, VOMITING.

Jon, Claire and Sharkey emerge and wait. They have tight, severe expressions. We HEAR:

ZIPSKY (O.S.)

IT WAS FUCKING GREAT!

Out rolls Zipsky, RED-FACED, grinding his teeth -- when he's not VIOLENTLY COUGHING. He even tries to SMOKE.

JON

(inappropriately impatient)

Now, Mr. Zipsky, I want to talk about Max  
Castle.

ZIPSKY  
IT'S A FUCKING MASTERPIECE!

Zipsky breaks into an almost DEADLY HACKING COUGH. He rolls himself toward the doors, banging them open. Jon follows.

EXT. THEATRE

Jon watches as Zipsky rolls down the sidewalk to a car. That same OLD WOMAN now helps Zipsky into the car. She then moves around to the driver's side. From inside the theatre:

SHARKEY (O.S.)  
I'm going to show the film here on the  
18th!!! It's a special event!!!

INT. LOBBY

Jon enters; sees Sharkey, red-faced, glowering at Mathers.

MATHERS  
Can you calm down?  
(studying his face)  
Or can't you?

SHARKEY  
I know that some of my collector friends  
are coming to see the film!! There might  
be some serious bidding!!

MATHERS  
I'm making a pre-emptive bid.

JON  
WHAT?! Who the fuck said it's for  
sale?!!  
(to Claire)  
Is that why you brought this guy?!!

CLAIRE  
I didn't know he was going to -- !!

JON  
We need to have a talk -- us three!!

Jon grabs Claire and Sharkey, pulling them into --

INT. SHARKEY'S OFFICE

-- and closing the door.

JON  
None of us has a right to sell this film!

SHARKEY

I can talk to Chipsey! -- He'll sell --  
and give us a broker fee! But I'm not  
selling until after the screening!

Sharkey leaves the office, SLAMMING shut the door. Jon turns his enraged expression towards Claire.

JON

Either your boyfriend coughs up some  
useful knowledge about who might've  
killed Gordon, or he gets the fuck out!!  
I didn't tell you to sneak him in here!!

CLAIRE

I don't need your permission, you  
impertinent shit!!

Claire SLAPS him. Jon grabs her arms, SWINGS her around, THROWS her across the room. Her back SLAMS into a FRAMED POSTER, which falls.

INT. LOBBY

Sharkey stomps toward Mathers.

SHARKEY

We'll talk after the 18th -- or go fuck  
yourself!!!

Mathers stares at Sharkey coldly; then, cracks a thin smile.

MATHERS

I'll be in touch.

Mathers abruptly EXITS. Sharkey watches, still fuming, wondering if he made the right decision.

INT. SHARKEY'S OFFICE

The fight continues. Claire charges Jon, TACKLING HIM so that he falls backward against a video shelf -- which ENTIRELY BREAKS OFF THE WALL, causing DVDs to RAIN all over both of them. They SLAP each other repeatedly. Then grab each other and wrestle on the floor, rolling over and over each other.

Claire grabs her cigarette lighter from her purse and flicks on a FLAME and BURNS Jon's BACK. He SCREAMS. He uses his foot to SLAM her down against the floor; slaps the shade off a desk LAMP; grabs it and moves the LIGHTED BULB toward her. He jams it against her skin. She SCREAMS.

She grabs him and PULLS HIM DOWN on top of her -- so that the bulb TOUCHES HIM, too. They both groan in pain. The bulb BURSTS between them. They get CUT and ELECTROCUTED.

They stop the fight, intertwined, gushing sweat, clinging to each other. They both have VISIBLE WOUNDS of various kinds.

Sharkey enters the office. He sees the WRECK; and Jon and Claire still on the floor. Jon and Claire look up at Sharkey.

CLAIRE

We ...

JON

She and I ...

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - LOBBY - LATER

Jon and Claire are using some FIRST AID supplies from Sharkey to tend to their wounds. Sharkey helps. They all three remain grimly silent, unable to speak, dazed.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN'S APT. - SAME

Susan, the German grad student, stares, ashen-faced, scowling and with gaping mouth, at her TV SCREEN, which is playing the tape of "Judas Jedermann." She holds a pen and pad, but this section of the film has no dialogue. Slowly, DROOL starts to drip from her mouth, PLOPPING onto the pad. A CAT jumps on top of the TV. Apparently unhappy, the cat MEOWS LOUDLY and PISSES on the TV. The urine runs down the front of the screen. Susan has NO REACTION.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BIBLICAL VILLAGE - DAY

Jon approaches a ROBED FIGURE kneeling down by TWO PRONE BODIES -- as if in sorrow. When, Jon gets to the Figure, he places a hand on the shoulder. The Figure looks up at Jon.

-- It's Claire -- with an EVIL GRIN. The BODIES are Sharkey and Gordon -- both SLICED and GUSHING BLOOD. Claire rises and STABS Jon in the chest -- then CARVES -- up, down, around.

CUT TO:

INT. JON'S APT. - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Jon abruptly awakens. He looks around, spooked. Silence. He lies back, tries to go back to sleep. Then, a FAINT, SLIGHT SOUND. Jon sits up. Silence. Jon lies back.

INT. JON'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Jon walks in, looks around. He notices TWO VIDEOS at the end of a shelf are out of place, as if jarred. He walks to the shelf, shoves the videos back into the row -- and one falls off the shelf at the other end. He puts it back. He looks around.

He goes to the phone, dials. In the background, amidst the DARK CURTAINS on a window -- a FLASH of a DEMON'S FACE -- partially covered -- as if it stuck its head through the curtains to look.

JON

Sharkey? Jon. I have this weird feeling that -- WHAT?!!! BROKE IN HOW?!!!

INT. SHOWART LOBBY - MORNING

Sharkey, smoking a joint, opens the front door and lets in Jon. Sharkey is visibly smug.

SHARKEY

Whoever the scumbag was, he tossed the basement a little bit, but he came out with nothing but his dick in his hand.

JON

"Judas Jedermann" is still safe?

SHARKEY

Exactly where you saw it.

JON

I want to call in this Detective who's working the case -- Detective Bracken.

SHARKEY

No can do.

JON

He could get forensics to see if any fingerprints match the --

SHARKEY

No, he could find my drugs -- he could find fire violations out the ass. No police.

JON

Sharkey, whoever's trying to steal the film might be who killed Gordon!

SHARKEY

If they break in here again, I'll handle it. Got that? And the cops can keep working at the archives. They'll find the killer.

INT. L.A. WEEKLY OFFICES - ON CLAIRE'S CUBICLE - LATER

Claire looks at Jon, surprised.

CLAIRE

Are you sure someone broke into your place, too?

JON

I'm almost sure. Where's Colby Mathers?

CLAIRE

He's back in New York.

JON

How do you know?

CLAIRE

I took him to the airport. Had a big fight with him, too. I don't know what was the matter with me -- especially last night. I was a bitch.

JON

I freaked out, too. It's that film. It ...

CLAIRE

Yeah. Gets into your head. I had the same nightmare again, where ...

JON

-- Where people stab each other?

CLAIRE

Yeah. Why?

JON

That's the dream I have.

They look at each other a beat.

CLAIRE

Let's go see Zipsky. He promised he'd talk.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE L.A. WEEKLY

Jon follows Claire to her Peugeot. Claire gets in. Before Jon gets in, he catches sight of something --

JON'S POV - WINDOW IN OFFICE BUILDING

A MAN, visible from the waist up, dressed in BIBLICAL ATTIRE, is STARING at Jon. The man seems to be in a BLACK & WHITE FILM, rather than in the colors of real life. However, he's just enough in shadow to make this possibly a light effect.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT

Jon gets into the car, then glances back at the building.

JON'S POV - SAME WINDOW

Just CLOSED CURTAINS. MOVING SHOT - as Claire pulls away.

INT. ZIPSKY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Zipsky smiles at them, with a secret sort of amusement, as he finishes making two new Martinis and handing them to Jon and Claire, who are still in icy moods.

ZIPSKY

I have a surprise.

INT. MEDIUM-SIZED SCREENING ROOM

Dust covers everything. A huge framed poster of "QUEEN OF VENUS" on the wall. Jon and Claire look at the poster.

Zipsky's head can be seen in the PORTAL of the PROJECTION BOOTH.

ZIPSKY

I have the third reel of "Queen of Venus."

JON & CLAIRE

You do?!

ZIPSKY

That's all I could steal from the studio. The scumbags destroyed the film.

Zipsky begins to laugh sardonically, then COUGHS VIOLENTLY. Zipsky turns on the projector. The lights in the screening room go off. Jon and Claire sit.

ON THE SCREEN is FOOTAGE from "QUEEN OF VENUS." The film is DECAYED and SCRATCHED.

JON

Why is it in such bad shape?

ZIPSKY

We ... I watch it a lot.

OLGA TELL, gorgeous, 17-years-old, the LEAD, dressed in a FUTURISTIC COSTUME showing her legs and a good part of her bust. She moves forward to a ROW of MALE ASTRONAUTS who are KNEELING.

OLGA (ONSCREEN)

(Swiss/German accent)

You are now prisoners. You will tell us what you know, or you will die.

ANGLE ON JON AND CLAIRE

Watching, already deeply mesmerized. Shifting, squirming in their chairs.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. SCREENING ROOM - LATER

The reel ENDS, followed by blank leader. Then, flapping. Jon and Claire and Zip are just staring at the blank screen. They have sweaty foreheads. Their eyes are wide open, doe-like, entranced and elated. They have moronic smiles. They look at each other.

CLAIRE

(to Zipsky)

Where's the bathroom?

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Claire enters; a beat later, Jon enters. Jon touches Claire's face. She takes his hand and kisses it. He gently kisses her lips. She slides her arms around his neck. He throws his arms around her shoulders. They slam back into the wall and start groping each other like crazy.

They RIP each other's clothes off.

CUT TO:

Jon and Claire, NAKED, on the floor, HAVING STRENUOUS,  
PASSIONATE SEX.

-- They notice something and both turn to see --

Zipsky, in the open doorway, staring at them with a dazed and almost deliriously pleasurable expression. His body is vaguely MOVING, but we don't know what exactly he's doing.

-- Jon and Claire turn back to each other and CONTINUE HAVING SEX, too spellbound in their intercourse to care about the voyeurism.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. ZIPSKY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jon and Claire, sweaty, dazed, stagger toward the sofa. They both fall onto it, slouching. They are in a EUPHORIC SERENITY -- and it seems that they cannot get up. They are staring at Zipsky, who's now in a serene state.

CLAIRE

You spiked our drinks.

ZIPSKY

No. Watching the film made this happen to you. See, the stuff Max did is not like anything that's ever been done or is being done. Everything he did had to work with the "flicker."

JON

Flicker?

ZIPSKY

The back-and-forth between light and dark. It hypnotizes you. Then, with Max's underhold, he gets into your subconscious.

CLAIRE

Underhold?

ZIPSKY

It's what you don't see. But you see it, anyway. Even though you don't.

JON

Subliminal images?

ZIPSKY

You want to call it something fancy, good. "

(MORE)

ZIPSKY (cont'd)

Judas Jedermann," causes some kind of mean shit, doesn't it? And "Queen of Venus" creates some kinda sex reaction.

CLAIRE

You spiked our drinks.

ZIPSKY

Max was so far beyond everything. He would even shit me about how he wanted to make a film with no DP. 'Cause there'd be no light. Watching it would be like you were blind.

CLAIRE

He must have been joking with you.

ZIPSKY

Max was a genius. No one has any idea.

JON

Is there anyone who would kill to steal a Max Castle film?

ZIPSKY

Those freak bastards in the cult -- the cult Max was in. He broke it off with them, but they never accepted his resignation, if you get my gist.

JON

Cult?

Zipsky's face shows an immediate sense of having "said too much." He wheels to the door and opens it.

ZIPSKY

I'm getting tired.

Jon takes out his wallet; removes the DIAGRAM on the PACKING SLIP; shows it to Zipsky.

JON

Do you know what this means?

ZIPSKY

No fucking idea. Now -- goodbye.

JON

Well, could we talk some more later?

ZIPSKY

You two have yourselves a great life.

Zipsky begins a long COUGHING FIT.

EXT. ZIPSKY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jon and Claire emerge through the front door. Zipsky shuts the door. Jon and Claire stand on the doorstep, looking at each other. They both wash over with embarrassment. They slowly amble toward Claire's Peugeot.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT

They get inside. They sit. A beat. Claire starts the car. She lets it idle.

CLAIRE

I ... don't know what to say. Except ...  
we ...

JON

We fucked the living shit out of each  
other.

They both burst into LAUGHTER.

CLAIRE

And it was spectacular.

JON

It was absolutely sensational.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - IDLING - LATER

Outside Jon's apt. building. Jon and Claire sit in embarrassed silence.

JON

I'll, uh ... talk to you, uh ...

CLAIRE

Yeah. See you ... around.

Jon awkwardly gets out of the car. They briefly glance at each other, then Jon leans back inside.

JON

What are you doing later?

CLAIRE

I have a press screening.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire sits in the back row, alone. There are a few OTHER CRITICS sitting closer to the screen. A SUPERHERO MOVIE.

Against the DARK SIDE WALL of the theatre -- A FLASH of OLGA TELL'S FACE -- from "VENUS."

Claire writes furiously, stabbing the pad every time she makes a "period." She HALF-MUMBLES while she writes, every few words come out LOUDLY.

MOVE IN ON CLAIRE -- and we can see the form of JON, down in front of her, his HEAD between her LEGS.

CLAIRE  
 (as she writes it:)  
 ... suggesting a CRYPTO-FASCIST PARADIGM  
 that GOADS THE AUDIENCE into accepting --

The other Critics turn to look at her, then back to the film. Claire bites her lip; resumes writing manically.

INT. CLAIRE'S APT. - NIGHT

An old apartment, furnished with eclectic collectibles that attempt to speak of worldly sophistication; including film posters and shelves packed with videotapes. MOVE INTO --

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM

Jon, laughing, reads Claire's review. She laughs, too.

JON  
 " ... an ersatz appropriation of  
 Reifenstahlian grandeur --"

He tosses it aside, pulls Claire closer to him.

JON (cont'd)  
 What happened to you?

CLAIRE  
 Sometimes ... I get some intellectual  
 epiphanies while ... I'm building to an  
 orgasm.  
 (she kisses him)  
 You know, Jon, I could definitely allow  
 "us" to be an ongoing thing.

JON  
 (sarcastic)  
 You could allow it? Lucky me.  
 (MORE)

JON (cont'd)  
 (pushes her away)  
 I don't know if I can handle always  
 getting film lectures during sex.

CLAIRE  
 You can handle it -- and you'll learn  
 something.

She pushes him down onto the bed and gets on top of him.

INT. CLAIRE'S APT. - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Jon comes from the bedroom, goes to the sink. He pours some  
 water into a glass, drinks. He moves back through --

INT. LIVING ROOM

Blindly navigates through -- and BUMPS into Claire.

JON  
 Oh. Sorry.

INT. BEDROOM

Jon moves toward the bed. Claire, in bed, sits up.

JON  
 WHAT?! Were you out there?!

CLAIRE  
 When?

Jon darts to the lightswitch, turns it on. He grabs the  
 beside lamp, yanks the cord free, wields the lamp like a  
 weapon and moves into the --

INT. LIVING ROOM

And he turns on the lights. -- Normal. Nothing looks wrong.  
 Claire wanders in.

CLAIRE  
 Jon? What's going on?

He goes to the door, checks -- locked. Windows -- shut,  
 locked. Jon lowers the lamp, bewildered; rubs his temples.

INT. CLAIRE'S APT. - KITCHEN - MORNING

Claire pours two espressos from an elaborate SAMOVAR.

CLAIRE  
You bumped into someone?

JON  
Yeah.

CLAIRE  
And you didn't see who it was?

JON  
No.

Claire sets down a cup of espresso in front of Jon and then starts massaging his shoulders.

JON (cont'd)  
You can be sweet. It's not like you.

CLAIRE  
I know.

She sits at the table with him, sips from her own cup. Jon's eyes idly scan the table. He sees a LETTER on her desk with the LOGO of the magazine "THE NEW YORKER." He picks it up. Claire quickly snatches it away.

JON  
Are you going to get a job with "The New Yorker?"

CLAIRE  
In my wettest of dreams. It's a rejection letter.

JON  
They should hire you.

The look of affection between them momentarily embarrasses both of them. To break it, Claire picks up an L.A. WEEKLY and waves it at Jon.

CLAIRE  
I've been at this rag for ten years. My car is falling apart, I barely make rent -  
- and "I'm wearing a cardboard belt."

JON  
You would have gotten the job -- if they could hear you write a review.

Claire gives him a wry smile as she sips. PHONE RINGS. Claire lets the machine get it:

SHARKEY'S VOICE  
(from answering machine)  
Hey, it's Sharkey. You guys there?  
Someone broke into the theatre again last  
night.

EXT. SHOWART THEATRE - MORNING

Jon walks up and sees HUGE CHAINS on the door. He knocks.  
Sharkey unlocks a MASSIVE PADLOCK.

INT. LOBBY

Sharkey lets Jon inside.

JON  
Did you see who it was?

SHARKEY  
No.

JON  
But they didn't get the film, right?

SHARKEY  
They didn't get shit. Let 'em try.

Sharkey shows Jon a HANDGUN.

JON  
Shit! Where'd you get that?!

SHARKEY  
I got it.

Jon stares at him a beat with concern. Kirk enters, carrying  
a large cloth bag.

JON  
Hey, Kirk.

KIRK  
(does the "prosper" wave)  
Jon.

JON  
Listen, uh ... keep an eye on Sharkey,  
will you?

SHARKEY  
Funny, Jon.

KIRK  
(to Jon)  
Don't worry. I'm on it.

JON  
Thanks.

Kirk sets the bag down by Sharkey. Sharkey unzips it and lifts out a RIFLE. Jon reacts with irritated surprise. He looks into the bag -- glimpses of BOXES of BULLETS, HUNTING KNIVES, CAMOUFLAGED CLOTHES. Jon lets out a somber SIGH.

EXT. UCLA GRADUATE HOUSING AREA - DAY

Jon walks to one of the residential buildings.

EXT. UPPER LANDING - RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

Jon goes to a unit door, knocks. After a beat, he knocks again. Then, he tries the handle. It is unlocked. Jon opens the door.

JON  
Hello? It's Jon Gates. You translated  
the film for me?

Jon takes a tentative step inside. He reacts visibly to a foul odor. Then the door opens wider.

JON (cont'd)  
Hello?

Jon steps into --

INT. SUSAN'S APT.

Jon sees the place is a complete MESS -- and glimpses some BLOODY RAGS in the bathroom. A long beat.

Abruptly, from Jon's side, before he can see her, the German Grad Student, SUSAN, SCRATCHES Jon's face. Her eyes are WILD with rage. Her hair is matted and tangled. She's in a robe. She picks up and HURLS a THICK NOTEBOOK at him, which slams him in the gut.

SUSAN  
Get your sick shit out of here, you evil  
fuck!!

Jon spots the "Judas" VIDEO on the floor and quickly snatches it. He backs out of the doorway. Susan SLAMS it shut.

INT. CLAIRE'S APT. - AFTERNOON

Claire reads the notebook as Jon paces, rubbing a salve into the scratches on his face.

CLAIRE

It's basically just the story of Christ from Judas' point of view. Pretty bland dialogue.

JON

You should have seen her. She looked deranged. She attacked me.

CLAIRE

Just from doing this translation? I don't see how it could be that disturbing.

JON

The film did it to her. Not the dialogue, not the story.

CLAIRE

The imagery? It was graphic at times, but nothing a grown-up can't handle.

JON

No -- something else about the film.

CLAIRE

What is that supposed to mean, Jon?

JON

I think you and I know first hand how Max Castle's films can affect the viewer.

CLAIRE

Zipsky slipped us a drug -- or a mix of drugs.

JON

Maybe the film was the "drug."

CLAIRE

So, you think just watching "Queen of Venus" made us feel this way ... about each other?

JON

I don't know. I've had movies make me feel like I'm falling in love, but not actually cause it.

CLAIRE

So, which is it? Are we really falling  
in love -- or are we brainwashed?

JON

We're really falling in love.

She smiles at him. They put their arms around each other,  
kiss for a lingering moment. Then, they look into each  
other's eyes.

JON (CONT'D) (cont'd)

But maybe the film gave us a jumpstart.

Claire's expression turns seriously sour. She lights a  
cigarette, picks up the notebook and jams it into Jon's  
stomach.

CLAIRE

I have work to do.

Jon takes the notebook, giving her an irritated expression.  
He LEAVES.

INT. JON'S APT. - DUSK

Jon lies on his floor, watching his VIDEO copy of "Judas  
Jedermann" with the notebook open in front of him. ON TV  
SCREEN -- JUDAS walks up to a wooden door. He opens it and  
goes into a room in which CHRIST and the other DISCIPLES eat  
the LAST SUPPER.

-- LOUD, OBNOXIOUSLY-BAD SAXOPHONE PRACTICE -- from another  
TENANT'S APT. Jon grits his teeth and STABS an INK PEN into  
the notebook. He rises, goes to a window and SLAMS it shut  
so hard the GLASS sprouts a slight CRACK.

JON

Fucking asshole!

The SAXOPHONE STOPS. Jon returns to his position on the  
floor. He roughly snatches up the remote and VISUAL REWINDS  
the video. He hits PLAY and WE SEE -- ON TV SCREEN -- Judas  
walking down a stone corridor toward a wooden door.

Jon takes a deep breath and seems to relax. He flips ahead  
in the notebook, then flips back. He keeps watching.

ON TV SCREEN -- Judas opens the door and enters the room of  
the Last Supper. Jon's face FLUSHES RED.

JON (cont'd)

If that piece of shit starts playing that motherfucking sax again, I'll rip his --

Jon suddenly grabs the remote and hits STOP. The TV screen goes BLUE. Jon rubs his face. He turns to look toward the window. There still has been NO SOUND of the saxophone.

He turns his head back to look at the TV screen.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - NIGHT

Sharkey watches as Jon moves the film of "Judas" slowly by hand as he looks at each frame through a powerful OPTICAL VIEWER.

SHARKEY

Every time you got to this point in the film, you freaked?

JON

Out of my mind with rage.

SHARKEY

Fantastic, man! This is great shit!

JON

WHOA!

Jon FLINCHES back from whatever he saw. Then, he timidly puts his eye back on the optical viewer.

JON'S POV - THROUGH MAGNIFYING GLASS

FRAME -- MID SHOT -- Judas opening the wooden door. In the BLACK SHADOW cast on the door from Judas' body, is the HIDEOUS FACE of a HALF-HUMAN, HALF-ANIMAL DEMON wearing a METAL CROWN with an UPSIDE DOWN-CRUCIFIX. Sweat covers the face and the eyes glisten with wet fury. It is so vivid, so alive, that it almost seems as if the image is not a frame, but a MOTION PICTURE of an unmoving demon.

MOVE TO NEXT FRAME -- and the demon is still there; also NEXT frame and NEXT frame.

ON JON & ON SHARKEY

As Jon raises up from the magnifying glass.

JON

I just found one of Max Castle's subliminal images.

Sharkey looks through the glass.

SHARKEY  
SHIT! SHIT!  
(raises up)  
Did he use an optical printer?

JON  
When this was made? I don't see how.  
They didn't have optical printers that  
could do this.

SHARKEY  
Well, then how?

Sharkey moves the film more quickly under the viewer.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
Twelve frames -- a half a second. Wait.  
After another half second, the face is  
there again -- for another half second.  
And ... same thing again ... same thing  
again ... Total of six times.

Jon takes over with the viewer and continues the process of  
moving through the film.

CLOSE ON - SCRIPT PAGE

-- The TRANSLATION of "Judas Jedermann." WE SEE JON'S HAND  
SKETCHING, with a pencil, a DEMON'S FACE. Then, Jon draws  
LINES from the sketch to indicate the SECTION of the script  
where this subliminal image appears in the film. PHONE  
RINGS.

WIDE ANGLE - INT. JON'S APT. - NIGHT

Jon sets down the notebook and rises from the sofa. He picks  
up the phone.

JON  
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE - BUNDES ARCHIV - BERLIN - DAY (EUROPE TIME)

A very nervous YOUNG MAN, FRIEDRICH, who's VOICE we've heard,  
leans against a window sill, his face looking outside.

FRIEDRICH

Jon. Listen. There were some men in here this morning. They wanted to know if we had any Max Castle films.

JON

Who were they?

FRIEDRICH

I don't know. But one was bald, around 60, and a cataract in one eye. He was almost "too" pleasant.

JON

They didn't leave their names?

FRIEDRICH

No. But it is weird, is it not? No one has ever asked about Castle in the four years I have worked here.

JON

Did they say they were with any organization?

FRIEDRICH

No. But this is the big part -- they were interested in Castle's experimental films.

JON

What experimental films?

FRIEDRICH

Exactly. I told them there are no such films. -- But, do they know something we don't?

JON

Friedrich, can you try to find those men again? Find out who they are?

FRIEDRICH

I have no time for such things, Jon.

JON

They could be involved in Gordon's murder!

FRIEDRICH

I told you to leave town -- and there you are, still. Did you burn "Judas Jedermann?"

JON  
Uh, well, first, I --

FRIEDRICH  
Do it! And come over here. You'll be just in time for the festival.

JON  
Festival? Oh -- yeah.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. L.A. WEEKLY OFFICES - CLAIRE'S CUBICLE - LATER

Jon sits on Claire's desk; she's in her chair.

CLAIRE  
Berlin Film Festival? Out of the question. I'm senior critic here. My festival is Cannes.

JON  
What about your career-making article on Max Castle, the mysterious lost genius of German film?

CLAIRE  
You think I can take you with me? You know what kind of budget this place -- ?

JON  
We can squeeze into the same hotel room, can't we? And fly cheap? It'll be romantic, in a way.

CLAIRE  
And you want to run around Berlin, trying to find members of this cult?

JON  
Exactly.

A COLLEAGUE walks up to her desk and drops an L.A. TIMES on her desk, folded to a specific page.

ON NEWSPAPER

An OBITUARY -- "ARNOLD ZIPSKY."

INT. CLAIR'S PEUGOT - MOVING - DAY

As Claire drives, scowling in distracted suspicion, Jon pores over the obit.

JON

"Freak accident on his staircase?"  
Doesn't anyone know he was confined to a  
wheelchair?

CLAIRE

That's why they called it an "accident"  
and labeled it "freak."

EXT. ZIPSKY'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire pulls her Peugeot over to the curb, stops. She and Jon stare at the house. Curtains drawn; no lights on.

EXT. BACK OF ZIPSKY'S HOUSE

Jon and Claire, both checking for witnesses, stand by a BACK DOOR as Jon tries it -- locked. Claire tries to look through the WINDOW in the door. Jon takes off his shoe. He hesitates, then BANGS the HEEL against the bottom corner of the window. The WINDOW SHATTERS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - ZIPSKY'S HOUSE

Jon and Claire enter to see that it has been RANSACKED. They stare at the sight for a beat, then Jon steps across the mess and into --

THE SCREENING ROOM

-- Which has been RANSACKED WORSE. Canisters of film lie open all over the place. Claire enters as Jon looks over the labels on the canisters.

JON

Just a collection of classic films. And  
I'll bet his footage from "Queen of  
Venus" is gone.

SOUND of KEY in LOCK; DOOR OPENING. Jon and Claire, in a panic, move as quietly and rapidly as they can through an open door to --

WALK-IN STORAGE CLOSET

Where they wait and listen.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, my God ...

Sound of FOOTFALL through the living room mess. Then, closer -- from the screening room. Jon peeks around the side of the closet doorway.

## JON'S POV - SCREENING ROOM

The OLD WOMAN -- the one who Zipsky lied about knowing -- who helped him into his car at the ShowArt -- looks around with an expression of both fear and grief. Beyond her, on the WALL, is a PUBLICITY PHOTO of the young OLGA TELL. It's immediately CLEAR that this woman is one and the same.

## STORAGE CLOSET

Jon pulls back and turns to Claire, speechless, getting hit with a revelation. SOUND of the woman WALKING through the living room again.

JON  
(quiet whisper)  
I just realized who that woman is. It's  
Olga Tell.

## EXT. ZIPSKY'S HOUSE - FRONT

The Old Woman leaves, locking the door. She hobbles away from the house to her CAR.

SMASH CUT TO:

## INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - MOVING - LATER

Claire tails the Old Woman's car -- which is the SAME CAR that Zipsky got into when he left the ShowArt.

CLAIRE  
If you're right about this, then ... She  
faked her death in 1953.

Jon just stares at the car ahead of them.

## EXT. SILVERLAKE NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Old houses in a hilly area with CITY VIEWS. "Maria" pulls her car into the drive beside an old TWO-STORY 1930's SPANISH STYLE HOUSE. She parks and goes inside.

Jon pulls up by the curb; parks. He and Claire go to the front door. Jon rings the bell.

MARIA'S VOICE  
(from inside)  
Who is it?

JON  
We're friends of Arnold Zipsky. Can we  
talk to you for a minute?

MARIA'S VOICE  
LEAVE ME ALONE! GO AWAY!

JON  
Uh, I didn't mean to make you angry. But ... My friend was killed -- and you know Zipsky was, you know ... killed.

MARIA  
GET OUT OF HERE!

Jon, stymied and growing angry, looks at Claire; then, turns back toward the door. Jon's voice clearly can be HEARD up and down the street:

JON  
WE KNOW YOU'RE OLGA TELL!! YOU'RE OLGA TELL!!

The door opens. Maria angrily waves them inside.

INT. FOYER

Maria slams the door shut, then stands between them and the rest of her house.

MARIA  
You get this straight! I was a friend of Olga Tell! I was at her funeral. And, tonight, I was at the wake of another friend! How dare you attack a poor old grief-stricken woman when -- ?!

JON  
Did you know Max Castle?

MARIA  
That's none of your business!

CLAIRE  
So -- you did know him.

JON  
I have a print of "Judas Jedermann."

Maria seems to become more and more frightened.

MARIA  
Then, you are a fool!

CLAIRE  
Why? Are we in danger?

JON  
And from whom? Zipsky told us about the cult.

CLAIRE  
He confided in us. You can, too.

MARIA  
I know nothing about it.

JON  
We even have a print of one of Max's experimental films.

Claire is surprised to hear Jon lie; but stays silent -- as she watches Maria get pale.

MARIA  
There is only one.

Maria reacts, surprised by her mistake of admitting this.

JON  
Then, it must be the one I have.

MARIA  
And have you watched it?

JON  
Yes.

MARIA  
Liar!

JON  
Why am I a liar?

MARIA  
Now, I know you're a liar!

JON  
Tell me why I'm a liar.

MARIA  
Because if you watched it, you'd be dead!

JON  
You mean someone would kill me? Or that the film would kill me?

MARIA  
You both have only lied to me and tried to trick me! Now, GO!

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - MOVING - LATER

Claire drives slowly, trying to absorb what just happened.

JON

A film ... that can kill you when you watch it.

CLAIRE

I've seen some that have come close to killing me.

JON

Seriously -- it's possible -- given what we know Max could do with subliminals. And those men who are looking for it -- they must have a good reason, right?

CLAIRE

Maybe you'll find out. I'm going to Berlin. Want to come with me?

Jon gives Claire a surprised smile. Clair smiles back.

OVER SOUND OF AIRPLANE,  
CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. CITY SCAPE - NIGHT

Some drab, 60's "modern" buildings, some new buildings in "classic" designs. TITLE OVER: "BERLIN."

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A tiny room in a very economical hotel. Jon stands by the window, looking out at the city. Claire, with a phone cradled between her neck and shoulders, hands Jon a martini. He takes it. She has one, as well. They drink.

CLAIRE

(into phone; with some GERMAN)  
I have some dresses that need pressing.  
Danke.

Claire hangs up.

JON

You act like you're used to being in Europe.

CLAIRE

I wish. But it's gauche to waddle around with slack-jaw and bovine eyes. Comport yourself like a traveller, not a tourist.

She playfully blows smoke just past his face.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

With a sign: "BUNDES ARCHIV." Jon walks up the steps to the entrance.

INT. OFFICE - BUNDES ARCHIV

Jon sits opposite a formal, business-like WOMAN ARCHIVIST.

ARCHIVIST

Friedrich has not told you? That is no surprise. He left for a "long vacation," he said. Gave no notice. And your policeman keeps calling here. No one remembers speaking on the phone to your friend Professor Rittenauer on that day.

JON

His phone records have a fifteen minute call to this place at that specific time.

This causes a spark of irritation in the Archivist, who simply stares at Jon.

JON (cont'd)

Who would murder to get "Judas Jedermann?"

ARCHIVIST

That question is nonsense to me. Good day.

JON

Can you give me Friedrich's home address?

EXT. APT. BUILDING - BERLIN - DAY

An old building. Jon walks through the main entrance.

INT. HALLWAY - APT. BUILDING

Jon walks toward an apartment door. On the shadowy wall, behind him -- A FLASH of a DEMON'S FACE. Jon knocks on the door; a beat; knocks again.

JON

Friedrich?! Are you there?! It's Jon!

Jon's pounding causes the door to POP OPEN. Jon sees that the knob and strike plate have been DAMAGED.

INT. FRIEDRICH'S APT. - LIVING ROOM

The entire place has been RANSACKED. A "post-cyclone" type mess. Jon walks further inside, stepping on various items by accident.

JON  
Friedrich, are you here?

Jon walks into the --

BEDROOM

Ransacked; overturned dresser; papers and objects all over the floor. He returns to the --

LIVING ROOM

-- Catching a view of the trashed KITCHEN as he moves. He stops in the middle of the room, peers all around at the devastation. He catches sight of an ICE CUBE on the floor, melting, at the foot of the SOFA. He kneels down.

JON'S POV - MOVING DOWN TO BELOW SOFA

FRIEDRICH'S FACE peers back at Jon from under the sofa -- hand gripping a LONG KNIFE.

LIVING ROOM - LOW ANGLE ON JON & FRIEDRICH

Jon JERKS away from the sofa in terrified shock. He struggles to get composure.

JON (cont'd)  
Friedrich, what the hell?! What did they do to you?! Did you see them?!

When Friedrich speaks, he reveals some kind of PALSY in his FACE and NECK. His speech is THICKENED by an overage of SALIVA. He seems to be FRIGHTENED to the point of INSANITY.

FRIEDRICH  
I saw ... no one. If they come back, I give them this scrap of film ... tell them it is whatever they look for ...

JON  
Let me help you out of there.

Jon reaches in and tries to take one of Friedrich's wrists. Friedrich STABS at Jon's hand, barely MISSING. Jon yanks back hand.

JON (cont'd)

HEYYYY!!!

FRIEDRICH

Get out of here, Jon! You brought all  
this trouble! Get out of here! GET OUT  
OF HERE OR I'LL KILL YOU!

Jon shoots to his feet and FLEES the apartment.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jon sits on the bed, pale, stiff, drinking wine. Sound of  
SHOWER from the BATHROOM.

CLAIRE'S VOICE

He was scared?

JON

He was insane with fear, Claire.

CLAIRE'S VOICE

Did he say anything about who he was  
afraid of?

JON

No.

Shower stops. Claire appears in the bathroom doorway, drying  
with a towel. Seeing Jon's emotional state, she wraps the  
towel around herself and sits next to him. She rubs his  
shoulders.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, Jon. What should we do?

JON

I don't know.

A KNOCK on the door. Jon and Claire both rise to get it.  
Jon gets to the door first, whips it open to see Mathers.

JON (CONT'D) (cont'd)

What the hell are you doing in Berlin?

MATHERS

I've been coming to the Berlin festival  
for years.

(toward bathroom)

Claire, the screening is at seven.

Mathers EXITS. Jon turns to look at the bathroom door; gulps  
down his drink.

INT. BERLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY - DUSK

PERIODICAL SECTION. Jon looks at a MICROFILM of a NEWSPAPER on a viewer. He spots "MAX KASSEL." He scans the German words; refers to a German/English dictionary. He writes down on his pad: "ROSENSWEIG. PARIS. TRIPLE MURDER."

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. BIBLICAL DESERT VILLAGE - DAY [BLACK & WHITE]

PEOPLE IN BIBLICAL ATTIRE SPEAKING IN GERMAN -- MEN AND WOMEN, TEENAGE BOYS AND GIRLS, OLD MEN AND WOMEN, IN THE STREET -- ALL REPEATEDLY STABBING EACH OTHER in DEMONIC RAGE.

MOVE IN ON -- BACK OF ROBED FIGURE, who's LIFTING A KNIFE.

PAN DOWN TO -- REFLECTION OF ROBED FIGURE'S FACE -- as he STABS PEOPLE AROUND HIM -- IT'S JON.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Jon SCREAMS himself awake, DRENCHED IN SWEAT. He looks around -- he's ALONE. He looks at the DIGITAL CLOCK -- 3:15 A.M.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Jon awakens, groggily turns to the clock -- 6:17 A.M. He rolls over and sees Claire, wrapped in the blanket, only a tuft of hair visible. Jon shakes her. She doesn't wake. He rolls her toward him.

-- It's a DEAD FEMALE CHARACTER from "Judas Jedermann" -- in BLACK & WHITE, though the blanket is in real color. Her THROAT is SLIT, oozing BLACK BLOOD. Her dead eyes loll towards Jon and seem to FOCUS on him.

Jon HURLS HIMSELF BACKWARDS off the bed, SCREAMING, and THUDS on the floor. He scoots back from the bed until his back hits a wall. He slowly rises up to see --

CLAIRE, in bed, propped up on one arm, looking at him with startled apprehension.

CLAIRE

What happened? Did you have a nightmare?

JON

A "day-mare" -- just now. After I was awake.

CLAIRE  
 You're stressing your nerves all to hell,  
 Jon. You've got to ease up on all this  
 conspiracy crap.

Jon rises. He pours himself a vodka. Shoots it. He stares  
 at her, then glances at the clock.

JON  
 What time did you get back in last night?

CLAIRE  
 The after-party went late.

JON  
 Where's Colby Mathers?

CLAIRE  
 He's on a plane back to New York.

Jon stares at her a beat, angrily puzzled. He gets up,  
 starts dressing.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
 Where are you going?

JON  
 Paris.

CLAIRE  
 Paris?

Jon holds up the photo copy of an ARTICLE --

JON  
 A man in Paris, named "Rosensweig, killed  
 three men in a theatre in 1943. At two  
 in the morning. Rosensweig said, during  
 his trial, that Max Castle showed a film.

CLAIRE  
 You're going to try to get information  
 from a murderer? Do you know what prison  
 he's in?

JON  
 There's only one that has a section for  
 the criminally insane.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PARIS, FRANCE - DAY

Jon steps off a train. He attempts to read the FRENCH signs,  
 pulling out a French/English dictionary.

EXT. DESOLATE TRAIN STOP - LATER - DAY

Jon gets off the train, looks at the area surrounding him -- the OUTSKIRTS of town. DEAFENING TRAIN WHISTLE. Jon slaps his hands over his ears; looks around. NO TRAIN anywhere.

EXT. FRENCH PRISON - VISITOR RECEPTION - MORNING

Jon, using the dictionary, stands at a counter, facing a UNIFORMED GUARD.

JON  
... Nom est ... "Guillaume Rosensweig."

The Guard speaks quickly in FRENCH; Jon can't comprehend it. But the Guard slides over a REGISTER for Jon to sign.

INT. VISITATION ROOM

Jon sits on one side of a table. Two GUARDS bring in a 90-something OLD MAN - ROSENSWEIG - with short-cropped hair.

GUARD #1  
He does not talk, but if you like, I can interpret.

JON  
Thank you.  
(to Rosensweig)  
I want to ask you about the night that the men died. In the theatre. And Max Castle.

Guard #1 translates in FRENCH. Rosensweig stares at Jon curiously. Beat. No reply.

JON (cont'd)  
Castle took four of you inside the theatre. He showed a film. Right?

Guard #1 translates. No answer.

JON (cont'd)  
Was the film "Judas Jedermann?" About Judas and Christ?

Guard #1 translates. A beat, then:

ROSENSWEIG  
"Persienne."

JON  
What?

GUARD #1  
He said "blind."

JON  
Blind?

Jon pores over his copy of the article.

JON (cont'd)  
Who was blind?

Guard #1 translates. A beat, then:

ROSENSWEIG  
Noir.

GUARD #1  
"Black."

JON  
(to Guard #1)  
Yeah, I know that word.

Rosensweig shows Jon a SCAR on his throat.

JON (cont'd)  
(to Rosensweig)  
Was it "film noir?" What did you see on  
the screen?

Guard #1 translates. No answer.

JON (cont'd)  
(re: the article)  
You said it was two in the morning. You  
were arrested at 2:15. So, you did not  
see the whole film, right?

Guard #1 translates. Rosensweig BURSTS into LAUGHTER. Jon  
watches him, waiting.

ROSENSWEIG  
J'ai vu le film entier.

GUARD #1  
"I saw the whole film."

JON  
Please ... Monsieur Rosensweig. People  
are still being killed.  
(MORE)

JON (cont'd)  
Including a very good friend of mine. If  
you have any idea who or why, could you  
tell me?

A beat as Guard #1 translates. Rosensweig looks away,  
staring somberly at the wall.

ROSENSWEIG  
Les Orphelins de l'Orage.

GUARD #1  
"The Orphans of the Storm."

JON  
Is that the cult -- the one Max Castle  
was in?

Guard #1 translates. Rosensweig leaps up and manages to grab  
a pen from Jon's notebook. He STABS at his OWN THROAT,  
causing minor wounds. The Guards easily restrain the old  
man. Guard #1 nods to Jon that it's time to leave. As Jon  
starts out of the cell, Rosensweig SPEAKS ENGLISH:

ROSENSWEIG  
THE FILM WILL KILL EVERYBODY!!!

He starts a COUGHING FIT that will not stop. Jon stares at  
him; so do the guards. They lock the cell; escort Jon away.

EXT. DESOLATE TRAIN STOP - LATER

Jon, alone, waits for the train. He's dazed, pacing a  
little, mulling over his experience.

He hears SOMETHING. He looks around. Looks in all  
directions carefully. Nothing. No one.

SCREEN GOES TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Jon WAKES UP, lying across the RAILS. Sound of TRAIN, CLOSE.  
Jon's eyes WIDEN.

He sluggishly kicks and jerks his body off the tracks -- just  
as -- A TRAIN BLOWS BY AT TOP SPEED. Another second, and he  
would've been cut in half.

He reflexively keeps rolling, rolling. He stops, panting in  
terror. He struggles to get to his feet. Rubs his temples.

Sniffs; sniffs again. He rubs his face -- just under the nose, then smells his hand.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jon lies on the bed. Claire sits by him, caressing him.

CLAIRE

You didn't see anyone near you at the train station?

JON

No.

CLAIRE

Well, what did you find out from the insane man?

JON

Rosensweig said he watched the whole film by Max Castle. Inside the space of fifteen minutes. Must've been Castle's lost experimental film.

CLAIRE

And why the murders?

JON

I don't know -- but he was stabbed, too.

CLAIRE

So, the other men fought back.

JON

He said "the film will kill everybody."

CLAIRE

What's the name of the film?

JON

He didn't say. But he did know the name of the cult -- "Orphans of the Storm."

CLAIRE

(chuckling)

Could it be a bit more melodramatic?

JON

I need you to do me a favor. You know the festival director, right? Put out the announcement that Friedrich Heller from Bundes Archiv is going to give a talk about the lost films of Max Castle.

CLAIRE

Your friend, Friedrich? How is he in condition to give a talk?

JON

He's not. When the event has an audience waiting, they'll be told it's canceled. Meanwhile, I'll be scanning the audience for anyone suspicious.

CLAIRE

Forget it. Not going to happen.

Jon moves to her; from behind, puts his arms around her; slides them around her body.

JON

Do you remember how it felt when I discovered that odd angle we used, having sex in Zipsky's bathroom?

CLAIRE

Is that what happened? ... You shifted, I think, and ... it really worked.

JON

You want another dose of that?

CLAIRE

You're saying, if I arrange the fake event ... ?

JON

-- I'll arrange real orgasms.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Jon and Claire, in bed, having ROWDY SEX. Claire is almost DYING from ORGASMS.

CLAIRE

(hoarse with passion:)

You have to see Pabst's influence on Castle! According to Rotha, Pabst was exceptionally interesting in his use of reverse shots and camera mobility!

JON

Yeah ... that's actually true ...

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

A small AUDIENCE sits, waiting. A geeky FESTIVAL WORKER timidly crosses the stage to the mic.

FESTIVAL WORKER

Uhh, ladies and gentlemen, our apologies.  
The speaker was not able to make it.

GRUMBLING from the audience as they all rise at various speeds and begin to leave.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE AUDITORIUM

The disappointed crowd files out of the door. Jon stands off in a corner, scrutinizing every face. After a beat of this --

-- A MAN catches Jon's interest. He is bald, 60's. To get a closer look, Jon strolls across the floor, cutting through the line of departing people. He BUMPS into the Man, dropping his festival PROGRAM.

JON

Oh ... excuse me.

The Man picks up the program and hands it to Jon. -- The Man has a cataract in one eye. The Man [DOCTOR BYX] heads outside.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Dr. Byx gets into a TAXICAB. It pulls away.

INT. TAXICAB - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Jon rides in the back, staring through the front window at the taxicab ahead of them.

EXT. CONVERTED HOUSE - LATER - DAY

A 60's "modern" Berlin residence, now a place of business with a SIGN above the door. Dr. Byx goes through the door. A beat later, Jon walks up to the doorstep.

CLOSE ON - DOORSTEP AREA

From here, Jon can read the sign: "WAISEN VOM STURM." He yanks out his German/English dictionary.

JON

"Sturm" is "storm," so this has to be ...  
(finds it)  
"Waisen" -- "orphans."

Jon looks at the door, hesitating. After a beat, he goes inside.

INT. LOBBY AREA

"Modern" 60's era furnishings. Jon looks around. A door opens, and a PLEASANT YOUNG WOMAN in a light BLUE DRESS emerges from a modern-looking, bright OFFICE.

BLUE DRESS  
Guten tag.

JON  
Uh, spreken zee, uh, English?

Jon is flipping through his German/English dictionary. Blue Dress frowns.

BLUE DRESS  
Englisch? Nein. Wer sind sie?

JON  
Do you have anything I can read about  
Waisens Vom Sturm? "Buchs?"

Blue Dress goes back into the office.

BLUE DRESS (O.S.)  
Doktor Byx?

Dr. Byx emerges from the office with Blue Dress behind him. He looks at Jon, probably recognizing him. He smiles solicitously.

DR. BYX  
May I help you, son?

JON  
Uh, hello. "Dr. Byx?" I'm Jon Gates.  
I'm doing research on the filmmaker Max  
Castle, who was a member of your ... your  
... group.

DR. BYX  
He was? When?

JON  
You don't know the name "Max Castle?"

DR. BYX  
Should I?

JON

Maybe you could just explain what the Orphans of the Storm is about ... or, uh, what they ... you ... do.

DR. BYX

You may go and sit in our meditation room, if you like.

Jon isn't sure whether to say yes or no to this. Byx pleasantly opens a door to an AUDITORIUM. Jon gives a slight smile and a nod. He walks through to doorway. Byx lets the door swing shut.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Jon walks right into the spotlight, so to speak. The AUDIENCE is FACING HIM. Some of them glance at him, but most have their eyes locked on something ABOVE and BEHIND him, from which LIGHT comes.

Jon steps forward and to the side, turning to see the SCREEN, which plays a blown-up VIDEO of BYX'S FACE, talking directly to camera. He speaks in GERMAN with a big smile and eyes that are opened a bit too wide -- an expression of something closer to mania than enthusiasm.

The only AISLE through the seats is CENTER, so Jon has to lope up past the faces of the viewers. Only the front third of the seats are filled, with gaps. There's a group of GRADE SCHOOL KIDS, all in school UNIFORMS, watching with good behavior -- paying attention; not moving. Scattered around are HOMELESS-LOOKING PEOPLE -- some very FILTHY.

The rest are MEN and WOMEN between age 20 and age 50 who are each uniquely, yet subtly STRANGE. One man is DROOLING slightly; one woman an UNEVEN HAIRCUT; one man is dressed in 1900's CLOTHES; one woman EATS something that looks FURRY; one man has an OXYGEN TANK and a BREATHING MASK that covers the WHOLE FACE.

Jon moves past several rows behind any seated people, to isolate himself. He moves into a row and takes the fourth seat from the aisle. As he watches Byx on SCREEN, he pulls out his notebook. He begins to jot down a few words here and there, spelling them by guesswork.

Then -- silence from the video. Jon steps to a position to see the screen. Byx's face still fills the frame, having the same expression, but he DOESN'T SPEAK. He simply continues to stare into camera, as if he were staring at the audience. The audience accepts this as normal. People begin to smile up at Byx.

INT. LOBBY - ORPHANS HQ - LATER

Jon emerges from the auditorium. He goes to the door of the office. It's closed and locked. He scans the lobby, picking up reading material. There's nothing about the Orphans.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - 60'S ERA "MODERN"

Jon approaches the entrance, which has a FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SEAL above the door.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Jon speaks with a GOATEED CLERK.

JON  
... old records about religious cults.  
From about 1920 to 1930.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM

Metal shelving units with old boxes containing extremely old documents. Several boxes are on the floor. Jon and Goateed Clerk are kneeling by them. Goateed Clerk studies the documents inside a dusty folder that has a SWASTIKA.

JON  
Aren't we looking for something before  
the Nazi's were in power?

GOATEED CLERK  
The Nazis subsumed old records into their  
own. And they were very interested in  
spiritual cults. Here ... See? Quite a  
list.

JON  
Oh, yeah. Now, we're talking.

GOATEED CLERK  
And you see that seal? It refers to the  
older Weimar records, which are at the  
back of the folder.

JON  
Jesus, how many religious cults could  
there be?

GOATEED CLERK  
What was the name of the one you're  
looking for?

JON  
 "Orphans of the -- "

GOATEED CLERK  
 (interrupting; flipping pages)  
 "Waisen Vom Sturm." Here. And it  
 indexes more documents ...

The Goateed Clerk digs through the box, pulls up another folder, spreads it open on the floor; digs through it.

GOATEED CLERK (cont'd)  
 Here. Dated 1923. A list of all the  
 known members.

The Clerk hands the list to Jon. Jon's eyes whip down the names.

JON  
 Oh, my God.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - LATER - DAY

Jon is rapidly packing his suitcase. Claire paces, smoking, deeply irritated, looking at a PHOTOCOPY of the 1923 MEMBERS LIST of "Orphans."

CLAIRE  
 "Maximilian Kassel."

JON  
 And did you see "Robert Weine?" That's  
 two film directors in the cult.

CLAIRE  
 (looks down list)  
 Weine. Hm. Are you suggesting that "The  
 Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" is supposed to  
 make the viewer sleepwalk and kill  
 people?

JON  
 Wait a minute -- that's the film Gordon  
 was watching when they killed him! Maybe  
 he found out a connection between  
 Caligari and Judas Jedermann. -- When he  
 talked to somebody at Bundes Archiv that  
 night.

CLAIRE  
 Will you stop saying somebody killed him?  
 We don't know that. And you can't go!  
 I'm still here for two days!

JON  
My schedule has changed.

CLAIRE  
You have to go find the "truth" about the big, evil conspiracy in film history?!

JON  
If you don't believe it, fine. Why do you have to be a fucking bitch about it?!

CLAIRE  
Because you're being a complete idiot! Subliminal images have been proven to be ineffective by scientists -- over and over and over again!  
(quieter)  
And because I don't like the thought that I've spent my life watching and studying and writing about films for no reason, Jon. And I don't want to think that how I feel about you is just brainwashing.

Claire's vulnerable expression reveals her affection. Jon goes to her; tries to kiss her. She pulls back and blows smoke in his face -- her emotional guard up again.

JON  
I'll see you back in L.A.

CLAIRE  
Don't count on it.

SOUND OF JET PLANE AS WE --

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. JON'S APT. - DAY

Jon enters with his suitcase, bending to pick up a MAILED PACKAGE. Jon looks at it curiously, walks to the table, lays down the package.

ON PACKAGE

The RETURN ADDRESS is all in FRENCH, but we recognize the name "ROSENSWEIG."

ON JON

-- His attention now tweaked on full alert. He opens the package. Inside is a dirty SHIRT, covering something.

Jon reacts with disgust and pulls away the shirt, letting it fall. A FILM CANNISTER is now before him. He lifts it out of the box. It has no label. He pries open the top.

ON CANNISTER

The REEL inside has a SHORT amount of FOOTAGE, perhaps FIVE minutes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - PROJECTION BOOTH - DAY

Sharkey starts the projector. He and Jon watch through portals.

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - HOUSE

The SCREEN shows SCRATCHED CLEAR FILM for a beat, then, it is BLACK & WHITE FOOTAGE -- from "JUDAS JEDERMANN" -- but with no synced sound. JUDAS walks to a door, throwing a shadow over it. He turns the knob. The JUDAS ACTOR STOPS abruptly, DROPPING CHARACTER, turning to look at someone BEHIND the CAMERA.

JON (O.S.)

Holy shit. This is an outtake.

Suddenly, SOMETHING HAPPENS with the LENS -- and a MIRROR gets MOVED to the side. The camera PANS to the LEFT --

-- CENTERING ON -- a SEATED ACTOR is IN VIEW. His face sweats. He wears a METAL CROWN with an UPSIDE-DOWN CRUCIFIX.

A GROUP of MEN in ROBES with OCCULT SYMBOLS walk INTO FRAME, gathering around the Seated Actor. One of them unrolls a SCROLL and somberly READS from it. In intervals, the other men seem to REPEAT a phrase.

The Seated Actor appears to GO INTO A TRANCE. His head lowers at first, then it RAISES -- and his expression is one of SHEER EVIL.

Again, something happens to the LENS, a FLASH of a MIRROR being swung into place -- and the camera begins to PAN back to its original position, when -- The film RUNS OUT.

PROJECTION BOOTH

Jon and Sharkey, open-mouthed, just keep staring through the portals at the theatre screen.

JON (cont'd)  
 Sharkey ... that man in the chair -- that  
 crown on his head ...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - LATER - NIGHT

Jon leans over the print of "Judas Jedermann," looking at ONE  
 FRAME through an OPTICAL VIEWER.

JON'S POV - FILM FRAME

Same frame as seen earlier -- JUDAS is reaching for the  
 doorknob, casting a shadow over the door. Inside the shadow  
 is the DEMON'S HEAD -- with the same CROWN on his head.

ON BASEMENT

Jon pulls back, straightens, stares at Sharkey. Sharkey  
 eagerly guides Jon out of the way and takes a look for  
 himself. Then, he raises up and stares at Jon.

SHARKEY  
 The guy in the chair was the demon.  
 Shit, Jon, the subliminals in the film  
 were ...

JON  
 -- Were created on set during shooting.  
 No optical printer. Did you notice the  
 ritual they were doing over him? What  
 happened to him? He seemed to be like a  
 medium at a seance, being taken over by a  
 demon personality.

SHARKEY  
 Yeah. It was creepy. But, why didn't  
 the guy have the make-up on? They were  
 about to roll film on the scene again.

JON  
 What if there was no make-up?

SHARKEY  
 What do you mean? You mean ... the actor  
 channelled a demon, and the film could  
 record what the demon looked like?

JON  
 Maybe I'm taking this mystical aspect too  
 far.

Sharkey pulls a PINT WHISKEY BOTTLE out of his jacket and GUZZLES all of it in one gulp. Then, he lights a JOINT. As he takes a long toke, his hand holding the lighter shifts the lighter down and shifts a small POUCH to the top. He shakes COCAINE out of the pouch onto his forearm and SNORTS it.

INT. UCLA GRADUATE RESEARCH LIBRARY - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS --

-- Jon running an internet LEXIS-NEXIS search on a COMPUTER.  
 -- Jon PRINTING RESULTS.  
 -- Jon whipping through REFERENCE BOOKS.  
 -- Jon PHOTOCOPYING PAGES.

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - LOBBY - LATER

Sharkey, in combat fatigues, now with a holster around his waist with a handgun -- and wearing a MILITARY BANDANA -- opens the door for Jon, who carries a thick FOLDER of his new research. Sound of a SLASHER FILM in the theatre. Kirk, also on combat gear, is behind the concession counter. Both Sharkey and Kirk have BLOODSHOT EYES that struggle to focus.

JON

What's the matter with you? What are you on, Sharkey?

SHARKEY

Acid. Welcome to the beginning of my "Death Schemata" at the ShowArt.

Jon gently holds Sharkey, keeping him from falling.

JON

Are you giving people tabs of acid?

SHARKEY

Only if they ask.

Jon takes Sharkey by the elbow, leads him toward the office.

INT. SHARKEY'S OFFICE

Sharkey slumps in his desk chair. Jon sits in a chair nearby.

JON

What were you thinking, Sharkey?

Sharkey starts WEEPING. Jon reaches over and squeezes Sharkey's shoulder.

SHARKEY

You shoulda been here for the unauthorized pre-preview of "Repo Man." Shit, what a party. Everyone came up from the lobby to my apartment, then we went on the roof. Harry Dean played music. The ShowArt used to be on the map of cool.

JON

Sharkey, being a happening spot comes and goes in cycles. You stay in the black. You keep it going.

SHARKEY

Yeah, you're right. I just have to be patient. On the 18th, when I show "Judas Jedermann," it's going to be the big event that brings back my good cycle, isn't it, Jon?

Jon averts his gaze, not wanting to answer. He picks up his thick folder.

JON

I got to tell you about all the stuff I found out about the Orphans.

INT. SHARKEY'S APT. - ABOVE THEATRE - LATER - NIGHT

Jon and Sharkey sit on the sofa with all Jon's RESEARCH spread out over the coffee table. He READS ALOUD as he goes.

JON

"Robert W. Paul, in London, was projecting motion pictures onto a screen in 1895." -- That's the same time as the Lumiere brothers. "He created a projector that holds each frame for a beat that's longer than the blackness between frames. Thus, he was the first to reduce the 'flicker' so that it was less noticeable by the viewer." -- Meaning the viewer's conscious mind.

SHARKEY

What's his connection?

JON

He was a Spiritualist and an associate of Robert Weine. Which means he was in this same death cult -- but in a branch in England.

SHARKEY

Weine? The guy who did "Caligari?" This is freaky shit, man.

At the window to the OUTSIDE DOOR, KIRK'S FACE moves into view. He stares through the glass at them, able to eavesdrop.

JON

(reading)

"Emil Mechau, in Germany, is considered the inventor of the first motion picture projector as we know it today. He projected silent movies without any 'flicker' visible to the eye." So, he finished what Robert Paul started -- and made the 'flicker' completely invisible.

SHARKEY

And he was in this ... ?

JON

Yes -- the same cult as Weine and Max Castle. And here, look at my diagram. I've connected names of people who associated with each other. In Germany, Max Castle worked with Abel Karsky on changes in the motion picture camera. Then, Abel Karsky and John Belson, a Brit, made improvements to the projector. Now, John Belson worked with Eric Harriman, an American, on changes to the camera. And just follow these connections all the way to ...

SHARKEY

All these guys -- in television, too? Shit, Jon, these last few names are within the last ten years.

JON

And the most recent names ...

(flips through pages)

... are in a cult identified as being the "Orphans of the Storm."

SHARKEY

My God.

JON

I have no other explanation than -- some Spiritualists formed their own cult right before motion pictures were invented.

(MORE)

JON (cont'd)

The cult grabbed onto the invention and formed it, shaped it to do what they want it to do.

SHARKEY

Which is what?

JON

I don't know.

Jon and Sharkey stare at each other. They don't see Kirk's face in the window -- somber -- then, pulling OUT OF VIEW.

INT. JON'S APT. - DAY

Jon is almost BURIED under PAPERS and OPEN BOOKS on the living room floor. His eyes are bloodshot. He reads.

Now, the content of his copied articles are about VIOLENCE at FILM THEATRES (regardless of which film) -- fist fights, brawls, riots and shootings -- articles from the past, up to the present.

KNOCK. Jon gets up, opens the door. It's Claire. She smiles at him, steps inside, presses herself against him and kisses him.

CLAIRE

I missed you.

JON

I thought you were mad at me.

She looks at the mess, then looks at Jon's face, his eyes. She runs her hand through his hair.

CLAIRE

Looks like I got here just in time.

Jon holds up articles about riots at theatres.

JON

Want to see what the Orphans have been up to since they lost Max Castle? -- For the last 60 years, they've been trying to replicate what he was able to do. They've been experimenting on specific prints of major studio releases in one city or another. Look -- fights, riots, murders -- always assumed to be random violence.

Claire has a non-expression. She looks at the articles, then looks at other papers, going through everything. Jon paces, watching her. Finally, Claire looks up at him, dubious. She lifts up a COLORFUL PRINT of a GOOFY WEB PAGE --

CLAIRE

How scholarly. "Serioso's Conspiracy Club."

(reads)

"The 'Orphans of the Storm' is a cult started by Spiritualists in the late 1800's. In addition to the basic spiritualistic belief that human spirits live after death on an alternate plane of reality, the Orphans believe that spirits inside still-living humans are trapped. Spirits must get free of their earthly bodies and cross over to the other side. By coincidence or with purpose, they had prominent members who were early pioneers in the technology of motion pictures. Rumors persist that the cult continues to thrive all over the earth." More like "all over the internet."

Claire goes to him, rubs his shoulders. She grins at him patronizingly.

CLAIRE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Jon, I know you've been through a lot ...

Jon pulls away from her touch.

JON

Don't act like I'm a mental patient.

CLAIRE

Why should I? You're doing a good enough job by yourself.

She runs her fingers through his hair. Jon SLAPS her hand away.

JON

I didn't get into this relationship just to have you be a condescending bitch all the time!

CLAIRE

(mischievously sexy)

Neither did I.

Claire abruptly pushes Jon down onto the sofa. She starts taking off his clothes. He can't help becoming aroused. He starts taking off his clothes.

INT. JON'S APT. - LATER

Claire, only wearing her shirt, gets two beers from Jon's fridge. She opens them, gives one to Jon.

CLAIRE  
I have a big shocker for you.

JON  
What?

CLAIRE  
I've been inside.

JON  
Inside what?

CLAIRE  
The center of all evil in the universe.  
The "Orphans of the Storm" headquarters  
in Berlin.

JON  
Very funny. Did you go into the  
meditation room?

CLAIRE  
I saw it. Weird, I agree. Anyway,  
they'd heard of me, from my critical  
reputation. I asked someone about their  
involvement with film.

JON  
Dr. Byx? He talked about it?

CLAIRE  
No, a pleasant young woman.

Claire reaches into her purse and pulls out a BROCHURE. Jon grabs the brochure from Claire, flips through it. He comes to the last page. It's a PHOTO showing the "ORPHANS" headquarters in BERLIN.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
The "Orphans of the Storm" is a film preservation society. Something you should know about. They've been in existence since the silent era. They find and save "orphaned" films -- films without a current owner to take care of --

JON

I know what it means. But ... what about the Spiritualism?

CLAIRE

Some of their members have been Spiritualists -- as well as many other belief systems and religions. It doesn't interfere with their work.

Claire starts putting on the rest of her clothes, lights a cigarette, heads for the door.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

I have to get to a press screening. You take your time and read through that. It's quite interesting.

Claire leaves. Jon, deflated, reads the brochure.

EXT. L.A.P.D. WESTSIDE PRECINCT - LATER - DAY

MOS -- Jon walking up the front steps as --

SOUNDTRACK OVER: JON'S ANSWERING MACHINE; BEEP; THEN --

DET. BRACKEN (V.O.)

Jon? It's Detective Bracken. I need to talk to you. In person.

INT. L.A.P.D. DETECTIVE AREA - ON BRACKEN'S DESK - DAY

Jon sits opposite a stone-faced Det. Bracken.

DET. BRACKEN

The forensics investigation concludes that Dr. Gordon Rittenauer committed suicide.

JON

WHAT?!

DET. BRACKEN

He used a film cutting tool. Stabbed himself fatally in the jugular vein.

JON

What about the fire?

DET. BRACKEN

The arson investigation concludes that a cigarette that fell from his hand started the fire. There is no physical evidence of an intruder -- or any struggle.

JON

It's not possible!

DET. BRACKEN

Did you know that Dr. Gordon had been regularly "borrowing" money from the Film Preservation Project bank account? I guess he was planning to get multiple grants to cover himself. He had a personal credit card debt of over forty-five thousand dollars.

Jon, utterly stunned, cannot respond.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - PROJECTION BOOTH - DAY

Claire, Sharkey and Kirk stand at the portals and watch the OUTTAKE FOOTAGE from "Judas Jedermann." It ends.

CLAIRE

This is an astonishing find. I want to print frames of it for my article.

Kirk, with traces of COCAINE around his nostrils, is wired and manic.

KIRK

That actor who was sitting down -- he channeled a demon -- and the film somehow could record the actual demon's face -- the subliminal image.

CLAIRE

You're joking, right?

KIRK

Sharkey? I'm right, right?

Sharkey looks at him with apologetic resignation.

SHARKEY

It's fun to think so, Kirk. But, no. They must have used an optical printer to put it on the film.

Kirk looks as if his mentor has betrayed him. He stomps out of the booth. Claire and Sharkey exchange glances.

INT. JON'S APT. - NIGHT

Jon sits, drinking straight from a wine bottle. Claire, sitting next to him, smoking, strokes his hair.

JON

I've been such a moron.

CLAIRE

No, not true. You know, Jon, I'm sorry that I never really acknowledged what a horrible, personal trauma you've been through, with Gordon's death.

She hugs him.

JON

All the bullshit running around I've been doing, chasing shadows.

CLAIRE

Not everything was a shadow. Olga Tell, AKA Maria Brandt. Remember? She let it slip about an experimental film of Max Castle.

JON

Oh. Yeah. Well, whatever. I didn't find it in Berlin. It wasn't at Zipsky's.

CLAIRE

It's still worth searching for. And you're the person who could find it. Colby Mathers is impressed with you. He'd pay for you to go back to France and talk to Rosensweig.

JON

I don't know, Claire. I got Rosensweig so worked up, he tried to stab himself in the neck with my pen. He was about to rip open that big, ugly scar on his throat.

Jon suddenly drops the wine bottle, startling Claire. Face turning pale, he rises to his feet and mimes a motion of stabbing himself in the throat.

JON (cont'd)

Rosensweig ... Gordon ... FUCK! The film makes you kill yourself!

CLAIRE

Now, wait a minute, Jon, I want to look for it, but I don't want you to start up again with --

JON

Rosensweig failed in his suicide attempt, but the other men succeeded. Of course the Orphans would want Max to make a film to cause that effect. Because they want people to free themselves from the physical body. All ... people.

CLAIRE

Jon, you know that Gordon was watching "Caligari." We both know that film cannot affect you that way.

JON

Yeah, right, he was watching ... What was he watching?!

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Claire drives; Jon, tense, freaked-out, stares ahead as if expecting to see something horrible.

EXT. UCLA ARCHIVES BUILDING - NIGHT

The charred building has POLICE TAPE over the door and window; an official warning sign.

INT. ARCHIVES BUILDING

Jon rushes to his office; Claire follows him.

INT. JON'S OFFICE

Jon dashes inside and sees the take-up REEL with "Caligari" still on his desk. He picks it up. Claire enters. Jon unspools a little of the film, peering at the frames.

JON

I've watched this print of "Caligari" a hundred times. It doesn't cause anything crazy to ... But, maybe ...

INT. LAB ROOM

Everything has BLACK SOOT all over it. Much of the carpet and floor is severely CHARRED. Jon and Claire watch as an OLD PROJECTOR, spared from the fire, REWINDS the film. It reaches the beginning and the film flops loose. Jon turns off the projector and takes hold of the loose end of the film. He slowly advances it through his fingers, peering at the frames.

JON'S POV - FRAMES - MOVING

COUNTDOWN LEADER comes off the reel. Then, BLACK LEADER -- only a short strip; then, COUNTDOWN LEADER again, continuing until the OPENING FRAMES of the "CALIGARI" start to pass through his hands.

JON  
Nothing. Just leader, then the film.  
Too much leader. It's silly how he put  
two countdowns and a ...

Jon gets an idea. He moves the film through his hands back to the LEADER. He stops at the short piece of BLACK LEADER.

JON (cont'd)  
"Noir."

CLAIRE  
What?

JON  
"Black." -- "Persienne: blind."

CLAIRE  
What are you talking about?

JON  
Rosenzweig said those words ... Hey!  
Didn't Zipsky say something about Max  
wanting to make a film with all black  
frames? Like you're blind when you watch  
it?

CLAIRE  
Yeah, I think so ...

Jon shows her the black strip of "leader." Then, he takes a cutting tool and removes all of the leader section from the front of the "Caligari."

He goes to a VIEWING TABLE with a light underneath. He grabs a rag to wipe off the black soot. He turns on the light. He sets down the film with the black frames on the glass.

He takes an optical viewer and peers down at a black frame, then advances each one. He raises up.

JON  
Nothing. Just solid black.

He carries the film to the old projector; turns on the machine -- the BULB does not light up -- broken.

CLAIRE  
Let's get Sharkey to show us.

INT. CLAIRE'S PEUGOT - MOVING - LATER

Claire tries to drive while also trying to fish her cell phone from her purse. She SWERVES.

JON  
I ... I'm not sure we should watch the film. What if I'm right -- and it causes suicide?

CLAIRE  
We don't even know it's a film, Jon.

Claire knocks her purse around, digging. When she pulls up the cell phone, her purse flops onto Jon's lap. Claire punches a number.

Jon sees in Claire's purse -- a FOLDED BUSINESS LETTER -- WITH NEW YORKER LETTERHEAD. He sneaks a look at the beginning of the letter.

JON'S POV - LETTER

"Dear Claire, Let me be the first to welcome you to our staff."

ANGLE INSIDE CAR

Jon lifts up the letter, reading it.

CLAIRE  
(into cell)  
Sharkey? We might have found the experimental film by Max Castle. We're on our way over.

Claire disconnects, drops the cell phone back into her purse. Jon shows her the letter.

JON  
You got the New Yorker job?!

CLAIRE  
Uh, yeah.

JON  
How?!

CLAIRE  
They ... reconsidered me.

JON  
When were you going to tell me?

CLAIRE  
I was going to take you out to dinner --  
and ask if you wanted to move to New  
York.

JON  
When were you going to do that?

Claire snatches the letter.

CLAIRE  
You didn't have to dig through my purse.

JON  
I didn't dig through you purse. It was  
right there.

Claire jams the letter back into her purse.

INT. SHOWART THEATRE - LOBBY - LATER

Sharkey, again in military gear, opens the door for Jon and  
Claire.

JON  
Sharkey, I want to take another look at the  
frames under the magnifying glass before --

SHARKEY  
Shit, Jon, come on. We're all together,  
we'll watch it, we'll be fine.

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Sharkey carefully threads the short film into the Steenbeck.

SHARKEY  
All black frames? Isn't this the  
negative?

JON

Not if it's what the film "Blind" is supposed to be -- all black frames. The negative would be white or clear.

RAPID FOOTSTEPS on the staircase. Sharkey draws his handgun; Jon seizes a cutting tool. -- But the intruder is a PIMPLY-FACED EMPLOYEE who runs down the steps in a hurry.

PIMPLY-FACED EMPLOYEE

The bulb burned out!

SHARKEY

Damn it, replace it!

PIMPLY-FACED EMPLOYEE

You have the key to the cabinet!

Sharkey digs through his pockets. No key.

SHARKEY

SHIT!

(severely to the others)

No one watches this without me.

Sharkey and the Pimply-Faced Employee run up the stairs.

A beat. Claire moves away from the Steenbeck, lights a cigarette. Jon just stares at the Steenbeck, contemplating taking out the film. Kirk, high as a kite, alternately smiles at Jon and at Claire. Claire puffs.

JON

Shit, Sharkey is probably too high to find the key.

Jon starts up the stairs. He stops, casts a suspicious look at Claire, then continues up the stairs. A beat. Claire looks at Kirk, puffs. Kirk starts to look pale and despondent. He pulls a vial out of his pocket. Snorts -- SNORTS DESPERATELY -- nothing in it. He slumps; his expression turns SOUR.

INT. SHOWART HOUSE

Jon emerges from the basement door, striding up the aisle as the film is now PLAYING AGAIN -- bulb replaced.

Against the DARK SIDE WALL -- a FLASH of a DEMON'S FACE.

Sharkey comes into the house, sees Jon. He runs down the aisle to meet him.

Jon turns back around, throws open the basement door --  
 Claire is halfway up the stairs.

CLAIRE  
 What's taking so long?

She has to turn and head back down quickly, or be trampled by  
 the over-impatient Jon & Sharkey, who run down the stairs.

INT. BASEMENT

Now, there's NO KIRK.

SHARKEY  
 KIRK?! WELL, FUCK IT! YOU MISSED IT!

Jon stares with growing apprehension as Sharkey starts  
 adjusting controls on the Steenbeck. All eyes are on the  
 small screen.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
 Hnh. I thought I ...

He REWINDS -- the film is so short, it gets to the beginning  
 in an instant. Then, he STARTS it.

JON  
 Wait a minute! Why wasn't it at the  
beginning?!

WE SEE -- BUT THEY DO NOT NOTICE -- a LAKE of BLOOD on the  
 floor, flowing from BEHIND the Steenbeck.

They see the leader countdown -- 6, 5 -- their faces full of  
 intense expectation.

Then Jon shifts his feet -- and notices a slight LIQUID  
 SOUND. He looks to the floor, sees the BLOOD.

-- 2, 1 --

Jon leaps at the Steenbeck, turning it OFF.

SHARKEY  
 WHAT ARE YOU -- ?!!

Sharkey and Claire see the blood on the floor. They both  
 SCREAM. They all run around to the back of the Steenbeck to  
 see --

Kirk, DEAD, with an EXACTO KNIFE in his hand; his THROAT  
 SLIT.

Sharkey VOMITS. Claire slaps her hand over her mouth and stumbles backwards a few steps.

Jon, panting and sweating with revulsion and fear, darts to the front of the Steenbeck, yanks off the reel, yanks the film off the reel. He grabs Claire's purse, snatches out a CIGARETTE LIGHTER and flicks on the flame. Claire lurches toward him to grab the film, but Jon LIGHTS the FILM and holds it while it BURNS in a FLASH.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOWART THEATRE - LATER

A CITY MORGUE HEARSE idles as TWO MEN carry a gurney with Kirk's body to the back of it.

DETECTIVES are interviewing Sharkey, Jon and Claire. Jon notices that Claire's Detective excuses her. She moves down the sidewalk, pulls out her CELL PHONE and makes a call.

Jon's Detective excuses him. Jon starts down toward Claire. She quickly wraps up her call; disconnects.

JON

I ... uh ... told Sharkey I'd make the call to Kirk's parents.

Claire puts a hand on his shoulder, looking at him with empathy. She hands him her cell phone.

Jon moves to the wall of the theatre, moving halfway around a corner, partially obscured. He puts his arm up against the wall, then lets his forehead rest against it -- as if preparing himself. Claire watches.

CLOSE ON JON

As he simply hits "SEND." The cell phone's LED displays a NUMBER with a (323) area code. Rings.

BYX'S VOICE

Yes, Claire? Hello? Claire? There is interference. I cannot hear you.

Jon DISCONNECTS; looks at the phone, paranoid.

INT. SHARKEY'S APT. - ABOVE THEATRE - LATER - PRE-DAWN

Jon, Claire and Sharkey are all drinking; all have pale faces with eyes that show stunned devastation. Jon is cold to Claire.

SHARKEY

The cops sounded pretty positive it was suicide.

JON

Of course it was. Just like Gordon. Just like the men in the theatre with Rosensweig. That film causes suicide. Max Castle made it before he broke away from the "Orphans."

SHARKEY

Why suicide?

JON

It's part of their plan -- for people to leave the trap of their physical bodies.

SHARKEY

... Shit, man.

CLAIRE

Sharkey, Kirk was doing tons of drugs. Wasn't he?

SHARKEY

So what?

CLAIRE

I watched him in the basement -- coming down hard from a cocaine high.

JON

Why didn't you do anything?

CLAIRE

I didn't know he was going to kill himself!

JON

You saw him watch the film.

CLAIRE

I was on the staircase!

Claire, livid, shoots to her feet and stomps to the door.

SHARKEY

Hey, guys, come on ... we're all shocked and upset and tired ... and drunk ...

Claire EXITS, slamming the door. Jon shoots to his feet.

INT. JON'S HONDA - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Jon looks through his REAR-VIEW MIRROR, watches Claire pull out, then does a U-TURN and FOLLOWS CLAIRE.

INT. JON'S HONDA - MOVING - LATER

Jon follows Claire's Peugeot, which is a block ahead. Jon sighs, realizing where she's going: THE WEEKLY. Claire pulls up an alley beside the Weekly's building. Jon pulls over and idles. He rubs his face.

INT. JON'S APT. - LATER

Jon enters and immediately sees Colby Mathers sitting on the sofa.

JON  
WHAT THE FUCK?!!

Jon picks up a chair, wielding it as a weapon.

JON (cont'd)  
YOU BROKE IN HERE?!

MATHERS  
No.

JON  
LIAR!

Jon takes a swing with the chair. Mathers dodges it.

-- Sharkey emerges from the bathroom, smoking a joint.

SHARKEY  
Dude, chill. I have a key, remember?

Jon turns to Sharkey, staring at him, trying to figure out what's going on.

SHARKEY (cont'd)  
Mathers has been working against the Orphans.

JON  
You expect me to believe -- ?!!

Sharkey hands Jon a BOOK. "LAYERS OF FILM. By COLBY MATHERS. Jon takes it. He opens it. Random House. Photo of (a younger) MATHERS.

SHARKEY

It's all about film as a manipulator of the masses. Look at Chapter 20.

Jon flips through the pages; stops.

JON

(reading)

"Exposing the 'Orphans of the Storm.'"

MATHERS

Skip two pages and read about the arrest.

JON

(flips pages; reads)

"... I set a trap to catch the two art thieves in the act of stealing rare films. ... The prosecutor had enough evidence to convict Hugo Bastinere and Wolf Byx."

(to Mathers)

Byx?!

MATHERS

Dr. Byx's brother -- very high up in the cult's power structure. I helped put him in prison. Now, you see -- there is no way that I'm in the cult. They hate me.

Jon drops into his desk chair, looking through the book.

MATHERS (cont'd)

Unfortunately, I couldn't give the FBI enough evidence to link those men to the Orphans cult.

SHARKEY

Colby wants to destroy the print of "Judas Jedermann." After I show it tonight, he's gonna shell out the cash for it.

MATHERS

(to Jon)

And I've been trying to find and destroy Max Castle's film "Blind" for twenty years.

JON

I just did that. I burned it.

MATHERS

The print? Yes, that's good. But I'm talking about the negative.

Jon surges with apprehension, sits up, staring at Mathers, then Sharkey. Sharkey gives a somber nod, gesturing towards Mathers.

JON

You gotta be kidding me.

MATHERS

Yes. There's a negative.

JON

Shit.

MATHERS

The "Orphans" weren't sure it existed. Now, somehow, they know. I think their plan is to slip it into the television coverage of the next Olympics.

SHARKEY

-- Supposedly going to be seen by three times as many people as the last one. All over the world.

MATHERS

I can't get the FBI involved until I have more of a case against the Orphans.

JON

How will we ever get enough evidence? They've been following me each step of the way. When I find out something, they find it out, too.

Jon gets HIT with a realization -- it shows on his face.

SHARKEY

What, man?

JON

Claire.

MATHERS & SHARKEY

What?!

JON

She's always dismissing the idea that the Orphans are dangerous. Tried to sell me on this "brochure" about them being a legit preservation society.

MATHERS

That's their cover.

JON  
 Every move she and I made, they found out  
 about. Zipsky, Friedrich ...

Jon's phone RINGS. The machine answers.

CLAIRE'S VOICE  
 (from machine)  
 Jon? Jon? Are you there?

They all look at each other. Jon ANSWERS.

JON  
 Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

CLOSE ON CLAIRE - USING CELL PHONE

Claire looks around, speaking low.

CLAIRE  
 I've got some big news.

JON  
 Do you?

CLAIRE  
 Colby Mathers --

JON  
 -- Is right here.

Claire blanches. A pause. Mathers looks up at Jon.

CLAIRE  
 Jon, I want you to listen to me, but  
 don't react in a way that would tip off  
 Colby. Okay? Colby is a liar.

JON  
 You don't say.

CLAIRE  
 I know he's been a friend of mine, but  
 now I know he's a liar. The Orphans of  
 the Storm --

JON  
 Did they get you the New Yorker job?

CLAIRE  
I GOT ME THE NEW YORKER JOB!

JON

Oh. Okay. I see. That's convincing.

CLAIRE

Jon, the Orphans of the Storm is truly just a film preservation society. Colby is the one who is in a death cult.

JON

Did Dr. Byx tell you that? When you talked to him on your cell phone?

Claire sighs; rubs her forehead; lights a cigarette.

CLAIRE

Dr. Byx showed me all the legal documents. Interpol is after Colby. He's a suspect in murders and art theft all over Europe.

JON

I had to be brainwashed by the film to think I loved you. Fuck your lies -- and fuck you.

Jon slams down the phone. In true anguish, rubs his eyes, slumps against the wall. Then, suddenly, he stiffens and turns to Sharkey and Colby.

JON (cont'd)

She probably told Byx about Olga!

INT. COLBY'S RENTAL CAR - MOVING

Colby races along, passing cars. Jon's in the passenger seat; Sharkey's in back.

EXT. MARIA'S HOUSE - LATER

Jon and Colby POUND on the front door. Sharkey just watches. Jon picks up a STONE from the walkway and TAPS the window beside the door -- trying to crack the glass. The entire window SHATTERS, making a noise. Colby frowns at Jon, then leans in, reaching over toward the inside door knob. He gets the door open.

INT. MARIA'S LIVING ROOM

Jon, Colby and Sharkey cautiously step inside.

JON

Olga? Maria?

The place has been RANSACKED -- cyclone level.

They turn to see -- MARIA (OLGA), DEAD, lying at the BASE of her STAIRCASE, her NECK TWISTED.

Jon gags, stumbles backwards. Colby rushes to Olga, checks for a pulse. His expression confirms the death. Sharkey has a weird, sick, slight smile (as if it's all "cool").

MATHERS

(looking around)

If anything was here, they would have found it.

SHARKEY

Aw, hell. Maybe not. What are we talking about? A twenty-four-frame film negative? All white frames, probably?

Sharkey begins to randomly hunt through the MESS. Jon continues to recover from the sight of the dead woman.

MATHERS

(to Jon)

The most likely places to find anything related to Max Castle were Zipsky's place and here. I don't know where to go next.

JON

(looking across the room)

Cal- ... - igari ...

MATHERS

What?

Mathers follows his gaze to a --

MOUNTED STAINED GLASS ART PIECE

Sitting on a window ledge, illuminated by sunlight. It shows a DISTORTED, EXPRESSIONISTIC CITY SKYLINE -- much like the sets of "Caligari."

WIDE ON ROOM

Mathers walks toward the glass piece; Jon follows. Sharkey drops his search and joins them.

STAINED GLASS

Above the crooked buildings is a solid WHITE SKY made up of SQUARES in an AMORPHOUS SHAPE.

WIDE ON ROOM

The three men stare at the stained glass.

MATHERS (cont'd)  
What's the significance of this?

JON  
Robert Weine was --

MATHERS  
I know. A cult member. In Germany, like  
Castle.

Jon moves right up to the glass, studies the bottom corner.

JON  
It's signed "Max Kassel."

MATHERS  
They didn't take it. Must be no use to  
them.

SHARKEY  
Do you think there's a clue in there?

JON  
I don't know. Could there be?

Mathers and Sharkey move in as close as Jon. They all study  
the glass.

MATHERS  
Just buildings ... and a sky.

JON  
(realizing)  
White sky. Oh, my God. Glass. Glass!  
It's totally possible to use glass!

Jon pulls his wallet, removes the OLD PACKING SLIP from the  
"Judas" canister, turns it to the backside to see the  
NUMBERED DIAGRAM. He compares it to the SKY portion of the  
glass.

JON (cont'd)  
The sky portion -- all white -- it's  
shaped just like this diagram! -- The  
numbers must indicate what order to put  
the pieces! See? One through twenty-  
four. Twenty-four frames. One-second  
film. It's the negative for the film  
"Blind!"

A beat as all of them look between the diagram and the SQUARE GLASS PIECES which make up the SKY.

Mather suddenly looks around, sees a large STONE STATUE. He picks it up, takes a big swing at the stained glass -- and Sharkey DEFLECTS the blow; grapples with Mathers. They FALL -- with Mathers hitting the corner of a table with the back of his head. Sharkey, adrenaline pumping, uses the statue to SMASH Mather's head.

JON (cont'd)  
SHARKEY! WHAT ARE YOU -- ?!!

Mathers seems to be DEAD; BLEEDING. Sharkey pulls out a HANDGUN and aims right at Jon.

SHARKEY  
No one's going to destroy that. Don't even think about fucking with me.  
(grinning eerily)  
Max Castle's ultimate lost film.

Sharkey takes the diagram out of Jon's hand.

JON  
YOU?! YOU'RE ... AN "ORPHAN?!"

SHARKEY  
(guffaws loudly)  
Fuck no, Jon. I am the owner of what is going to be one of the great theaters in film history.

CROSSFADE TO:

SHOTS - JON'S POV - IN & OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS - HAZY EFFECT

-- DAY: From BACK SEAT of COLBY'S RENTAL car; Sharkey driving.

-- LATER: Sharkey parks in front of a "TECH" BUILDING. He lifts up the STAINED GLASS, checks to make sure he has the OLD PAPER -- with the DIAGRAM, gets out, takes the STAINED GLASS inside the building.

JON'S VOICE  
Sh ... Sharkey ...

-- NIGHT: From the FLOOR of the SHOWART BASEMENT. Sharkey is carefully putting 24 BLACK SQUARES in a row, on a table, marking a number on the edge of each one. These are PRINTS of the POSITIVE FRAMES, from the glass negative. Sharkey, seeing Jon STIR, picks up TWO SYRINGES. He INJECTS Jon, then injects himself.

JON'S VOICE (cont'd)  
 What ... are you ... ?

SHARKEY  
 Downers for you, uppers for me. Here,  
 all the frames are in the right order,  
 according to the diagram. Now, I just  
 have to print it.

-- DAY: From the back of SHARKEY'S VAN; Sharkey parking.  
 Getting out with all the POSITIVES attached together. He  
 goes into a FILM LAB.

JON'S VOICE  
 No ... oh, no, Sharkey ... no ...

-- NIGHT: From the SOFA in SHARKEY'S APARTMENT; watching  
 Sharkey making SIGNS: "DEATH NIGHT" -- skulls; bones;  
 headstones; Gothic metal-type art.

-- DAY: From the back of Sharkey's parked van. Sharkey comes  
 out of the FILM LAB with a small BAG; a big, drugged, sick  
 smile on his face.

SLOW BLACK OUT

SHARKEY'S VOICE  
 (barely audible)  
 Tonight will be the night that puts the  
 ShowArt in the center of the universe.

QUICK FADE UP:

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jon's eyes flutter, then open. He sits up. Looks around.  
 No Sharkey. No stained glass.

EXT. SHOWART THEATRE - SAME

A long LINE waits along the sidewalk. The Pimpily-Faced  
 Employee, dressed in COMBAT FATIGUES, takes scissors and CUTS  
 the POLICE TAPE. The crowd LAUGHS and APPLAUDS.

INT. SHOWART BASEMENT - LATER

Jon fully revives and struggles to his feet. He goes to the  
 door. It's LOCKED. He pounds it, kicks it. He looks  
 around, finds a MICROPHONE STAND. He picks it up and uses it  
 to BASH the doorknob and lock. The door opens.

INT. SHOWART HOUSE

Jon emerges from the basement. The theatre is FULL of MOVIEGOERS.

JON  
THERE'S A BOMB IN HERE! GET OUT NOW!

The AUDIENCE HOWLS with LAUGHTER; some APPLAUD.

AUDIENCE MEMBER  
Sharkey's really doing a number tonight!

Jon sprints up the aisle.

INT. LOBBY

Jon is about to take the stairs when he reacts to POUNDING. He sees Claire at the doors. And SEVERAL UNIFORMED COPS.

Jon keeps running up the stairs. One of the cops SMASHES the glass and opens the theatre door.

CLAIRE  
Jon?!

Claire and one Cop run to chase Jon. Another Cop turns to see the Pimplly-Faced Employee lying on the floor behind the concession counter -- his EYES GLAZED with being drugged. He holds up a sheet of LSD TABS.

PIMPLY-FACED EMPLOYEE  
A thousand hits of acid. You want some?

This Cop gets out his handcuffs.

INT. LANDING

Jon BANGS on the door to the booth.

JON  
SHARKEY! OPEN UP!

INT. BOOTH

Sharkey -- looking MORE DRUGGED and MORE DERANGED than we've ever seen him -- smirks as he carefully threads the short black film "Blind," with a countdown leader, into the projector.

INT. LANDING

Jon keeps pounding.

JON  
SHARKEY! YOU CAN'T SHOW THIS FILM!

Claire and the Cop get to Jon. The Cop pulls out his gun.

COP #1  
Step away from the door.

INT. HOUSE

The AUDIENCE starts turning, looking up toward the booth.  
SNICKERING.

JON (O.S.)  
HE CAN'T SHOW THE FILM! SHOOT OPEN THE  
DOOR!

LOUDER LAUGHTER.

RED-HAIRED MOVIE-GOER  
SHOW THE FILM!

A CHANT BEGINS:

SOME OF THE AUDIENCE  
SHOW THE FILM! SHOW THE FILM!

MORE OF THE AUDIENCE  
SHOW THE FILM! SHOW THE FILM!

INT. LANDING

Jon and Claire react to the dimming lights. Jon KICKS the door.

JON  
SHARKEY, YOU CANNOT SHOW IT!

COP #1  
SIR, STAND BACK!

INT. BOOTH

Sharkey's loving it. He TURNS ON the PROJECTOR. He starts the motor.

INT. LANDING

Jon and Claire react to HEARING the projector. Jon goes to a RAILING where he can see the HOUSE.

AUDIENCE  
SHOW THE FILM! SHOW THE FILM!

JON  
DON'T WATCH THE FILM! DON'T WATCH IT!

Some people who hear Jon LAUGH. The CHANTING CONTINUES. Cop #1 SHOOTS the BOOTH DOOR.

Jon sees the SCRATCHY LEADER PROJECTED on the SCREEN. He SPRINTS FULL-BORE TOWARD THE BOOTH DOOR and SLAMS it OPEN.

INT. BOOTH

As Jon LEAPS at Sharkey, WE SEE on SHARKEY'S FACE the LIGHT turn BLACK, then LIGHT again.

AUDIENCE  
SHOW THE -- !

EN MASSE, the audience goes DEAD QUIET.

Jon RIPS off the TAKE-UP REEL and LIGHTS the film on FIRE, burning it. He tosses the burning film onto the PRINT NEGATIVE made by Sharkey, which is on the table. He grabs a can of film cleaner and SPRAYS onto the small fire. It FLARES UP -- all the celluloid BURNS TO ASH.

He turns to Sharkey, who's DAZED.

JON  
Did you ... ?

INT. HOUSE

The entire audience SITS in DEAD SILENCE. Then, they begin to SQUIRM.

CLOSE ON - PEOPLES' FACES

Their EYES VIBRATE. They go out into the aisles and try to BASH their heads on the floor.

One WOMAN opens her purse and takes out a COMPACT MIRROR and BREAKS it. She uses the SHARDS to SLICE HER NECK. Another PERSON'S HAND GRABS it AWAY -- to USE IT.

INT. BOOTH

Sharkey grabs a knife and STABS HIMSELF in the THROAT. He DROPS. Jon drops down on his knees next to him.

JON  
SHARKEY!!!

We HEAR the SOUNDS of IMPROMPTU SUICIDES. Then, KABLAM! Jon, splattered with BLOOD, whips his head around to see -- ON THE LANDING -- the Cop has used his gun in his mouth to KILL HIMSELF. Jon then looks at Claire staring downward, toward the GRUESOME SOUNDS in the HOUSE, her face PALE. Jon leaves the booth and walks --

LANDING

-- toward Claire.

JON (cont'd)

Did you know it would do this, Claire?!!  
DID YOU?!! OR WERE YOU JUST A FOOL?!!

Claire looks at Jon, her face full of painful distress. Jon's expression changes to sympathy and forgiveness. He goes to her, takes her by the shoulders.

ON JON'S AND CLAIRE'S FACES

They stare at each other. Claire's face shows an intense build-up of emotion. Jon becomes concerned.

JON (cont'd)

You didn't watch the film, did you,  
Claire?

Her eyes now focus on his eyes. A beat.

She brings up the BARREL of the COP'S GUN and shoves it into her MOUTH.

JON (cont'd)

NO -- !!

KA-BLAM! -- Before Jon can grab it. Claire's body DROPS. Jon falls down onto her, squeezing her.

From downstairs, another GUNSHOT. Jon hears a STAMPEDE. FIVE MORE GUNSHOTS, then CLICKS from an empty gun. BREAKING GLASS from the lobby. BODIES THUDDING against the floor.

THREE NEW COPS rush up the stairs with guns drawn, looking around. They see Jon in the booth; aim at him.

COP #3

Get your hands up! Back away from the  
booth!

As Jon obeys, Cop #4 and Cop #5 move past Jon into the --

BOOTH (ANGLE INCLUDES LANDING)

-- Where they find the STACK of dislodged WHITE STAINED GLASS FRAMES. Cop #4 nods to Cop #5 and picks up the stack and carry it out of the booth. Jon looks at them, aghast. Cop #5 returns the look, then glances at Cop #3 -- conspiratorially.

JON

You're ... not cops! WHO ARE YOU?!

More COPS arrive on the landing. Cop #6 and Cop #7 move past Jon, who's still sited by Cop #3's gun. Cop #6 tries to salvage some of the print negative of "Blind," but there's nothing but burnt, melted film. Cop #7 picks up a canister of "Judas."

Jon peers down at the --

LOBBY

And sees BYX and another COP standing by the FRONT DOOR.

ON BOOTH AND LANDING

-- Making sure Byx sees him, Jon takes the DIAGRAM out of his pocket and PUTS IT INTO HIS MOUTH, CHEWING.

COP #3

GET THAT!

Cop #3 grabs Jon. Cop #6 and #7 emerge from the booth and grab Jon. Jon's trying his best to swallow the paper. Cop #6 sticks his hand into Jon's mouth. Jon gags, pulls back and keeps trying to swallow. He fights -- they grapple with him, moving into the

BOOTH

Jon now makes gulping SWALLOWING sounds. Cop #7 takes aims a gun at Jon's head.

COP #3 (cont'd)

(while listening to CB)

NO! DON'T SHOOT HIM NOW, DAMN IT! TRY  
TO GET IT!

The Cops continue to grapple with Jon. In the messy struggle, the whole group RAMS into the projector stand, KNOCKING IT OVER.

The BULB is still ON -- and it TOUCHES the "JUDAS" FILM in one of the open CANISTERS.

NITRATE EXPLOSION. Cop #7's UNIFORM CATCHES FIRE. He screams and runs out of the booth. Cop #6 runs out of the booth.

-- JON PASSES OUT.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. THATCHED ROOF HUT - DAY

Jon, dressed in a simple TUNIC, lies on his BACK, UNCONSCIOUS, on a STRAW BED. Sound of OCEAN SURF. Jon STIRS. He lifts his head, struggles to focus his eyes. He feels his stomach. He lifts his garment -- there's a BLOOD-STAINED BANDAGE across his STOMACH.

JON  
Ohhh ... God ...

Jon, with difficulty, sits up; looks at his stomach. A long beat of absorbing what this means. He struggles to his feet, looks around. A small bedside table made from a TREE STUMP holds an array of basic medical supplies.

In the corner, straw baskets full over various indigenous food -- cocoanuts, bananas, other tropical fruit.

Jon winces as he takes a few steps. He goes out to --

EXT. LUSH VEGITATION

Sounds of BIRDS. Jon sees a nearby STREAM. He moves around the HUT to --

EXT. BEACH

White, powdery sand and blue water. Calm ocean with low tide. Jon walks toward the ocean for a beat, then, looking to each side, seeing nothing but sand, turns and starts back into the --

EXT. LUSH VEGITATION

He pushes through tall bushes, steps over thick growth. He searches for any sign of anything.

A HAND touches his shoulder. He YELPS, flinching back, turning to see --

An OLD MAN, skin varnished by sun, deep wrinkles, intense eyes.

OLD MAN  
Wer sind du?

JON  
Who ... are ... ?

OLD MAN  
(thick German accent)  
This is what I ask you.

Jon strains to FOCUS his blurry vision -- yes, it's the 90-YEAR-OLD MAX CASTLE. Max's face is withered and rough-hewn, but recognizable from the previously-seen photos.

JON  
Max ... Castle ... ?

MAX  
Why did they cut your stomach?

JON  
(difficult to speak)  
I swallowed the diagram ... for ...

Max grimly nods: he knows which diagram. He gently takes Jon, gripping both his arms, leads him back into the --

INT. HUT

Max leads Jon back to the straw bed, lays him down. Max kneels, and feels Jon's forehead.

JON  
Why ... are ... you alive?

Max puts a cold, wet CLOTH onto Jon's forehead. He then gingerly removes the bandage and starts the process of applying a fresh one.

JON (cont'd)  
They expect you ... to make "Blind" ... again?

Max is silent -- which is acknowledging Jon is correct.

JON (cont'd)  
Why ... me alive?

MAX  
If they need you, they will be back for you.

Grim silence.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Jon, WEEKS LATER, unshaven; hair unkempt, walks along the beach.

JON (V.O.)

"Blind" is only one second long. They must know by now that they have to get the correct order of the 24 frames. Will they try all the combinations? Have they gotten the right sequence? Or ... Will they come for me, hoping I remember -- and try to torture it out of me? Or do I just wait here for the end of the world? Maybe I won't even know when the end comes. I'll just live out the rest of my life on this island. Maybe that means I'm luckier than you.

FADE TO BLACK.

FRAME IS FILLED WITH -- SLUG COUNTDOWN:

FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE --

SCREEN GOES BLACK

SCREEN GOES WHITE