

MONKEYBONE

screenplay by
Sam Hamm

based on the comic book
"Dark Town" by
Kaja Blackley and Vanessa Chong

SEVENTH DRAFT
3 FEBRUARY 1999

FADE IN:

MAIN CREDITS ROLL

over BLACK SCREEN, with PORTENTOUS SPOOKY MUSIC underneath. Just as the music reaches its crescendo, we hear a simian SCREECH.

A BUCK-TOOTHED CARTOON MONKEY swings past on a vine. TITLE WIPES IN with him:

MONKEYBONE (tm)
in
"FREUD CHICKEN!"

TIGHT CLOSEUP - STANLEY (ANIMATED)

A POCKETWATCH swings back and forth in F.G. Gaping at it is a goofy, bespectacled CARTOON CHARACTER, sucking his thumb as his EYES move back and forth. After a moment, the LEFT EYE freezes in place - but the right eye keeps going back and forth with the watch.

SHRINK'S VOICE (o.s.)

Back, Stanley...you're going back...back to when it all began. Are you going back yet? Come on, get back, we haven't got all day.

Now BOTH EYES are locked in place. The patient is hypnotized.

INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY (ANIMATED)

A squat, lumpy TEACHER, MISS HUDLAPP, is straining to erase the Gettysburg Address, which is written along the very top of the blackboard. There's an obtrusive, rhythmic BANGING noise in B.G.

STANLEY (V.O.)

It was third grade. The teacher was Miss Hudlapp. She was kinda squat and lumpy - she smelled funny - but she was kind.

MISS HUDLAPP

CLASS!

(turning around suddenly)

How many times have I told you? In this class we do not pound tenpenny nails into Stanley's head!

REVERSE ANGLE - ON STANLEY

Hapless ten-year-old STANLEY, still goofy and bespectacled, in his front-row desk. NAILS stick out of his head. The FOUR MEAN KIDS poised around him lower their hammers and return to their seats, grumbling.

A dreamy SMILE crosses STANLEY's face as he gazes at MISS HUDLAPP.

STANLEY (V.O.)

You know how some teachers have those, kind of, flaps on their arms - those big sacks of limp flab that like, dangle?

As MISS HUDLAPP pulls her sweater off, TWO MASSIVE ARM-FLAPS - fifty gallons of flab apiece - SPILL OUT and SMACK INTO THE FLOOR.

MISS HUDDLAPP claps two erasers together, kicking up a cloud of dust. Young STANLEY watches, transfixed by her massive ARM FLAPS. We TRACK IN on the gigantic ARM FLAPS as they swing hypnotically back and forth, with a loud SLAP each time they collide.

STANLEY (V.O.)

It sounds weird...but for some reason, as I watched those big old flaps of hers, I began to feel...well...oddly...

Now we TRACK IN on the mesmerized STANLEY. A SONG comes up underneath: Donna Summer, "I FEEL LOVE."

STANLEY (V.O.)

...aroused.

(beat)

And then the horror began.

DOINK! STANLEY looks down at his LAP in horror. The boys and girls around him are pointing and tittering.

Grimacing in embarrassment, he discreetly places a heavy TEXTBOOK onto his lap, suppressing the bulge in his pants. But SPROING!! - the BOOK goes flying across the room. The BULGE is fighting back!

The kids DUCK AND COVER beneath their desks as STANLEY slams a STACK of textbooks onto his lap. It's no use - the WHOLE STACK goes flying, and BOOKS come raining down on the entire class! Now MISS HUDLAPP is staring *directly at him...*

MISS HUDLAPP

Young man. What's that in your lap?

She marches toward him. STANLEY pulls his BACKPACK over his lap.

STANLEY (V.O.)

It was useless. Like putting a baseball cap on the Washington Monument. And then...all at once ...there he was.

The BACKPACK bucks and wriggles, as if something inside is trying to GET OUT. And then - with a flourish of rousing disco strings - IT DOES!

STANLEY (V.O.)

Monkeybone!!

The libidinous cartoon monkey BURSTS OUT of the backpack, POINTS at MISS HUDLAPP - and announces, in his Barry White baritone:

MONKEYBONE

Oooo-oo-oooh, baby. I love your way.

KC and the SUNSHINE BAND comes up underneath as MONKEYBONE DANCES to the front of the class. He grabs MISS HUDLAPP by the hands and begins dancing The Bump with her ARM FLAPS. Butt left, WHAP. Butt right, WHAP.

The KIDS are bug-eyed - agog. With each WHAP their little heads turn back and forth as if they're watching a nude tennis match.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - ON AUDIENCE (LIVE-ACTION)

A roomful of LIVE HUMANS watching the cartoon, heads turning in sync with the kids onscreen. TV-INDUSTRY HIPSTERS, AD EXECS, MANUFACTURER'S REPS...they're all guests at this sneak preview of the Monkeybone show, and they're LAUGHING UPROARIOUSLY.

In the midst of the crowd is a handsome young couple: JULIE McELROY and STU MILEY. JULIE's a research scientist, brainy, professional, abnormally well-adjusted - and pretty enough that she'd be intimidating if it weren't for a prominent goofy streak.

STU is the one guy in the auditorium who *isn't* laughing at the cartoon on the screen. In fact, he's solemn as a judge - peering nervously around to see how the rest of the audience is responding.

Why? Because he's the cartoonist who created the characters on screen. In his looks (gangly, disheveled) and manner (sardonic, self-deprecating), he's the obvious model for the character of STANLEY.

INT. CLASSROOM (ANIMATED)

As the monkey dance continues, we ZOOM IN on the mortified face of LITTLE STANLEY. His eyes begin doing the familiar HYPNO-SWIRL...

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE (ANIMATED)

A CUCKOO pops out of a wall clock. ADULT STANLEY'S THUMB pops out of his mouth. He awakens from his trance in a cold sweat.

STANLEY

How about it, Doc? Can you help me?

SHRINK

Not overnight. These imaginary monkey cases take time. I would estimate...roughly...

On the desk is a CATALOGUE, open to a two-page spread depicting a 40-foot CABIN CRUISER. "NEW FOR SUMMER! ONLY \$229,999.95!" With his free hand, the SHRINK is working a CALCULATOR...

SHRINK

Twelve years and three months ought to do it.

The SHRINK hustles STANLEY to the door and shakes his hand.

STANLEY

One question, doc - what did you mean when you said "imaginary"?

SHRINK

All in good time, my boy. All in good time.

The SHRINK shoves STANLEY out and slams the door behind him. Two beats. Then he doubles over, WEEPING with LAUGHTER.

SHRINK

Vot a crackpot! Monkey on ze back - HAH!! ROLL OUT ZE WACKY WAGON!!

Now he notices a BACKPACK, which STANLEY has left on the couch. It TWITCHES slightly - of its own free will.

VOICE IN BACKPACK

Imaginary, huh? You quack.

EXT. SHRINK'S BUILDING (ANIMATED)

A WINDOW shatters. The SHRINK comes hurtling out. MONKEYBONE STRADDLES HIM like Slim Pickens riding an H-bomb, hootin' and hollerin' all the way down to the street.

SPLAT! A gob of gore hits STANLEY in the face as he exits the building. He kneels on the sidewalk - finding a PIPE and a GOATEE.

STANLEY

Aw, Monkeybone! At this rate I'll never find a good shrink.

MONKEYBONE

Those guys are a waste of money! I'll show you how to stop sucking your thumb...

MONKEYBONE sticks his thumb in his butt as he and STANLEY toddle off into the sunset.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - THAT MOMENT

STANDING O from the crowd as the cartoon ends and the lights come up. HERB, an all-purpose sidekick type, appears at the podium:

HERB

Thank you...that's our pilot...the good news is, Comedy Channel has just picked us up with an order for six new episodes!

HERB leads a round of APPLAUSE. JULIE nudges STU - the only guy in the room who's still in his seat.

HERB

Now, let's give it up for the guy who started it all. Creator of America's most disturbed comic strip...the man behind the monkey...Mister Stu Miley!

A SPOTLIGHT hits him, and he STANDS to tumultuous applause. He looks genuinely stunned. He can't believe it's happening.

JULIE surreptitiously PINCHES him on the bottom, giving him a start. She WINKS at him. He shoots her a small private smile - then turns to WAVE at the adoring crowd.

INT. LOBBY - HALF-HOUR LATER - NIGHT

STU working his way through a crowd of well-wishers and FANS.

STU

I don't actually draw all the animation, no. We have sweatshop workers who couldn't get jobs at Nike doing that.

A beautiful, heavily-pierced FEMALE FAN hands STU a marker.

BEAUTIFUL FAN

Mr. Miley, would you draw Monkeybone on my belly? As a guide?

STU

Guide...?

BEAUTIFUL FAN

For my tattoo artist?

She exposes her taut midriff. STU thinks for a moment, then goes to work. When he's done, Monkeybone appears to be climbing out of the girl's pants and WAVING to her. Nearby FANS APPLAUD.

BEAUTIFUL FAN

Wait! You have to draw the rest of him -

She begins unbuckling her belt so STU will have enough room to draw Monkeybone's bottom half. STU demurs...

STU

I - I have to, uh, check in with my doctor. DO-
OCCCC!!

He wanders across the room, finds JULIE deep in conversation with a bunch of other GUESTS, and pulls her aside.

STU

Hey, Doc. Come here. There's something really cool I want to show you.

He grabs her by the sleeve, pulls her across the floor to -

INT. ALCOVE - OFF LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

There's nothing "cool" about it - it's a stairway landing, with metal fire doors that open onto the parking lot outside.

STU

See these doors? The cool thing is, you go out
...they close...you can't get back in!

He opens one door and holds it for JULIE.

JULIE

You want to leave? But Stu - you're a big hit!
Everyone loves you!

STU

They don't love me. They love Monkeybone.

JULIE

It was you who got the standing O. It was you
drawing on the belly over there...

STU

That was especially Monkeybone. Come on, Doc, I
don't want to be stuck here with this bunch of
media creeps. I just want to be us. Home. Alone!
(conspiratorially)

I have something I have to give you.

JULIE

Can't you give it to me later?

STU

Yeah, I could, but the thing is, if later got
here sooner, it would be...better.

He gives up trying to explain...pulls her close and kisses her. For a moment they completely forget about the party in the next room.

Then HERB appears behind them, trying to catch STU's eye as he waits for

the clinch to break up. Finally he pries them apart:

HERB

Sorry, Julie - won't be a minute. Now Stu - I know you don't like the idea, but you really ought to talk to these guys -

STU

Julie and I - we were just gonna go...

But before STU knows what's hit him, HERB is leading him back to -

INT. LOBBY - THAT MOMENT - CONTINUOUS

HERB

Go? There's a potload of money here, pal. You got three major toy companies...you got the guys from Burger God over here...

STU

Burger God. The ones that found the pig hair in the french fries?

HERB

Never proven. They're ready to pop for a pre-emptive endorsement. Kids love Burger God -

The MERCHANDISERS shoot STU an expectant wave. STU waves back and turns in the opposite direction. HERB grabs him by the sleeve.

STU

Herb, it's too much. It's all out of hand.

HERB

Do you know what kind of opportunity you have here? You gotta strike. I'm talking mansions. Lamborghinis. Champagne for mouthwash when you brush your teeth!

STU

I don't want to be rich. It's just a trap!

HERB

Being rich is not a trap. That is a dirty lie perpetuated by rich people to keep the failures from killing them.

STU

Herb. I have to go.

HERB

Why?

STU

I got the ring.

(beat)

Tonight's the night, Herb. Tonight's the night.

He nods toward JULIE, who's at the open bar grabbing two glasses of punch. HERB realizes a proposal is in the works.

HERB

Oh my God...you're proposing?

STU

My life was totally crappy, Herb, and she... fixed it. She made me happy. Which I'd never been. She loves me the way I am - right now.

(beat)

I don't want everything to change. I don't want her saying yes to some big success. I just want her saying yes to me.

HERB

...In some weird way I respect that.

JULIE's over by the punchbowl. She sees the two boys staring at her conspiratorially - MAKES A FACE at them as she waves back.

HERB

Okay then. If I get you out of here - you pop the question - tonight. Or else. Get me?

STU nods gravely.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

STU, JULIE, and HERB in the parking lot. A small safari of FLUNKIES is loading enormous boxes full of MONKEYBONE JUNK into STU's beat-up car - stuffed dolls, action figures, board games, lunchboxes, beach towels, team jackets and more! STU groans at the sight of it...

HERB

They're just prototypes...take 'em home and look at 'em before you say no...

(scanning the streets)

If you could just hold on a minute or two, we're expecting a couple more trucks.

STU GLOWERS at HERB as he opens the car door for JULIE.

HERB

Okay, okay! You're a beautiful couple. Go.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

STU backs out of his space. The small parking lot is full of DELIVERY TRUCKS from would-be merchandisers - all too large for the spaces they're parked in. STU has to keep backing up because the exit lanes are blocked. It's like negotiating a labyrinth.

STU

Look at this! He won't let us leave!

JULIE

Who?

STU

The monkey!! He's everywhere! He'll take over both our lives if we let him.

JULIE

Stu - stop it. That monkey is good luck. You thought him up, and everybody loves him, and he's probably going to make you rich. So relax! Enjoy it!

STU

I'm trying. It's weird, that's all. I never had any good luck, until I met you...what if it's all just another bad dream?

JULIE

What's the "bad" part?

STU

I might wake up.

JULIE

(laughing; taking his hand)

If you do, I'll be right there beside you. So face it. You're just going to have to be happy!

STU

I am happy. It just so happens this is the happiest night of my life.

He says it so solemnly that she cracks up. After a moment he joins in.

EXT. PARKING LOT - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

A PLASTIC BANNER stretches between two poles on either side of the entry to the lot. It shows MONKEYBONE in a typical languorous pose:

It's His World. We Just Live in It!

MONKEYBONE

Sunday Nights This Fall

TWO GUYS on EXTENSION LADDERS are taking the sign down as STU'S CAR idles at the exit below. There's a strong wind tonight, and one guy LOSES HOLD of his end of the banner just as he gets it detached...

INT. CAR - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

As STU pulls into the intersection he sees a DELIVERY TRUCK approaching in the opposite lane, with a cardboard likeness of MONKEYBONE mounted atop the cab. He chuckles...

STU

That damn monkey is everywh--

Suddenly his view of the street DISAPPEARS. The MONKEYBONE BANNER has fallen DIRECTLY ACROSS HIS WINDSHIELD, like a huge SHROUD. All he can see is a great, grinning MONKEY FACE!!

JULIE SCREAMS. STU SCREAMS. Unable to see, he slams on the brakes and JERKS THE WHEEL RIGHT.

Off screen: HORNS BLARING. TIRES SQUEALING. The horrible crunch of METAL ON METAL.

But Stu's car comes to a halt untouched. After a moment he opens his eyes...and JULIE opens hers...

STU
Did we just - hit something?

JULIE
I don't think so.

STU
Are you okay??

She thinks it over, nods. STU takes a moment to catch his breath, then opens the door gingerly. A HORN BLARES as a car speeds past in the opposite lane, nearly taking STU's door off. He jumps back inside, waits, opens the door again...

EXT. INTERSECTION - THAT MOMENT

His eyes widen in horror as he steps out to survey the scene. The asphalt is strewn with MONKEYBONE MERCHANDISE - stuffed dolls, games, lunchboxes. SKID MARKS show where the TRUCK which was carrying all this SWERVED...

...and slammed into the rear of a BUICK REGAL, pinning it up against a TELEPHONE POLE. STU races up to the Buick. Its front end is mashed up like an accordion, but the occupants - a couple of TEENAGERS dressed for the prom - seem to be okay.

STU
Hey! Are you guys all right in there?

TEENAGE GIRL
We're fine.

STU
That stupid monkey banner! It fell on my windshield - it practically killed us all!
(to JULIE)
God, Julie, if anything had happened to you -

JULIE
I'm fine, baby. We're all okay. We were lucky.

STU
I'd better go report this...

He spots a PHONE BOOTH and starts across the street. On the way there he plucks a STUFFED MONKEYBONE DOLL off the pavement and CHOKES IT with both hands.

JULIE stays behind with the prom kids. The TEENAGE BOY in his tux is glassy-eyed, miserable beyond description.

JULIE
Dad's car?

The BOY begins to SOB softly. JULIE nods in sympathy.

Then: EVERYONE WINCES. The air is full of a horrible CREAKING noise, like nails on a blackboard...

TEENAGE GIRL

What was that? Did you hear that?

The horrible CREAKING NOISE continues. JULIE turns. Behind her, the TELEPHONE POLE that the car slammed into is beginning to TEETER. Then it TOPPLES. Directly toward...

JULIE

STU!!

ON STU - IN PHONE BOOTH

He sees JULIE running toward him and holds up a single finger.

STU

Operator? I want to report an accident.

Finally he glances up - just in time to see the TELEPHONE POLE coming down toward the phone booth like a gigantic sledgehammer. His eyes widen. The STUFFED MONKEYBONE slips from his grasp...

CLOSEUP - MONKEYBONE

A HORRIBLE CRASH. SCREAMS. CAMERA ZEROES IN on the MONKEYBONE DOLL which STU was holding, surrounded by broken glass, its face twisted into an insane, almost *macabre* grin.

The screen fades to PITCH BLACK for a few seconds...until we hear a DISTANT SIREN, and an IMAGE comes swimming into focus...

STU'S POV: ON JULIE

He's in the back of an ambulance, with PARAMEDICS all around him, working feverishly. JULIE hovers above him, holding his hand.

JULIE

Stu? I'm here, baby. It's me. It's Julie. I love you. You're gonna be okay, baby, I promise -

All at once he seems to be RECEDING from JULIE and the others - as if SINKING THROUGH the bottom of the stretcher, and BEYOND - through the floor of the ambulance! JULIE's voice grows weaker, more distant:

JULIE (V.O.)

I'm here, baby. I won't leave you...

And then all trace of the ambulance is gone, and he's floating down through some strange LIMBO, surrounded by the silhouettes of billowing SHROUDS, with the sound of BIRDS CALLING all around him...

An AWFUL MECHANICAL RATCHETING NOISE fills the soundtrack. STU's eyes close - and when they reopen, he finds himself in:

EXT. TROLLEY - MOVING

A tiny ROLLER-COASTER CAR descends from dense clouds down the length of an impossibly long and rickety METAL TRACK. The track leads through a

vast black VOID...

...to a tiny ISLAND floating in the darkness...an island that looks not unlike a disembodied FIST.

And, as the car draws closer, the fist begins to OPEN - tulip-like - turning into a HAND, with a full-sized TOWN nestled in its palm! In the town, CARNIVAL LIGHTS begin to glitter. MUSIC begins to tinkle...

EXT. PLATFORM - NIGHT

The car - a one-passenger job with a CARTOON ANIMAL FACE on its prow - stops with a lurch. STU steps out onto a fog-shrouded TRAIN STATION PLATFORM. Before he knows it, the little car DEPARTS behind him. He's stranded - alone.

STU

Hello? Anybody? - Am I dead?

(beat)

PLEASE. I'D LIKE TO KNOW IF I'M DEAD.

Off in the fog is a big wheeled CART with the sign: "PSYCHOLOGICAL BAGGAGE CLAIM." There STU finds two SUITCASES and a BACKPACK. He examines the TAGS. They all belong to him!

He sits on the edge of the cart, opens a SUITCASE, and pulls out...

- A bagged copy of Marvel Comics' *Conan the Barbarian* #1;
- An 8mm reel of highlights from Ray Harryhausen's *Jason and the Argonauts*, with swordfighting skeletons on the box cover;
- A SPIRAL NOTEBOOK, its cover labelled "STU M. - GEOGRAPHY," its inside pages covered with drawings of dinosaurs and airplanes;
- Transparent plastic models of "THE VISIBLE MAN" and his mate, "THE VISIBLE WOMAN," with a couple of spare organs that young STU never quite found a place for;
- A vinyl LP of "BREAD'S GREATEST HITS," which STU quickly slips back into the suitcase lest anyone see it.

As he gathers his bags, he hears odd SQUEAKS and CHITTERING...

RACCOON (o.s.)

Carry your bags, mister?

A STRANGE FURRY CREATURE pops out from beneath the platform and yanks on STU's pants leg. It looks like a raccoon, but it's FLAT - an animated pelt. Before STU has time to let out a yell, a FLAT SNAKESKIN comes slithering out from beneath the baggage cart...

SNAKE

Cigars, mister? Genuine Coobans!

STU looks down and sees a SQUASHED RABBIT humping his leg.

RABBIT

Wanna meet my sister?

These bordertown types are known as ROADKILL, and they're sporting the tire tracks to prove it. STU SCREAMS, shakes them off, and RUNS.

EXT. DARK TOWN GATES - NIGHT

A long stone STAIRWAY leads to decorative wrought-iron GATES. SHADOWY CARVED SPHINXES sit on either side. As STU races up the steps, a sputtering NEON SIGN comes to life overhead:

D RK TOWN

A FANFARE BLOWS as the creaky gates begin to part. A SPOTLIGHT hits the SPHINXES - and they COME TO LIFE! They rise up on their hind legs, put on boater hats. One of them blows a note on a kazoo...

SINGING SPHINXES

*Weeee...welcome you to Dark Town
And while you're in your coma
This odd amusement park-town
Will be your Home Sweet Homa -*

STU bolts THROUGH THE GATES, with the ROADKILL TRIO right on his heels. The indignant SPHINXES exchange a look of outrage.

EXT. DARK TOWN - MIDWAY - NIGHT

It's a carny town, a tourist trap, seedy and nightmarish. Despite the festive trappings, there's something *off* about it - an air of neglect and decrepitude - as if they'd tried to turn Alcatraz into Disneyland, and given up halfway through.

STU looks back and sees the ROADKILL gaining on him. He spots a small group of OTHER HUMANS...

STU

Help me. Please. There's animals. They -

The humans just YAWN. They're COMA VICTIMS, just like STU. He ditches one of his SUITCASES as the ROADKILL come after him.

VOICE

Pony ride, Mister?

He turns and spots a helpful-looking fellow in a COWBOY OUTFIT. The COWBOY is in fact a CENTAUR - rider and mount rolled into one!

The characters who run this place - the BARKERS, TICKET-TAKERS, and RIDE OPERATORS - are all weird HYBRIDS, part human, part ANIMAL. They could be the ancient Gods of some primitive culture - reduced to working as street entertainers in this ramshackle resort town.

STU pinballs down the street, bouncing from one shock to another:

- JOE CAMEL, doing community service as a STREET SWEEPER -

JOE CAMEL

Hey, Mister. Mister! Got a smoke?

- a YETI selling SNO-CONES from a cart outside the MORPHEUM THEATRE.
The marquee reads:

LIVE! NIGHTMARES! LIVE!
First-Run - Continuous Performances - Popular Prices
Rated NR-H - Not Recommended for Humans

- A CYCLOPS working as a barker at the Penny Arcade;
- A VIDEO RENTAL OUTLET - "BAD DREAMS VIDEO," offering your favorite nightmares, cult and classic, three nights for \$2.95. A THREE-HEADED DEVIL emerges from the shop carrying a sackful of videos - and recognizes STU, much to his horror.

HEAD #1

Hey, aren't you Stu Miley?

HEAD #2

We're big fans.

HEAD #3

Could we have your autograph?

Reduced to babbling hysteria, STU ducks into the nearest building. Above the door, an ANIMATED NEON SIGN shows a happy boozier lifting his martini glass, then falling over flat on his back, at which point his eyes are replaced by the traditional cartoon X's. This is the COMA BAR.

INT. COMA BAR - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

STU bursts in, flattens himself against the wall as the ROADKILL skitter past outside. He's given them the slip. He looks around.

The bar's a weird melange of styles. COMA VICTIMS ride around in wheelchairs refurbished as BUMPER CARS, drinking cocktails from IV bottler. A four-armed ELEPHANT GOD is at the Mighty Wurlitzer while a MERMAID VOCALIST in a half-shell belts out the wistful lyrics of Johnny Mercer's "DREAM." And over at the BAR...

BULL (o.s.)

New in town, huh? What're you drinking?

Out of breath, STU edges toward the bar as the BARTENDER, BULL, turns away to grab a fresh glass.

STU

Chasing me - animals - horrible -

BULL

Animals? What kind of animals?

STU GAGS. BULL is a full-fledged MINOTAUR, body of a man, head of a BULL. His features are CUBIST - weirdly squashed over to one side.

BULL

Yeah, I know - Picasso. Guernica, right? That's what everybody says - although personally, I don't see the resemblance. What are you drinking?

STU

Uhh - martini?

BULL
Olive or eyeball?

STU
Olive. - Where exactly am I?

BULL
Dark Town. Land of nightmares. I'm Bull.

STU
Stu Miley.

BULL
Yeah, I've seen a few of your dreams. You're quite a celebrity down here.

STU gives him a cockeyed look. BULL points to a MONITOR mounted over the bar, on which a panicked man in pajamas is trying to run barefoot through a great sticky SEA OF MOLASSES.

BULL
I told you, it's the land of nightmares. Same on every channel...all the stuff people dream, after they have the extra anchovies.

He changes channels with a remote. Now we see a guy falling through midair, arms and legs flailing, falling, falling, falling...

STU
Jeez, it all looks like bad late-night cable.

BULL
Sad commentary, huh?

Now a small muffled VOICE speaks from the area of STU'S BACKPACK:

DISEMBODIED VOICE (o.s.)
"Bull," huh? That's cute. What's your last name - "Shit"??

BULL
(turning angrily to STU)
I beg your pardon?

STU
I didn't say anything.

VOICE (o.s.)
Nice face. Lemme guess. You were in a bullfight ...with a Mack Truck!!

STU claps both hands over his mouth to prove he's not the one talking. BULL glowers at him, snorting STEAM out of both nostrils.

STU
I was, uh, just getting ready to leave...

BULL
Yo, Jumbo. We got us some kind of ventriloquist here.

The ELEPHANT GOD from the Wurlitzer organ comes lumbering over.

VOICE (o.s.)

Well, hello, sailor. Get a lot of dates with that ding-dong on your face??

BULL and JUMBO rear back to PUNCH STU'S LIGHTS OUT. He's saying his prayers when his BACKPACK begins to BULGE and QUIVER - and a SMALL FURRY BEAST pops out, CACKLING HIS HEAD OFF!!

MONKEYBONE

Just kiddin', folks! Drinks for everybody -
(*pointing at STU*)
On him!! HIYA, BOSS!!

BULL and JUMBO back off, STUNNED. The monkey grabs STU'S FACE and plants a big wet SMOOCH right on his NOSE. STU SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

TIGHT ON an EEG monitor. There's a sudden BLIP on the readout.

NURSE

Just a spike, ma'am. It happens. It's perfectly natural with coma patients.

JULIE

I'm a doctor too. I know this man's brain -

JULIE strokes STU's limp hand. He's COMATOSE, cocooned in a tangle of wires and tubes. His head and shoulders are heavily bandaged. He's hooked up to as much machinery as you can cram into one room.

DOCTOR

Go home, Doctor. Rest. Come back when you can do us some good.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Dead on her feet, JULIE stumbles toward the exit. As she's leaving she passes the WAITING ROOM -

WOMAN'S VOICE

Julie?

She turns and sees an older colleague from work - ALICE - waiting in the doorway. Hovering right behind ALICE is HERB. And behind *him* -

It appears that almost everyone in the waiting room is a friend of JULIE and STU's. Disheveled and groggy, they rouse themselves and make their way over to JULIE's side. She's overcome with emotion.

INT. STU & JULIE'S HOUSE - ENTRY - NIGHT

The sound of the key in the lock is met by INSANE BARKING. JULIE and ALICE enter and are met by BUSTER, the pet basset - jumping and yipping like crazy after 24 hours without food or human company.

ALICE

Now don't pick a fight. I'm staying over.

JULIE

Oh, poor Buster. He hasn't been fed in a day and a half. Let me get some food...

ALICE kneels to play with the dog. She hears a sudden GASP from the kitchen. JULIE is standing by the open refrigerator, wearing an absolutely stricken expression...

INT. KITCHEN - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

ALICE finds JULIE holding a bottle of champagne - *Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame 1989* - all wrapped up in a bow and ribbon.

ALICE

Special occasion?

JULIE

I don't know. I guess it was...

She bursts into tears. ALICE sits her down at the kitchen table and takes the champagne from her.

ALICE

Don't get all poignant. We're keeping this bottle on ice. When he comes around you're going to need it.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER - NIGHT

A limp JULIE soaking in a steamy tub, one arm dangling over the side. On the vanity is a framed PHOTO STRIP, four poses for a dollar. In the first three, STU and JULIE are making outrageously goony faces. In the fourth, they imitate the stern-faced farm couple from *American Gothic*.

She gazes at it for a long, long time. Eventually she smiles.

INT. SECOND BEDROOM/STUDIO - NIGHT

OPEN on two PHOTOS, mounted in a single frame. On the left, BUSTER KEATON, droopy-eyed, in his familiar porkpie hat and vest. On the right, a Photoshopped image of BUSTER THE BASSETT HOUND, in the same pose, also wearing Keaton's hat and vest.

These photos are on the wall of the cramped room which serves as STU's studio and JULIE's office. MONKEYBONE STRIPS are scattered across the drafting table. ALICE is making up the sofa as a guest bed.

As she's hanging her coat in the closet she comes across an ACRYLIC CANVAS in the back, stashed behind a battered portfolio and a box full of spiral-bound sketchbooks. She pulls it out. She's obviously disturbed by it, but she can't tear her eyes away...

She's still gaping at the painting when JULIE enters in a terrycloth robe.

ALICE

Who did this?

JULIE

Stu. That was right about the time we met.

ALICE

When he first came in to the sleep lab?

JULIE

Yeah...before your time.

The canvas depicts a group of SURGEONS with the faces of wolves. They're standing over a HUMAN PATIENT, replacing his internal organs with MACHINE PARTS. The style is at once cartoony and unsettling.

ALICE

Jesus, honey...he always joked about you curing him, but I never realized what you cured him from.

JULIE

He hadn't gotten a good night's sleep in years. The nightmares would wake him up, and he'd start right in painting...

(chuckling)

That boy looked like pluperfect hell.

ALICE's gaze goes from the nightmare paintings to the MONKEYBONE strips tacked up over the drafting table.

ALICE

How do you get from here - to there?

JULIE

Switch hands.

ALICE

What?

JULIE

I'm serious. It was bicameral disjunction - right brain and left brain out of balance. He was a rightie, so I made him switch the pencil to his left hand. Just to see what'd come out.

A smile comes to JULIE's face. She settles in on the floor beside ALICE and digs through the various portfolios until she comes up with a quickie CARTOON on the back of a napkin - the prototype for...

ALICE

Monkeybone?

JULIE

Left-handed, he was funny. He'd been doing all this scary, intense work...then he found out he could draw this stuff, and make me laugh, and he liked that.

(shrugging)

And then the nightmares just...stopped.

ALICE

Wow - two guys in the same brain. - Which one did you fall in love with?

JULIE smiles at the cartoon. She isn't telling.

JULIE

I've put a ton of work into that boy, Alice. I am not going to let him get away from me.

INT. ICU - MORNING

JULIE, in her white lab coat, wanders through Intensive Care and finds a WOMAN hunched over STU's bed, BAWLING HER EYES OUT.

JULIE

Kimmy...?

KIMMY looks up. She's crying so much she can barely recognize JULIE.

KIMMY

Oh, Julie...my poor Stu...my poor baby brother...

JULIE

When'd you get in?

KIMMY

An hour ago.

(gathering herself)

I tried to prepare myself, but I didn't know he would be like, like this. I can't even bear to look at him... How about you? You're okay?

JULIE

I'm fine, Kimmy. Fine.

KIMMY

I had so much I always wanted to say to him. At least he had a chance to give you the ring.

JULIE

The ring...

KIMMY

Grandmama's ring. The engagement ring. He asked me to send it to him -

JULIE turns to look at STU in the bed. The certain knowledge that he was about to propose is like a knife in her heart. KIMMY feels bad as well, having let the cat out of the bag, but before they can hash it out -

VOICE FROM BEHIND

Mrs. Brewster? Julie? I'm Dr. Edelstein.

Cheery DR. EDELSTEIN enters. He shakes hands with the women, then checks STU's readouts, making notations on his clipboard.

DR. EDELSTEIN

Vital signs have stabilized. That's good.

KIMMY

Can you give us a realistic sense of my brother's chances?

DR. EDELSTEIN

He's held on this far. We can't do much but wait and see.

KIMMY

But these...machines are what's keeping him alive, is that right?

This remark sends a shiver down JULIE's spine, but she keeps silent.

DR. EDELSTEIN

At the moment, yes.

KIMMY

Can you give me a realistic idea...of how long this is going to last?

DR. EDELSTEIN

Comas are unpredictable. He could wake up today, tomorrow, a month from now...

KIMMY

Honey, I have to clarify this. The thing is, Dr. Edelstein, my brother has an absolute horror of doctors - hospitals - needles - all of it -

JULIE

Kimmy, he doesn't know what's going on. He doesn't even know he's in a -

KIMMY

Please, Julie. This is not easy for me. Our father took a long time to die. A long time. It just about killed us all. And Stu and I made a pact that when our time came - we wouldn't let it drag out.

JULIE

It's too soon even to - talk about that!

KIMMY

Give me a date, Doctor.

DR. EDELSTEIN

Three months.

(pause)

There's always some brain damage. But at three months...the chances of coming back shrink dramatically with every day.

KIMMY

I want him to have every chance, Doctor. We can certainly give it...three months.

No one says anything. But both women look at STU, and then at each other, and everyone knows exactly where everyone else stands. JULIE has a sinking feeling that STU is working on a 3-month deadline.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT - TELEVISION SCREEN

A beauty pageant - shapely INGENUES in EVENING GOWNS being introduced by an EMCEE with enormous teeth.

EMCEE

And now the last of our five finalists...Miss Michigan...GEORGE T. WILLOUGHBY!

GEORGE is a pudgy shmoe with a small pencil mustache who's wearing glasses, a necktie, and NOTHING ELSE. He steps forward, holding a briefcase in front of his crotch, looking EXTREMELY MORTIFIED.

EMCEE

And now George will give us his analysis of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle as it pertains to third-world economics!!

CAMERA PULLS BACK - and we realize we're in:

INT. COMA BAR - NIGHT

where BULL the BARTENDER and a number of PATRONS are watching GEORGE's nightmare on the TV mounted over the bar.

Onscreen, NUDE GEORGE is sweating bullets. He has no idea what to say, and the audience is beginning to laugh at him. In a desperate, feeble attempt to buy time...he begins to SING.

GEORGE

I'm gonna wash that man right outta my hair!

In fact he goes into a little softshoe, keeping the briefcase poised over his crotch. Unfortunately, THE CASE POPS OPEN, dumping frilly LINGERIE all over the stage. The weeping GEORGE must crawl around on all fours to retrieve it...

By now the onlookers at the bar are CRACKING UP. All except one - the lonely, disconsolate fellow on the last stool, nursing a martini - STU.

BULL

Hey, Stu, why so glum? Everybody loves a good humiliation nightmare.

STU

Three months, Bull. Three months tonight. Three months since the accident - and I'm no closer to going home than I was then.

BULL

Aw, buck up. Have another 'tini.

STU

I'm sick of martinis. I'm sick of the waiting, and the carnival rides, and watching people's nightmares. And of course, I need not add -

He GRIMACES at MONKEYBONE, who's stretched out atop the mighty Wurlitzer at the other end of the room. The MERMAID CHANTEUSE is singing a Dietrich number, "The Laziest Gal in Town" - or at least trying to, because MONKEYBONE is caterwauling behind her. By the time she gets to the grand finale, he's practically BAYING AT THE MOON.

Pissed off, she SHAKES her FIST at MONKEYBONE and pulls the lid of her clamshell SHUT. This suits MONKEYBONE just fine, as it leaves him alone in the spotlight to soak up what little applause there is.

MONKEYBONE

Thank you, thank you for that very modest response. I know you're all in comas, but still. And now...it's dedication time!

He gestures to JUMBO, the elephant organist, who begins to vamp.

MONKEYBONE

We've got a special dedication tonight. This one's from my ever-lovin' boss, Mr. Stu Mopey - I mean Miley - and we're sendin' it up to a very special lady in the land of the living. Yes, I do mean Julie - the beautiful Miss Julie - who, if she has a brain in her head, is shackled up right now with some good-lookin' doc she met in the E.R.!

(pointing at STU)

JUST KIDDING, BUDDY! Because if we know anything about Miss Julie, we know she is faithful, loyal, and true. Even if her boyfriend is an eggplant. Which is why we're dedicating...this very special tune...to her. Jumbo?

JUMBO's tasteful vamping gives way to a RAUNCHY ROCK BEAT - and MONKEYBONE begins STRUTTING across the top of the piano, bumping and grinding and shaking his booty to the tune of -

MONKEYBONE

MAH baby does the Hanky-Panky! UNHH!
MAH baby does the Hanky-Panky! UNHH!

MONKEYBONE sings the same poignant line over and over until STU comes storming over from the bar and YANKS HIM off the Wurlitzer by the scruff of his scrawny NECK.

A trouper to the end, MONKEYBONE WAVES at the crowd even as STU drags him off to an empty table in the farthest corner of the room.

STU

You have humiliated me in public for the last time.

MONKEYBONE

I doubt that. Besides, I can't help myself. I'm just a figment of your imagination.

STU

Then you can learn to act normally. I had to!

MONKEYBONE

Aw, come on. You know you love me. You're a

masochistic pain freak. You gotta love me.

STU

I am not. And I don't gotta.

MONKEYBONE waves and winks at every female who passes by. STU whacks him upside the head.

MONKEYBONE

You are too! Mooning over Julie when we could both be gettin' some o' this fine local action. It's not like she's gonna know. Out of town, under five minutes, and in a coma don't count.

STU

Sorry. The women here aren't my type. Most of them aren't even my species.

Cocktail waitress KITTY, a seven-foot cat-faced feline sex bomb, arrives in her skimpy black dress and shows STU a Cheshire-cat grin. MONKEYBONE reclines, Odalisque-style, on the table.

MONKEYBONE

Helloooooooooo, Kitty.

KITTY

Hiya, Stu. Refill on that martini?

MONKEYBONE

I'd like something with an umbrella in it and a really smutty name. Like a...Sex Behind the Sofa with Your Parents in the Same Room Watching "The Brady Bunch."

STU

Nothing for him! He's being repressed.

KITTY

Is something wrong, Stu? You seem so tense.

MONKEYBONE

Aaah, it's the same as always...poor mope's just wishin' he was me.

STU

I've been trying to get through to the head guy - the nightmare god - what's his name?

KITTY

Hypnos?

STU

Yeah. To see if he could expedite my case. But I wait, and I wait, and...I'm starting to think I'll never see her again.

A softie at heart, KITTY sits across from STU and takes his hand.

STU

I shoulda proposed, Kitty. That way at least

she'd know how I feel. That way she'd...wait for me.

She leans forward sympathetically. From this particular vantage, MONKEYBONE has an unobstructed view of KITTY's cleavage. And so does STU - although he's not quite as obvious about staring.

KITTY

She is waiting for you, Stu. I know she is. Guys like you don't come along that often. Believe me, I know.

MONKEYBONE slinks over behind STU - up onto his shoulder - and whispers into his ear:

MONKEYBONE

My Fellow Americans. I have a dream. Let us boldly go where no man has gone before.

STU

(trying to ignore him)

I'm sorry, Kitty - what were you saying?

KITTY

I mean it, Stu. You're one in a million.

KITTY is holding the cleavage pose for an unnaturally long time. Her furry tail begins to swing back and forth playfully in the air. It's hypnotic - like a windshield wiper.

STU stares at it. MONKEYBONE stares at it. And MONKEYBONE'S TAIL responds by straightening...stiffening...bending upward slightly.

STU

I'm not so special. I'm just - kind of -

STU is suddenly aware of something LONG, RED, and WET unrolling onto his shoulder. It's a TONGUE...dangling out of MONKEYBONE'S OPEN MOUTH. STU lets out a YOWL OF SHOCK.

Blushing bright red, he GRABS THE TONGUE and shoves it manually back into the monkey mouth whence it came.

MONKEYBONE

Come on, pal! It was a compliment! You'da done the same if you had the equipment!

STU

THAT DOES IT! BACK IN THE PACK!

MONKEYBONE

FORGET IT! NO WAY! I'M NOT GETTING -

STU LUNGES at MONKEYBONE - who JUMPS OVER HIM, BOUNDS off the edge of the table, and grabs hold of a CHANDELIER.

MONKEYBONE

I'm reportin' this to my union!!

STU

What union?

MONKEYBONE

The sidekicks' union! Me, Tonto, and Robin the Boy Wonder. You top bananas better watch your ass!

STU grabs a CHAIR and swings it at the chandelier. MONKEYBONE makes a series of SUBMARINE NOISES -

MONKEYBONE

DIVE! DIVE!!

- and DIVES - directly between KITTY's breasts into her skimpy black dress!! STU circles around KITTY, following the undulating monkey-sized BLOB that's tunnelling around under her dress. Finally MONKEYBONE pops out of the BACK of the dress and NUZZLES KITTY'S EAR:

MONKEYBONE

I left my phone number in your undies. Try not to lose it in traffic.

STU

Sorry, Kitty! I'll be right back after I choke my monkey.

MONKEYBONE runs under the pool table. STU is giving chase when - suddenly - a DOOR blows open in the chill night wind.

EVERYONE IN THE BAR freezes in place.

For there, in the doorway, is a looming, ominous figure - the most dreaded figure in all of Dark Town -

- a GRIM REAPER, nine feet tall and swinging a scythe, come to take some hapless coma victim to the land of Death!

EERIE WINDS WHISTLE and the shroud FLUTTERS in the night breeze as the REAPER looks from face to face. For a moment he focuses on STU. STU backs away involuntarily, with a mounting sense of dread...and MONKEYBONE jumps into his arms, clinging to him fearfully.

But the REAPER moves on - past each COMA VICTIM in turn - finally STOPPING in front of a TINY, WIZENED, PRUNELIKE OLD GENT in a wheelchair, who looks to be 110 years old at least.

MONKEYBONE

Him. Whew. About time!

REAPER

EARL BIEGLER. I'VE COME -

EARL

Can't hear you, young fellow. Speak up!

REAPER

EARL BIEGLER, I'VE COME TO GIVE YOU - aw, hell. Here.

GASPS OF ANTICIPATION all around the room as the REAPER hands EARL a long white ENVELOPE. EARL opens it slowly and removes...

...an oversized rectangular TICKET...the size of a Hershey bar, made of SOLID GOLD, with the letter "E" stamped upon it.

VARIOUS CHARACTERS around the barroom react, in hushed voices:

BULL

An E-Ticket!

PATRON

He got a reprieve.

KITTY

Good for him! He's gonna wake up!

EARL throws his crutches aside, jumps out of his chair, and DANCES A JIG, waving the ticket over his head. STU stares at him with naked envy.

STU

No. No. Not him.

EARL

So long, suckers! See you in the funny papers!

EARL does an end-zone dance toward the door. One by one, OTHER PATRONS get up from their seats to watch EARL's departure.

EXT. COMA BAR - STREETS - NIGHT

The COMA VICTIMS shuffle toward a BIG RIDE across the midway.

It's a "TEST YOUR STRENGTH" machine - the kind where you slam down a mallet and try to ring the bell. It's surrounded by crocodile moats and storm fences and electrified barbed wire, and a big sign reading PRIVATE - NO ADMITTANCE.

EARL, still jubilant, inserts his E-ticket into a receptacle at the entrance. A DRAWBRIDGE LOWERS, and CAROUSEL MUSIC cranks up, and CARNIVAL LIGHTS blink on, and FIREWORKS rocket into the sky...

All around them, faces turn skyward. CLOUDS are parting. An EDDY of swirling colors is forming DIRECTLY ABOVE the E-ticket ride - and a PINPOINT HOLE opens up at its center.

The "TEST YOUR STRENGTH" machine has been outfitted with a SEAT where the bell-ringer should be. Once EARL has settled in, a GIANT MECHANICAL MAN lifts its enormous mallet...

...and SLAMS IT DOWN on the lever end of the machine, sending EARL ROCKETING UPWARD toward the hole in the sky. DING!! The SEAT hits the BELL, but EARL keeps going - up - up - UP...

Then, with a distinct POP, he's gone. Over the rainbow...home.

STU

He's ninety. He's practically dead already. How come he goes back and I stay here?

MONKEYBONE

Maybe he wanted to pick out his own casket?

STU
(turning abruptly)
HEY!! HEY, YOU!!

STU marches across the street to the GRIM REAPER - who's climbing onto his WINGED BICYCLE and seems shocked that anyone would want to chat with him. MONKEYBONE scurries alongside, terrified.

STU
He got an E-ticket. Where's mine? When do I get to wake up??

MONKEYBONE
Stu? Stu? Let's not disturb the nice Reaper.

STU
I've been stuck down here for months. Somebody had better start paying attention, or I'm gonna - I'm gonna kick ass!

MONKEYBONE
Let's not kick the nice Reaper's ass.

MONKEYBONE practically swoons. But the REAPER just stares at STU:

REAPER
SORRY, BUD. OFF-DUTY.

The REAPER climbs onto his winged bike and PEDALS OFF down the midway. STU lets out a HOWL OF FRUSTRATION.

MONKEYBONE
Stu? Stu? Let's calm down, talk things over. How about some comedy relief? Okay. Brontosaurus walks into a gay bar...

STU BOOTS MONKEYBONE aside. They're at a GAME STALL manned by Elsie the Cow - the one where you throw baseballs at milk bottles. STU picks up a baseball and HURLS IT at the departing REAPER.

The ball hits the REAPER smack on the head, knocking him off his bike!

STU/MONKEYBONE
(in unison - impressed)
Damn.

MONKEYBONE cowers in fear as the REAPER gets up, shaking a fist at them. But STU isn't intimidated. He grabs another ball and winds up.

MONKEYBONE
Stu? Stu? I think weve got this backwards. Your behavior...is disturbing me.

The REAPER, scared shitless, jumps back on his bike and PEDALS OFF as the ball whizzes past. STU starts chasing after him!

The REAPER turns down a side street and pedals up an incline - one of the "fingers" of the hand that holds Dark Town. When the bike hits the end of the finger, it TAKES OFF into the void and KEEPS ON GOING.

STU

That's right. Run! And don't come back unless you've got my e-ticket!!

The REAPER vanishes. STU sits dejectedly on the edge of the curb.

STU

Who am I kidding? I'm never gonna get out of here. I'll never see her again.

Just then, a multi-armed MESSENGER BOY in royal livery toodles past on a CHILD'S SCOOTER. He stops...

MESSENGER BOY

Miley? Stu Miley?

STU looks up. Six arms reach into six pockets. Finally the MESSENGER finds an ENVELOPE and hands it over. Inside is an ENGRAVED INVITATION:

**YOU Are Invited to a
PAJAMA PARTY
at HYPNOS' HIDEAWAY
Penthouse Suite - 10 PM Sharp
"If You Snooze, You Lose"**

STU'S EYES widen with excitement as the MESSENGER scoots off.

STU

Hypnos! The god of nightmares! Do you know what this means, Monkeybone? He's finally going to hear my case. I'm going home!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STU'S PRIVATE ROOM - MORNING

As she's done every morning for the last three months, JULIE brushes STU'S TEETH. Although she looks a bit more worn and haggard than when we saw her last, she always affects a cheerful manner around STU - on the off chance that he might be aware of her presence.

She packs the toothbrush away, runs a hand along his stubbly cheek.

JULIE

I think we can go another day without shaving. Long as you don't look like you're growing one of those stupid little goatees.

She opens up the entertainment section of the daily newspaper.

JULIE

Hey, there's an article about the Monkeybone show. They've run that one episode about eight times now. Herb says it gets higher ratings every time...they're hoping you'll give 'em some new material soon...

(long, bored pause)

Wanna hear another joke?

entitled *The Book of Raunch*. She pages through it for a moment.

JULIE

Okay...let me see...here we go. A plane full of explorers crashlands in New Guinea; they are captured by a cannibal tribe and taken to the chief's hut, where...wait a minute. I know this one...

(reading ahead)

You stinker! You swiped this joke for a Monkeybone strip!

She whacks him on the arm with the book. No response at all.

JULIE

Okay. Let's try again. Why did the pervert cross the road?

The sound of SOBBING interrupts her joke. She looks up and sees KIMMY standing in the doorway, red-eyed and crying.

JULIE

Kimmy! What's the matter?

KIMMY

This is hard for me, Julie...very hard...but it's been three months now, and...

(long pause)

I gave the order.

JULIE just stares at her for a beat or two, refusing to understand. Then it sinks in. Her hand goes to her mouth in horror and grief.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. HYPNOSPHERE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

CAMERA TRACKS up the seemingly endless length of the HYPNOSPHERE - up, up, THROUGH a heavy layer of clouds, to the ROTATING PENTHOUSE DOME of the building...

...which is festooned with oodles of 18-INCH DSS SATELLITE DISHES.

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - NIGHT

ELEVATOR DOORS open, and we glide into the swank, swingin', space-age bachelor pad of HYPNOS, God of Sleep. A giant flying CUPID welcomes us, tiny bumblebee wings somehow keeping his vast bulk aloft.

HYP'S HIDEAWAY occupies the entire penthouse floor, and there's always a party in full effect. A rotating disco ball flashes colored light on walls, floors, and ceilings covered with shockadelic OP-ART PATTERNS.

MONKEYBONE

Now this...is livin'.

Of course, a party needs party animals - and the DARKTOWNERS on the scene are in fine fettle, working up a sweat on the dance floor. DJ SLEEPY ZZZ'S has three turntables spinning at once.

As STU wanders through, he gets a big surprise. Reproductions of his old NIGHTMARE PAINTINGS are hanging on the walls! They've been turned into ONE-SHEETS for the coming attractions at the Morpheum.

MONKEYBONE

Y'call that art? Why, my three-year-old can paint better than that.

STU

Like you'd know. You started out on the back of a napkin, you little...doodle.

Scowling at each other, the boys turn their backs and part ways. We follow MONKEYBONE to the wet bar, where he almost immediately bumps into a statuesque GORGON with a full head of writhing SNAKES.

MONKEYBONE

Hey! Like the do. So tell me, are you a, uhh... natural snakehead?

GORGON

Only fifty dollars to find out.

MONKEYBONE

Fifty dollars?! Bite me!

GORGON

You got it, big boy.

He grins and shrugs: what the hell. As they head for a back room, the BARTENDER hands him a SNAKEBITE KIT.

A look of apprehension crosses MONKEYBONE's face. But before he can change his mind, the GORGON'S HAND yanks him out of frame.

STU, meanwhile, is crossing the dance floor, moving among glittering animal-people who DANCE in their bizarre, uninhibited way. A FIVE-LEGGED WOMAN - the bottom half of her body a big human HAND - SMILES at STU as he passes. He tries to talk to her, but she's dancing, and with five constantly moving legs it's difficult to get in close.

STU

Say, have you seen Mr. Hypnos?

HAND WOMAN

Hyp? He was here a while ago. Aren't you Stu Miley? The nightmare guy?

STU grins meekly, nods yes. She pulls him over to dance.

HAND WOMAN

I heard you were going to be here tonight. This is so cool!

JUMBO the ELEPHANT GOD is dancing in ungainly fashion nearby. His trunk swings out and hits one of the HAND WOMAN'S arms - which SNAPS OFF like marble statuary. Before she can let out a squeal, he does it again. Now she's armless - a regular Venus de Milo!

HAND WOMAN

You fat slob! Watch what you're doing!

JUMBO

Why don't you slap me? Go on, slap me!

HAND WOMAN

Come on, Stu. Let's go where the real fun is.

She leads him over to the sunken living room. Among the other guests, we see a CYCLOPS, a YETI, a BBQ PIG. A number of sofas and lounge chairs are arranged around a big crystal ORB in the center of the room.

The ORB is where nightmares happen. Although the perspective shifts and the locales change abruptly, as in a movie, all the nightmares have a 3-D quality - as if they're taking place right here in the room with us!

STU

Wow. Live feed, huh?

HAND WOMAN

You bet. Hyp gets all the best stuff before it goes out to the theatres.

STU grins in anticipation. He finds an empty chair and starts to sit down - but there's a SLUG with a MAN'S HEAD already in it!

SLUG WITH A MAN'S HEAD

HEY!

STU

Sorry.

STU picks another seat. The HAND WOMAN sidles up alongside him.

HAND WOMAN

Shh! There's a new one just starting.

EXT. FIELD OF FLOWERS (NIGHTMARE ORB)

In long shot we see a handsome young couple dressed in paisley prints. Emerging from a sylvan glade, they kiss in golden sunlight. Then the MAN breaks free - sprints through knee-high sunflowers to the middle of the field, where a picnic blanket is waiting.

CLOSEUP - STU

HIS FACE GOES PALE as he recognizes the man in the paisley shirt.

STU

That - that's me.

CYCLOPS

Nice shirt, dude!

EXT. FIELD OF FLOWERS (NIGHTMARE ORB) - DAY

Paisley-shirted STU pours champagne for two. Toasts his beloved - who is, of course, JULIE, the dreamer of the dream.

He pulls out a little velvet RING BOX and offers it to her. But when she tries to take it, he pulls it away, teasing her, and STEALS A KISS.

Suddenly the two of them are locked in a tight embrace, rolling together through the flowers, LAUGHING, full of joy.

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - THAT MOMENT

The DARKTOWNERS are rubbing their hands together in anticipation of horrors to come. STU looks from one misshapen face to the next, his heart pounding with dread.

STU

What is this? Who's dreaming this??

(beat)

Julie??

YETI

Hey, keep it down!

EXT. FIELD OF FLOWERS (NIGHTMARE ORB) - DAY

JULIE rolls onto her back on the grass, FACE AGLOW. Only to realize... that STU IS NO LONGER THERE BESIDE HER.

She looks around. Gets to her feet. Turns. And the BACKGROUND behind her MORPHS suddenly into...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (NIGHTMARE ORB)

The room is decorated for a FAREWELL PARTY, complete with streamers and confetti. KIMMY, DR. EDELSTEIN, various MEDICAL PERSONNEL and FRIENDS are wearing party hats, lifting champagne glasses in a toast to the guest of honor...the comatose Stu!

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - THAT MOMENT

The DARKTOWNERS clustered around the orb can barely conceal their animal excitement. It's obvious that the nightmares they're watching are more than mere entertainment - they get some kind of addictive, visceral charge from the spectacle of human terror.

STU

JULIE!!

He tries to push his way forward to the orb. An angry CYCLOPS elbows him aside. A YETI grabs his coat and pushes him out of the way.

HAND WOMAN

Stu!! What are you doing? Chill out!!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (NIGHTMARE ORB)

COMATOSE STU stands in the center of the room, UPRIGHT and IMMOBILE in a party hat. A weird UMBILICAL CORD extends from his navel to a huge groaning BELLOWS DEVICE - like an artificial lung, it's all that keeps him breathing.

EDELSTEIN hands a pair of OVERSIZED CEREMONIAL SCISSORS to KIMMY, and she CUTS THE CORD, as if opening a new mall. Applause all around. JULIE races toward STU in slo-mo, SHRIEKING -

- as he DEFLATES into a LIMP PUDDLE OF FLESH before her eyes!!

JULIE

No. No. STU!

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - ON STU

JULIE's distress is killing him. Yet all around him, DARKTOWNERS are cackling their heads off, growling, howling, punching their fists in the air like rowdy drunks at a football game. He LOSES IT ALTOGETHER.

STU

JULIE! I'M HERE, DOC! DON'T LET THEM PULL THE PLUG! I'M HERE!!!

He won't be stopped this time. He makes for the orb - climbing over sofas, pushing guests aside, knocking over their drinks -

CYCLOPS

HEY! Watch it, you stinkin' gringo -

STU

JULIE! I'M HERE! I LOVE YOU!

Somehow, JULIE has heard him!! Down in the nightmare orb, her dream self is looking UP, trying to locate the source of STU's disembodied voice! He struggles to reach the orb, but the CYCLOPS is holding him back.

JULIE

Stu? STU...?

STU breaks free and FLINGS HIMSELF on the ORB - which SHORTS OUT in a haze of smoke and sparks, abruptly ending the nightmare. JULIE's image vanishes - and STU gropes at the air, DESPAIRING.

INT. STU'S PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

The real JULIE awakens suddenly and lets out a scream of her own.

JULIE

STU!!!!

Only now does she realize where she is. She's fallen asleep in the visitor's chair next to STU's bed. The clock on the wall reads 1:15 AM.

STU'S READOUTS are spiking like crazy.

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

STU is being dragged across the dance floor by the YETI and JUMBO THE ELEPHANT GOD. HAND WOMAN brings up the rear.

JUMBO

Who invited this schmuck, anyway?

HAND WOMAN

Oh, it's my fault. I thought he was cooler than that.

STU

Listen. Please. It's my girlfriend. I've gotta get a message to her...

But just then a hush falls over the room, and someone screams...

WOMAN'S VOICE

HYP!!!

A WALL PANEL does a 180-degree turn, and a CIRCULAR BED rotates into the room. Languishing atop it, garbed in a silk robe which exactly matches the black & white checkerboard pattern of the bedspread...

...is a CHUBBY, GRINNING, SLEEPY-EYED SATYR, with horns and hooves. TWO WASP WOMEN are with him on the bed, brushing his furry goat legs and feeding him grapes.

As STU fights his way over, he sees an odd LUMP wriggling under the bedcovers. Out pops MONKEYBONE, clutching a bottle of champagne!

MONKEYBONE

I knew I left it in there somewhere.

He shakes the bottle, pops the cork, and SPRAYS SPURTING BUBBLY at HYPNOS, the GIRLS, and everyone else within firing range!

HYPNOS

Haw! I like a monkey with vision!

MONKEYBONE

You said it, partner!

Hilarity all around. STU snatches MONKEYBONE off the bed -

STU

How'd you get in there?

MONKEYBONE

Stu... It's a party.

STU

Mr. Hypnos - sir - I needed to talk to you -

HYPNOS

Wait a minute. Stu Miley, right? Boys and girls ...Mr. Stu Miley, in the house!

(leading a round of applause)

This is an honor. We see a lot of nightmares down here, but yours are like caviar, man. You da shits!!

STU

Mr. Hypnos, I saw a dream. My girlfriend was having it. She dreamed they were pulling the plug on me. She was watching me die.

HYPNOS

Uh huh. And?

STU

Well, I have to get a message to her. I have to let her know I'm okay. Until I can get out of

here...

A vaguely embarrassed look crosses HYPNOS's face. All the nearby DARKTOWNERS stare at their shoes, clear their throats.

STU

...which is actually what I wanted to talk to you about. See, I've been here three months -

With a brusque gesture, HYPNOS sends the party girls packing. He slings one arm around STU's shoulder and pulls him aside.

HYPNOS

Kid - didn't they tell you about this party?

STU

Tell me what?

HYPNOS

It's a special kind of party. A farewell party. Do you...get what I'm saying?

STU

Farewell? You mean - you mean I'm -

STU EXPLODES WITH JOY. He practically dances a jig.

STU

I'M GOING HOME! I'M WAKING UP! HEY, EVERYBODY!
I'M OUTTA HERE. I...

One by one, the celebrants turn their backs and slink discreetly away.

STU

I think I...I'm about to... Am I mistaken, or don't I get to... Is there some...

HYPNOS

Y'see, Stu, as I understand it, you made this pact with your sister...no life support?

MONKEYBONE's jaw drops. He slaps himself across the forehead.

MONKEYBONE

Pact? Pact? NO LIFE SUPPORT??

STU

Well - yeah - but that doesn't...apply. It was different then. I was depressed. My life is great now. I'm in love!

MONKEYBONE marches back and forth across the bed, wearing a dimwit's expression as he MOCKS STU in a singsongy voice...

MONKEYBONE

Pull the plug! Pull the plug! Take my organs! I don't need 'em! I don't need no! Life support! I'm an idiot! Pull the pl--

STU grabs the monkey and clamps a hand over his mouth.

STU

Besides, Julie wouldn't...she'd never...

HYPNOS

Actually, Stu, Julie doesn't get to decide.
That's why she was having the nightmare.

(an embarrassed shrug)

They're pulling the plug at nine AM.

STU

Nine AM! But that's - twelve hours.

In checking his watch, STU removes his hand from MONKEYBONE's mouth. The singsong resumes...

MONKEYBONE

I'm so dumb! I deserve to die -

STU

Mr. Hypnos, you run this place. I'm begging you.
There's gotta be something I can do.

HYPNOS

Stu, I like you personally, I admire your work,
but I'm just the God of Sleep. This is Death's
bailiwick.

STU

Maybe you could talk to Death!

HYPNOS

Me? Me, go crawling to Death? My friend, it will
be a cold, cold day in Las Vegas, Nevada, before
I go crawling to that piece of -

HYP shuts up. Looks around the room, as if he's afraid of being overheard. Then he gestures to the boys to join him on the bed.

They climb aboard eagerly. HYPNOS hits his remote...

INT. HYPNOS'S BEDROOM - ON BED

...and they rotate AWAY from the party. Privacy at last.

HYPNOS

Now Death is not what you would call a people
person, like me. Death is a putz - and I should
know. I'm his little brother.

STU

You're Death's brother?

HYPNOS

Oh yeah. Mr. By-the-book, Stick-Up-the-Ass, My-
Way-or-the-Highway Death. Believe me - over the
course of eternity, you get pretty damned tired
of that schtick.

(spreading his hands)

So I need a job. He sticks me in this broke-down

amusement park, with a buncha animals to run it.
I'm supposed to be grateful?

MONKEYBONE

The penthouse is pretty swank, though.

HYPNOS

Thank you. I decorated it myself.

STU

Guys, I don't mean to be rude, but I only have eleven hours and fifty-three minutes to...

HYPNOS

Oh, right. Cheating Death. There's one thing you might try. Only one guy in history ever pulled it off. Well, actually two. Actually, no, there was that other guy who...well, very few people have done it.

STU

Hyp, I'll do anything.

MONKEYBONE

Me too. And I mean anything. Ask the chicks in the back room.

HYPNOS

You've seen those E-tickets, right? Well, what you gotta do...is go into the Land of Death... and steal an E-ticket right out from under Death's nose.

STU

Land of Death. How do I get there?

HYPNOS

Kid, listen: that's all I'm saying. And you didn't hear it from me.

HYP hits the remote. The bed begins to ROTATE OUTWARD again.

HYPNOS

You've heard of a fate worse than Death? That's what's waiting for you if you screw up.

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - A MOMENT LATER

HYP gives the boys a wink and a thumbs-up, then wanders off to shmooze his other guests. MONKEYBONE shakes STU's hand.

MONKEYBONE

Fate worse than death! Well, it's been real, boss, but I gotta go buff up my resum. ANYBODY HERE NEED A FIGMENT?

STU

Fine! Don't put yourself out. I'll go to the land of Death alone.

MONKEYBONE

Stu, you have my absolute confidence. - DEAD
MAN! DEAD MAN WALKING!!

STU

(grabbing him by the throat)

I've got one chance to get back to Julie, and
I'm gonna take it - with or without you.

He turns and stalks off. MONKEYBONE stands there blinking.

MONKEYBONE

Hey. Aren't you gonna talk me into it?

STU

No. Goodbye. Thanks for nothing.

Stunned, MONKEYBONE scurries along behind him, PLEADING.

MONKEYBONE

You gotta talk me into it. You'll screw up on
your own. I mean, a guy's gotta have a sidekick.
For moral support! Wisecracks - snappy banter -
(wrapping himself around STU's leg)
It's the land of Death, Stu, the Land of Death!
Don't go in there without your comedy relief!!

STU

All right. You can come.

MONKEYBONE

OH, THANK YOU! THANK YOU! TH--
(suddenly realizing)
Something went very, very wrong here.

STU

Now we just gotta figure out how to get there.

As if in reply, a PALE, SPECTRAL PRESENCE comes drifting across the
dance floor - an eight-foot-tall GRIM REAPER.

The boys duck behind a POTTED PLANT to watch as he zeroes in on the WET
BAR - where a beautiful coma victim, LULU, is drunkenly making out with
another sloshed corpse-to-be, FRED.

REAPER

LULU LA RUE. I HAVE COME FOR YOU.

LULU doesn't notice. She continues grappling with FRED. Muttering, the
REAPER dives in and tries to disentangle them.

REAPER

LULU LA RUE, I HAVE COME FOR -

LULU

Shay, you're kinda cute.

She ditches FRED and throws her arms around the REAPER. Repulsed, he
pushes her away, props her against the nearest wall -

- and TOUCHES HER with one bony finger above the heart! It's like

throwing a switch. Her body stiffens. Her EYES cross. Her TONGUE droops out of her mouth. She makes a noise like a DIAL TONE.

The true horror of death is that it makes you look like a total idiot. The REAPER pulls a collapsible HAND TRUCK from beneath his shroud and starts maneuvering LULU onto it.

FRED

Say there. How 'bout one for the road?

The REAPER ignores him. FRED holds up a cocktail glass.

FRED

Hold this for me, pally.

The REAPER heaves a sigh and takes the cocktail glass. FRED grabs a pitcher filled with some luminescent tropical concoction...

...and POURS IT down the REAPER's front!

FRED

Ooopsy daisy.

ON STU AND MONKEYBONE - BEHIND THE PLANT

WINCING at the REAPER in his sopping wet, pink-stained shroud.

MONKEYBONE

Is that what they call "death with dignity"?

The REAPER wrings out his shroud and grabs the hand truck. As he wheels LULU past the boys, MONKEYBONE pops up with a helpful hint:

MONKEYBONE

Two words for you, my friend: club soda.

STU claps a hand over MB's mouth as the REAPER turns down a hall.

EXT. DARK TOWN GATES - NIGHT

The still-muttering REAPER wheels LULU toward the entrance to Dark Town. The boys are skulking along behind him at a discreet distance.

STU

He's taking her to the land of Death, right? So all we've gotta do is...hitch a ride!

(beat)

Stop shaking! I'll protect you.

MONKEYBONE

Oh, sure. Mr. Action Hero! Why couldn't I be Arnold Schwarzenegger's figment?

The REAPER approaches the GATES. He presses a remote-control BEEPER and the meshing teeth of the gates slide back far enough to let him pass through.

STU realizes they've only got an instant to make their move. He DIVES through the gates at top speed. As soon as he's on the other side, he hears a nasty CLANG behind him...

MONKEYBONE is caught - his body contorted like a pretzel, woven in and out among the meshing teeth! STU gives him a good hard YANK, and he slips out like a strand of fettuccine.

They hear RUMBLING on the tracks outside. A CAR is arriving!

EXT. DARK TOWN GATES - OTHER SIDE - NIGHT

The REAPER loads LULU into the little roller-coaster and climbs aboard. The car begins to move. STU and MONKEYBONE get there just in time to jump onto the LUGGAGE RACK in the back!

ON ROLLER-COASTER - MOVING - THAT MOMENT

They peep over the back of the car at the REAPER and wonder what to do next. MONKEYBONE spies a TOOL KIT mounted under the rack - opens it, and pulls out a big, nasty MONKEYWRENCH.

The boys nod in agreement. MONKEYBONE clambers over the back of the car and hoists the wrench. STU covers his eyes. WHANG!

STU looks up - sees a confused MONKEYBONE alone in the car with LULU. Now he clambers into the car as well.

STU

Where'd he go??

MONKEYBONE

I don't know.

There's no trace of the REAPER - except for a rumpled shroud, a wristwatch, and a St. Christopher's medal on the floor of the car. The boys exchange a puzzled shrug. MONKEYBONE tries on the watch.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SLEEP LAB - PRE-DAWN

The wall clock says it's not quite 3 AM, yet JULIE has managed to round up all her co-workers: ALICE, HUTCH, CLARISSA, *et al.* They're groggy, disheveled, un-made-up, unshaven. But they're there.

JULIE

Six hours. That's when they pull the plug.
That's how long we've got to wake him up.

(beat)

Now these are Stu's old charts from five years ago, when he first came to the sleep lab...

She points to a series of EASELS where HUTCH and ALICE have been tacking up EEG printouts, engram maps, etc.

JULIE

...they show incredibly intense nightmare activity. The chart below is his new chart...

The lower chart shows a JAGGED SPIKE virtually identical to the one on the upper chart. JULIE pauses for effect - then pulls on the edge of the lower chart, OPENING IT UP like a gatefold -

The onlookers GASP. Opened accordion-style, the lower chart shows the SAME SPIKE recurring again and again, TEN TIMES OVER!

HUTCH

Holy shit.

JULIE

He's stuck in a loop - a nightmare loop.

(beat)

Anybody here know what Oneirix is?

CLARISSA

Sure - it's an enzyme. The brain secretes it during violent dream activity...

HUTCH

It's nightmare juice. Julie and I were on the team that learned to synthesize it. If those charts are right, Stu's swimming in the stuff.

(puzzled)

Are you thinking we can decrease the levels?

JULIE

No. I want to give him more. I want to give him a massive dose.

HUTCH

That's not going to stop his nightmare -

JULIE

I don't want to stop the nightmare, Hutch. I want to crank it up. I want to take it right off the charts. I want to scare him awake.

The group exchanges nervous glances: it's risky. JULIE claps her hands:

JULIE

All right! We have a plan. Let's move!

As the group swings into action, HUTCH pulls JULIE aside.

HUTCH

You know, Julie, even if this works - which it probably won't - that stuff is tricky. You don't know what it'll do to his brain.

JULIE

What'll it do if they pull the plug?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAND OF DEATH - NIGHT

A PANORAMIC VIEW of an impossibly grand, Gilded-Age TRAIN STATION. A central turntable is the hub for dozens of TUNNELS, which converge like the spokes of a wheel, disgorging long trains full of DEAD PASSENGERS from all over the world.

Far above, in the dizzying reaches of the vaulted DOME that crowns the

station, REAPERS on FLYING BICYCLES spiral about like mosquitos, bringing dead souls to their final reward.

This is Thanatopolis - land of Death - truly the end of the line.

A WET SQUEEGEE scrapes across the frame - wielded by a GRIM REAPER in a jumpsuit bearing the logo of "LAND OF DEATH WINDOW WASHERS, INC." The noise is irritating, so a REAPER on the inside snaps the venetian blinds shut, cutting off our view.

CAMERA PULLS BACK, and we realize we've been seeing all this through the wall-to-wall windows of...

INT. DEATH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It looks like the observation bridge in the nose of the *Nautilus*; the decor is ornate, and the office equipment - vacuum tubes, pipe intercoms, etc. - is on loan from the Jules Verne Museum of Defunct Technology.

REAPERS are bustling about everywhere. One of them pushing a HAND TRUCK laden with oversized crates bearing the label "DEAD SOULS."

REAPER

Batch of souls - just back from Processing.

DEATH'S ASSISTANT

Put them over there with the others.

He unloads the crates in a corner of the room, where SCORES of crated souls are already piled up.

DEATH'S ASSISTANT

Your Grimness? We have a new shipment -

DEATH (o.s.)

Yeah, yeah, yeah... I'll get to it...

We can't see DEATH himself - just the back of a tall swivel chair. With much creaking, it rotates around - bringing us face-to-face with...

CLOSEUP - DEATH

He's not at all what you'd expect. He's a chubby-cheeked, bespectacled ACCOUNTANT TYPE...a harried bureaucrat, just trying to do his job. There's something sweet, almost avuncular about him.

There's an open crate of DEAD SOULS on his desk. Dead souls take the form of PERFORATED PAPER DOLLS...two-dimensional, underwear-clad, usually wearing expressions of shock. DEATH pulls a sheet from the box, detaches the dead soul, and outfits it with a cut-out TOGA.

Now he places it in a big diorama - with OODLES of toga-clad souls staring up at a scale model of an active volcano. He throws a switch and BEAMS as the volcano spits BLOBS OF KETCHUP into the air.

DEATH

Last Days of Pompeii...now there was a Great Moment in Death.

DEATH'S ASSISTANT

If I may point out...it is 12:05...

DEATH, grumbling, digs into the box and pulls out another soul. His eyes light up. He clutches the sheet with trembling hands.

DEATH

I can't believe - oh, man, I - SINATRA!! Do you know how long I've been waiting for this?

Sure enough, the doll on the sheet is Ol' Blue Eyes. DEATH digs in a desk drawer and pulls out a SHOEBOX DIORAMA...DINO and SAMMY standing at microphones, with a third, center mike conspicuously open.

DEATH'S ASSISTANT

Make that 12:07, your bleakness...the dispatch team is waiting...

Grumpy, DEATH shoves FRANK, DEAN, and SAMMY back in the drawer.

DEATH

Okay, okay, send 'em in. Jeez.

INT. DEATH'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

A FLUNKY opens the office door, and a long line of REAPERS glides in. DEATH lugs an enormous musty leather-bound BOOK over to a long table. He snaps his fingers and WHISTLES.

His pet HELLHOUND - a tiny plump weiner dog, with a HORNED DEATH'S HEAD for a face, comes skittering across the office floor and jumps into his lap. Meanwhile, the ASSISTANT turns on a chugging, card-shuffling UNIVAC COMPUTER, which spits out a length of TICKETAPE.

ASSISTANT

Chakasandra Singh, New Delhi. Snakebite.

DEATH checks the name against the master list in his big ledger. He pulls out a document and puts his STAMP on it - the DEATH WARRANT. This he gives to the REAPER at the head of the line.

ASSISTANT

Mulrooney, Lavinia P., Dearborn, Michigan. Head crushed in a pants press.

As the line moves along, we notice an odd-looking REAPER nearing the desk. His gait is wobbly. His head bobs independently of the rest of his body. There's a big, luminescent STAIN on the front of his shroud.

DEATH

YOU!!!

EVERYONE FREEZES as DEATH points a bony finger DIRECTLY AT the wobbly REAPER with the iridescent stain.

DEATH

You're the customer, okay? You're about to die. It's a big occasion. A formal occasion. And as you shuffle off this mortal coil, the last thing your eyes behold is a Grim Reaper covered

with...
(sputtering)
What the hell is that??

TWO VOICES come out from under the shroud at once:

STU
Cranberry Margarita.

MONKEYBONE
Sex on the Beach.

Much COUGHING and THROAT-CLEARING from under the shroud. By now DEATH'S LAPDOG is GROWLING at the STAINED REAPER, and DEATH can't hear what anyone is saying. He shushes the dog.

DEATH
...What??

STU
Salty Dog.

MONKEYBONE
Sufferin' Bastard.

The little hellhound YIPS VICIOUSLY. DEATH whacks him on the rump.

DEATH
Well - whatever it is - you get that shroud to the dry cleaner ASAP! Now where were we?

ASSISTANT
Clarke P. Devereaux, San Francisco.
Complications resulting from coma...

DEATH
Oh, wait. Says here he's supposed to recover.

A loud chorus of "A WWWW's" from the disappointed REAPERS. DEATH stamps the word "REPRIEVE" on Clarke's warrant.

His ASSISTANT crosses the room. In the far wall is a steel-reinforced VAULT DOOR with a hydraulic wheel - the kind you see at banks. The ASSISTANT dials in a combination, turns the wheel, laboriously pulls the door open and STEPS INSIDE...

...returning, a moment later, with a priceless gold E-TICKET!!

The UPPER HALF of the STAINED REAPER begins to gyrate wildly.

CLOSEUP - ON STU - UNDER THE SHROUD

MONKEYBONE is doing an agitated TAP DANCE on his head. His TAIL whips repeatedly across STU'S FACE.

INT. DEATH'S OFFICE - BACK TO SCENE

The REAPER in front of the boys stares at the E-ticket, crestfallen.

DEATH
Take this to Dark Town. Sad to say, he's gonna live another forty years.
(a consoling pat on the shoulder)
Sorry. Nobody said this job would be easy.

The ASSISTANT hands the REAPER a YELLOW MAILMAN'S POUCH containing the

E-ticket. But before he can depart, the STAINED REAPER - aka STU and MONKEYBONE - jumps to the front of the line.

MONKEYBONE

Say, Death, just out of curiosity, could we maybe swap jobs with that other guy? See, we've been meaning to drop in on Dark Town - I mean I've been meaning to...

DEATH is stunned by this unprecedented breach of protocol. The other REAPERS in the line are ABUZZ.

DEATH

...I beg your pardon?

MONKEYBONE

I got relatives there. I...EEP!!

CLOSEUP - ON STU - UNDER SHROUD

An ENRAGED STU is yanking on MONKEYBONE'S TAIL, signalling him to shut up. MONKEYBONE, in pain, squeals repeatedly. Finally he reaches down and PUNCHES STU IN THE NOSE.

INT. DEATH'S OFFICE - BACK TO SCENE

The blow sends STU staggering. DEATH and the other REAPERS look on in astonishment as the STAINED REAPER does a bizarre DANCE across the floor, top half and bottom half moving independently. Miraculously, he manages to right himself and regain his balance.

DEATH

Now what were you saying?

STU/MONKEYBONE

(in unison)

Nothing.

DEATH

I'd like to have a word with you in private.

He stands and gestures toward a side room. The boys follow. The little HELLHOUND scampers out from behind the desk...

...and GRABS THE HEM OF THEIR SHROUD in its teeth! The boys keep on walking, but the shroud stays behind. Somehow they go three or four steps before they realize they've been exposed.

DEATH jumps a foot in the air and SHRIEKS. PANDEMONIUM ERUPTS.

DEATH

IMPOSTORS!! GET 'EM!!

The boys back toward the big WINDOW overlooking the trainyard. The REAPERS close in on them, BRANDISHING THEIR SCYTHES.

DEATH

HYPNOS! That little twerp! He's the one who put you up to this!

With a SCREECH, MONKEYBONE LEAPS into the air, BOUNDS OVER the heads and shoulders of the advancing REAPERS, and SNATCHES the yellow E-ticket pouch from the guy Death gave it to.

He bounds over a table and into STU's arms, with the precious pouch in hand! DEATH lets out a great rattling BELLOW OF RAGE.

His features begin to JITTER VIOLENTLY. HIS HEAD EXPLODES!!!

MONKEYBONE

Yowie.

Nothing to lose at this point. With a CRASH, the boys DIVE THROUGH THE BIG WINDOW overlooking the trainyard!

The headless DEATH gropes around blindly, waving to his ASSISTANT.

DEATH

Head. HEAD!!

The ASSISTANT opens a cabinet containing a half-dozen identical HEADS. He pulls out a spare and screws it onto DEATH's neck.

EXT. TRAINYARD - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

The boys land hard at the edge of the trainyard. Behind them, REAPERS are shepherding a line of newly arrived DEAD PEOPLE past a sign which reads: "PROCESSING - THIS WAY."

By the time they can dust themselves off, an ALARM starts blaring. REAPERS drop what they're doing, point at the boys. Panic time!

Nearby, a FLYING BICYCLE is propped up against a SIGN. Side-by-side they race toward the bike, each of them clutching the strap of the pouch, YANKING each other back and forth in a tug-of-war.

STU's bigger. He pulls the pouch onto his shoulder, and MONKEYBONE with it. They grab the bike, climb aboard, and pedal off -

- revealing the SIGN it was leaning against: "CYCLE REPAIR."

EXT. TRAINYARD - ON BICYCLE - THAT MOMENT

STU pedals onto the central turntable area. The BATWINGS on the rear of the bike flap feebly, but the flying bike just won't fly.

MONKEYBONE looks over his shoulder. A small ARMY of REAPERS, armed with scythes, is pouring into the trainyard behind them.

MONKEYBONE

Stu...Stu...

STU

IT'S NOT WORKING.

MONKEYBONE

There's a thing here! There's a switch!

MONKEYBONE fiddles with the ignition switch. A BLACK CLOUD OF EXHAUST belches violently from the rear of the bike, almost pitching them off

their seat. The batwings start to flap faster...

SPUT. BLAP. The engine BACKFIRES and DIES. STU fiddles with the switch, but it's no go.

MONKEYBONE

Stu...LOOK!

STU

What?

MONKEYBONE

Isn't that Lulu?

LULU is still sitting in her little car at the edge of the tracks, eyes crossed, mouth agape. MONKEYBONE waves brightly. Then a mob of REAPERS appears on either side of LULU's car, swarming out onto the tracks! STU starts pedaling for his life.

He makes for the TRAIN TUNNELS in the far wall of the station. ILLUMINATED SIGNS over the tunnels read: *Calcutta...Hong Kong...Waco, TX* ...and directly ahead...

Dark Town!! By now they're well out onto the turnaround. STU pedals frantically, BOUNCING over tracks and ties. MONKEYBONE bites his fingernails down to the quick as he watches the column of REAPERS pursuing them onto the tracks.

INT. OFFICE - ON DEATH

watching through a crooked spyglass as the boys pedal down the tracks.

DEATH

Now we've got 'em.

Petting his hellhound, he reaches for a WALL SWITCH.

EXT. TRAINYARD - HIGH ANGLE

The boys are almost at the Dark Town tunnel. The REAPERS, on foot, will never be able to catch them. But as they pick up speed for the stretch run, the GROUND begins to move beneath them!

DEATH has activated the TRAIN TURNAROUND - the rotating platform at the end of the line which allows an engine to reverse direction. Before they know it, they're doing a full 180!

EXT. TRAINYARD - ON BICYCLE

The boys continue to bounce down the tracks - but the tunnel entrances seem to be SPINNING before their eyes. Before they know it, they're pedaling directly TOWARD the mob of ANGRY REAPERS!!

MONKEYBONE

Weren't we just here?

STU jerks the handlebars HARD RIGHT and JUMPS THE TRACK he's on. He WINCES IN PAIN as the bike BOUNCES over a series of rails...

MONKEYBONE

What'd I tell you? You go to the Land of Death,
wear a jockstrap!

EXT. TRAINYARD - HIGH ANGLE

The REAPERS are SPREADING OUT around the turntable - encircling it! STU rides around the periphery of the great turning platter, but there's no getting off. They're completely surrounded!

EXT. TRAINYARD - ON BICYCLE

MONKEYBONE covers both eyes and wails in fear. But STU is rattling the ignition switch, making ONE LAST EFFORT to get the bike aloft...

THE ENGINE CATCHES. Trailing black fumes, the BICYCLE RISES! The REAPERS converge in its path, and RAISE THEIR SCYTHES...

But the bike JUST MANAGES TO CLEAR the tangle of scythes - leaving the REAPERS slicing at empty air!

INT. OFFICE - ON DEATH

Through the big window, he sees the boys leveling off, flying toward the DARK TOWN TUNNEL. They're moments away from a clean escape.

INT. STU'S ROOM - NIGHT

STU's readout monitors are registering frantic nightmare activity when JULIE and ALICE enter. JULIE sets her purse on STU's bedside table - removes a SYRINGE and a test tube filled with PURPLISH FLUID.

JULIE

What's the maximum safe dose?

ALICE

Most we've ever used is half a CC.

JULIE

Five CC's.

CLOSEUP - DEATH

He unlocks a RED SECURITY BOX on his wall. Inside is a TOGGLE SWITCH labelled "FATE WORSE THAN DEATH." He flips it...

CLOSEUP - THE SYRINGE

The plunger goes down, injecting fluid into STU...

EXT. TRAINYARD - ON FLYING BIKE

MONKEYBONE is sitting on STU's shoulder, facing backward, thumbing his nose at the REAPERS. STU glances back as well, laughing, unable to believe his own good luck.

Since they're both looking the wrong way, neither of them sees the sheer, monolithic WALL rising up DIRECTLY IN THEIR PATH.

It's no ordinary wall. It's STU'S PAINTING - the one ALICE found in the closet, the wolf-surgeon canvas from his scary period -

- and as the bicycle SLAMS INTO IT, it begins to TOPPLE OVER - PINNING STU against the ground underneath!

STU'S DREAMSCAPE

No bike. No monkey. Just STU - who finds himself on an operating table, with the world of the painting coming to 3-D life around him. The WOLF-FACED SURGEONS are closing in on him, baring their fangs, brandishing their scalpels and their metallic REPLACEMENT PARTS...

Suddenly the fabric of this weird reality TEARS - just like a rip in a canvas. A FURRY PAW reaches through - GRABS STU by the hand...

MONKEYBONE

This ain't my nightmare!

EXT. TRAINYARD - JUST OUTSIDE TUNNEL

MONKEYBONE PULLS STU through the rip in the back of the giant toppled canvas. The bike's there waiting. They hop aboard and pedal off INTO THE DARK TOWN TUNNEL a split-second before the REAPERS arrive to slice them to ribbons.

INT. DARK TOWN TUNNEL - ON BICYCLE

STU pedals so hard his heart is about to burst. He feels down at his side - the yellow pouch containing the E-ticket is still there. The REAPERS are clustered at the mouth of the tunnel, but they aren't following.

The boys WEEP WITH GLEE. It's a miracle - they've cheated Death!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DARK TOWN GATES - NIGHT

An exhausted STU huffs and puffs as he pedals the bike up the last stretch of track to the platform outside the gates. He climbs off the bike and stares back - it looks like the last thousand miles or so have all been uphill. He slings the YELLOW POUCH over his shoulder...

STU

You saved my life, Monkeybone. I never would've made it without you.

MONKEYBONE

Move it. We got exactly five minutes left.

STU

It's just...now that I'm leaving, I feel like there's lots of things I haven't said. Who's gonna look out for you? Are you gonna be okay when I'm gone?

MONKEYBONE

Oh, don't you worry. I'll be fine.

STU

You've been a hell of a figment, pal. I sure

wish I could take you home with me.

The gates slide open. STU passes through. But MONKEYBONE lingers behind a moment - just long enough for one of the SINGING SPHINXES to slip him a big, nasty BASEBALL BAT.

MONKEYBONE

Awwww. Worried about my feelings, are you? Well, there's a new twist.

STU

Don't joke around, little buddy. I mean it. I really do love y--

He turns - and MONKEYBONE MARK McGWIRES HIM upside the head! STU crumples in a heap...

MONKEYBONE

Love you too. Boss.

Laughing maniacally, MONKEYBONE STEALS the E-TICKET and goes RACING OFF DOWN THE MIDWAY!!

STU'S HEAD is swimming. It takes him a few seconds, but he gets to his feet. By now, MONKEYBONE is halfway to the E-ticket ride. Worse yet, STU'S WATCH reads 8:59 AM!!!

STU

Stop! Monkeybone! Please!!

EXT. DARK TOWN PLAZA - NIGHT

The STREETS ARE LINED with Darktowners ROOTING MONKEYBONE ON as if he's the hometown favorite in a big footrace. Which he is.

MONKEYBONE reaches the E-TICKET RIDE - drops his E-TICKET into the receptacle at the gate. The drawbridge lowers...

As STU sprints down the street, the SNAIL MAN oozes into his path - and TRIPS HIM! Before he can get up, cackling DARKTOWNERS converge on him - forcing him back to the ground and HOLDING HIM THERE.

STU

NO! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?? HE'S GOT MY E-TICKET!
HE'S GOT MY -

HYPNOS

Sorry, Stu. It's all part of the deal. We've got big plans for that body of yours!

EXT. E-TICKET RIDE - ON MONKEYBONE

The familiar miasma of COLORS is beginning to swirl in the night sky overhead. MONKEYBONE straps on a NEEDLE-TIPPED HELMET which makes him look like a simian DART. Then he climbs into the seat of the TEST-YOUR-STRENGTH machine and braces himself for the big ride!

EXT. DARK TOWN PLAZA - THAT MOMENT - RIGHT

ONLOOKERS APPLAUD as the robot lifts its mallet and LETS FLY. DING!! The

tiny figure of MONKEYBONE soars toward the swirling colors. His DART-HELMET strikes the black hole dead center.

STU WATCHES HELPLESSLY as MONKEYBONE penetrates the veil of the sky and VANISHES. He's still SCREAMING when the cackling DARKTOWNERS drag him out of the plaza by the heels...

STU
NO! JULIE! NO-O-O-O!

AERIAL SHOT - ON MONKEYBONE

ROCKETING UPWARD through the clouds in his dart-helmet, a look of SHEER EXHILARATION on his simian face. Somewhere a CLOCK begins to chime the hour...

INT. STU'S PRIVATE ROOM - 8:59 AM - DAY

MOST OF OUR CAST is either in STU's room or in the hallway outside.

PLUS we've got a man of the cloth; two LEGAL TYPES, with briefcases; and several of the NURSES from the facility.

ALICE squeezes JULIE's hand, and JULIE squeezes STU's. The minute hand on the clock hits twelve. KIMMY, sobbing into a handkerchief, gives DR. EDELSTEIN the nod. As he reaches for the power switch...

STU
EEEEEEPP!!

JULIE DROPS the hand with a gasp. The DOCTOR jumps half a foot.

All at once STU is sitting BOLT UPRIGHT IN BED...shaking his head and feeling around gingerly under the bedclothes, as if something VERY SHARP has just poked him in the ass.

STU
Oooie! That smarts!!!

KIMMY sighs and FAINTS DEAD AWAY.

STU blinks and looks about the room, disoriented. It could be because he's just come out of a coma after seven months. Or it could be because he's a MONKEY unaccustomed to hanging out in a human body.

JULIE
Stu?

STU
Julie?... Hey, you are a looker.

A BURST OF LAUGHTER from the others in the room. Weeping TEARS OF JOY, JULIE flings herself across the bed and hugs him tight.

While JULIE is hugging him, STU is checking out his new fingers and toes, RUBBING his sparse patch of CHEST FUR. DOCTORS and NURSES look on in amazement from the doorway.

NURSE
It's a miracle. It's a miracle.

DOCTOR

Two more ticks of the clock...

STU is almost oblivious to JULIE. He lifts up the sheet, sneaks a quick peek at his CROTCH, and grins delightedly.

JULIE gives him another kiss, WHISPERS in his ear:

JULIE

Thank you. Thank you for coming back to me.

What she *doesn't* know is that, although he still *looks* like STU, his body is now occupied by MONKEYBONE. Since he's now a hybrid character, man on the outside and monkey within, let's call him...

STU-BONE

Boy, I don't know about you guys, but I'm starving.

WIPE TO:

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

A damp, stonewalled VAULT with a barred door. STU is sprawled on the floor, OUT COLD, when a VOICE awakes him...

RAT GUARD (o.s.)

Heads up! Feeding time!

STU comes around just in time to see a PANEL sliding open in the ceiling far overhead. A torrent of JUNK - stale popcorn, half-eaten candy bars, molten ice cream pops, and sticky soda - rains down ON HIS FACE.

A horde of DARK FIGURES emerge from the shadowy catacombs around him. All at once, HANDS are grabbing at him from all directions. STU lets out a SCREAM - backs up against a wall -

STU

Who are y-- WHAT DO YOU WANT??

A MONGOL WARRIOR with a droopy mustache looks up at him.

GENGHIS KHAN

Dinner.

After a moment STU realizes that the DARK FIGURES have almost no interest in *him* - instead, they've been grabbing at the half-eaten SNACKS that cascaded down onto his head. A long-haired SLAV - RASPUTIN - dives on a Hershey bar with only one bite out of it, but an oddly familiar FAT MAN gets there first. STU gapes at him...

STU

Alfred Hitchcock??

EDGAR ALLAN POE

A fat bastard, but damn quick on his feet.

TYPHOID MARY

That's how he keeps his girlish figure.

STEPHEN KING

Gotta move fast in this crowd, or you'll starve.
Here you go, pal. Have some popcorn.

He offers STU a box of popcorn soaked in Dr. Pepper.

STU

What is this stuff?

STEPHEN KING

They feed us the slops from the Morpheum
Theatre. You hope for Jujubes, settle for
goobers. - I'm Steve. Steve King.

STU

Stephen King? What are you doing in here?

Various OTHERS emerge from the shadows to shake STU's hand.

JACK THE RIPPER

I'm Jack the Ripper.

TYPHOID MARY

Typhoid Mary.

ATILLA THE HUN

Atilla the Hun. Trade you a Twizzler for a box
of Raisinets!

STU

Atilla the - ! What in hell is this place?

As if in reply, a FANFARE sounds in the distance...

INT. DUNGEON - ENTRANCE

A RAT GUARD stands at attention by the door, TOOTING HIS KAZOO to
announce the arrival of an honored guest.

RAT GUARD

All hail the most glorious! Most eminent! Most
esteemed all-powerful God of Sleep...his Royal
Lassitude -

HYPNOS

Enough, enough, I'm hung over.

As HYPNOS passes, the DUNGEON DWELLERS race up to the WALL OF BARS that
separates the entry area from the dungeon proper.

TYPHOID MARY

Hyp! Did you bring me the cough medicine?

STEPHEN KING

Did you remember the night light I asked for?

EDGAR ALLAN POE

King, you pussy.

STEPHEN KING

Bite me, Poe! I hate waking up in the dark.

HYPNOS

Sorry, Steve, maybe next time. And how's our new guest settling in - ?

STU

YOU SET ME UP!!

STU LUNGES at HYPNOS - who backs up just out of reach.

HYPNOS

Easy, pal! I was coming to congratulate you. It ain't easy snatching one of those E-tickets. Steve here was the last guy to pull it off, and that musta been, what, 25 years ago...?

STU

Why'd you do it? What'd I ever do to you!??

HYPNOS

It's simple, Stu. We need nightmares - lots of 'em. So whenever we can swing it, we send a guy up to stimulate the flow...a nightmare maker! Like Steve here. Poe. Rasputin...we've been doing this all the way back to Atilla and Genghis Khan!

STU

But why me? Why'd you pick on me??

HYPNOS

The monkey, of course. It was his idea.

STU

Monkeybone...!?

HYPNOS

Nobody wants to be a sidekick, Stu. So one day he comes to us - he's got a proposition. We help him get your body...in return he gives us all the nightmares we want.

STU

You're nuts! I'm a comic strip artist! What's he gonna do - draw really scary cartoons??

HYPNOS

Oh, no, no, no. Y'see, Stu, as it happens, that girlfriend of yours figured out the chemical basis of bad dreams. And she just whipped up a big old batch of nightmare juice!

STU's face goes white as he realizes the point of the master plan.

HYPNOS

Oh, we're predicting a record box-office. It's like I always say...nightmares are your best entertainment!

HYPNOS marches off, chuckling. STU's head sinks into his hands.

EXT. STU AND JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

STU's back from the hospital. JULIE is removing his bags from the trunk of KIMMY's car while STU and KIMMY chat in the front seat.

KIMMY

I just couldn't stand the thought of you suffering. I love you so, I would never have... forgive me, Stu. Please forgive me.

STU-BONE

Kimmy. Chill. We've still got a pact. If anything ever happens to you, I'll be right there to return the favor.

(baring his teeth)

So drive carefully! From now on.

He climbs out. KIMMY is so rattled that she smacks bumpers with the car parked in front of her. She PEELS OUT with the hand brake still on.

INT. STU & JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

STU-BONE and JULIE enter with luggage. He stands there for a moment scoping out the unfamiliar surroundings. She sets the bags down, taps him on the shoulder.

JULIE

Welcome home.

STU-BONE grins insipidly. She kisses him, pulls him into a tight embrace - and then, overwhelmed by emotion, begins to SOB.

JULIE

Oh, baby, I can't believe you're back.

STU-BONE

Home sweet home, huh? Actually, I was expecting something a little swankier. How much loot does old Stu rake in, anyway?

She gives him an extremely puzzled look.

STU-BONE

Meaning me, of course. I'm referring to myself. You have to assume Monkeybone would be a pretty lucrative franchise...

JULIE

Baby? Why don't you just...rest on the sofa for a minute. I'll be right back.

She goes into the kitchen as STU-BONE plops onto the sofa. He spies a bowl of FRESH FRUIT on the coffee table and immediately tries to pick up a banana with his FOOT.

But he can't. He's got shoes on. Frowning, he unties his shoe, peels off his sock. His bare foot is in the fruit bowl when JULIE returns from the kitchen with a TRAY holding a chocolate cake and the bottle of CHAMPAGNE

Stu bought three months ago. The cake bears the message "WELCOME HOME - I LOVE YOU" in pink icing.

She sits beside him with the goodies. He removes his foot from the bowl, crosses his legs, WIGGLES HIS TOES at her. She smiles uncertainly. Then she opens the bottle of champagne and pours two flutes full.

JULIE

Here's to a bottle...we should have opened...
three months ago.

She finishes pouring, hands a flute to STU-BONE. His face is smeared with CAKE and ICING. He's scooped out a big fistful and crammed it right into his pie hole. He GRINS at her.

STU-BONE

Bitchin' good cake.

JULIE

Stu, are you...feeling okay?

STU-BONE

Sure. Why?

JULIE

You're acting kind of...odd.

STU-BONE

(grabbing another fistful)

In what way?

Then: we hear TINY NAILS skittering across the hardwood floors at high speed. And BUSTER THE DOG races into the living room!

JULIE

Buster! Look who's here!

STU-BONE tenses instinctively. The dog is yipping, wagging his tail insanely at the sight of his long-lost master - until he gets just a little bit closer, and senses that something is *very, very wrong*.

BUSTER sizes STU-BONE up and GROWLS. STU-BONE bares his teeth and HISSES. The dog LUNGES - and STU-BONE jumps up on the sofa!

STU-BONE

Oh shit, the cake!

He bends down, snatches up the cake, and CRADLES IT under one arm as he KICKS AT BUSTER from the sofa.

STU-BONE

Mine. Get back! MINE!!

The frazzled JULIE pours herself another jolt of champagne - a stiff one.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SOUNDS of JULIE taking a shower in the adjacent bathroom o.s.

STU-BONE is sprawled in bed, pillows propped up behind him, flipping channels on the bedroom TV with his trusty remote. The Discovery Channel happens to be showing a Jane Goodall special...

NARRATOR (on TV)

The mating rituals of the African silverback are as rigidly formalized as those of any animal we know - with the possible exception of man.

Onscreen a FEMALE GORILLA is presenting her furry haunches to an ALPHA MALE.

STU-BONE watches this erotic spectacle with a connoisseur's eye. He glances over at the open bathroom door and catches a teasing glimpse of JULIE'S SHADOW as she steps out of the shower and pulls on a robe. He SCRATCHES and SNIFFS, just to put himself in the mood.

On TV: MONKEY FOREPLAY, which consists of a pounce from behind.

NARRATOR (on TV)

In the wild, a dominant chimpanzee male is likely to engage in sex numerous times throughout the day, with a shockingly wide variety of -

STU-BONE mutes the nature special and sneaks up behind JULIE just as she emerges from the bathroom in her robe and towel-turban.

JULIE

What are you watching?

STU-BONE

Ohhh, nothing.

She tries to pass, but he grabs the belt of her robe and spins her around. He delicately unwraps the turban, then opens her robe and pulls it closed around the two of them. They kiss...

JULIE

You sure this is...medically advisable?

STU-BONE

Got a doctor on duty.

JULIE

Well. As long as it's okay with Monkeybone -

STU-BONE almost lets out a gasp of shock. *What does she mean???*

JULIE

(glancing downward)

- which it seems to be.

STU-BONE does a take. The good news is, she doesn't suspect. The bad news is, he's apparently *named after his creator's penis.*

INT. HALLWAY - A MOMENT LATER

All at once the air is full of Barry White's lush baritone on the bedroom CD player. Through the bedroom doorway we see STU-BONE and JULIE

waltzing romantically, belly to belly, still wrapped up in the single robe.

The only jarring note is BUSTER'S FRANTIC BARKING. The poor dog is stuck behind an accordion gate in the hall, going crazy, trying to warn his mistress about the imposter in STU's body. The dog is almost drowning out Barry White -

- so STU-BONE stops kissing JULIE long enough to reach over with one foot and KICK THE DOOR SHUT.

INT. BEDROOM - A MOMENT LATER

JULIE watches from the bed as STU-BONE begins peeling off his PJ's, going into a bizarrely formalized MONKEY MATING DANCE. He circles back and forth from one side of the bed to the other, making faces, grunting, FEINTING at her occasionally.

JULIE has some dim sense that this ritual is supposed to be erotic, but in fact, it's making her *damned nervous*. She finds herself scrunching up on the bed, trying to keep out of STU-BONE's way.

Now he LEAPS UP onto the foot of the bed. REARS BACK. And with an animal howl of triumph, POUNCES AT JULIE!

Terrified, she rolls out of the way. STU-BONE'S SKULL slams into the headboard.

JULIE

Oh, God!! Baby! Are you -

Dazed, he sits up. He tries to stand, but his rubbery legs give way, and he pitches over - CRACKING HIS SKULL AGAIN on the nightstand.

EXT. HALLWAY - A MOMENT LATER

JULIE helps a punchdrunk, staggering STU to the stairway.

STU

How was it? I don't recall.

JULIE

It was great, baby. Let's get you to the ER.

As they pass, BUSTER lets out a little growl of satisfaction from behind his gate. HOLD ON THE DOG's satisfied expression as STU-BONE loses his balance and topples down the stairs O.S.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

RASPUTIN, ATILLA, JACK THE RIPPER and STEPHEN KING are engrossed in their weekly Parcheesi game. STU is clinging to the bars, bemoaning his fate.

STU

I'm not like the rest of you. I'm just a regular guy! I'm not a "nightmare maker."

RASPUTIN

Neither are we. We got our bodies hijacked just like you. The guys who replaced us are the nightmare makers!

ATTILA

Like me. I was a mess sergeant in the Mongol Horde. I never wanted to be the Scourge of Asia. I just wanted a new recipe for yak!

JACK THE RIPPER

I was Jack the Haberdasher.

STU

But how? Did you all have sidekicks? Figments? ...Monkeys??

STEPHEN KING

Hey, I got screwed over by my own dog. Go through hell to get that E-ticket, and who winds up in my body? That darn Cujo.

TYPHOID MARY runs past, GIGGLING, pursued by a huffing HITCHCOCK.

RASPUTIN

He's sure got a thing for those icy blondes.

KAZOOS SOUND. The RAT GUARD appears to announce:

RAT GUARD

Miley. You got a visitor.

STU

...Kitty?!?

At the sight of STU behind bars, she breaks down CRYING.

KITTY

I'm so sorry, Stu. I wanted to tell you what was going on. I really, really liked you.

STU

Kitty...my situation is really not important. The thing is, my girlfriend is now living with, and possibly engaged to, a demented monkey.

KITTY

You're such a beautiful man. Look at you - stuck in this place, and only thinking of her.

STU

Listen to me! Is there any way I can warn her what Monkeybone is up to??

RAT GUARD

Time's up! Break it up, you two.

The RAT GUARD pushes STU back with a prod. KITTY reaches out...

KITTY

No! Give me a moment. Just to look at him. Oh,

Stu. Oh, my sweet, sweet Stu.

As she gazes at him, love struck, the overhead PANEL opens and a deluge of CRUD from the Morpheum lands directly on STU.

RAT GUARD

Feeding time!

KITTY BAWLS inconsolably as the RAT GUARD leads her away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

STU-BONE in pajamas and a head bandage, reading the morning funnies. He pounds the table, practically WEEPING with hilarity at the MONKEYBONE COMIC STRIP.

STU-BONE

Priceless! Priceless! This stuff just kills me!

JULIE

I'm heading in to work, baby. Are you sure you'll be okay?

STU-BONE

Oh yeah. There's just one thing I don't get. "Monkeybone Creator Awakens from Coma" that's a big story! That's front page news! But I can't find a word of coverage in this stinkin' rag!
(*shuffling through the paper*)
Hey. Don't I have a TV show?

JULIE

They only made the one episode. They've shown it about nineteen times.

STU-BONE

I need a new PR guy.

JULIE grins, plants a goodbye smooch on his forehead, and exits. He waits a minute, then reaches for the PHONE.

WIPE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The house is crawling with PRESS. There must be three dozen REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS and TV CREWS hanging on STU-BONE's every pronouncement.

STU-BONE

Yes, being in a coma taught Stu Miley a thing or two about life. Buckle your seat belts, for one. But seriously, Stu Miley is a different man today. I'm much homier.

The front door opens. A stunned JULIE pushes her way inside...

STU-BONE

And speaking of which, here's the light of my

life, the pert and saucy Miss Julie McElroy.

JULIE

I had to park two blocks away. Is something -

He pulls her to his side for a photo op. FLASHBULBS go off.

STU

I took the liberty of calling a little press conference. We're on TV, so don't say "shit."

,(covering his mouth)

Shit! I said it. Shit! I said it again!

REPORTER

Stu, what is it about Monkeybone that makes him so popular?

STU-BONE

Well, it's partly that he punctures all the phony pretensions of our modern society...and it's partly that he's a breathtakin', heartbreakin', rump-shakin' sex machine!

(beat)

Ask these gentlemen here. They're an important cog in my media machine. They'll be doing six new episodes of the Monkeybone show under my personal supervision.

He pauses for a photo op with MIKE CACHUELA and MIKE MITCHELL.

STU-BONE

It's all synergy. The show synergizes the strip, which synergizes the merchandising, which synergizes the religion, which synergizes the Barbara Walters special; and then, baby, we are all in the United Empire of Monkeybonia.

INT. KITCHEN - THAT MOMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

JULIE squeezes through the crowd, finds HERB working the phone.

HERB

I tell you, he's ready to merchandise. We've gotta move quickly. Get the toy guys, the burger guys, the lunchbox guys -

JULIE

Herb...what in God's name -

HERB holds up a finger. He's too busy talking. STU-BONE enters with the video crew in tow. JULIE somehow manages to sideline him.

JULIE

What's this about merchandising? You always hated merchandising!

STU-BONE

Well, baby, I do, but to look at it from another angle...there's a potload of money here.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

SUPERCHARGED POP MUSIC underneath as STU-BONE comes running around a corner - followed, a moment later, by a SCREAMING HORDE of BEAUTIFUL GROUPIES in black miniskirts and high heels. It's like something out of *A Hard Day's Night*, only more so.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

TIGHT on STU-BONE, head still bandaged, eyes closed, SNORING slightly. He wears a big monkey grin as he DREAMS the above.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A CARLOAD OF SUPERMODELS. They kill their engine in the middle of a busy intersection and climb out to join the mob chasing STU-BONE.

He cuts around a corner, ducks into an alley, and FLATTENS HIMSELF behind a dumpster. As the girls run past, he pulls out a handkerchief and MOPS SWEAT from his brow.

Then, with a what-the-hell twinkle, he steps out and FLINGS HIS SWEATY HANKIE into the midst of the GROUPIES. A CATFIGHT ensues as they scramble after this precious memento. The chase resumes.

Suddenly he realizes he's SLOWING DOWN...running in SLO-MO. Same deal with the girls on his trail. After a moment, he FREEZES. He can't move anything except his EYES; he looks right, left, up, down...

...and suddenly he sees HYPNOS winking into view directly in front of him! HYPNOS is perfectly capable of moving. He strolls right up to the frozen STU-BONE and SLAPS HIM REPEATEDLY, Moe Howard-style.

HYPNOS

You two-bit simian stooge. WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? We didn't send you up here to shake your booty and chase broads. We sent you up to make nightmares!!

STU-BONE tries to speak. All that comes out is a slo-mo DRAWL.

HYPNOS

Now find that nightmare juice and get to work. 'Cause you may be a free man during the day... but when you dream, your monkey ass is mine!

He winds up - throws a ROUNDHOUSE PUNCH at STU-BONE'S FACE.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

STU-BONE sits up suddenly in bed. For a moment he's relieved - *it was all a dream*. Then he realizes his FACE is swelling like a prizefighter's. His front tooth is loose. BLOOD is streaming from his nose!

STU-BONE

Eep!

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

He's awake, fully dressed, and fishing around in the pocket of JULIE's topcoat. He finds her KEY RING and tiptoes furtively to the front door.

STU-BONE

Friggin' Hypnos. I'll show him...

INT. SLEEP LAB - NIGHT

He unlocks the door and enters the darkened lab. Finds the dispensary area and kneels beside a LOCKED REFRIGERATOR. Then he shuffles through the keys on the ring until he finds one labelled "FRIDGE."

On the top shelf is a corked beaker of purple fluid bearing the label "ONEIRIX" with red DANGER stickers all over it. STU-BONE takes it out, flashes a sinister grin, and EMPTIES ITS CONTENTS into a similar beaker. Then he refills the original from a hip flask and replaces it.

He's just about to leave when he's startled by a series of SIMIAN GRUNTS and SQUEAKS - which are TRANSLATED in SUBTITLE:

FEMALE BABOON

Hey, handsome.

He turns and spots a SEDUCTIVE FEMALE BABOON who's confined to a CAGE in the corner. The conversation continues in MONKEY TALK.

FEMALE BABOON

Yeah, you. Come here, good-looking.

(beat)

Why don't you let me out of this cage?

STU-BONE

Hey, I'd love to, baby, but...it'd put me in hot water.

FEMALE BABOON

(caressing his chin)

I know how to be very, very grateful.

He pulls out a MATCHBOOK and scribbles a number on it.

STU-BONE

Tell you what, angel. When you get out, give me a call...

A LIGHT goes on suddenly in the outside hallway! STU-BONE tries to dive for cover, but the FEMALE BABOON grabs him by the belt and pulls him against the cage.

Startled, he drops the ONEIRIX BEAKER - which rolls out into the hall!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The beaker CLATTERS LOUDLY as it rolls through the lab door. STU-BONE'S HANDS grope through the doorway - but the FEMALE BABOON has got him by the pants leg and won't let go, no matter how much he rattles the cage. He can't quite pull himself through the door...

He unbuckles the belt. UNZIPS HIS PANTS. Keeps clawing toward the beaker. But he still can't quite make it, and the BABOON won't let go.

Now his pants are down around his knees. He keeps wriggling until his pants legs are entirely INSIDE OUT - and still he can't quite reach the beaker! His shoes are caught in his pants cuffs! RRRRRIPPPPP...

Freedom! Minus his pants, he GRABS THE BEAKER.

In FG through all this is a dim teenage JANITOR pushing his electric floor polisher. He has his Walkman on and he can't hear any of the mayhem behind him. He sings along atonally with the music:

JANITOR

Gettin' jiggy wit' it - gettin' jiggy wit' it...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A disheveled STU-BONE, back from his secret mission, is trying to take his clothes off so he won't wake JULIE. But she starts to rouse, so he jumps into bed fully dressed and pulls up the covers.

JULIE

Stu? Is that you? Where did you go?

STU-BONE

Me? Nowhere. I was asleep.

JULIE

Baby, don't lie. I know you went out.

STU-BONE

Not me. Nope. You must've been dreaming.

She pulls the covers back. He's still wearing his topcoat, shoes, socks, and shorts...but NO PANTS.

JULIE

You're wearing a topcoat, Stu. - Where are your pants?

STU-BONE

Well, Miss Smarty, if I didn't go out, I wouldn't need any pants. Now would I?

He pulls the covers up to his chin. The two of them lie there in the dark staring up at the ceiling.

INT. STU'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The entire Monkeybone brain trust has come to visit: HERB, syndicate head MR. BOWERS, and several CORPORATE REPS hoping to arrange tie-in deals. Host STU-BONE has started to take on a simian look: more prominent ears, flared nostrils, heavy beard stubble, etc.

The BURGER GOD REP sets a tray of FAST FOOD in front of STU-BONE - the packaging all covered with angelic haloed Monkeybones.

BURGER GOD REP

As you know, Burger God has 1700 outlets

nationwide...we're prepared to back a major TV buy to launch our Mega Monkey Meal.

(beat)

Go ahead. Try a bite.

STU-BONE takes a bite out of his Monkeyburger - looks pleased at first - then begins PICKING something out of his teeth.

HERB

What's the matter?

STU-BONE

I think it's a pig hair.

(examining a contract)

How much is McDonald's offering?

HERB

Less.

STU-BONE immediately signs the contract and shakes hands with the BURGER GOD REP. HERB consults his agenda.

HERB

Oh, here's something. The city zoo is kicking off a fund-raising campaign. They wonder if you'd be willing to appear at a benefit.

STU-BONE

How much?

HERB

Well, nothing. It's a benefit. But we could probably get People and Entertainment Tonight to cover it.

STU-BONE

I get it. We could give the public the impression that we were doing something... charitable. Brilliant!!

HERB

And last...you remember Bill here, from the Bazoom Toy Company? He's got a little something I think you'll like.

The TOY REP sets a LOCKBOX on the table. A stencil on the box reads "TOP SECRET." He pulls out a key and opens it to reveal...

...a tuxedoed, collector's-edition MONKEYBONE DOLL lying on a bed of CRUSHED PURPLE VELVET. He carefully removes the treasure from its chest. Its right hand is hinged. The doll's thumb is UP ITS REAR.

BAZOOM TOY REP

It's a prototype. Code name "Little Jack Horner." Go on - pull out his thumb.

STU-BONE stares at the doll - cautiously yanks its thumb out. We go to SLO-MO as the rising arm causes a NOXIOUS AEROSOL SPRAY to shoot out of Monkeybone's ass!

And we STAY in slo-mo as STU-BONE stares at the doll in wonderment and
Script provided for educational purposes. More scripts can be found here: <http://www.sellingyourscreenplay.com/library>

awe...a man in loooooove.

Still in slo-mo, the EXECs crack up, gag, hold their noses at the awful stank of it. STU-BONE is the only one not laughing. He reaches out to touch the doll - to fondle it adoringly -

- and suddenly we're back to REAL-TIME.

BAZOOM TOY REP

You know kids - they love anything gross...

STU-BONE

Kids? Kids?! This is a work of genius. This is art. This is the answer to all my prayers!

(beat)

Say - just a technical question - could you fill these babies up with a particulate solution of one part chemical enzyme to ten parts water?

BAZOOM EXEC

Well - I guess...

STU-BONE

Aww rihhhhht!

He breaks into RIOTOUS LAUGHTER and begins blasting monkeyfarts at HERB and the EXECs, who dive for cover under the conference table.

EXT. STU AND JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Laughter and back-slapping as STU-BONE walks his guests to their cars.

STU

So here's my idea. We do a giveaway at the zoo benefit. We get a big pi,ata. We fill it with Monkeybone dolls - hundreds of 'em.

HERB

A pi,ata. That's a great idea!

STU-BONE

You guys don't know it, but you just saved my ass!

With a big grin, he pantomimes sticking a thumb up his ass, in obvious imitation of the doll, and then gives the thumbs-up sign. The unnerved EXECs gape at him as he goes back inside - he's developed an odd, loping gait, and his arms swing outward in wide arcs as he walks.

BURGER GOD EXEC

Interesting fellow.

HERB

Head trauma.

INT. STU'S KITCHEN - THAT MOMENT

He digs around under the sink, finds the purple beaker of ONEIRIX. Looks at the FARTING DOLL...and GRINS.

STU-BONE

This'll get him off my back!

INSERT - TV SCREEN

A PROMO for the MONKEYBONE cartoon show. MONKEYBONE swings across the screen on a vine, followed by a string of grinning, live-action FANS doing a scratch 'n' sniff, pull-out-a-plum LINE DANCE.

ANNOUNCER

It's his world - we just live in it. Monkeybone!
Back with six all-new episodes, starting -

INT. LIVING ROOM - REVERSE ANGLE - NIGHT

A distraught JULIE mutes the TV. Her friend ALICE is on the sofa beside her, having coffee and dessert.

JULIE

The thing is, I'm responsible for the way he's acting. It's the nightmare juice. It's got to be.

ALICE

Julie, that stuff probably saved his life.

JULIE

I can't explain this, Alice, but I'm not so sure it did. It's as if...he's not Stu any more. The Stu I love is gone!

(beat)

He spends all his time in the garage. He says he's...autographing.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

TIGHT ON the flask of ONEIRIX as STU-BONE picks it up.

He's wearing a GAS MASK. He's rigged a CLOTHESLINE in the garage. MONKEYBONE DOLLS are clipped to it, ass-end up - forming a makeshift ASSEMBLY LINE. He dips a TURKEY BASTER into the flask...withdraws a quantity of purple fluid...plucks the FINGER out of the first doll's behind...

- and plunges the TURKEY BASTER into the doll's hindquarters, filling it with ONEIRIX!! The doll's buttocks take on the purple hue characteristic of Orangutans in heat. STU-BONE holds the doll at arm's length and pulls its finger - launching a purple puff of SPIKED NIGHTMARE GAS.

STU-BONE

Yeah, baby! Nightmare-in-a-butt!

(looking around)

Okay...guinea pig, guinea pig...

EXT. GARAGE/BACK YARD - NIGHT

STU-BONE steps out into the driveway and hears a low growl - BUSTER is giving him the stinkeye from behind the picket fence. STU-BONE's eyes light up with inspiration.

STU-BONE
C'mere, boy...c'mere, ole buddy...

INT. LIVING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

LOUD BARKING outside. JULIE wanders over toward the window.

ALICE
Listen. Let's bring him in for some tests. I guarantee you're overreacting.

JULIE lifts the curtain - and sees STU-BONE in his gas mask, bent over in a weird crab like stance, chasing BUSTER around the yard with the Monkeybone doll.

JULIE doesn't seem especially surprised - but ALICE's mouth falls open.

JULIE
Actually, no, I don't think I'm overreacting.

EXT. BACK YARD - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

BUSTER is apparently ALONE now - he's pacing in circles under a HIGH TREE BRANCH, staring up and GROWLING. Someone throws a PINE CONE at the picket fence. BUSTER'S HEAD TURNS, just for an instant -

STU-BONE
KREEEGAHHHH!!!

- and STU-BONE plunges out of the tree, DIRECTLY ON TOP OF THE DOG! The two of them GRAPPLE, rolling around on the grass.

For a moment it looks like this battle royale could go either way. Then STU-BONE gets on top of BUSTER, STRADDLES HIM, shoves the ASS of the Monkeybone doll up against his muzzle...

FOONT! A purple cloud of NIGHTMARE GAS hits BUSTER in the face. The dog goes limp. His eyes roll back in his head. He starts to TWITCH.

STU-BONE
Sweet dreams, you little bastard!

Disheveled but triumphant, STU-BONE stands up, pounds his chest with both fists, and lets out a Tarzanian ROAR. Lights go on all over the neighborhood. ANGRY NEIGHBORS poke their heads out the windows.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

STU-BONE skulks back into the garage. He throws back a tarp, revealing HUNDREDS of boxed Monkeybone dolls, stacked so high they fill an entire wall of the garage. He pulls out his turkey baster, cranks up the clothesline, and goes to work.

EXT. BACK YARD - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

CAMERA TRACKS IN on the twitching face of BUSTER, and we see

BUSTER'S DREAM (BLACK & WHITE)

A German-expressionist nightmare, all low angles and heavy shadows.

We're in some kind of OPERATING ROOM, where a struggling PATIENT is being wheeled in on a tall, creaking GURNEY. Four ORDERLIES in surgical masks are holding him down.

The PATIENT is BUSTER. And the ORDERLIES...are CATS.

A CAT SURGEON draws the sheet back. Looks at the spreadeagled BUSTER. And brandishes a big nasty pair of GARDEN SHEARS.

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

The Dark Town audience is scratching its collective head at Buster's dream, which is showing in one of HYP'S NIGHTMARE ORBS. An angry HYPNOS slams down the phone and storms across the dance floor to his big circular bed.

HYPNOS

Dog dreams!! That stinkin' monkey. I can't believe it. We give him a body, and he sends us ...dogs.

A FELINE BEAUTY embraces him from behind, pulls him onto the bed.

KITTY

Let's not think about dogs. Let's think about pussycats. Meeowwwwwrrrr....

She draws ONE SHARP CLAW lightly down his chest. He gives her a now-you're-talkin' grin and hits a switch - causing the big circular bed to ROTATE off the dance floor and into the *boudoir*.

As it turns, we see KITTY'S PAW closing discreetly around a KEY CHAIN on the nightstand...

INT. DUNGEON - RIGHT

STU's curled up on the dank floor when he's awakened by the sound of a VISITOR in the corridor outside - KITTY. She passes a sack containing FOOD and BOTTLED WATER through the bars - and SHUSHES the astonished STU before he can speak.

KITTY

Shh! You'll need it when you're traveling.

Glancing back at the GUARDS, she pulls a KEY from her cleavage.

KITTY

Don't ask where I got it.

STU

You can't do this! You'll get in trouble!

KITTY

You're the only true-hearted man I ever met. You find a way back to that girl of yours and make her happy.

STU

How am I gonna get past the guards?

KITTY

I'll worry about the guards.

(loudly)

OKAY, STU. SEE YOU IN A DAY OR TWO.

She turns down the corridor. STU stands there for a beat, GAPING at the key in his hand.

Then he hears the sound of CARNAGE outside. A FEROCIOUS, BLOODY BATTLE seems to be underway. Realizing that KITTY must be in trouble, he uses the key to unlock the dungeon door.

INT. DUNGEON - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

He finds KITTY hunched in the corner on all fours, surrounded by blood and tufts of fur and an abandoned GUARD'S HAT.

KITTY

Go. Just go.

STU

Thanks, Kitty, I'll never forget you for th--

She looks up at him, feline eyes aglow. There's a three-foot-long RODENT'S TAIL dangling out of her mouth.

STU

I'll really...never...forget you.

He races off as KITTY resumes her feast. The sound of fighting has roused the other DUNGEON DWELLERS, and when they realize the dungeon door is open they come rushing out *en masse*.

Then the PANEL opens. They hear FOOD raining down behind them. HITCHCOCK is the first to turn back - then STEPHEN KING - then ATILLA. A moment later they're back to their old habits, climbing over one another to get at a half-empty box of Raisinets.

WIPE TO:

INT. SLEEP LAB - DAY

The usual gang sitting around at their computer terminals, etc. JULIE is coolly reading NOTEBOOK ENTRIES into a TAPE RECORDER.

JULIE

"4/17: Subject, when unaware of observation, prefers to hold eating utensils...with feet. Successfully carves turkey roll holding eating utensils...with feet."

ALICE

They had a case like that at Johns Hopkins. Wires got crossed between hands and feet.

CLARISSA

Great lead. I'll try and find it on the net.

JULIE

"4/18: Subject climbs backyard tree...to perform

elimination. When confronted with product...
blames it on family dog."

DEAD SILENCE from the mortified group. They never had a case like that at Johns Hopkins. JULIE somehow keeps a stiff upper lip - deeply embarrassed for STU, but a scientist nonetheless.

HUTCH

Seems perfectly obvious. He's been possessed by a monkey!

The others all GLOWER at HUTCH for this egregious display of bad taste.

EXT. GARAGE - AFTERNOON

STU-BONE and HERB are standing outside the garage in formal attire as a crew of ZOO WORKERS load MONKEYBONE DOLLS into a pickup.

HERB

You're really gonna pop the question?

STU-BONE

Got the ring. Got the airline tickets. Soon as they break that pi,ata, we'll grab a cab - and it's off to the land of palm trees and coconuts.

HERB

I can't believe you. You used to hate being the center of attention. Now you're proposing, in public, at a benefit.

STU-BONE

Yeah, I was thinking...I mean, I'm a celebrity now, do I really want to get married? But on the other hand, if you're married, they can't testify against you.

HERB wonders if this is a joke, decides it is, and forces a chuckle.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

JULIE is getting dressed for the benefit when the PHONE RINGS.

JULIE

Hello? Oh, Hutch - what?

INTERCUT - JULIE AND HUTCH

HUTCH is at the sleep lab, standing over the open refrigerator.

HUTCH

The Nightmare Juice! It's gone! Somebody switched it for a beaker of grape Kool-Aid!!

JULIE

Kool-Aid!? But who'd would want to -

Her eyes move to the WINDOW - to STU-BONE out by the garage.

JULIE

Okay. Call the police. I'll be right over.

INT. SLEEP LAB - LATE AFTERNOON

Two DETECTIVES examining the scene of the crime.

JULIE

The technical name is Oneirix. It's an enzyme.
It's present in the brains of -

DETECTIVE

(cutting her off; writing)

Yeah, yeah...Nightmare juice.

DETECTIVE II

And there's been no sign of a break-in?

HUTCH

Holy shit...the pants.

(remembering)

The janitor found a pair of torn-up pants. It
was the same night the monkey tipped her cage
over. Remember that, Julie?

JULIE

(suddenly afraid)

Yeah...I remember it vividly.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

LIVERIED WAITERS scurrying all about in preparation for the benefit. ZOO
WORKERS set up tables and chairs underneath a giant CANOPY.

STU-BONE watches with satisfaction as the last of the DOLLS is loaded
into a giant pi,ata in the shape of STANLEY.

WIPE TO:

INT. DEATH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The big creaky swivel chair swings around, revealing DEATH.

DEATH

Now, if I may ask - what kind of idiot sneaks
into the Land of Death twice?

The party he's addressing is STU - who's stretched out horizontally,
strapped to a medieval TORTURE RACK, with a whole posse of GRIM REAPERS
standing guard around him.

STU

You're mad at me. Great. You have every right to
be. But we're both mad at Dark Town. We're both
mad at Hypnos.

DEATH

Oh, sure. Now you're gonna tell me it was all
his idea. You were completely innocent -

STU

I'm not going to tell you that. I wanted that E-ticket. I wanted it so bad I'd stare you right in the face to get it - and I'd do the same again.

DEATH

Why??

STU

I have a girl up there. And I never - I should've - I just want to tell her I love her.

DEATH

I'm a simple man. I'm just doing my job. I enjoy my job. Why does everyone want to make it difficult for me? Stealing tickets, switching bodies...it is so irresponsible.

STU

Death, I'm trying to make things right. Take my soul. Turn me into a paper doll. But give me just one lousy hour.

DEATH

Well - you'd need a body.

DEATH gestures for the REAPERS to unshackle STU.

DEATH

If it wasn't for that comic strip of yours, I wouldn't be doing this. But a good chuckle is darned hard to come by.

(chortling)

That one where Monkeybone stole the soap cake out of the urinal - I thought I would die.

STU

Coming from you, that's quite a compliment.

DEATH

De nada. Now, come here...bend over...before I change my mind.

STU

Bend over?

DEATH rears back and KICKS HIM, full-force, SMACK IN THE ASS. The supernatural might of the blow sends STU ROCKETING UPWARD THROUGH THE CEILING!!

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY

A TEAM OF SURGEONS. The lead SURGEON has his arm buried up to the elbow in the open torso of an ORGAN DONOR.

SURGEON

Okay...detaching the left kidney...

SCREAMS ALL AROUND as the ORGAN DONOR sits BOLT UPRIGHT! The startled SURGEON drops the kidney back into place.

ORGAN DONOR

What the - who the hell am I??

SURGEON

You're an organ donor!

ORGAN DONOR

Am I dead?!?

SURGEON

The chute didn't open. We kind of assumed -

ORGAN DONOR

I need this body. Just for a few minutes. I'll bring it back, okay?

The ORGAN DONOR grabs a lab coat from a nearby rack and races out. (And since STU is temporarily occupying the DONOR's body, we will henceforth refer to him as O.D. STU.)

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - A MOMENT LATER

O.D. STU comes racing around a corridor. His LAB COAT is already covered with gore, and he's having trouble holding his GUTS in. His PANCREAS spills out onto the floor just as two DOCTORS stroll past.

DOCTOR

(eyeing the pancreas)

Might have someone take a look at that.

O.D. STU

Oh. Yeah. Thanks.

The DOCTORS move on. O.D. STU spots a JANITOR'S CART with a roll of DUCT TAPE on one shelf. He WRAPS IT TIGHTLY around his midsection to keep his innards from falling out. Then he runs for it.

Now the TEAM OF SURGEONS rounds the corner in hot pursuit. The lead SURGEON spots O.D. STU at the end of the corridor and takes off after him. But he SLIPS on the PANCREAS and goes sprawling!

The pancreas goes flying down the hall, where it gets SQUASHED in rapid succession by a GURNEY and by a little old lady's MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIR. When the SURGEONS retrieve it, it's a hunk of pulp.

LEAD SURGEON

I think it can still be saved. Put it on ice.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

GUESTS are beginning to arrive for the benefit. In the cages and habitats, animals stare up at a gigantic MONKEYBONE BALLOON.

EXT. ZOO - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

The BAZOOM TOY REP is rounding a corner when HERB pops out from behind a tree and BLASTS HIM with a jolt of purple gas from a Monkeybone doll! He sputters and coughs...

Then he grabs the doll away and blasts HERB right back! The two of them chase each other around the tree, giggling. The BAZOOM REP'S WIFE, in her formal gown, affects a look of supreme mortification.

EXT. STU'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

O.D. STU climbs over the fence, finds a hidden key, and lets himself in.

INT. HOUSE - STUDIO - DAY

O.D. STU rushes frantically from room to room.

O.D. STU (o.s.)
DOC? DOC?? - JULIE?

No reply - the joint's empty. O.D. STU enters the studio and spots a NEWSPAPER on his drafting table. The paper is folded back to a big DISPLAY AD for the benefit: "MEET STU MILEY AND MONKEYBONE - 8 PM TONIGHT!" He checks the wall clock: time is short.

Reaching into the drawer of the drafting table, he pulls out a TACKLE BOX which contains old brushes...and a small VELVET BOX. O.D. STU opens the velvet box to reveal Grandma's ANTIQUE RING.

He hears GROWLING behind him - it's BUSTER. The dog looks up, cocks his head - and begins WAGGING HIS TAIL. Somehow, even though STU's in a different body, BUSTER recognizes him.

EXT. STU AND JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

O.D. STU exits, ring in hand. Behind him, BUSTER is throwing a fit - barking, FLINGING himself at the screen door. He wants to come along!

A BUS pulls up at the corner, and O.D. STU boards it. BUSTER throws everything he's got at the door - and it gives! He takes off after STU.

EXT. ZOO - GROUNDS - DAY

As HERB is walking toward the refreshment table, an ODD LOOK crosses his face. All at once he begins to TUG at his collar. He yanks his TIE off ...doffs his JACKET onto the pavement...

POV HERB - PSYCHO-VISION

The nightmare drug is kicking in! The whole zoo SWIMS around him. All at once he's being ATTACKED...by a HORDE of EMPTY CLOTHES!!

EXT. ZOO - GROUNDS - DAY

JULIE has arrived at the zoo. She's wandering zombie-like through the food court, flanked by her friends ALICE and CLARISSA.

JULIE
Whatever he's done, I'm responsible for it.

CLARISSA
That's not true, Julie. It's not true.

ALICE
This is not about your guilt, Julie. There could

be innocent people in danger.

CLARISSA

He's not the same guy. He's not your Stu.

(beat)

I didn't want to tell you this, but the other day he pinched me on the butt.

ALICE

I didn't want to tell you this, but the other day he tried to mount me from behind! Look, you have to tell the police.

JULIE

Tell them what? I don't know anything concrete. All I have is a feeling.

All of a sudden, they hear SHOUTS and LAUGHTER from the area of the reptile house. In the distance, ZOO SECURITY GUARDS are chasing a NAKED MAN through the crowds of formally-dressed partygoers.

CLARISSA

Oh my God, we've got a flasher.

JULIE

That...that's Herb!

The GUARDS catch hold of HERB and drag him away past JULIE, ALICE, and CLARISSA. He doesn't recognize any of them. He's PSYCHOTIC:

HERB

CLOTHES! Beware of clothes. They're working together. All of them. Shirts...pants... ENSEMBLES...!

The three women exchange looks of stupefied HORROR.

INT. MUNI BUS - LATE AFTERNOON

PASSENGERS are holding their noses, frantically pulling on the BELL ROPE to alert the driver that they want off. As we move toward the back we see O.D. STU sitting alone, with rows of empty seats on either side.

He looks rough. He's bone-white, his taped-up lab coat is crusted with blood, and he never did find any shoes. Also, it's a hot night and he's starting to get a little ripe. FLIES are buzzing all around him.

EXT. STREETS - THAT MOMENT

BUSTER runs down the sidewalk as fast as his stumpy little legs will carry him, in pursuit of the BUS.

INT. CAR - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

The team of SURGEONS has been tracking O.D. STU across the city! Through the windshield they see the BUS pulling up outside the zoo. O.D. STU hops out and sprints across the parking lot.

SURGEON

IT'S HIM! HE'S GETTING OFF!

INT. ZOO - ENTRANCE - LATE AFTERNOON

O.D. STU doesn't even stop at the ticket window. He VAULTS over the turnstile, knocking benefit guests aside. The SURGEONS aren't far behind. They race up to the ticket window -

SURGEON

Did you see a corpse running this way?

The TICKET-TAKER shrugs and points off in O.D. STU's direction.

INT. BANQUET TENT - THAT MOMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

The last stages of dinner. WAITERS are already clearing plates, and although JULIE has barely touched her food she sends her plate away.

Onstage a BAND is playing tasteful zoo jazz. When the number ends, STU-BONE approaches the dais and leans into the mike.

STU-BONE

As emcee I want to thank you all for joining us at this swingin' bash...it's a special night for the birds, and the lions, and the monkeys, but it's also a special night for -

(tapping his chest)

- this monkey. And it's special because of a very special lady. Her name is -

(checking a note in his pocket)

Julie McElroy. Just kiddin', Julie. Stand up.

JULIE stands reluctantly. The CROWD APPLAUDS.

STU-BONE

And to make this special night extra-special, I'd like to do a special number...especially for you.

A DISCO BALL lowers. STU-BONE turns to welcome a group of BACKUP SOUL SINGERS who are just joining the band on stage.

The TENT begins to ROCK with a throbbing beat. And STU-BONE launches into a wild-eyed, hip-shaking parody of Mick Jagger singing the Rolling Stones' "MONKEY MAN"!

As he sings, STU-BONE gyrates over toward JULIE, bumping and grinding like the cartoon-monkey sex machine he is. He waves his mike to the crowd, urging everyone to join in. JULIE gasps in disbelief, but the crowd is eating it up - clapping and singing along with STU-BONE.

He gestures for pretty women to join him out on the floor. He opens his shirt at the neck, exposing a hitherto unseen plenitude of chest hair.

He pulls out a hanky to mop his brow and tosses it to the crowd. He wipes his armpits with a second hanky and tosses it to the crowd. He blows his nose into a third and tosses it to the crowd.

Then he JUMPS UP ON THE TABLES and shakes his booty wildly, strutting in and out among the dessert plates. If the real Jagger could see him, he would creep home a sad and broken man.

For the big finale, he jumps off the table and SLIDES ACROSS THE FLOOR to JULIE'S table - arriving ON HIS KNEES.

STU-BONE

I am just a Monkey Man! I'm glad you are a monkey...woman...too.

(soft voice)

How about it, Julie?

He pulls out a RING BOX and hands it to the beet-red JULIE. The crowd lets out a collective GASP - followed by WILD APPLAUSE.

She stares down at the ring - a big vulgar sparkler. She can't speak.

STU-BONE

We'll hop a plane tonight. An island ceremony.
An Abba Dabba honeymoon!

JULIE

It looks so...new.

STU-BONE

It is new. Why wouldn't it be new?

JULIE

But the heirloom ring. Your grandmother's ring...

STU-BONE

Heirloom? Huh? You want a used ring - ?

No reply. She's taking a long time to say yes. The audience is muttering.

STU-BONE

Ju-leeeee... Operators are standing by... Offer expires at midnight, December 31...

Suddenly a GORE-STAINED FIGURE bursts into the tent.

O.D. STU

DOC! DOC! DON'T DO IT! HE ISN'T STU! HE'S MONKEYBONE!!!

JULIE's jaw drops. She barely gets a glimpse of O.D. STU before the ZOO GUARDS arrive to haul him away.

STU-BONE

Boy, the nuts are out tonight. What'd that creep call you - ?

JULIE

He called me "Doc."

- which STU-BONE never does. Someone in the crowd yells...

GUEST

HEY MONKEYBONE!!

STU-BONE turns and does a simian COMEDY SHTICK for the crowd.

STU-BONE

That's me, folks! Monkeybone! Let's party!

By the time he's done scratching his ribs, JULIE has vanished!

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

She races out of the tent - grabs a passing ZOO GUARD.

JULIE

Please. Where did you take that man...?

The GUARD points to an ANIMAL CONTROL VAN. JULIE sees O.D. STU peering out through a small barred panel. Their eyes meet...

JULIE

Who are you? Why did you say those things?

O.D. STU

Oh, Doc, it's all a mixup. We were in the land of death. He stole my e-ticket. That's how he got my body, see? All they had left for me was this corpse!

JULIE digests this, nods professionally, and turns to walk away.

O.D. STU

Don't walk away, Doc! He's only here to give people nightmares!

(no response)

Doc! Please! Don't you remember the dream? They were pulling the plug - I called out to you - and you heard me. Remember?

This stops JULIE cold. Her spine is tingling. She turns slowly, a single tear rolling down her cheek. And then...

JULIE

BUSTER?!?

The dog runs right past JULIE and bounds up to the animal control van, barking his head off. Now JULIE is starting to believe. She turns -

JULIE

Stu...how?

O.D. STU

I had to come back, Julie. I had to give you this.

THROUGH THE BARS he hands her the little box containing Grandma's antique ring.

O.D. STU

I meant to give it to you before. The night we crashed. I was so happy, Julie, I...try to remember me like that, okay? Not like this.

She slips the ring on her finger - looks up at O.D. STU with TEARS

WELLING in her eyes. He makes an odd SNORKELING kind of noise.

JULIE

What's wrong?

O.D. STU

I'm crying too. I just don't have any tears. I'm all dried up.

JULIE TURNS. The two DETECTIVES we saw in the sleep lab have just arrived at the gate, and ALICE and CLARISSA are leading them over.

ALICE

Detective, please let this man out of the van.

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - PI,ATA AREA - THAT MOMENT

The PARTYGOERS are lined up under the gigantic Stanley-shaped PI,ATA, which is hanging from a tree. A TUBBY BANKER in a blindfold takes a good hard whack. CRACKS are beginning to appear...

STU-BONE

Okay, folks, it's pi,ata time - you know the rules - five bucks a pop - and remember, it's all for the benefit of our friends the animals!

(eyes brightening)

Ooooooh! This one's on me!

The next contestant is a GORGEOUS WOMAN. He blindfolds her and embraces her from behind to help her with her grip on the bat.

STU-BONE

Choke up, baby. That's right. Choke up!

Suddenly he notices the COPS marching up with JULIE, O.D. STU and co. in tow. He freezes, terrified - BACKS AWAY from the BABE -

- and catches a BAT IN THE FACE. Several people rush up to help him as the COPS consult with the BENEFIT ORGANIZERS...

ORGANIZER

I don't understand, officer. This is a benefit. Surely this can wait until -

COP

Sorry, ma'am...we need to question Mr. Miley on a most urgent matter.

JULIE

Stop this. Now. Those dolls have been tampered with. They're toxic!

O.D. STU comes marching through the crowd. He passes a LIFE-SIZED DISPLAY of Stanley and Monkeybone...GRABS THE BACKPACK off the Stanley figure...and proceeds deliberately toward STU-BONE.

O.D. STU

MONKEYBONE...BACK IN THE PACK.

The old command seems to retain its magical power, because STU-BONE

clutches his gut as if stricken at the sound of it.

O.D. STU

I mean it this time. Back in the pack.

STU-BONE bends over - jerks and twitches - becoming more SIMIAN by the moment as O.D. STU approaches.

STU-BONE

Stu...I can explain...I was sick of being a figment, see? It's awful being a figment. It's degrading! And I never really wanted to give people nightmares. I just told 'em that so they'd help me get a body.

O.D. STU

Yeah - my body. Back in the pack, you simian shitbird!

The COPS are *tres* confused by all this -

COP

Ma'am, can you give me some idea of what's going on here?

- but JULIE holds them back so the scene can play itself out. Now STU-BONE is doing a weird little monkey dance - PLAYING UP to the puzzled crowd, who laugh and snicker, wondering what to make of all this.

STU-BONE

Laugh, damn you...laugh at the sidekick...the happy little monkey. He doesn't have any feelings. He's just a figment of your imagination!

He turns suddenly - GRABS THE BAT from the puzzled BABE -

STU-BONE

GIMME THAT GODDAM BAT!

He wails on the pi,ata like Ken Griffey Jr. O.D. STU tries to stop him, but it's too late - the pi,ata BURSTS, and hundreds of PURPLE-ASSED MONKEYBONE DOLLS spill out onto the ground!

An equal number of RABID PARTYGOERS surge forward to scoop them up. The COPS swing into action, trying to hold the crowd back...

COP

HE'S GETTING AWAY!

STU-BONE climbs a tree and JUMPS from a branch onto one of the TWIN JUNGLE TOWERS at the pavilion - begins CLIMBING toward the giant MONKEYBONE BALLOON moored up above!

O.D. STU sees him - pulls away from JULIE -

O.D. STU

I LOVE YOU!

JULIE

STU!!

STU-BONE unties the mooring rope and wraps it around his midsection. Now freed, the balloon LIFTS INTO THE AIR, CARRYING HIM ALOFT!

O.D. STU climbs up the opposite tower as the balloon starts to drift away. He GRABS HOLD of the MOORING ROPE as it whips past.

And the TEAM OF SURGEONS - who have been combing the grounds in search of O.D. STU - catch sight of him just as he FLOATS OFF INTO THE AIR, ON THE END OF THE ROPE!

HEAD SURGEON
LOOK! IT'S HIM!

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - ON BALLOON - MOVING

They rise to an altitude of ten or twelve feet. But O.D. STU's additional weight pulls the balloon back DOWN - and both of them hit the ground! They have to RUN at top speed just to keep pace with the balloon!

STU-BONE
Let...go...you...dingleberry...

As he's trying to KICK O.D. STU off the rope, a GUST OF WIND catches the balloon and LIFTS IT HIGH INTO THE AIR.

For about three seconds. The boys tumble to earth, off-balance, in a heap, BOUNCING along the pavement. The balloon pulls them over a WROUGHT-IRON FENCE and drags them through the ALLIGATOR PIT. Giant jaws snap as the boys glide overhead like bait on a hook.

As the balloon LIFTS UP AGAIN, O.D. STU hauls himself along the length of the rope.

He gets close enough to GRAB STU-BONE's LEG. STU-BONE reaches down to push him away...grabs a fistful of DUCT TAPE...

...and RIP! The tape TEARS - exposing the great big GASH in O.D. STU's midsection! He tries to pull himself together...

EXT. FOOD COURT - THAT MOMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

A SERVER ladles out a cup of PUNCH from a big silver PUNCHBOWL. Something PINK comes plummeting out of the sky - and the next thing he knows, the SERVER is DRENCHED!

The SURGEONS come rushing up. They all stick their hands in the punchbowl at once...fishing out O.D. STU'S KIDNEY!

HEAD SURGEON
Put it on ice. I think it can still be saved!

One of the TEAM finds an ice cooler full of soft drinks. In it goes.

EXT. TIGER HABITAT - LATE AFTERNOON

BOTH BOYS SCREAM as the balloon drags them perilously close to the RAZOR WIRE atop a tall storm fence.

They clear it by inches - but they don't have much time to celebrate. They're dangling over the Bengal Tiger exhibit, and the great cats are LEAPING INTO THE AIR trying to snag them!

As O.D. STU squirms out of reach, his LIVER drops out...

EXT. GROUNDS - TIGER HABITAT - LATE AFTERNOON

It lands close enough to the FENCE that one of the SURGEONS thinks he can reach it. He reaches through the bars and sees a pack of BENGAL TIGERS racing toward him! He manages to grab ONE END of the liver - but a TIGER gets the other end -

- and it's a TUG-OF-WAR until the tiger BITES the liver in half, sending the terrified SURGEON sprawling on the pavement outside the bars! The HEAD SURGEON examines the remaining half-liver...

HEAD SURGEON

Put it on ice. I think it can still be saved.

ANGLE ON BALLOON

STU-BONE socks O.D. STU hard across the face! He lets go of his incision ...and his SMALL INTESTINE falls out! Since it's still connected at both ends, the intestine forms a great big LOOP...

EXT. FOOD COURT - SERVING TABLE - LATE AFTERNOON

The SERVER has just brought out a new PUNCHBOWL full of nice clean punch. He sets it down on the table and is about to ladle out a cupful when STU flies past overhead. His intestinal LOOP slides across the table, knocking over glasses, snagging the PUNCHBOWL at its base...

...and YANKING IT right off the table! Bystanding GUESTS are DRENCHED in punch as the punch bowl FLIES END OVER END...

...and, with the sound of a GONG being struck, BEANS a member of the SURGICAL TEAM from behind!! Naturally it's the guy who's lugging the ICE CHEST full of O.D. STU's organs. When the punchbowl strikes, he GOES DOWN HARD, PITCHING the ice chest...

... at a pair of COPS who are over by the pi,ata, loading CONFISCATED MONKEYBONE DOLLS into a SHOPPING CART. The ICE CHEST knocks them off their feet - and sends the SHOPPING CART rolling downhill!

The COPS try to get up, but they skid every which way on the SPILLED ICE underneath. On top of which, the SURGICAL TEAM is all over them, playing GRAB-ASS with the COPS as they try to retrieve precious organs.

The HEAD SURGEON kneels beside his fallen comrade, the guy who got BEANED by the punchbowl, and feels for a pulse.

HEAD SURGEON

Put him on ice. I think he can still be saved!

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

COPS sprint downhill, trying to intercept the runaway SHOPPING CART full of confiscated dolls. Too late. The CART slams into a fence and goes ass-over-teakettle, dumping its contents into the PENGUIN HABITAT...

INT. HYP'S HIDEAWAY - THAT MOMENT

HYPNOS and an audience of DARKTOWNERS peer into the nightmare orb. They see a Keystone-Cops vision of fur-clad ESKIMOS, with clubs and spearguns, amid a colony of terrified PENGUINS.

HYPNOS

Not again. THAT STINKING MONKEY!!!

AERIAL SHOT - STU'S POV - MOVING

STU gets an idea as he looks down at his dangling INTESTINE. He begins FEEDING IT OUT - giving himself more rope to work with - and when it's long enough, begins SWINGING IT like a LASSO!

EXT. WATER BUFFALO HABITAT - LATE AFTERNOON

WATER BUFFALO graze Buddha-like as STU'S INTESTINE snags one of them around the HORNS. The lasso draws taut - and holds!

ANGLE ON BALLOON - O.D. STU AND STU-BONE

The balloon is moored in place again! O.D. STU pulls himself upward, toward STU-BONE, who KICKS AT him frantically!

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

A COP pulls his sidearm and TAKES AIM at the now-stabilized balloon.

COP

I think I can bring 'em down.

ANGLE ON BALLOON - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

BLAM! The cop's shot hits the giant MONKEYBONE BALLOON smack in the ass. With a gale-force helium FART, the balloon ZOOMS UPWARD. The INTESTINE snaps. STU-BONE and O.D. STU shoot off into the air!

ON STU-BONE & O.D. STU - AERIAL

AT APOGEE. They exchange a LOOK as the last gasp of helium hisses out of the gigantic balloon. Then it occurs to them to look DOWN...

THEIR POV - PARKING LOT - OVERHEAD ANGLE

...at the tiny CARS parked far, far below. They must be close to a hundred feet up in the air - and all at once the ground is coming up fast!

EXT. ZOO - ON JULIE & CROWD - LATE AFTERNOON

JULIE *et al* SCREAM IN HORROR as the two bodies plunge earthward.

ON STU-BONE & O.D. STU - FALLING

...and falling and falling until they SMACK INTO the hot asphalt of the parking lot, the deflated balloon settling over them like a shroud.

Their BODIES have stopped - but their SPIRITS keep on falling...

AERIAL SHOT - SKIES OVER DARK TOWN - NIGHT

...and the fight continues - even into the afterlife! As they plummet down through the heavens, they REVERT to their true personae. It's STU vs. MONKEYBONE, creator vs. sidekick, still duking it out - like a couple of skydivers fighting over a single parachute!

EXT. STREETS - DARK TOWN - RIGHT

DARKTOWNERS pour into the streets to watch the epic struggle overhead. They're placing bets, rooting their favorites on. Then...

THE GROUND SHAKES AND THUNDERS - and the DARKTOWNERS scatter in all directions, DIVING for the nearest hiding place. They seem to know what this mighty rumbling signifies.

The E-TICKET RIDE pops out of the ground - begins to RISE into the air - and a COLOSSUS appears beneath it! A FIFTY-FOOT WARRIOR clad in JAPANESE CEREMONIAL ARMOR, he TOWERS over Dark Town, so mighty and enormous that he can wear the E-TICKET RIDE as a hat!!

ON STU AND MONKEYBONE - FALLING

STU lands a HAYMAKER, and the two of them break loose of each other -

ON ARMORED COLOSSUS - THAT MOMENT

- LANDING in the upturned palms of the COLOSSUS! STU watches in disbelief as a PANEL pops open in the giant's CHEST, revealing...

STU

DEATH!!

DEATH

I dress up when I want to make an impression. -
So how'd it go?

STU

Fine, thanks. Saw my girl, said goodbye,
everything's gonna be okay.

(shrugging)

I guess I'm yours now.

MONKEYBONE

Death, I'd like to point out that none of this
was my fault. The roots of this tragedy go back
to a callous, uncaring society that -

DEATH lets out a MIGHTY ROAR and CLAPS HIS GREAT METAL HANDS together. Man and monkey are surely squished. But when DEATH opens his hands, STU is still there, cupped safely in his palms.

STU

Hey. Where's Monkeybone?

DEATH

Back in your head, where he belongs.
(beat)

No offense, Stu, but on your own you're kinda vanilla. I didn't want to send you back without him.

STU

Back? You're sending me back?

DEATH

It's irregular, but...I just love that strip of yours. I figure I'll take the "Family Circus" guy instead.

STU

Death! Thank you!

DEATH

Thank me next time you see me.

He sends STU ROCKETING UPWARD INTO THE STRATOSPHERE with a single flick of his finger. Then he turns...

DEATH

Ohhhh, Hypnos??

A BUNCH OF FRIGHTENED DARKTOWNERS pitch the quivering satyr out into the middle of the town square.

HYPNOS

Death! So nice to see you. I can explain -

He looks up tremulously. A GIANT SHADOW falls across him...followed by a GIANT ARMORED FOOT.

EXT. ZOO - DUSK

JULIE SOBS in a POLICEMAN's arms at the exit to the zoo.

JULIE

I don't know what happened. All I know is...he was in a coma...and then he came back...and now he's gone again.

They wander out. Behind them, a squad of COPS are confiscating MONKEYBONE DOLLS from squawling children as they file out.

EXT. ZOO - PARKING LOT - DUSK

The TWO CORPSES, on gurneys, are being loaded into the back of the police ambulance. The SURGEON and his team come wandering up.

SURGEON

Excuse me. We lost a corpse - we saw him heading this way...

DRIVER

I got a couple of fresh ones in the back. Help yourself.

The SURGEON pulls the sheet off CORPSE #1 - aka O.D. STU.

SURGEON

I'll be. It's him all right. Still dead...

The SECOND CORPSE sits up abruptly. His sheet falls away, revealing STU ...the *real* STU...now back in his own body! The SURGEON and his TEAM run away from the ambulance SHRIEKING.

EXT. ZOO - ANOTHER ANGLE - DUSK

BUSTER barks like a maniac. JULIE turns and sees an IMPOSSIBLE VISION ambling toward her...STU, alive and kicking. She can't believe it's him until he grabs her and pulls her close.

JULIE

Is it you? Is it really you this time?

He pulls her close and kisses her long and hard, quelling all doubts.

JULIE

Oh, Stu. Tell me I'm not dreaming.

STU

Baby...you're asking the wrong guy.

They wander off, arm in arm. STU TUGS at the seat of his pants.

JULIE

What's the matter?

STU

My tail itches.

He DOES A TAKE as he realizes what he's just said - but JULIE smiles, and he shrugs it off. Johnny Mercer's "DREAM" comes up underneath as the reunited lovers walk off into the moonlight, and we

FADE OUT.